More than the Sum of My Parts:

Multiracial Teen Identity Development and Experiences of Appeasement and Objection in a Mono-Racialized Context.

A Dissertation
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Abstract

This dissertation examines multiracial student cultural awareness and how their experiences provided them insight into their current educational environment. The multiracial students in this study had significant self-awareness and cultural literacy due to their early identity formation and their continued navigation of disparate cultures. Because these students have received little attention in academic research, this dissertation explored multiracial identity in adolescents and the student experiences in a secondary educational context. This ethnographic study explores the students' experiences through participant observations, in-depth interviews of students, teachers and school administrators, ethnographic reflections and field notes. The dissertation found that students encountered pressures in the school environment which affected their interactions in the school setting with teachers and peers. These encounters could be racially charged, although at times they could be so subtle that adults might not have recognized them as racially charged. In spite of these difficulties the students found supportive teachers and academic success. Based on the study's findings the dissertation proposed a new lens through which to view multiracial student behavior. Since students were sensitive to others expectations, they mold their behavior to conform to these expectations. Through appeasement and objection the student actively chose how to react to others' perceptions of them. Appeasement and objection

in response to expectations could have stressful impacts on students as they sublimated portions of their identities in order to better fit into their environments.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Mary T. Gudjonsson without whom I never would have learned the perseverance necessary. I still miss you every day.

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Chapter 1

> "Illic est vires obvius universus (There is strength in the whole)" (Taylor & Nanney, 2010).

Multiracial individuals have posed a dilemma in research since the colonial era (Spencer, 2011). Prior to the Civil Rights era, and even until the 1990 Census, mixed race individuals were presumed to be part of the minority group they phenotypically resembled (Zack, 1995). The codification of hypodescent led to anyone of African ancestry being considered black and having a subordinate status in the United States (U.S.) social and political system. The 1990 U.S. Census allowed individuals to mark more than one racial category for the first time, resulting in what many researchers have called the "multiracial baby boom" (Root, 1996). This 'baby boom' continued to grow at a rate of 6.9% between 1990 and 2000 (ESRI, 2005). In the years following the 'baby boom's' initiation, research on mixed race people increased in academic circles. This research included developing frameworks of multiracial identity and studies examining the psychological well-being of mixed race peoples.

Since that time, little research was done regarding the school experiences of these children. Studies conducted in the late 1990's and early 2000's continued to draw on earlier schemas of student categorization, both institutional and self-oriented, and the psychological wellbeing of these students. Most studies were focused on college level students, based on the Eriksonian framework of how and when people have adopted a stable adult identity. Other school-based studies looked at how schools and parents

differed in their categorization of students. The few studies that looked at multiracial student experience used predominately anecdotal evidence and focused on what and how to teach these 'special' students (Wardle & Cruz Jansen, 2003). To date, there has been no work done on the multiracial student experience itself. This dissertation begins to address this gap. It focuses on the high school experiences of a group of teens in a Midwestern urban high school setting.

> The 2008 election of President Barak Obama brought America's conception of race to the forefront but also opened up the discussion of perceptions of race and class with regard to people of multiracial, multiethnic and multicultural origins. During the last twenty years these groups have been claiming space both politically and in the formation of their own identity politics. Little has been written about how the racial dichotomization within public institutions, such as schools, has impacted identity formation, self-conceptions and academic experiences. Schools have continued to reinforce the black/white and white/other racial dichotomy inherent in the U.S. socio-political system (Fuligni, 2007). Multiracial teen students have been examined and understood as minority students within the educational system. Identity research on multiracial individuals reveals that these students are not a single homogeneous group under the guise of mono-racial blackness as has been previously thought (Rockquemore, 2005).

This dissertation set out to explore how students develop identity in an urban high school context. Formulating an understanding of identity development of multiracial[1] individuals was a key piece in understanding the youth studied in this dissertation. Recent research done on biracial and multiracial identity indicated that much of the research available on multiracial individuals was either of young children or adults who have formed an adult identity. There remained little literature available on biracial and

[1] A lot of research on mixed race people is focused on people with one minority parent and one white parent, thus focusing on biracial individuals rather than multiracial people.

multiracial youth who are in the process of forming adult identities. As the project progressed it explored how context and teacher interactions impact students in varied ways. It explored more explicitly the school experiences of multiracial students as they began to form their adult identities. As an examination of the high school context it contributes to a deeper exploration of how teacher attitudes and student peer experiences affect student maturation, academic aspirations and success. It provided a new lens to explore student interactions by proposing the concepts of appeasement and objection in students' reactions to others expectations.

Categories of Self

Biracial/multicultural individuals categorize themselves differently from mono-racial peoples (Rockquemore, 2002). Because their self-perceptions and general societal perceptions of them are at odds with each other, they may navigate through high school feeling a great deal of pressure to conform to a mono-racial group and follow that social groups perceived norms (Phinney, 2004). This pressure affects the students in deep ways, often leading them to choose a prescribed racial identity or opt out of categorization all together (Rockquemore, 2002). Multiracial children are judged by the 'one drop rule' within the educational system.[2] Often the school system values their minority/multi-cultural heritages less, and at the same time precludes them from the discussion of their multicultural heritages (Kozol, 2005). This external split may make it

[2] The one drop rule or hypodescent is the belief that if a person has even one drop of black-blood or heritage they are considered black. School forms often only allow students to check one box for racial identification. Mixed race students often are seen both on forms and through phenotypical markers are seen as monoracial.

difficult for the mixed race students to form an identity that brings together all aspects of who these students are (Khanna & Johnson, 2010).

They are neither black, native, Asian, white nor somewhere in between (Daniel, 2002), yet they are categorized as minorities[3] and expected to conform to that racial or ethnic stereotype (Chiong, 1998). "Schools often ignore the special concerns of – even the existence of – multiracial and multiethnic students" (Wardle, 2000, p. 42). They confuse educators, administrators and other students when they do not conform to these cultural expectations (Brunsma, 2005). As invisible students, they do not receive validation and rarely if ever see themselves represented in the school curriculum (Chiong, 1998; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Wardle, 2000). Yet as teens, when identity formation is the hardest and arguably the most important, they get little support in the academic arena to develop the positive identity necessary for successful adult lives (Root, 1996; Wardle, 2004). This dissertation examines the role schools and school cultures play multiracial/ multicultural adolescent identity formation. The purpose of this research is to provide greater insight into the particular experiences and perceptions of these students for teachers, school counselors and administrators.

Historical Understanding of Mixed Race Individuals

Since the 1960s the number of biracial children or multiracial children in the United States increased by almost 500% (Root, 1996). This includes all mixes of 'racial'

[3] I use mix race and multiracial as broad terms, because I want to move the focus from mixed black and white to the broader mixed race community, as some of the experiences mixed race students have are common among all groups while others are not. I use minority also in the broadest sense to cover all racial and ethnic groups.

combinations: black/white,[4] black/Asian, Asian/white, Latino/white, and Latino/Asian. Until the mid-1990's, these children were grouped by their dominant racial characteristics. That means that black/white, or black/anything, were considered black, both in terms of the census and in terms of the general view of race in American society (Zack, 1995). Since the inception of slavery in the U.S., the one drop rule for black children, mixed or not, has held sway (Brunsma, 2005; Rockquemore, 2002; Root, 1996). Placing biracial children in this category until the 1990's was not uncommon. However, as interracial marriages and relationships became increasingly more frequent in the last three decades, the parents of multiracial children sought to find new and better definitions of who their children were and are (Chiong, 1998; K. Rockquemore, 2002).

These children develop distinctly different identities than children of monoracial heritage (Phinney, 2004; Wardle, 2000a). Living in a home where both races are present affects how these children see themselves. Even in homes where only one parent is present, multiracial children raised in racially tolerant environments develop a deeper understanding of their duality (Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). In many ways these children become bicultural or even multicultural in their dealings with the world. Many have reported having multiple 'identities' used for appropriate occasions, acting white in situations where that is expected or less threatening and

[4] I have deliberately chosen not to capitalize the racial categorizations here because I see these designators as descriptions; hence, they are adjectives and not nouns that name the individuals discussed.

acting black where the expectation of them is that they act black (Root, 1996, Rockquemore, 2002).

Despite their difference, the multiracial children are often understood in educational contexts through the same racial, social and cultural lenses used to examine mono-racial minority children (Wardle, 2000b). As a result, these multicultural/multiracial children experienced the same or similar stigma, exclusion and problems frequently cited as issues for black minority students (Kozol, 2005). These educational issues for young black students range from delinquency to severe under-performance, tracking, higher levels of out of school suspension and lowered academic expectations (Anyon, 2006; Ayers, 2006). In the Midwest, African-American students have one of the lowest high school graduation rates and the highest rates of school expulsions and out of school suspensions (State of Midwest, 2008; Midwest Department of Education, 2011). To further complicate matters, African-American males are the most highly stigmatized and stereotyped group in America (Noguera, 2005; Kozol, 1992; Swanson, 1979). Multiracial teens, an invisible minority,[5] are often stigmatized in the same ways, but also incur stereotyping or exclusion from members of their minority group for not conforming to the minority culture (Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007).

Racial Mixing and History

Biracial and multiracial individuals are nothing new. There are historical records of multiracial communities across the nation, from the Creole people in Louisiana to Metis

[5] They are considered an invisible minority since they are seen as monoracial in social and school contexts.

groups in the Carolinas (Zack, 1995). Historically, these groups were absorbed in to the larger slave community, separated from darker skinned blacks or set themselves deliberately apart (Daniel, 2002). While biracial and multiracial children continued to be born in the U.S., they were not considered different from the larger African American community in the country. Part of the reason biracial/multiracial individuals did not garner or seek any separate attention is the persistent dichotomization of race in the U.S. (Mills, 1998). Other ethnic groups which reached these shores were able to shed their “negative” identity and assimilate into the predominately white Anglo community. African descended peoples could never shed the color of their skins to be fully assimilated in the U.S. mainstream culture (Ignatiev, 1995). Blackness, here in the U.S., is conferred not simply by color but by “physical features and continent of ancestry” (Hacker, 1992, p. 67).

It was not until after the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's that mixed race families began to claim place for themselves in U.S. society. It would take a full 30 years before a clear and distinct multiracial identity definition was attempted. The earliest researchers discussing “non monoracial” people assumed that a biracial or multiracial person was mentally imbalanced and continuously at war with his or her self (Park, 1928). As the multicultural, multiethnic and multiracial population continues to grow, a clearer understanding of how children develop and maintain stable multifaceted identities is needed, as this has implications for their education and participation in the global economy.

Early in colonial U.S. history, most states passed miscegenation laws prohibiting interracial marriages, especially between black slaves and free or indentured white women (Spencer, 2011). Prior to the passage of these laws, intermarriage between ethnic groups and racial groups was not uncommon (Daniel, 2002). When they did occur, these couples lived on the margins of society. Until the U.S. Supreme Court ruled miscegenation laws illegal and they were repealed across the country in 1967 under Loving vs. Virginia, interracial couples were ostracized from white society and often had difficult lives in black communities (Daniel, 2002). Such exclusion most likely contributed to the belief that children of these unions were unbalanced (Daniel, 2002; Wardle, 2004).

As multiracial children of the Civil Rights era moved into the academic arena in the 1990's, there was a growth of research on biracial and multiracial identity. Prior to the 1990's, biracial/ multiracial individuals studied were selected from psycho-therapy populations. The finding of the early research on identity problems correlated with Park's (1928) discussion of the “marginal man.” Marginal individuals were believed to be perpetually confused and could never form a stable adult identity. These models of identity have been roundly challenged by more recent researchers on the premise that biracial/ multiracial individuals were being compared to monoracial identification, which has different characteristics than those found in multicultural and multiracial people (Brunsma, 2005).

Definition of Modern Multiracial Identity

Much of the fervor over a singular classification for multiracial individuals came around the 1990 Census in a push to change Census racial categories so multiracial individuals could claim more than one ethnic and racial category (Root, 1992). The foundation of the research into identity lies with Erikson's categories of human social development, which requires a “mastery” of each of the stage before proceeding to the next stage (Erikson & Erikson, 1963). An individual who does not master the stages is subject to an unbalanced adult identity. Multiracial researchers hold that Erikson's development stages are too limiting and do not take into account such things as different ethnic and racial backgrounds of the individual. Later theories argue that a person can be at different stages throughout his life and, in fact, move back and forth upon a continuum of identity (Root, 1996).

More recently, Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) postulated that biracial identity has four distinct categories, while Daniels (2002) argues that there are only two categories. Ramirez postulates that there are three distinct identities from which mixed individuals choose. Each one of these identities is dependent on factors such as socialization within the different cultural groups; parenting; socialization in peer groups as well as pressure from outside of the individual's community. Daniel’s are based on not only on personal choice but on the environment and through a person’s social interactions. These identity categories are explored more explicitly in section 3 of chapter 2.

Formulating an understanding of identity development of multiracial[6] individuals is a key piece in understanding the youth studied in this dissertation. To begin understanding such a new and complex topic, chapter 2 discusses identity development theory and theorists. This review indicates that much of the research available on multiracial individuals is either of young children or adults who have formed an adult identity. There remains little literature available on biracial and multiracial youth who are in the process of forming adult identities. This dissertation is an attempt to examine this period in a multiracial student's life to see what tools students develop to move into full-fledged adulthood. Through critical ethnography, discussed in chapter 3, this dissertation explores the school life of ten adolescents. Biracial and multiracial literature on biracialism and multiracialism, there is discussion of includes discussions of ethnic and cultural identity, but the examination of these topics is often overshadowed by the dichotomization race and its concomitant complications racial issues exert on the research. The authors are aware and provide discussions on the two topics, but soon move back to the racial topic. This focus, while very important, limits seeing how multiracial and multicultural individuals explore their multicultural heritages and how they respond to their social environments.

Limited discussion is carried out on how these individuals function fluidly in their different cultural beliefs, practices and social millieux. The experiences that multiracial youth have affect them as much as any direct discussion of race does. While these youth

[6] A lot of research on mixed race people is focused on people with one minority parent and one white parent, thus focusing on biracial individuals rather than multiracial people.

may not be conversant in multiple languages[7], they may have an understanding of white power and privilege that is denied to most African Americans. While the students themselves may not be aware of their access to the "white ivory tower," they may inadvertently or consciously use this knowledge, often to the surprise and dismay of people who see these students as black. These students are conversant in African American and/or other cultural frameworks to which they belong and blend in as well. Section 1 of chapter 2 discusses both of the cultural frames alluded to above, placing it in a historical context, while chapters 5 and 6 explore this in relation to the student participants.

Discussing only multiracial identity theory would leave a gap in this research as there are other forces at work in U.S. society that impact the identity formation of any minority student. Thus section 2 of chapter 2 also addresses the structures of racism and power with in U.S. society in general and in a school context specifically. Recent research on school culture has begun to open up the discussion of culture, race and power that affect student maturation, academic success and social participation in school; these concepts are explored in the student participant context in chapters 6 and 7 (Giroux, 2012).

Schooling in Central City

This dissertation explores the ways in which school context affects identity choices and students' projection of self both with their peers and in the academic setting. It

[7] The students may switch fluidly between African American (Black) Vernacular English and "Standard American" English.

examines how categorization and expectations through interactions with peers and faculty affect how students reflect their multiracial identities. To do this, the structure of U.S. educational institutions and their curriculum, culture and social structures are discussed. The racialization of education and how schools, administrators, teachers and students use their cultural capital within the schools are examined using critical race theory and critical pedagogy theory.

The educational system in the U.S. is a vast system that works both on a federal level and on a state level. Navigating this system can be difficult, even for educated individuals let alone for individuals with limited time and limited education. In the past few years, school choice has been a hot topic. The Midwestern city, where the research was conducted, is considered to have one of the best state public education systems in the nation. Central City school district where the data was collected participates in open enrollment and many children attend the school from outside of the bussing area.

The average Central City high school houses well over 1000 students. In the past ten years, the urban population of Central City has changed from being predominately white to a mixture of white, black (both black American and Africans, especially from East Africa), Asian (predominately Lao, Cambodian, Hmong and Vietnamese), and Native American (Midwest Department of Education, 2011). As “white flight” has continued in the cities, the populations being served in the urban schools are increasingly minority students, English Language Learners and the urban poor. Certain schools and areas still have a largely white population, but of the 12-13 traditional four year high schools, the

population of black students has become for many of these schools the larger proportion of school attendees (Midwest Department of Education, 2011). In a report from 2006, the average graduation rate for minorities in Central City is under 50%, a worryingly low number (Horvat & O'Connor, 2006).

For students of color, school can be difficult place where they rarely find themselves represented in the curriculum (Delpit, 2006). If minorities are represented, it is often superficial ways or they encounter the same curriculum content, resulting in these students mentally "checking out" long before they graduate (Anyon, 2005; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2007). Many schools in Central City and the inner ring suburbs have attempted, with varying success, to develop a more multicultural and multiethnic curriculum and school environment. However, with shrinking state and federal education budgets, especially in the wake of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the services schools can provide and the "changes" that can be made to teaching curriculum are limited and often only skin deep (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2007). With the federally mandated NCLB, urban and under-preforming schools are penalized for their failures (Anyon, 2005; Horvat & O'Connor, 2006). These large schools have become holding areas for teens before they are pushed either on to an unforgiving job market or into college. "[I]n most American cities 50 percent of students will drop out before graduation, that in many schools concerns about safety and discipline take precedence over efforts to ensure student learning, and that alienation and disengagement among students is so common..." (Noguera, 2008, p. 139). Despite the rhetoric of NCLB that it

serves all students, inner city schools continue to have difficulty meeting the needs of their students to a greater degree, since 40% - 50% of students are not graduating from the Central City schools (Orfield, 2011).

Racism Entrenched in Schools

Parents of minority students still confront racism in various forms in U.S. public schools (Delpit, 2006; Noguera, 2007). The fact that racism is no longer an overt issue does not mean that racism is no longer an issue in Central City schools. As minority populations increased in the state, school districts were challenged to diversify the school curriculum. In many cases, such diversification was often restricted to superficial international days, including readings of minority authors such as Fredrick Douglass and Sherman Alexie. General overhauls of social studies and language arts curricula were limited and minority students do not often see their cultures and histories reflected in their school curriculum. Currently in the Midwest, the majority of school teachers are white and women (Pioneer Press, 2011). However, well-meaning whites who teach in inner city schools might be the cultural, social and economic gaps between the teachers and the students often leads to misunderstanding, racism and stereotyping of the students, when their behavior does not conform to mainstream cultural expectations (Delpit, 2006).

Minority students finding themselves under-represented in their curriculum, being held to "expectations" that seem innocuous enough, often shut down and opt out even when they are present in the classroom and school halls (Horvat & O'Connor, 2006). The

students are expected to conform to middle class social expectations and norms. What is more difficult to illuminate is that these norms and expectations refer to white middle class ideology. This ideology of normalcy includes modes of speaking, language use, modes of dress, music, arts, literature, and even physical stance, notions of space, expressions of emotions, and decibel level. For non-white students, the pressure to conform is constant, from looks from fellow students, to banning certain styles of dress. Failing to see themselves, students develop resistant stances to learning and to the culture of school.

Part of this resistance was examined through Ogbu's and Fordham's (1986) concept of oppositional behavior. Dressing thug: sagging pants, wearing hoodies, listening to rap and hip-hop, speaking African American Vernacular English (AAVE), can all be viewed as symbols of resistance and indicators of belonging to black American cultural frames. The way a student laces his kicks (sneakers) or the color of his laces are all subtle symbols of group membership. Some of these symbols have been banned from schools: long black coats, hoodies, baseball caps or handkerchiefs, which are related to negative group stereotypes. In spite of this students find other ways to express both their individuality and group membership. A 'Pac, Biggie, Li'l Wayne or Neo t-shirt marks a student as a fan of a certain rap style, East Coast versus West Coast. The students' interactions with teachers and authority figures, the respect the student shows or the subtle shrug of her shoulders when asked for an explanation are means of showing conformity or resistance to school expectations. Not snitching or covering up for one student are all ways that

students create boundaries and keep solidarity with each other and separate themselves from the dominant school culture. By placing students into remedial classes or labeling them as behavioral issues schools mark non-conforming students as outsiders. Some of this pressure to conform or fit in is overt, but the majority of it is hidden away in looks, feelings, quiet asides. The multiracial students experiences with this are explored in chapter 5, 6 & 7(Tatum, 1998; Ayers, 2008).

While these types of problems may affect a majority of minority students, this is a double problem for students of multiracial heritage. These are individuals are not included in the curriculum, are seen as minority students, and thus often get treated in a similar fashion to minority students (Moore, 2006). This can be perplexing to students who have lived in homes and communities that are accepting of them. In the literature on minority academic success, minority access and school completion, multiracial black and white students are briefly mentioned. Tatum (1993) addresses them as a special sub-group in schools that tend to congregate together, based on their similar experiences, which differ significantly from monoracial white or black students. This is not to say that these students behave in an exclusionary manner, but researchers such as Rockquemore and Brunsma (1996) found that multiracial students are often placed under a great deal of pressure to select a monoracial identity, both by peers and authority figures in schools, so multiracial students associate with each other to avoid such pressure.

Furthermore, when students in a mainstream Central City high school were asked about their lack of representation in the curriculum or in the school faculty, many of the students had not really entertained the idea that they should be represented (Moore, 2006). Many minority students are disengaged from the schools that they do not even question the gap in their schooling. They are able to identify racial incidences and can detect racism both in the curriculum and in teachers' attitudes but rarely is it voiced in terms of treating them as monoracial blacks (Dyson, 2006). As these multiracial students move into adulthood, they begin to question this dichotomy as exclusionary and can begin to voice their dissatisfaction with the situation. Students from multiracial families may seek to speak up in ways that monoracial minority students are less likely to do, considering their experience in homes where a white parent is present and students' tacit understanding of "white privilege".

Research Questions

This study set out to examine the following questions:

- To what extent does racism in schools impact multiracial identity conception and affect ethnicity and racial choice in teens?
- To what extent do multiracial children feel the „stigma" associated with their mixed identity affects school relationships, with peers and teachers?
- In what ways do biracial and multiracial teens develop identity in the mono-racial context of U.S. schools?
- And finally how do students develop advocacy for themselves in the school context?

Methodology

This dissertation was an ethnographic study of a group of ten biracial teens, four teachers and two administrators, who were chosen through purposive sampling during the school year 2010-2011. The initially identified group was from all academic years in the school; six of the students have now graduated.

While this was an ethnographic case study it included components which sprang from my own experiences as the parent of a multiracial and multicultural son. This, of course, raises the question of the author's objectivity, but by using ethnographic methods -- such as in-depth interviews, participant observations, group interviews, student writing and music, observation at school events and field notes as well as self-reflective journaling --and analysis, the dissertation as a whole offers a more complete picture of these students' experiences during the academic year. Some of the students developed and maintained supportive friendships during the course of the data collection. After the data collection phase, my analysis of the data began first through transcription of the interviews and observations.

During the initial transcription, I identified four meta-themes that resonated with the stated research questions, such as how students define themselves. The analysis looks for tensions between self-definition and perceptions of how others, teachers and school defined the students. With the themes developed from the first interviews, I coded the remaining data in order to make inferences on how students categorized themselves and how they dealt with the racial environments they encountered in schools. These

themes and inferences allowed me to then examine how these categories in turn inform the greater cultural context and how perhaps these “set in stone” racial categories can be revisited or reinterpreted in order to better serve multiracial students in U.S. schools. The methodology, analysis and general demographic student data are further discussed in chapter 3.

Author Subjectivity.

Integral to this research project are my personal experiences. On one hand, I come to this research as an insider, a single white mother; I have raised a biracial, multicultural son. On the other hand I am multicultural, Icelandic and Irish American and multilingual, I will always remain a relative outsider in U.S. culture. The depth and variety of racial issues and racism are a new academic area for me. I always knew racism had existed historically and that in many places continued overtly; however, through my son's experiences, I have learned how it continues to exist more subtly within institutions as well. Thus, because of my own life experience this study is affected by how I understand, interpret and learn about racism and its effect on teens such as my son. Since the research is partly auto-ethnographic in nature, my subjectivity is discussed and explored throughout the dissertation.

Data Discussion

This dissertation investigates how ten multiracial students express their mixed race identities and become advocates for themselves in the face of the racialized experiences that occur in their lives. Their success as self-advocates affects their academic and social

experience in school. However, because of the cultural power that schools, administrators and teachers hold, these students endure stressful situations as they are singled out by staff for increased negative attention. The result is what Tatum (1996) so vividly described in *Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria*, multiracial students form groups that are cohesive protective bubbles that help them keep their identities strong and validated.

Chapter four begins the discussion of the data by introducing the student participants, including general demographic data about school choice, family life and student self-identification. The chapter also examines self-expression of identity. This is followed by chapter five's examination of the overt racial experiences and includes a look at how students interact and connect with each other, as well as their experiences with the curriculum. Chapter six continues the examination of the school situation by examining less overt racial incidences and introduces micro-aggressions as a frame to understand these more subtle experiences the students encounter. This section then moves further to look at student and teacher interactions, student misbehavior and punishment at Midwest High School. The final data chapter explores how students use their social knowledge to maintain and define their identity boundaries. The concepts of *appeasement* and *objection* are introduced to explore how students conform to social expectations. The section takes an in-depth look at how students conform and resist both the categories that schools place them in and what affect this resistance has on their experience, expectations and academic achievement.

Conclusions and Further Research

Chapter 8 reviews the identity choices and experiences of students at MWHS. Through an exploration of the social and curricular environments in Midwest High School, the impact on student identity development and academic experiences was discussed and analyzed. As these students develop as adults they struggle to define their identity boundaries while explaining to others who they are. An undercurrent of racism exists in an environment that aims to be inclusive of all students. The student participants coped with subtle incidents of discrimination in the school. Their reactions to this discrimination were often internalized as a need for them to change or cloak, who they were. The final chapter posits further directions for research on multiracial school experiences. It takes note of data that was too tentative to be deeply explored in the data sections and concludes with some suggestions on how to improve multiracial and minority student experiences in the school. This dissertation opens the discussion on school experiences for multiracial adolescents to help parents, teachers, administrators and other researchers begin to develop awareness and academic tools to support them during their maturation. To begin understanding such a new and complex topic, chapter 2 discusses identity development theory and theorists. It then moves on to discuss the recent research done on biracial and multiracial identity in adults as there remains little literature available on biracial and multiracial youth who are in the process of forming adult identities. The next chapter begins the discussion of the literature that informed the development of this research.

Chapter 2
"My grandmother told me:"
Race, History, School and Multiracial Identity Theory

This chapter examines the historical perception of race and how the racial dichotomy established during the era of Atlantic slave trade continues to affect students in educational contexts. The foundation of racial inequity framed by the slave trade and the early racial theorists has had a profound effect on whiteness and blackness and ultimately on how the intermixing of various races is viewed on the socio-political and educational fronts.

This chapter starts by examining the racial dichotomy in which blackness and whiteness are defined in opposition to each other in such a way as to maintain white hegemonic control over populations that were, and still are, seen as pathological, less intelligent and less capable (hooks, 2001; Young, 2004). It must be clarified here that few people in the United States can claim a mono-racial or mono-ethnic past, as intermixing, both voluntary and forced, are a large part of the legacy of U.S. history (Brown, Carnoy, Currie, Duster, & Oppenheimer, 2003). Whiteness is constructed in such a way as to be the norm by which all other experiences and cultures are judged, evaluated and understood (Roediger, 2002a). The fallacies of this argument are presented with a historical and socio-cultural discussion of blackness and black identity theory (Mills, 1998).

The section on multiracial individuals focuses on their identity conception through U.S. history. It then shifts to examine categorization of identity with a focus on recent research on identity categories for biracial individuals (Zack, 1993). This section is an exploration of biracial and multiracial identity development and historical context through the lens of critical race theory. To this end, and perhaps because of the "othering"[8] that occurs in definitions of whiteness, blackness and the continued pathologization of black identity as outside of the norm by many scholars is discussed (Zack, 1993). This is followed by an examination of urban schooling and the institutionalization of racial dichotomization that continues to exist within schools in the U.S. (Trueba, 1988; Young, 2004). The focus here is on both representation in curriculum, academic achievement and expectation, and racial categorization and socialization within cultural, social and racial groups (Phinney, 2007). As the chapter turns to examine biracial/multiracial identity, it is perhaps not surprising that the pathology that characterized early black identity theory carried over into biracial identity understanding and classification (Daniel, 2002; Tizard, 1993). Recent research on biracial identity offers different theories of categorization into which an individual can be placed, which to a certain degree feeds into the need to have clear cut categorization of an individual's racial identity (Brunsma, 2006).

The final section examines the concept of identity development in adolescence. This discussion concludes with a discussion of the available literature on multiracial

[8]Othering: the perception or representation of a person or group of people as fundamentally alien from another, frequently more powerful, group (Oxford English Dictionary, 2010)

adolescent school experiences. Due to the limited research little is known about how these youth forge their identity as they negotiate school life. The concern of this dissertation is not to 'categorize' the students by racial designation, rather it examines student experiences; the obstacles the students face and how they negotiate past them, given the racial dichotomy inherent in the social and educational system. This involves examining student perspective, how these teens understand the obstacles they face and create support networks and achieve their personal and academic goals. The chapter then closes with a presentation of the research questions.

In White and Black: Race and Dichotomy in U.S. Social Systems

The mixing of race, ethnic and cultural backgrounds are a significant part of our history, as human populations migrated from one place to another (Barth, 1964). As national boundaries formed, linguistic groups helped to develop national identities and the notion of ethnic, cultural and racial superiority began to take on a more formalized and political shape in Europe. The “discovery” of Africa and the Americas, through economic expansion, brought with it a new process of separating those who were significantly different from Europeans, both by cultural and societal attainment and by the color of people's skin (West, 2001; Roediger, 2002). European colonial expansion not only extended white economic and political control over the globe at the time but also reached new heights in social control. While elite (aristocratic and royal) ethnic intermarriages and their offspring were included acceptable, individuals who married out of their cultural and ethnic group had difficult time adjusting and were often viewed

with suspicion in the 17th century and later (Daniel, 2002). This suspicion of the "other" is an age old story, as is the enslavement of peoples who are different. However, the Atlantic slave trade introduced perpetual enslavement (Spickard, 2005).

As the trans-Atlantic slave trade took root and mixed race unions in the New World increased, the government sought ways to maintain the separation between "whites"[9] and others established by establishing rules, mythologies and laws regarding racial mixing (Korgen, 1999; Daniel, 2002). This was done both as a means to maintain the perceived European racial purity as well as to retain slavery as a basis for economic operation with in the new colonies. In 1664, Maryland made slavery a perpetual state which included all offspring of interracial unions (Daniel, 2002). Other states soon followed, passing anti-miscegenation[10] laws, as well as establishing and enforcing the hypodescent rule,[11] which still provides the basis for our understanding of race in the United States (Korgen, 1999). Thus, people of mixed racial origins in the U.S. were vetted as a permanent underclass of slaves no matter how much white European blood ran through their veins[12] (Zack, 1990).

Shades of grey: Mixed race in U.S. history. Historically, mixed ethnic and mixed race individuals have been classified by what can best be termed the 'lowest common denominator' in the racial mix, be it black, Native American, Asian, etc. (Daniel, 2002,

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[9]White – here refers to anyone of European English, Dutch, or German descent. The Irish and others are excluded from this original conception of whiteness.

[10]Miscegenation is the practice of intermarriage with someone from a different race.

[11]Hypodescent rule: is the notion that an individual with even one traceable ancestor who is black is considered black, regardless of how far back that ancestor is in the family genealogy

[12] According to Spenser, children born to white women were considered white, and children born to black women were considered black and slaves.

1996; Root, 1990). It was assumed that the minority racial group was the one with which the mixed race individual identified most closely (Brunsma, 2000). This form of categorization paid, and its current forms pay, little attention to the cultural, ethnic or racial environment the person experiences. In early colonial times, mixing of religious backgrounds or national ethnic groups was limited (Daniel, 2002). However, there is a history of mixed black and white individuals from the beginning of the U.S. colonies. As a result, there are enclaves in the U.S. that are made up of Métis communities, such as the Melungeon in Appalachia, or the mulatto and octroon mistresses of wealthy landowners in New Orleans of the 18th and 19th century. In 17th century Virginia, free or slave status was based on the mother's social status (Root, 1992). Hence, mixed race children born to black female slaves were slaves, while mixed race children born to a white European woman were free and became some of the first free blacks in the U.S. (Daniel, 2002). Because of the rigidity of hypodescent, mixed race people were considered property or of lower status than the white colonialists and were often marginalized even within minority communities (Thornton, 1996; Daniel, 2002).

Fixing categories: The development of modern racial categorization. Nowhere else was there quite the same rigidity in racial categorization as arose in the U.S. during the colonial era. In the New World, each ethnic enclave of Europeans dealt with forced labor and hypodescent differently. As other excluded groups, such Irish and Italians, became assimilated enough in the U.S. to claim whiteness, the separation between racial groups grew as the newly assimilated began to espouse the White Anglo Saxon Protestant

(WASP) beliefs in white superiority (Ignatiev, 1995). People of clear minority heritage continued to be excluded. Until the emancipation proclamation in 1851, anyone with even a drop of African blood was considered property and continued to be seen as morally and culturally inferior to those who espoused whiteness (Rodeiger, 2008). The goal here is to create a picture of how whiteness is contrasted with blackness in order to make white identity, and belonging to the majority group, more appealing. Creating the perception that whiteness was the primary way of being in U.S. culture. However, the premise of this review is to question the veracity of this perception and to look at race and culture through the lens of multiplicity rather than the dichotomy in which it is often seen.

Because of the prevalence of one drop rule[13] and deep-seated fear of racial impurity, there is no direct means to trace the history of multiracial individuals in the U.S. (Spenser, 2010). There were no efforts to record historical or geographical origins of slaves during the slave trading era. Given the continued, both voluntary and forced, mixing between whites and minority groups, one can assume that a significant portion of Americans are of mixed ethnic, cultural and racial origins. This, however, causes a problem for the one-drop rule and keeping track of individual mixes, and also does not allow for a broader notion of multiracial and multiethnic heritage, be it minority or not. For people of African origins, the forced migration and the lack of contact with the African continent meant that residual cultural heritage is more difficult to clearly

[13]The one drop rule is akin to the notion of hypodescent and tracing of minority blood quantum within the individual's genealogy.

identify and specific ethnic cultural heritages are all but erased (Ogbu, 1987). As a result of this assimilation within white culture and annihilation of African culture, the two groups, white and black, are assumed to be distinct, mutually exclusive and ultimately incompatible culture groups (Gould, 1981). This long standing divide between black and white has impacted how biracial and multiracial identity has been conceived of and written about. To more clearly understand the categorization of multicultural /multiracial people, the next section explores how we came to develop the idea of mono-raciality.

Finding the corner pieces: Mono-racial identity development. Mono-racial and mono-ethnic identity stems from the notion of white superiority (Roediger, 2002). The concept arose as European nations began expanding and colonizing the rest of the world. With this economic and political expansion, Europeans began developing nationalist ideas, including especially those of superiority over other European nations as well as other geographical areas of the world they considered less developed and civilized (hookshooks, 2000). In the colonial U.S., as the nation developed its own identity vis-à-vis the British, those in power (white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP) fleeing religious persecution and seeking better economic opportunities) sought to define themselves in opposition to other groups, beginning with their quest for independence from the British Empire (Rodeiger, 2007).

As the colonies became more established, WASPs became the driving force that bound a new nation. This force sought to make a unified image of itself and its nascent

culture. To that end, one of the things that had to be done was to create a notion of racial and ethnic solidarity among “white” colonists. Initially, such groups as the Irish and Southern Europeans (Italians, Spanish and Portuguese) were excluded from citizenship and barred from politics and other public arenas, as many had come to the colonies as slaves or indentured servants (Daniel, 2004; Ignatiev, 1997; Roediger, 2002). In 17th century colonies, free blacks and poor whites found a common cause. They often lived in the same parts of town. Soon, it became clear to the ruling class that a bond of sorts was forming between poor immigrants, like the Irish, and free blacks to the detriment of the ruling class; thus, WASPs felt they needed to separate the groups. They began by banning interethnic and interracial unions (Daniel, 2002; Spenser, 2010). By uniting poor whites through fear of ethnic degradation through marriage to or by consorting with blacks, the elites established and perpetuated racial purity notions, thereby giving birth to the strict racial dichotomy extant in the U.S. until today, “forever” separating white mono-racial identity from black mono-racial slave identity (hooks, 2000; Touré, 2010).

Little pieces make bigger pictures: Is race biological or socio-political. Mono-racial identity is based on the notion that race itself is a biological concept, and many Colonial and European thinkers argued for this iron clad method of creating a permanent underclass as the slave trade across the Atlantic grew and colonization of the New World with its dependence in slave labor continued apace (Gould, 1996). In most of the South American colonies, the racial lines were blurred and, in most cases, ethnic mixing

was encouraged (Debe, 2009). The Spanish and Portuguese married and lived with natives and transported Africans. What happened in the U.S. was quite a different story. A clear separation between whites and blacks in early U.S. history served to align WASP interests with “lesser” white groups. The bond became so deeply entrenched that for centuries researchers continued to attempt to prove the distinction between the races, a problem academics and educators still confront (Noguera, 2007).

Early researchers believed the human species could be divided in to five separate races: Caucasoid, Negroid, American, CaucAsian, and Mongoloid (Oxford English Dictionary, 2009). Attempts to prove the inferiority of non-CaucAsian groups ranged from skull size measurements to looking at and testing academic skills, care-taking skills and evaluating levels of social, scientific and cultural advancement. These attempts to minimize other ethnic groups were later debunked as fraudulent research in the case of the skull size or as being culturally biased and based on the white notions of social and cultural advancement (Gould, 1996).

Many early researchers saw minorities, both blacks and other groups as unintelligent and unteachable, which was supported by research on academic success for minority students. The academic skills argument continues to linger with academic research circles and is distinctly tied to the continued understanding of the pathologized conception of black identity (Young, 2004; hooks, 2000; Macleod, 2004). The lack of understanding of or refusal to accept race as a socio-political concept results in a continued failure to see African American poverty, their seeming inability to /refusal to

assimilate as something solely within the control of the individual black person, rather than something that has historical, social and cultural origins (Anyon, 2004; hooks 1999; Young, 2004).

In reality there is no such thing as a mono-racial or mono-ethnic person. Human migration, political and military occupation, and the shifting of national boundaries mean that we have for hundreds of thousands of years mixed ethnic groups and cultures (Barth, 1991; Spickard, 1990). Furthermore, as has been proven through scientific research, race is not a biological fact, but rather a socio-political notion or concept that still carries enormous weight in U.S. society, as is evidenced in such publications as Herrnstein's (1994) *The Bell Curve*, where the author tackles racial differences in intelligence by skull measurements, in order to support his argument about the variations in intelligence (Gould republished his *The Mismeasure of Man* in 1996 as a refutation of Herrnstein's blatantly racist book). This separation of white from black has its origins in our conception of whiteness as a norm and as an unquestioned standard by which all others are measured.

Whiteness: Conception, History and Meaning

White[14] as a color seems so innocuous when thought about it in U.S. culture, at least to European Americans. Look around, it is everywhere -- on billboards, in television commercials, in school textbooks. Rarely do whites question this notion of white and whiteness that is everywhere. Why should they, it has always been this way after all.

[14] White refers to people of European origin and includes Italian and Irish American. I myself am Icelandic and Irish American, and for many years was unaware of my dominant status as a white women in the U.S..

White people founded this country; they wrote the rules and laws. They have trusted whiteness to take care of them and it does. Whites are not questioned when they walk into a department store. They look like most of the people in the better schools or the people in history texts (Loewen, 1995). Author Peggy McIntosh (1993) perhaps said it best in her piece: “Unpacking the invisible knapsack” when she wrote: “I will feel welcomed and "normal" in the usual walks of public life, institutional and social.” For a majority of European Americans, white is normal. And, through its perceived inherent normalcy, people are rarely required to question it. Yet what does whiteness say about the dominant culture in the U.S.? Its conception is defined in opposition to others, those who are not white, i.e. blacks, Latinos, Hispanics, Asians and the indigenous peoples of the Americas, those deemed to be “other,” which is much of the rest of the world.

White people are a minority in the world, although they still constitute a majority in U.S. society. Most whites, when asked, think European Americans only make up around 50% of the U.S. culture, while the reality is that they make up over 70% of the U.S. population (Roediger, 1991). This number, of course, then begs the question why should whites care; they are the majority. The purpose here is not to talk about who should and should not benefit from being a minority or a majority; but to talk about whiteness, its meanings and it history. By examining, the narrative of whiteness through a critical lens, its affects both those who are not white and those who are unaware of the privileges that whiteness confers can be seen.

White: the absence of color. Many whites in the U. S. never question what it means to be white. They believe that what they are is normal, unquestionable and “just simply how it is.” Non-whites and white critics alike, question whiteness’ place as the normal state of affairs. They see it as one more way to ignore the fact that white is as much a racial construct as black or Asian (Roediger, 2002). How is it that whiteness and its latent privileges are so hidden? Why is it not questioned? Peggy McIntosh's monograph "Unpacking the invisible knapsack" lists the myriad ways that whiteness is invisible. Whites in the United States have created a category for themselves that makes it difficult for other racial group to access. For many, whiteness is what Harris (1993) calls 'property,' just like a home or a car.

> I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks. (McIntosh, 1993, p. 2).

McIntosh’s knapsack is a cultural font of symbols, cues and meanings that others do not have access to and which whites try to keep as a closely guarded secret. Lipsitz (1998) called it 'wages of whiteness.' Dyer (1997) calls it white privilege. Whatever it is called, it has the effect to privilege whites over everyone else in areas such as housing, employment and education. “[W]hite power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular" (Dyer, 1997, p. 41). They use the amorphous category of whiteness to measure difference and construct an understanding of the difference

between this invisible whiteness and those who are different. "[T]he unmarked category against which difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations" (Lipsitz, 1998, p.18). Much of what whites do in their lives is not questioned or faced with suspicion. If a white dresses differently, talks differently or acts differently, they are not questioned or seen as faulty because of the color of their skin

As McIntosh notes: "I will feel welcomed and "normal" in the usual walks of public life, institutional and social." (p. 2) In schools, whites are presented with the history, literature, and cultural exploits of people who look like them. They know that when looking for housing that no matter where they go in this country, they will not be denied the housing due to their color nor will they be seen as lowering the property values if they move into a neighborhood. "If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live" (McIntosh, 1993, #3). Most middle class whites can obtain bank loans, find colleges where most students are white, and even walk into stores without being viewed with suspicion.

As McIntosh, Lipsitz and Dyer would argue, these are all things white European Americans fail to question, and have not earned, but rather have been bestowed by the history of racial relations and discrimination in this country. The current definition of the U.S. Census Bureau and, more recently, the U.S. Department of Education for whites is “anyone of European, Middle Eastern or North African decent” (Hussar & Bailey, 2006).

This definition, however, has not remained historically static. When the country was founded, the notion of white and whiteness had not yet arisen; it had to be created.

Black Identity: History and Context

If whiteness and white identity are formed by creating a dichotomy between whites and blacks, then it is equally important to examine minority status and blackness, and their historical constructions. As hooks (2000) notes in *Where we stand: Class matters,* during early colonial American history, some Africans[15] and other ethnic groups immigrated voluntarily, as well as coming involuntarily as slaves. "Racist biases shaped historical scholarship so that the information about African explorers who came to the Americas before Columbus was suppressed along with elementary knowledge of the black folks who came as explorers and immigrants…" (p. 89). These blacks often looked down on the enslaved Africans with pity. "This did not mean that free blacks did not at times 'lord' it over their enslaved counterparts" (hooks, 2000, p.90). As slavery became more entrenched, the free blacks tended to isolate themselves and seek distinction from those who were enslaved (Daniel, 2004). However, due to the precariousness of the free blacks' position, there was still a racial solidarity between them and the black slaves (hooks, 2000).

Because of racial mixing in early American history and the one drop rule, most mixed race blacks were considered black. Race was conferred by the racial status of the mother. Children born to white women were considered white, while babies born to

[15]Africans is used here to distinguish between those who initially came to the U.S. and their decedents who later emerged from slavery as negroes, blacks, coloreds and African Americans.

African woman slaves were considered black and slaves (Spenser, 2011). Communities such as the Creoles in Louisiana sought to occupy a space somewhere between the white elite and the black slaves and share croppers (Spenser, 2011). This separation was frequently encouraged by whites who conferred special privileges on light-skinned blacks and used them as a buffer between the whites and the 'less civilized' blacks. Often within plantation life, light skinned blacks (often mixed race) were chosen for household servants, although Spenser (2011) argues this is a fallacy and there was little division between field and house slaves. These privileges created a divide between lighter skinned and darker skinned blacks, which can still be seen African American communities today (Daniel, 2002). As blacks internalized the privileges achieved by light-skinned blacks, a black middle class was born, but this often did not impede racial solidarity. “More often than not racial solidarity forged a bond between black-skinned folks even if they did not share the same caste or class standing” (hooks, 2000, p.90).

The understanding of blackness is perhaps more subtle, because early academic work and thought on blacks in the U.S. has been fraught with the attempt to pathologize the black person in order to distinguish whites from their perceived others. Because most Africans in the colonies were brought here involuntarily, they were violently ripped from their home cultures and placed together regardless of ethnic affiliation. Many have argued that this forced migration stripped them of their respective cultures and left a void that was then filled by the colonial slave identity (Ogbu, 1989). But since a person generates culture and culture makes the person, it is difficult to assume that Africans

were completely stripped of their home cultures, but rather these cultures were integrated into a larger concept of blackness during slavery, as Africans began to devise a new culture to replace the ones from which they were forcibly taken (hooks, 2000; Daniel, 2002; Root 1996, Spickard, 2008). The numerous accounts of slave revolts, runaways, and reports of community that arose among slave groups demonstrate that despite the inhuman treatment at the hands of whites, black slaves developed and maintained community that was both different from and similar to their cultures of origin (hooks, 2000; Daniel,2002). Other cultural groups, such as the Native Americans and Asian immigrants, were also place on lower social rungs and treated as mentally and culturally deficient and, thus, exploitable (Takaki, 1993).

Since the means of maintaining white power and privilege was fear of the other, the way to keep blacks enslaved and other ethnic groups exploitable was to prove that they were less than human, since to be white was to be human (Ignatiev, 1999). This was done both 'scientifically,' through skull measurements, brain size comparisons, and through direct humiliation and dehumanization as well as through cultural depictions of blacks as stupid, slovenly, hyper-sexual, ape-like, duplicitous, sullen, uncooperative, unteachable, violent and even incapable of 'real' language production (Gould,1996). Another means to retain control over the slaves was through separating families by sales and trade among white slave owners. Due to the lack of control Africans had over not only their destiny but also over their own personal bodies, they adapted new ways of family and community, through what Ogbu (1989) termed “fictive kinship”.

This method of creating community in the absence of biological family ties is still prevalent today within many communities, since the development of bonds and creation of family support could not always be found in a husband/wife context (hooks, 2000). Through these "imagined," but very real bonds, life, child rearing and survival became a communal affair. The rule of hypodescent and the dehumanization of blacks led children of black women, who were born both through the violence of rape perpetuated by the landowners and other white men and through consensual relations, to be included in the black slave community (hooks, 2000). In the 1700-1900, mixed women were kept as mistresses of wealthy landowners, especially in the context of the Creoles in Louisiana (Daniel, 2002). These children, while treated marginally better were still slaves and had few rights. In the U.S. under slavery, most black and brown Africans had few or no rights, no perceived community, self-identity or ability to care for themselves (Spickard, 1991).[16]

Black resistance in history. During slavery, the largest population of enslaved Africans was in the South; those who held slaves were the ideologues who developed the first concepts of black identity. This pathological negative identity allowed blacks to be placed in lower status on the evolutionary ladder. Even free blacks living in the North were affected by the white categorizations of them and they often lived in black enclaves in cities, mostly in areas that had been abandoned by other ethnic groups such as the Irish, in Boston and New York, who had moved up the white social ladder

[16] Note this as a paraphrasing of what whites believed and some continue to believe based on the deficit model of cultural understanding; these are far from the views that I hold regarding minorities.

(Ignatiev, 1995). Yet, despite the mistreatment at the hands of whites, poor and rich alike, blacks, slaves and freemen continued to resist the subjugation and domination of white society. Runaway slaves were common occurrences which led to the development of the Underground Railroad, moving thousands of blacks from the South to the North in the 200 years before the Emancipation Proclamation was signed (Douglass, 1973).

By the 1800's when the tensions between the manufacturing North and the agrarian South began to mount, the emancipation movement was in full swing, and prominent blacks such as Fredrick Douglass, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth spoke out against the inhumanness of slavery. Aided by white allies within communities such as the Quakers of New England, Irish activist Daniel O'Connell and the revolutionary John Brown, blacks began to move closer to freedom, if not equality, within the United States (Loewen, 1996). With the nation's history of rebellion, it became harder and harder to keep slave revolts down and to continue the overt repression of blacks across the country (hooks, 2000; Thornton, 1991). When Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862, many saw it as a great victory, which it was since a country so proud of its ingenuity; creativity and strength had achieved its status and wealth on the backs of black slave labor. However, by ending slavery, a new class of poor was created, since former slaveholders were no longer responsible for, nor interested in, caring for their former black slaves (Loewen, 1986).

Resilience. In spite of the extended brutality and abuse of blacks at the hands of whites, African Americans maintained a strong resilience. The resilience of blacks and

their incredible ability to resist white domination as well as their adaptability helped them to develop a cultural frameworks and traditions unique to them. While retaining and melding various African and Caribbean cultural traditions, they also adapted white culture to suit them, through music, dance, and art (hooks, 2000). Many secretly learned and then taught others to read and write, which was an expressly forbidden right held by whites (Douglass, 1973). Many of the cultural adaptations developed by slaves and oppressed blacks have helped to create the American culture of today (Touré, 2011; hooks, 2000). However, whites have done little to recognize these achievements, preferring to keep notion of achievement and ingenuity in the domain of white privilege.

Once blacks obtained their freedom, they entered a class struggle that pitted them against poor whites (hooks, 2000). By 1850, the negative images of blacks were firmly entrenched in white understanding of black identity, which allowed racism to continue to grow and be openly practiced, as well as serving to keep class solidarity out of the discussion in the U.S. Blacks, in both the North and South, were vilified at the same time that aspects of their collective culture were appropriated by white society, as long as the borrowed aspect fit into the white norm, jazz is an example of this. At the same time, whites continued to claim that blacks had no culture of their own, thereby upholding whiteness and white privilege as the cultural yard stick (Rodeiger et al., 2007).

Yet, within black communities, schools were built, teachers trained and strong educational and social bonds were formed (Fugliani, 2006). Blacks created not only their

own schools, but institutes of higher learning, church organizations, businesses, music, and literature alongside white culture, and sometimes even overlapping white culture. Some of this culture was fiercely guarded, since they had historically been stripped of anything that they created, such as their 'native' ethnic African cultures. Rarely did blacks get credit for their resilience (hooks, 2000). The strides that were made beginning with the slave revolts and the Underground Railroad were hard won. Once slavery was abolished blacks struggled to find cultural and political space in a country that at best tolerated their existence and at worst wanted to have them return to Africa or simply disappear altogether (De Bois, 1993). Most blacks continued to live in poverty well into the twentieth century (hooks, 2000; Anyon, 2005). All the while, blacks celebrated various milestones in the desegregation battle, beginning with Plessy versus Ferguson in 1896 and culminating, currently, in the election of Barak Obama as president in November 2008.

Black identity in research. Writing and research of black identity has been forged in opposition to white hegemony and has distinct differences from white culture. Part of this history is the continued struggle for equal rights as well as the freedom to create a self that is free of the pathology that has characterized early thinking and research on black identity (Dyson, 2007; West, 2001). Much of this understanding stems from the early negative views of blackness. Early research on psychological and sociological understanding of racial identity focused on self-hatred that was brought on by a significant continued exposure to racism (Cross, 1978a; Cross, 1978b). Because forced

transportation and slavery had removed blacks from their African cultural contexts, it had taken away the peoples' cultural identity replacing it with a cultural stereotypes formed by the dominant white society (Ogbu, 1990).

As was mentioned above, historically blacks have been described as dirty, venial, unintelligent, bestial, low and more importantly unteachable (Gould, 2001; hooks 1992). These arguments held sway in identity theory until the argument was countered by the argument that Western-centered psychology denied that distinct and healthy black identity existed outside of the negative personal experiences blacks had with continued racism (Phinney, 2007). Many of the these theories were based on *deficit modeling*, thereby looking at 'perceived' problems in the black psyche and not the strength of the black personality and community that allowed them to survive slavery and persistent racism, while building community and cultural frames distinctly their own (Fuglini, 2007).

This negative interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict/deficiency was assumed to be uniquely tied to the black American experience as involuntary minorities (Ogbu, 1986). This model of identity for blacks gave rise to arguments of cultural deprivation, looking at poverty as a personal attribute rather than a social concern, i.e. you are poor because you want to be poor or are too stupid to know any better, which has been undergirded by the notion that anyone with the will can make it in America (hooks, 2000; Kozol, 2004). The identity models which focused on 'nigrescence' found that having an

assimilated[17] identity (conforming or over-identifying with white culture) was mentally unhealthy for blacks. Since the starting point for these models was a negative cultural identity model. At the same time, these models failed to take into account the cultural and historical experiences of black Americans (Daniel, 2002; Root, 1992).

Thus, behavior that black people exhibit that is threatening to or incompatible with white culture, is often seen as deficient. So, for example, when a black person looks away or fails to meet a white person's gaze, they are considered “shifty, devious or sly.” When examined historically, meeting someone's gaze meant that the individual had the same social and cultural status. This type of behavior during slavery and segregation resulted in punishment. Another example is the cultural convention of signifying. This is when in a group context, like church or a social meeting, members of the audience call out affirmations and responses, which is not acceptable in white cultural enclaves such as schools, churches or lecture halls (hook, 2000).

Involuntary minorities and oppositional black culture. Ogbu’s and Fordham’s (1987, 1990) school based ethnographic research examined what they calls involuntary minorities,[18] who have developed a culture of opposition. In their research, such students used oppositional behavior such as use of language (use of Ebonics), modes of dress (sagging pants as a show of strength and lack of fear), and music, as well as the lack of academic success. Ogbu and Fordham argued that the cultural discontinuity

[17]Assimilated personalities are those who have taken on the majority cultures values and context, and moved away from their minority one.

[18] Involuntary minorities: are African who were brought here during the colonial and slavery period as forced laborers and slaves.

between the white school and institutions and African Americans as a problem that African Americans needed to address, not as something that was inherent to the institution. In essence, his argument was that blacks had been stripped of their cultural and historical identity during slavery, and this identity had been replaced by a deviant negative identity which needs to be corrected and separated from the majority conception of blackness to a more black/ African centered personal and group identity. The underlying assumption is that all individuals develop an identity in the same manner, as well as the idea that black cultural life is deficient. Ogbu and Fordham's theory have been much contested for the negative and all-encompassing nature of their ethnographic research, which provided further research in the direction of deficit perspective. In 2007, Fordham rebutted some of the arguments, noting that their research was not intended to be generalizable to the larger African American population. A further problem is that these theories and models focus on individual identity and excluded school and other group identities, thereby ignoring values, attitudes, world-view, ideology, religious preference, racial preference, ethnicity and nationalism (Lewis & Landsman, 2006).

The color-line and wishful thinking. Since W.E De Bois declared the problem of the 20th century to be the colorline, the lives of African Americans has improved. The black middle class has continued to grow. More blacks are going to college than ever before. They are getting high paying and high profile jobs, outside of the entertainment industry. Even within the entertainment industry, they are making changes, creating

their own production companies (Disturbing the Peace and Def Jam), clothing lines (FUBU, Roca Wear), soft drinks and video games (Def Jam Icon). And, many are giving back to communities by creating foundations to support reading and educational improvements.

bell hooks (1992) notes, in *Black looks: Race and representation*, that despite the positive economic and educational gains black people have made, the representations of blackness in the mainstream have changed very little. "Opening a magazine or book, turning on the television set, watching a film, or looking at photographs in public spaces, we are most likely to see images of black people that reinforce and re-inscribe white supremacy" (p. 1). Part of the legacy of this subordination leads to both blacks and whites assimilating racial hatred and self-hatred, because whiteness makes blackness the perpetual other. She argues that the black upper class, who have been co-opted by the white capitalist hegemony, are helping to alienate the poorer blacks living in the inner cities. For example, such conservative black thinkers as Dickerson (2005) and McWhorter (2000) have argued that blacks are failing themselves; they simply need to get with the program (read: assimilate to white capitalist culture), quit playing the part of the victim and then all will be well.

This attitude aligns itself with early sociological understanding of black identity as deficient and needing to be rewritten (Gibbs, 1987; Noguera, 2004). But, this argument fails to recognize that "[w]hat needs to be brought home to students is that racism was not the aberrant ideology of a few Klansmen, but a structural and routine, a systemic set

of theories and legally sanctioned institutionalized practices deeply embedded in the American polity and endorsed at the highest levels in the land" (Mills, 1998, p. 126). Since white hegemonic power and capitalist culture have gained footholds in the black middle and upper class, there has been a great deal of push by blacks and whites alike to declare that race is no longer an issue and that equal opportunity provisions are no longer needed.

At the same time, the data points out that there are still proportionally more black people living below the poverty line than whites. They hold a smaller share of U.S. wealth. They make up disproportionately larger number of the U.S. prison inmate population. One third of the male prison population is black. Black men have significantly higher rates of under- and unemployment (Young, 2004; MacLeod, 2009). Current data for the Midwest unemployment rates in 2011 are at 5.7% overall, but, for African Americans, the rate was 27.1% (Algernon, 2011). Black students are more likely to drop out of school, go to schools that are understaffed, falling apart and failing by the draconian federal standards of NCLB (Kozol, 2005; Noguera, 2007). They make up a larger portion of foreclosed home owners in the recent economic crisis. Central City has one of the highest rates of home ownership at 75%, but in the last few years the rate of black home ownership has fallen from 46.5% to 41% (Orfield, 2012). The following section on urban education will examine more closely how little value the "pulling one's self up by the boots straps" has when large proportions of blacks remain segregated, poor, undereducated and underemployed.

In conclusion, this section is not intended to be an exhaustive examination of whiteness, white privilege, blackness and black identity, but rather a glimpse into the complexity of the definitions of both, as well as an illustration of how blackness is viewed as the polemic opposite of whiteness. In fact, one of the most difficult parts of writing this section was the way, historically; blacks have been portrayed in a negative and deviant light. I have tried to intersperse the positive achievements of blacks in U.S. history, within the continued negative depictions of blackness. However, these endemic notions of black inferiority have affected how our educational system looks at, teaches and categorizes minority black students.

Urban Education and Student Experience

This section focuses on how race and education function in urban educational settings. While the previous section illuminated how the U.S. has historically understood race, through the oppositional frames of whiteness and blackness as well as critical race theory, this section reviews the current disjunction between how predominantly minority students in urban settings receive lower quality education, or as Kozol (2005) argues, unequal education due to funding disparities, inadequate teacher training, persistent misinformation on minority student academic ability, and continued use of the cultural deficiency model postulated in early black identity theory. The section also examines how in spite of continued disparity in education, some minority students continue to thrive while others do not. In discussion of these matters, the author uses the lens of critical pedagogy to examine the inequities in the system. The

deracialization[19] of school as a public space is addressed here. Most schools have attempted with varying success to introduce a multicultural curriculum and have begun claiming that school as an institution does not have or maintain any form of racial bias (Kozol, 2005; Kinshloe, 2001). This is, in fact, part of the white hegemonic control to make race a thing of the past as well as an individual issue rather than an institutional divider keeping those who are not part of the power structure from moving too far up the educational and socio-economic ladder (hooks, 1992; Mahiri, 1998). To be sure, not all schools are like this, but as is discussed, many more schools are increasingly segregated, including in the Twin Cities, both by geographical location as well as in the diverse academic programs housed in the schools (Orfield, 2012).

Equal Education?

A great deal of the discourse on teaching and working with minority and urban students focuses on these students as problems or as deficient in some way, rather than on the idea of educational equity (Delpit, 2006; Noguera, 2009; hooks, 2004). This mode of examining minority student achievement and the pathologization of the students follows what is discussed above in the research regarding minority identity development. The notion that blacks are imbued with self-hatred and lack a cohesive identity arose in the early 1930's including Robert Park's discussion of the marginal man, who is so alienated from mainstream society that he or she cannot help but be a substandard, mentally unhealthy individual. Prior to the desegregation of schools in the

[19] Deracialization is the focus of conceiving of school environments as racially neutral space.

U.S. in 1950, black students were more often than not taught in black schools staffed by black teachers. The schools these students attended, while being culturally nurturing, were significantly underfunded, in disrepair and found to be offering education that was not equal to the schooling which white children were receiving (Ladson-Billings, 1994; hooks, 2000).

In 1954, the Plessy[20] ruling was then challenged in Brown v. the Kansas Board of Education, where the Supreme Court ruled that black students attending black schools were not receiving equal education and were not receiving equal access to higher education. The result of this decision was the "nominal" desegregation of U.S. schools, although Kozol (2005) argues that the solution of busing did little to change the fact that black and other minority students still failed to receive better and more equitable educational opportunities. The reality is today, schools are going back to being more segregated, as funds for busing and parental ability to get their children to schools further from their homes is compromised by lack of public transportation, and the ever decreasing wages in the U.S. (Orfield, 2007; Kozol, 2005; Anyon, 2004).

While desegregation aimed at equalizing education for minority students, these students continued to underperform on standardized measures. Research conducted in the 1970's and 1980's attempted to understand why minorities failed to measurably improve in the better educational settings. Expanding their scope beyond the view of the schools, studies started examining the social environments in which the students

[20] In Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), the Supreme Court ruled that separate facilities as long as they were "equal" were not unconstitutional.

lived and found that over the preceding decades, white flight from urban centers to the spreading suburbs had severely undermined and eroded the economic funding base of U.S. urban schools. Property taxes in the inner cities declined, thereby shrinking the funds available for good inner city educational programs. This, coupled with increasing unemployment, increasing urban housing segregation, decreasing federal social support services, rising drug related crimes, increasing HIV infection rates and gang violence, made the urban educational sphere a constant struggle for survival that superseded any academic gains that had been made (MacLeod, 2009).

> It is amazing in the twenty-first century that white perception of non-white peoples continues to be deficit laden and inscribe by fear. Not only do many whites believe that black people, Latinos, and Native Americans/indigenous peoples are cognitively deficient, but also that urban ethnic street culture contradicts dominant white values such as the work ethic, generational improvement, socio-economic mobility, self-sufficiency, family values and sobriety (Kincheloe, 2007, p. 7).

This is part of the hidden racial ideology that argues that we are spending money on individuals who are not worthy or capable of utilizing the resources that education provides them, while it is never questioned that in fact this is just continue belief and touting of the deficit model of education that has been prevalent in this culture since the 1930s.

This reasoning is supported by such arguments as Herrnstein and Murray used in *The Bell Curve*, that educational funds should be focused on the gifted and talented rather than wasted on students who will never test well on standardized tests or IQ tests. “The prevailing politics of knowledge in the twenty-first century create an information

climate that supports deficit views of minority students" (Kincheloe, 2007, p. 7). When students are dealt with or viewed in this manner the initial assumption is that they come to school unprepared and because of the cultural, social, and economic disadvantages they encounter on a daily basis in their communities, not only are they slow to learn but these students are seen as unteachable, which is fostered by the notion that blacks are inherently inferior (See section on race above; Ayers, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Not only does this view inform how teachers are prepared to deal with minority students, but it comes to form the way the students understand themselves and informs their attitudes toward schooling and their own ability to succeed in what is often an alien and occasionally hostile socio-educational environment (Tatum, 1997).

A cultural divide. Schools are expected to be centers of learning, which treat all students equally. This view point paints a rosier picture than the reality is for many students. Schools are in fact enclaves of white middle class cultural and societal values. "[T]here were formal and informal practices built into the structure and operation of the school that harmed the educational interests of some students while enhancing the opportunities of others" (Noguera, 2006, p. 22). In many urban centers, the teachers working in the schools are young, recent graduates of teacher training programs (Delpit, 2000). They are predominantly white and females, who come into the urban environments, perhaps with a deep seated desire to help improve students learning, scores and academic success. However well-meaning they may be, they are often

outsiders, who come in for the school day and then commute back to their majority white enclaves and families for the night (Kinchloe, 2007). These teachers are often culturally divorced from the socio-economic environment where they work. In some cases, their teacher training does not prepare them for the cultural differences they face in students whose reality can be a daily struggle for survival. “[M]ore than ever before, they [students] come from single-parent homes. Many don't have a sense of physical security; they worry about gang violence and AIDS... The teacher in my research project acknowledged that she was not aware enough of the day-to-day realities in her students' lives...” (Mahiri, 1998, p.2). These observations are not intended as a slur on hard working teachers, but rather a means of looking at how whites fail to grasp the modern reality that urban minority students face. Changing these attitudes and learning is, moreover, often difficult when teachers are bombarded with negative images of minorities in the media, film and literature (hooks, 1992, Touré, 2010). Yet there continues to be teachers who, no matter what the odds, succeed in engaging students and helping them overcome the difficult aspects of their lives, as have been depicted in movies such as *Stand and Deliver* and more recently *Freedom Writers*, just to mention known examples; but, this does not even begin to cover those hard working teachers who are not rewarded or do not receive mention for all their work.

Making culturally relevant schools. Akom (2008) argues that one of the most important things of what he calls the “third wave of critical pedagogical studies” is to examine school in a wider cultural context. “In general America's involuntarily minorities

experience persistent problems in school adjustment and academic performance" (Ogbu, 1990, p. 46). Despite efforts to expand school curricula by including multicultural education and by eliminating tracking, there continues be a significant achievement gap between white students and black minority students (Kozol, 2005; Noguera, 2006). Since individuals often operate with unknown and undefined assumptions and biases, teachers may not realize that what they do or fail to do with minority students ultimately harms them. As Ladson-Billings (1994) argues in *Dreamkeepers*, many teachers think that "going easy on" or being really hard on black minority students is a means to motivate and engage these students. Her book focuses on a means of reaching minorities through "culturally relevant teaching." To her and others, such as Ayers (2006) and Anyon (2005), this form of teaching has its roots in Paolo Freire's theory that students are, in fact, not empty vessels which needed to be filled by the classroom teachers, but rather people who enter schools with a culture and knowledge base formed by their communities and society (Freire, 1993). He and other critical pedagogues argue that not only do students learn from teachers, but teachers can, do and should learn from their students as well (Ayers, 2006; Kinchloe, 2007).

For a classroom to be culturally relevant, a teacher must not only teach students but truly engage them at a level within the students' cultural community. Often this does not happen, as a large portion of the teaching profession is young, female and white (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ayers, 2006). These teachers often find themselves in urban schools with little preparation to understand or create cooperative learning experiences

with children of different cultures, ethnic and race.[21] These students come to school with a different set of cultural references and understanding of the dominant culture. Often these students come to school knowing both what is called black vernacular English and English (Akom, 2008). This cultural gap between the students and their teacher can only lead to misunderstandings, which often come in the form of perceived behavioral problems, learning disabilities, or school suspensions. And once labeled as problems or bad students, the label follows the student throughout his or her school career (Kinchloe, 2007).

Their white teachers may not understand either the culture or the language that these students speak or recognize their own middle class norms and traditions as culturally specific. This cultural gap between the students and their teachers can lead to misunderstandings, which often are perceived as behavioral problems, learning disabilities, or result in school suspensions. And once labeled, the labeled follows the student throughout his or her school career as the file started in primary school follows the student to high school (Kinchloe, 2007). What teachers and administrators miss seeing in these children is their street savvy, story-telling skill, and desire for respect. Students are quick to pick up on people talking down to them or being patronizing. Being taken out of the classroom for special remedial work can be embarrassing (Harry, 2006). The misunderstandings grow with the cultural disconnect between the school

[21] I use culture as well as race here because blacks and minorities in the United States have a distinct and different culture from the white dominant culture (Dyson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

culture, administrators, teachers and students often creates such a gap that students fall through the cracks (Akom, 2008).

Multicultural education. Not only do students and teachers not speak the same "cultural" language, but minority students rarely see themselves represented in a positive light in the curriculum (Ayers, 2006). The cultural, social and political achievements of minorities are often boiled down to sound bites. Textbooks do not delve deeply into the materials. Many are written with the curriculum required to cover the state-tested curriculum. Textbooks further are subject the will of the local school boards and to the desires of the loudest parents (Loewen, 1999). Often when multicultural curriculum is introduced into schools, it is done in a festival like manner rather that a culturally exploratory fashion; it becomes a kind of one stop tourist shop (Banks, 1996). Furthermore, the multicultural curriculum is juxtaposed to the norm of privileged white culture, thus placing the culture and the minority student in the position of the other (Delpit, 1996). At times, this curriculum is simply a conglomeration of "fun" facts or interesting tidbits covered during black history month or any other designated minority month. Multicultural education is often added to such classes as history, social studies and language arts (English), but fails to appear in mathematics or science classes which have traditionally been considered subjects outside of culture, so students do not learn about the development of the numeric system by Arabs, or the development of algebra during the Egyptian empire. Leaving out the cultural context of minority students places them in an a-cultural context. Rather students are *tabula rasa*

to be filled with information; disregarding the knowledge and life experience with which the students arrive in school (Kinshloe, 2005; Fuligni, 2007).

Boundary maintenance. This cultural disconnect and lack of cultural understanding not only harms students in positive identity development, it begets a culture of 'too cool for school' since everything or most everything there is framed for the majority white culture (Macleod, 2008). Through “secondary cultural differences students take on new features and reinterpret old ones to cope with domination and oppression” (Ogbu, 1990, p. 46). For the students, these meanings become part of their identity. The differences are not seen as boundaries to be overcome, but rather serve as “boundary maintaining mechanisms” between the minority students and the majority white school culture. Students feel that society's rules and means of advancement have failed them, and so they aim to change the rules (Akom, 2008; Kinshloe, 2005).

They are aware the education they receive does not lift them out of poverty, guarantee good employment or personal success. Their continued maltreatment at the hands of the white hegemony has led them to distrust whites and white institutions. “Involuntary minorities view the prejudice and discrimination they experience as institutionalized and enduring” (Ogbu, 1990, p. 50). As a defense mechanism, students then engage in oppositional behaviors that can negatively affect their school success. This “oppositional cultural frame of reference,” as Fordham and Ogbu (1986) termed it, in their study of black high school students in Washington D.C., includes behaviors, events, symbols and meanings that are considered inappropriate, because they are

white, and thereby become negatively sanctioned. Ogbu's argument regarding involuntary minorities' behavior deserves the critique that he places the burden solely on the students' attitude and behavior, without examining the cultural context of the schools and white power in school codes, behavioral expectations, language and learning styles (Horvat & O'Connor, 2006).

Acting "white" and burden of peer pressure. Some students believe that adopting white culture and behavior has a negative effect on their culture and their own cultural identity. The students do not always distinguish between what constitutes academic success from the white cultural hegemony, which results in oppositional attitudes toward school (Aynon, 2006; Kozol, 2001). Fordham and Ogbu (1986) note that existing conditions in schools and society have led black parents to teach children that they must work twice as hard as white children to succeed. At the same time their children must not develop arrogant attitudes, which maybe in opposition to black culture, black community norms and expectations. This contradictory attitude leads to academic success being labeled as "acting white." Social peer pressure to not act white, fear that academic success might lead to exclusion from the social group and the label "brainiac" or worse keeps students from participating fully in school. "Because of ambivalence, affective dissonance and social pressures, many black students who are academically able do not put forth the necessary effort and perseverance in their school work and consequently do poorly in school" (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986, p. 177).

Students who “act white” face opposition from peers and are assumed to have “joined the enemy.” This “burden of acting white” does not only affect interpersonal student relations, but can also cause internal stress or what Fordham calls “affective dissonance,” which can make students feel like they are betraying their culture group as well as fearing ostracism from whites. School is seen as learning the white frame of reference, which negatively reflects their minority cultural frame of reference, thus making schooling a subtractive process as successful students become “assimilated” whites. “At the social level, peer groups discourage their members from putting forth the time and effort required to do well in school and from adopting the attitudes and standard practices that enhance academic success” (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986, p. 183).

Fictive kinship[22] plays a large role in monitoring student behavior. If an individual who is “black in color” but does not seek to belong to the fictive kinship system, they can then be denied membership by the groups because “one's behavior, activities and lack of manifest loyalty are at variance with those thought to be appropriate and group specific” (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986, p. 184). This form of group identity grew out of the conditions of slavery and continued in its aftermath as an inversion of negative white stereotypes of blacks, into positive group black identity. Group identity becomes important in situations involving conflict or competition with outsiders, in this case whites. This kinship controls the criteria for group membership, and black children learn the criteria early and see it as a means to successfully navigate in a hostile white world

[22]Fictive kinship is a sense of peoplehood or collective social identity, which in this case is exhibited in such terms as: brother/ sister, folk, my peeps, my brother from another mother, moms...

(Touré, 2010). Behavior that Fordham and Ogbu found to be characterized as acting white includes some the following (not an exhaustive list): speaking standard English rather than Ebonics; listening to white music; attending the opera, ballet or symphony; working hard to get good grades; getting good grades; doing volunteer work; camping; hiking; mountain climbing; being on time; reading or writing poetry (although rapping is encouraged); and putting on “airs” or acting “uppity” or above one's station. Current research has questioned Ogbu and Fordham’s findings as being too focused on negative aspects of students and paying little attention to the school’s cultural and social environment and its exclusiveness. Questioning the veracity of the oppositional behavior and seeing it rather as a defense mechanism and a demand for respect and cultural recognition. In fact, recent research has found that students are not oppositional, although they continue to be seen as such (Carter, 2005; Conchas, 2006).

Consequences. Not only do black students reject the white cultural expectations, but they are frequently the object of these types of negative consequences applied by school staff who fail to take into account the cultural differences of minority communities. Such things as calling out answers or answering back are common cultural experiences that occur anywhere from on the street corner, at home or in church on Sunday. Often such students are seen as threatening to the quiet of the class and shipped off to the principal’s office for further disciplinary action or subjected to suspension or expulsion. Black students are the most frequently suspended students in the schools due to behavioral problems and non-compliance, because they adopt

oppositional frames of behavior (Fuligni, 2007). In 2007-2008, 1715 out of every 10,000 black students were involved in disciplinary actions in comparison with 304 European American students. Out-of-school suspensions happened for 1559 per 10,000 black students and 262 per 10,000 European Americans (Midwest Department of Education, 2007, p. 7-9). Numbers for mixed race students do not exist; schools do not often collect data on multiracial multiethnic students. Schools categorize them by minority label, so mixed race students can be presumed to be part of their minority cohort. Considering there is no data on multiracial student experience, discipline and academic inclusion, it is difficult to know if they exhibit or experience similar problems to minority students. This dissertation is designed to explore this gap.

Parental exclusion. Teachers often argue that the parents, rather than the children are the problem in that they have no interest in supporting the child's educational attainment, arguing that black parents fail to see the value of education. This is a dangerous assumption and untrue, as “good” education for black Americans is a hard won prize that is still being fine-tuned (Calabrese, 1990). Thinkers such as Ladson-Billings (2000) and hooks (2000) have noted that prior to the desegregation of school in the 1950's, black teachers, school administrators and parents instilled in their children a strong ethic for achievement and learning. As was discussed above, there exists this mythology that black parents or minority parents are less concerned with their children's schooling and academic success than majority white parents. Both Ayers (2006) and Ladson-Billings (1998) found that black parents are equally concerned, as

education is often seen as the means up out of the poverty inner city families' face. Parents may also see this as a means to learn about the majority culture and not realize that it is to the exclusion of other cultural traditions in the U.S. In fact, as Orfield's (2007) report shows, black parents are showing great concern for their students as school that focuses on more Afrocentric and African American centric culture and curriculum are becoming more common and more popular. There are a growing number of culturally specific charter schools.

Teachers or administrators often note there are few if any racial problems or issues at their school (Tatum, 1996; Ayers, 2005). If pressed, they may point to incidences of student fights or gang activity within the school, but rarely will they venture any further analysis of race within school walls or in the curriculum (Noguera, 2006; Ayers, 2000). This, as Ayers and others argue, is counter to what really occurs within schools, where race is present in both overt and covert ways. The overt aspects can be seen through examining racial and cultural groupings that form, as Tatum (1996) so clearly sees, in U.S. high schools. This form of cultural grouping does not always happen along racial lines. The all familiar groups, such as jocks or geeks can be seen, but often in the lunchroom, the corridors and elsewhere in schools including student organizations, groups of culturally and racially homogeneous students, white, black, Asian or Hispanic/Latino, can be found as well. These groups may internally divide into smaller cultural and linguistic groups, such as the Somalis or the Hmong, whose populations have been increasing in Central City schools. This type of social group choice is part of

the Intersectional Model of Identity, where students define themselves in social context, reference group orientation and situations of encounter. In some ways, minority students are not always afforded choices in the way that white teens are, due to the racial/color dichotomy are forced into racial groups. Even these larger groups may form smaller entities that follow patterns of jocks, geeks, popular students etc., but primary group affiliation along the color lines stays relatively static (Tatum, 1996).

The invisible minority in school. This lack of cultural understanding of minority students begs the question, how do multiracial students fit in to this picture? Multicultural/racial students are the invisible minorities in schools. They are usually included in other black students even when their cultural experiences are significantly different from those of the black students (Korgen, 2001). These students never see themselves in the curriculum or are infrequently represented in the school culture, where there are few minority teachers to begin with (Moore, 2006). For many multiracial students, their invisibility is so normalized that they themselves fail to notice it, as Moore (2006) found in her study of an urban Central City senior high school. Because these students are often overtly minority looking in phenotype, they are placed in the same deficit categories as other black and minority students. For students who have been raised with cultural awareness of their heritage, this grouping often leads them to see themselves as a ,mono-racial and they choose to be categorized as black, taking on the behavior, language, dress and other cultural artifacts of black American culture (Rockquemore, 1999).

Part of the goal of this review is to place multiracial students in this school context. The previous discussion indicated these students confound the standard racial definition, even when they are characterized by the schools and government as mono-racial (Chiong, 1998). Research has indicated that these students may or may not have racial identity choices that are acceptable. These same identities are potentially socially exclusionary and even dangerous. In the event of "passing"[23] or not being black enough, the multiracial students tend to "transcend" our current racial social boundaries. Where there is a critical mass of multiracial black and white students, they tend to find each other and form a distinct social group (Tatum, 1996). At the same time, they continue to maintain a highly diverse and broad group of friends that transcend racial and social boundaries. The multiracial students may have widely differing interest, but as Tatum (1996) pointed out they are united by common racial experiences such as exclusionary behavior or blatant racism. While they may identify in many ways with minority black students, even the "colorism" and historical distinction between dark and light skinned people can affect in-group belonging (Daniel, 2002).

Midwestern schooling. Despite such landmark occurrences as the Civil Rights movement and Brown vs. the Board of Education, schools have remained segregated in Central City as well as more recently resegregating (Orfield, 2007). In 2009-2010, African Americans made up 37.8% of the Central City student population while whites made up 30.7%. Looking at the high school population more specifically, African

[23]Passing means looking and acting white enough to be accepted as white.

Americans make up 36%, European Americans 34%, Hispanic Americans 14%, Asian Americans 11.7%, and Native Americans 3.4%. Of the 7 high schools in the Central City area, there are two schools where whites are in the majority; both of those schools are in fairly white and affluent neighborhoods in the city. In four of the schools, African Americans make up the majority of the student body ranging from 40%-61%, and Hispanics the largest ethnic group in one school (Midwest Department of Education, 2010, retrieved 7.15.2012). White flight into the suburbs, where students go to schools with a greater resource base given higher property tax incomes, has caused the city schools to have higher concentrations of minority students.[24] Even in these suburban settings, property values are lower and schools encounter similar problems to the ones which occur in urban settings (Orfield, 2012). In the urban setting of the Twin Cities, there are much higher concentrations of minority students in high schools. These minority dominated schools are located in areas of concentrated poverty and have high minority populations. There is a 42% graduation rate gap between Central City minority and white students. For 2010, 82.4% of white students graduated, while 68% of Asian students, 44% of black students, 45.2% of Hispanics and 41.3% of Native Americans did. Dropout rates for minorities ranged from 19.3% for Native Americans to 5.7% for Asian Americans while whites only had a 3.7% drop rate. Mainstream schools can expel students or suggest that students go elsewhere if they are not meeting the school behavioral and academic criteria. However, regardless of whether we are talking about

[24]Although it can be and is argued that many minorities who are middle and upper income are following a similar trend, they tend to migrate to suburbs that have higher concentrations of their ethnic and or racial group.

mammoth, traditional high schools or small, culturally homogeneous charter schools, the fact remains that they are failing far too large a portion of Central City students (Midwest Department of Education, 2010).

Alternatives and tracking. It is a sad truth that the current educational system has failed to live up to the desegregation, even with such things as open enrollment and magnet schools within larger schools (Feld & Carter, 1998; Livingstone, 2008; Kozol, 1992). Magnets tend, like charter schools, to have specific focuses such as Mathematics and Science, Core Knowledge or International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. While most school officials would argue that tracking of students has been eliminated, researchers have found that minority students are underrepresented in academically rigorous programs such as IB and over represented in what can be called remedial programs, such Academic Learning Centers (ALCs) (Orfield, 2007). So, even academically, minority students tend to “track” or matriculate into less ambitious and academically rigorous programs. Students in mainstream Twin Cities schools are still highly segregated across the curriculum, with fewer minorities represented in IB and AP programs (Orfield, 2007). Minority students continue to underperform scholastically, as well as being more likely to be suspended or expelled for behavior or non-compliance to the schools' dominant cultural expectations and requirements, as the numbers from the Central City Department of Education attested to earlier. Worst of all, fewer and fewer minority students complete high school in the normal time frame or at all (Midwest Department of Education, 2010).

Multiracial Identity and Schooling

Early discussion of, and research on, multi-ethnic multi-racial heritage assumed to produce children who were not only mentally handicapped, but could not form a stable adult identity (Choi, Harachi, Gillmore, & Catalano, 2006; Park, 1928; Suzuki-Crumly & Hyers, 2004). The earliest theories on mixed cultural identity found that the individual was subject to a host of mental problems that kept the person from becoming a fully functional adult. Park (1928) used the notion of the *marginal man* to explore the pathology of the mixed race individual. Parks definition is as follows: "one whom fate has condemned to live in two societies and in two, not merely different, but antagonistic cultures" (Park, 1931, In Korgen ,1998, p. 69). As can be seen from this, the mixed race individual is constantly on the periphery of any community, within which he chooses to live. In unpacking what Park says here, the negative bias of his argument can be clearly seen. Using such words as fate, condemn and antagonistic make the life of the marginal individual a continued misery.

This relates to Simmel's concept of a stranger who is part of a group but never a full member of the group in which she participates. This can also be linked to DeBois' (1903) argument on the divide the black man experiences in U.S. society. "One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (1903). For Park, the biracial black and white individual was the quintessential marginal person, who dealt with daily friction between two races that were at odds. In more recent work, the notion of marginality has assumed a more

positive aspect. McCarthy (2004) argues that as a result of this marginality, it has created strength and deeper understanding of society is found in these groups. In effect, any group that has been marginalized in society (e.g. single fathers, homosexuals, illiterate persons, racial/ethnic minorities) can contribute insights about our society not found in mainstream dominant culture (Korgen 1998, p. 70). Marginality has two aspects: the negative outsider who can never fit in, and the idea that multiracial individuals, or any other group being studied, have by necessity a broader more "cosmopolitan" understanding of the cultures than mono-racial people. As with race, marginality is socially defined and personally ascribed to, in that the person either self marginalizes or is marginalized by society for her difference (Khanna, 2011; Phinney, 1990).

As a consequence of Park's categorization of the marginal individual, the research and discussion focused on the individual's mental health, and took little account of the lived experience of the multiracial person. As was discussed in the section on race, most multiracial black and white individuals were categorized as black. Thus, their identity and history is deeply tied in with black culture and black identity.

Multiracial History

Because early colonial labor was done by means of indentured servitude, and black and white indentured servants were common, interracial unions were not uncommon. As mentioned above, once slavery of blacks became a perpetual state, the unions between whites and black became criminalized, but they persisted none the less. A

white female servant who married a black had her servitude extended. Free white men and women were often fined, jailed or "reduced to servitude" for marrying blacks. Free blacks were enslaved or deported from the colonies. Many of these unions were extramarital, and if a women gave birth to a mixed race baby it was grounds for divorce, while for white men it was much easier to ignore or minimize these types of affairs, especially after slavery was uniquely tied to blackness. In keeping with the notion of white superiority, biracial individuals were slowly stripped of their rights, since they were phenotypically black (Daniel, 2002; Korgen, 1998).

After the revolutionary war, when the northern states prohibited slavery, there were moves to maintain economic, social and political distance between blacks and whites, and states began to codify the definition of black, as anyone who had "a black parent or grandparent." Korgen notes that mulattoes[25] in the Upper South were common and generally lived in rural areas. They formed the lowest rung of colonial society and were treated as blacks. In the lower South, mixed race individuals were fewer until the 18th and 19th century. In 1850, there were nearly 200,000 mixed race individuals in the upper South while in the lower South there were around 90,000. These were the offspring of wealthy landowning men and slave women and they were often acknowledged by their fathers, but most were slaves (Daniel, 2002).

The free mixed race individuals lived in large cities like New Orleans and Charleston. As was discussed above, they formed a buffer zone between free whites and enslaved

[25] The term mulatto is derived from the Spanish word for mule, a species that cannot reproduce.

blacks. Mixed race people in the lower South belonged to a different caste than the darker blacks. They were treated well and could be counted on to side with the whites in times of unrest (Daniel, 2002; N. Zack, 1993). In some cases mixed race women traded on their exoticness to become defacto wives of white men; they were well educated and had superb social graces. "Many of these women, themselves offspring of white men and light-skinned black women, were sent to Paris and well educated in the feminine refinements of the day..." (Korgen, 1998, p. 15). They were barred from marrying whites, but became the "kept" women of many wealthy white men. As a buffer between blacks, mulattoes, octoroons and other mixed race individuals who "acted like white men" were not treated as blacks, "or at least as was the case in many instances, as a "step up" from a black man" (Korgen, 1998, p. 15).

In the mid-nineteenth century, mixed race slavery was on the rise, and the freeing of slaves became a rare occurrence, as the Atlantic slave trade halted in 1807. With the entrenchment of slavery and the divide between blacks and whites growing, mixed race people began to align themselves with blacks, all the while considering themselves better than darker skinned freed blacks (N. Zack, 1993). They began to form societies based on litmus test like the brown paper bag[26] or the comb test.[27] During reconstruction, the black political leaders were predominately mixed race people, which is not at all surprising since they had been afforded social, political and educational opportunities that darker skinned blacks had been denied (Spencer, 2011). "Fine

[26]Brown paper bag test meant you were lighter than the color of the bag.

[27]Comb test meant that you had hair straight and fine enough to run a comb through it easily.

educations and social skills were common among the mixed-raced leaders. No doubt these attributes encouraged both their ability to lead and also the notion among the black masses that they should lead the newly freed slaves" (Korgen, 1998, p. 16).

With emancipation, the distance between poor whites and black slaves was removed and they became economic competitors. Labor laws were passed that lead to the formation of a permanent underclass of sharecroppers. Blacks of all hues began to form a closer union, and the previous separation between mixed race people and blacks disappeared (hooks, 1992). This led to the development of black unity and pride in the face of white racism (Dyson, 2007). It is during this period that middle class blacks in the North (escaped slaves and freed successful blacks) began to focus on "uplifting" the black race. These middle class blacks during the Harlem Renaissance were mostly mixed race individuals, such as Langston Hughes and W.E.B DuBois, who focused on their blackness rather than their white ancestry as previous mixed race people had done. Those who accepted their blackness came to be counted as nothing other than black. The "talented tenth" who were the most important members and political- social leaders of the black community were mixed race individuals (N. Zack, 1995). "Both blacks and whites viewed mixed race persons as the natural leaders of the black community" (Korgen, 1998, p. 18). As was common during slavery, mixed race individuals became the buffer zone between whites and blacks.

By the 1920's, the notion of who was white and who was black was fixed, and the U.S. Census determined that anyone with any known African heritage was black. The

leaders of the black community turned toward empowerment of the black race and separating themselves from whites rather than attempting to assimilate to white culture. This led to a decrease in social interaction between whites and blacks, and those who crossed color-lines were ridiculed (Rockquemore, 2002). “Interracial relationships between white and African Americans were relatively unheard of during that time” (Korgen, 1998, p.19). Blacks who married whites were often considered low class and were excluded from black society. During the early 1900's, while black families did not condone interracial marriages and biracial children, the children were often accepted. However, these interracial families were often completely ignored by their white families. Many biracial children had the white side of their family function as a painful reminder of racial division and disharmony within the family (McBride, 2000).

The tide turns. From the 1600’s, thirty-eight states enacted anti-miscegenation laws. The Supreme Court overturned Loving v Commonwealth of Virgina in 1967. In 1967, 13 states still had such laws. Loving led to a “biracial baby boom.” Interracial relationships could no longer be considered deviant behavior, at least legally. At the same time, the Sixties was a period of increased black pride and black nationalism, which brought the notion of black power to the forefront as it was spurred by the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act (Daniel, 2002; Khanna, 2010; Root, 1992).

While black nationalists frowned on interracial relationships, and saw these relationships as a rejection of blackness, the offspring were encouraged to embrace their blackness and to eschew their whiteness. Whites continued to see anyone of

mixed race parentage as black, regardless, in essence helping to define and maintain the color dichotomy of U.S. racial categories. It is still true today that many black and older mixed racial people believe that all multiracial people should identify as blacks, since that is how society sees them (Spencer, 2011). As Korgen (1998) notes, though, multiracial identity today is not as clear cut as it was, and many realize that for these children to neglect either aspect of their heritage is not healthy or conducive to the well-being of the individuals.

Official Categorization of Multiracial and Multi-ethnic People

As was discussed above, historically, multiracial and multi-ethnic individuals have been absorbed into the larger minority or ethnic group and raised as mono-racial minorities. Following the civil rights movement and Loving vs Virginia, when anti-miscegenation laws were repealed, these children and their families began to come forward to claim identity space. They have refused to be categorized by the U.S. racial dichotomy and choose to self-identify in various ways, which have led to pressure from both the mainstream white and minority groups to conform to the current system. While multiracial and multi-ethnic people can, on U.S. census forms, choose multiple racial categories, these choices are artificial since the OMB (Office of Management and Budget) counts the person by her minority status group, disregarding her own expressed choice. Thus, those multiracial individuals who mark more than one category, or choose *other,* continue to be classified mono-racially. Nearly 50 thousand biracial children were born in 1990. While there are still limited data on the number of

multiracial and multi-ethnic people, there are estimated to be more than 5 million multiracial individuals in the U.S. (Root, 1992).

Schools and the eyeball test. This multiple choice option does not hold true for schools, either, where if students or parents choose multiple categories for their child, the schools are empowered to make the “appropriate” racial choice based on what Chiong (1992) and others call the eyeball test. This is when a teacher or school administrator categorizes a student based on phenotype or from personal knowledge of the student's extended family. This form of forced identification implies that neither the student nor the parents have any idea to which ethnic or racial group their child or children belong. This implied assimilation further perpetuates that notion begun with Park's discussion of the *marginal man* and fostered the idea that somehow multiracial and multi-ethnic people are confused and unable to form a stable identity for themselves. Thus, by definition, they are never able to have or maintain a stable adult identity, based on the mono-racial and mono-ethnic definitions of identity (Sanchez, 2010). Many professionals such as school administrators and teachers, unconsciously, continue to assume that biracial multiracial students identify with the minority part of their identity without acknowledging the other parts of the student's ethnic and racial heritages (Sanchez et al., 2009).

Resistance is futile. Because people's assumptions on racial categories are based on phenotypical features and the simplified classification as mono-racial, multiracial students deal with a great deal of stress as they feel pressured to deny their 'white' or

other cultural, social and ethnic heritage. One would think that much of the social pressure to choose a mono-racial group would come from whites, who often desire to keep the racial color divide clear (Wardle, 2004; Daniel, 2004), but studies have found that there is equal if not more pressure from the minority group (Seaton, 2009). Part of the reason there is so much social pressure from other minorities is that as Herman (2004) and others note, the fear that all the “hard found gains” from civil rights will be diluted if multiracial individuals choose to identify as whites and thus reduce funding for minorities in educational areas as well as affecting the currently beleaguered Equal Opportunity provisions (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). Others argue that multiracial black and white students and individuals need to face the fact that in U.S. society, they are and will always be perceived as black due to the still strong belief in the one drop rule and racial dichotomization, and therefore students must learn to struggle in the trenches along with other minorities (Korgen, 1998; Winters & DeBose, 2003). Herman's (2004) *Forced to choose: some determinants of racial identification in multiracial adolescents*, looks at racial choice of students and argues that most multiracials do, in fact, choose to identify with the minority group, and most students report feelings of discrimination similar to, or greater than, their mono-racial counterparts. Her findings support Wardle's (2004) anecdotal evidence that multiracial students feel pressure from many sides to choose a minority racial status (Moore, 2006).

Interestingly enough, not only are multiracial students pressured or forced to choose a minority identity, but once they have done so they face pressure to “prove” that

status choice or be faced with “acting white” and the social exclusion that engenders (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). For multiracial students, there is always or often a feeling that they are not black enough or that they are “selling out” if they perform well in school, date outside their racial or ethnic group, listen to the wrong music or dress the wrong way (Fordham, 2008; Moore, 2012). For many students, this type of pressure causes a stress and even anger as they are required to constantly prove their right to belong, or not, as they choose. The students who face these dilemmas could be expected, as Tatum (1999) argues, to seek out groups of others who experience the same exclusion from both or all ethnic and racial groups to which they belong, thereby forming a cohesive multiracial social peer group that continuously supports its members in their self-identity exploration (Jaret & Reitzes, 1999).

Identity Theory and the Multiracial Student

Multiracial identity theory can be divided into two sub-groups: those researchers who focus on identity development and those who attempt to define what multiracial and multi-ethnic identity looks like and how these individuals understand and categorize themselves. The development theorists take their cues from the earlier theorists Piaget and Erikson, with Erikson[28] receiving the most attention, since his theory focuses on the creation of a “stable” adult identity while progressing from childhood to adulthood. In his theory, each stage of development requires a certain mastery before proceeding to the next level. Implied in his theory is the notion that identity development follows a

[28]It is interesting to note that Erikson himself was a Jewish Dane and may have spent a great deal of his younger years negotiating a stable identity, in the highly mono-ethnic culture of Denmark.

linear process and the individual cannot move backward and forward in the process. Root and others argue, however, that identity develops on a continuum or an ecology and children move back and forth as they negotiate their identity development. The period of identity development which touches on this paper's focus is adolescence.

Adolescence is seen in many ways as the most turbulent time in a child's life and when children begin experiencing what is most often called an identity crisis. For development theorist such as Erikson (1963), adolescence is the time when youth begin forming a stable identity that will lead them over the threshold into adulthood as well as forming a self-concept with a sense of “personal sameness and historical continuity.” Teens begin to seek greater autonomy both from family and peers. They begin to relate more with both sexes and discover more clearly their own gender, racial and social roles. They become more aware of social position both within family life and in social and community situations. They seek greater independence from parents and other authority figures. At this stage, teens are more apt to question rules and conventions. While children become aware of social and racial differences between the ages of 8-10, it is the teen years where racial choice and group adherence becomes a major aspect of student identity (Basu, 2000; Jacobs, 1977). Finally, teens begin to examine life and career goals. For minority teens, there is the added difficulty of dealing with their racial role within U.S. society (Conger et al, 2012).

All of these issues affect multiracial / multi-ethnic teens as well; however, they face the added problem of understanding not only their ethnic, racial and cultural plurality,

but often find this part of them challenged by other ethnic and racial groups (Brunsma, 2005). Because adolescents tend to seek out groups that are similar to themselves, a great deal of peer pressure can arise between what is called the in-group and the out-group. Many multiracial teens face this type of pressure on multiple fronts (Brunsma, et al., 2012). Schools, administrators and teachers bound by the one drop rule may continue to view the students as part of the mono-racial minority group and recommend that they select the category that gives them various perceived and real advantages, funding and access as a result of Affirmative Action (Chiong, 1998). Peers from the white mainstream majority may judge the student based on phenotype and hold that the multiracial student is not part of their social group in spite of language, dress, and behavior similarities (Rockquemore, 2002; Doyle &Kao, 2007). Students from the minority group may express that the multiracial multi-ethnic student is a sellout or trying to pass.[29]

Minimization of white ethnic and racial heritage. For most biracial and multiracial teens, their white ethnic identity is dismissed or ignored unless they phenotypically resemble whites more than they do blacks. Many multiracial children have been raised in dual parent households or homes where the mother is white (Brunsma, 2005). Because of this home situation, biracial children have unique access to learning and decoding white privilege and white hegemonic culture. Children living in homes where one parent is white learn the values of the majority culture, including music and dress,

[29]Phrases which indicate that the student is not conforming to the monoracial minority group.

educational attainment expectations, cultural behavioral norms, economic expectations and even racial attitudes (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). When these children enter an educational setting, they have an understanding of this culture that most minority raised students, due to the continued segregation within urban centers in the U.S., do not (Kozol, 2004).

In schools where children are sorted for funding and recording purposes, the larger portion of multiracial children are assumed to be part of the minority culture, and are in essence excluded from the discussion of the white culture when they are lumped into the minority category (Chiong, 1998, Khanna, 2010). Since these children also have an understanding of the white minority culture, they have the skill to recognize the distinction and gap that is generated by the dichotomization of race that exists in schools, which Tatum (1996) argues these students do. In high school, when biraical students are developing a notion of their adult identity, ignoring the white part of their heritage leaves students feeling cheated or deprived, as they are required to disassociate themselves from one of their parents and a significant part of their cultural heritage (Wardle, 2004).

At the same time, multiracial high-school students are sensitive to the difficulties faced by minorities and understand, perhaps intrinsically, the code by which this dichotomization takes place, thus allowing them to choose to face it head on or to rise above it (Hitlin, Scott Brown, & Elder, 2006; Terry & Winston, 2010). The decisions that students make affect how their adult identity develops. Often the behavior of the

students who resist the above mentioned classification and the treatment that minority students face within schools is seen as socio-psychological, resulting in referral to school counselors and the labeling of students as behavioral problems (Cheng & Klugman, 2010). These students may develop oppositional stances which are often seen as threatening by teachers who are not trained to understand students' cultural differences outside of the stereotypical scenarios that are often offered for teacher during teacher training (Kozol, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2000). These biracial students, who have been raised within the majority culture, to a certain degree feel they have the ability to negotiate the white power structure, or attempt to do so, within the schools both to their advantage and detriment (Campbell & Herman, 2010).

Contemporary Multiracial Identity Models and Theory

This section delves into the most recent attempts at developing a clear understanding of how biracial people categorize themselves. Since race is a socio-political construct, and we have determined that, despite clinical studies (Choi et al., 2006; Cooney & Radina, 2000; Gibbs, 1987) that support Park's notion of marginality, current theorists have focused on developing models of identity that transcend the mono-racial model. Historically, there have been three approaches to understanding multiracial identity: the problem approach, the equivalent approach and the variant approach (Thornton, 1996). The problem approach advocated the *marginal man* theory and held on to the vast cultural gap that exists between black and white. The equivalent approach, multiracial people assimilate well into white culture and race does not figure

largely in the self-image people hold. Finally, this section focuses on the variant approach. The way multicultural / multiracial people self-identity is highly varied and dependent on both social and cultural factors in the individual's life (Herman, 2004). Most multiracial people today are exposed to positive experience from both heritage cultures and this socialization leads to “intergroup tolerance, language facility, enjoyment of minority group cultures and better ties to single heritage groups than the latter hold with one another” (Thornton, 1996, p. 111).

Cross' (1987) theory of identity formation for African Americans allows for a more flexible examination of how an adolescent develops a multicultural multiracial identity. He argues that identity develops in five stages. In the first stage, young people are developing a personal identity which is distinct from their family, but they have not focused on creating a group identity. The second stage is group selection where youth are pushed to choose a group identity, which is influenced by cultural and social factors as well as personal ones. These choices tend to be dichotomous since teens in this stage do not have the complex thinking required to go beyond the duality of minority versus majority. In stage three, the individual is enmeshed and at the same time perhaps in denial as the individual might experience guilt over picking one group over the other. This is often exacerbated by a negative response from other groups. Individuals who reach stage four begin to appreciate their multiple identities and begin to seek more information on themselves and the cultures to which they belong. Cross' final stage is full integration where the individual is “unified” and appreciate all the varied aspect of

herself. This final stage is considered unique to adolescents who are multicultural or multiracial.

Daniel (2002) argues that multiracial / multicultural individuals have three identity options: *synthesized, functional white and functional black identity*. People who have a *synthesized identity* function well in both cultural groups, but often rise above both groups to see themselves as part of humanity as a whole. A famous example of this is Tiger Woods who refused to be called black or Asian. In the case of the *functional white or black identity* individuals can still function within either culture group, but profess greater comfort within one group over the other.

Daniel (2002), in his book *More than black: Multiracial identity and the new racial world order,* uses these categories but expands them to note that most multiracial individuals feel comfortable in both, and that the identification choice is not motivated by phenotype, but more by family, peers and U.S. society in general. He breaks Ramirez's (1995) *synthesized identity* category down into *synthesized integrative identity*, and *synthesized pluralistic identity*. Someone who has a *synthesized integrative identity* feels comfortable in both racial communities. They function well in white social settings, “but are committed to issues that concern African Americans” (Daniel, 2002, p. 107-108). A *synthesized pluralistic identity* means that the person functions well not only in the two racial groups but also in multiracial settings. They too are committed to African-American issues, but have an added interest in multiracial issues. Both of these types of people “exhibit an identity that seeks to transcend questions of racial or

cultural specificity without denying their value and significance" (Daniel, 2002, p. 108). These individuals do not exhibit "racelessness" and do not show clear black cultural attitudes or behaviors. This does not mean they are attempting to espouse whiteness, but at the same time the notion of the norm may make it appear that they embrace whiteness, with its positive social connotations.

Table: 1 Daniel's multiracial categories

synthesized identity	***functional identity***
synthesized integrative identity	*functional integrative identity*
synthesized pluralistic identity	*functional pluralistic identity*

In this model, the *functional identity* also has two distinct subcategories: *functional integrative identity*, which is then tied to either white or black orientations. Those who are functional integrative/ European American are more comfortable in white European cultural settings, while those who are functional integrative / African American feel closer to African American cultural norms and values. People who have *functional pluralistic identities* are again drawn to either European American cultural groups or African American cultural groups, but both also feel more comfortable in multiracial cultural settings. The primary distinction between the *functional* and the *synthesized identities* is that those who exhibit a *functional identity* take race as an integral part of their identity, while the synthesized attempt to transcend racial classifications all together. "Functional identity individuals tend to view the world through the lens of

race in a much more immediate sense, such that everyday encounters are somewhat more racialized" (Daniel, 2002, p. 110). Those individuals who are pluralistic in orientation see themselves as part of a new culture of multicultural multiracial people. Rockquemore et al (2003) examine the self-categorization of biracial individuals in a similar manner to Daniel (2002), but come up with a different means of categorization. They found that young adults and teens with one white parent and one black parent were over all well-adjusted.

Table: 2 Rockquemore & Brunsma Multiracial Categories

Protean: changes identity based on context	**Transcendent:** denial of racial categorization
Border: functions in multiple racial groups	**Singular:** holds one racial identity

Rockquemore found that there are four distinct personalities held by biracial young adults: *border identity, singular identity, protean identity, and transcendent identity*. These four identities are represented in biracial youth to varying degrees. A youth who hold a *transcendent identity* "consciously denies having any racial identity whatsoever" (Rockquemore, 2002, p. 71). For these youth, race is not an identifying construct in their world. In her study, Rockquemore supposed that individuals choosing such an identity would be biracials who could pass for being white. However, the study showed that there was a spectrum of color difference in the choice of transcendence. In the first phase of the research, the supposition of understanding identity by "color" held for the transcendent identity, but the second tier found that these youth had a large network of

white friends and community and they had experienced a continued understanding of themselves from the pre-adult phases of their lives to the adult phase.

Individuals who held *protean identities* did not have “a single, unified racial identity;” rather, they had constructed multiple identities they utilize in the required contexts (Rockquemore, 2002, p. 69). This identity coincides with what Major (1992) calls the “cool pose” where black men develop a variety of personae to cope with the racial discrimination and socio-economic difficulties they experience in their personal lives (Harris & Sim, 2002; Phinney, 2004). These individuals are conversant in a wide variety of cultural experiences and are readily accepted as *in-group* members in different social settings. This identity requires a great sensitivity and “mastery of various cultural norms and values and an ongoing awareness and monitoring of the presentation of self” (Rockquemore, 2002, p. 69). Here, the focus is on identity as process. The study found that this group felt the closest with both the black and the white social groups to which they belonged. Here the distinction from Majors 'cool pose' arises, as protean biracial do not feel put out, or like they are masking their true selves, but rather this is the expression of their true selves. This identity corresponds well to bicultural individuals who can move through society fluidly, having developed high cultural competency and cultural sensitivity. This type of chameleon ability is distinctly different from the singular identity.

Singular identity identified individuals have chosen to pick one racial social category. In this case, appearance plays a significant role in the choice youth make in belonging to

this category of biracial identity. This choice was found to be affected by exposure to the two racial groups during childhood. Rockquemore (2003) notes that racial composition of the individual's social network affects identity choice for biracial adults and young adults. The final identity category is the *border identity* which “encompasses both of the socially accepted racial categorizations of black and white yet includes an additional element” from the creation of additional identity. This was the largest group in the Rockquemore study; the group broke down into two smaller subcategories, those who had a *validated border identity* and those with an *unvalidated border identity*. Those who felt validated had childhood experiences where they were accepted within the community where they lived, while the unvalidated felt to some extent excluded by both groups. Rockquemore found that those who were validated had experienced majority white sociocultural networks. The unvalidated individuals had a greater number of black pre-adult socio-cultural networks. These two subgroups were based on how the respondents felt *out group* individuals responded to the subject racial make-up.

Factors that influence the identity selection of biracial individuals, are as with multicultural individuals, complex and multifaceted. One of the most significant means of identification for biracial individuals is appearance (Rockquemore, 1999). This identification is driven by a North American cultural norm that arose from slavery and segregation: the one drop rule. While we no longer formally ascribe to either slavery or racial discrimination, the one drop rule is still in full force within U.S. society. This can even be seen on application forms of all sorts from college applications to the U.S.

census, where individuals are required to select one category and the option of mixed, multi- or bi-cultural, or multi- or bi-racial are not presented as choices.

The second most influential factors are social networks in which the individual lives and works. These relationships are impacted by the sociocultural situations as well as the socioeconomic status of the individual's culture group (Wallace, 2001). Rockquemore found individuals from high socio-economic status (SES) had a larger white peer and social groups, while those from lower SES had a larger black social circle. Those who had a white reference group were less likely to develop a *singular black identity* as adults. As discussed above, having a primarily white social group correlated with having a *validated border identity*. By comparison, those who expressed an *unvalidated border identity* had more African Americans in their pre-adult social networks. Thus, identity is not solely influenced by family or peer groups, but rather the type of contact an individual has with the different racial groups, and how they socially experience race that defines the relationship between social status and racial identity (Rockquemore, 2002, p. 62). Social status is a significant predictor of success in school in the U.S. I bring this up because the focus tends to be on race as a predictor of school success, but as in discussed in *Cutting Class* (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2007), the authors focus on exploring the notion of social class which has all but been removed from the discussion in U.S. classrooms. Schools are seen as a-cultural, as the great equalizer where everyone has the chance to succeed whatever race or class they are (Giroux, 2011).

Conclusion and Research Questions

This chapter addressed three disparate topics as a way to situate this study in the academic literature. It began with an examination of the dichotomy of racial categorization. It looked at how U.S. society has historically defined race and otherness as white and non-white or black and non-black. It laid out how, as a result of this dichotomy, blacks have been imbued with deficiency characteristics and whites are seen as the cultural norm. Then, moving from how blacks are pathologized in research literature, the paper discussed how racial categories play out in the institutional settings of urban schools in the United States. The section on urban education discussed how urban minority students are misunderstood, pathologized and ultimately excluded from educational success through the devaluation of black identity and culture and the normalization of white middle class identity and culture. This section introduces how students develop resistance to these stereotypes, and how it hinders or helps their school success. The section ends with a more localized examination of schools in the urban setting of Heartland City. Here the white flight and continued segregation of minority students is examined both within traditional mainstream high schools as well as charter high schools. Regardless of academic programming in the urban setting, the schools fail to graduate 50% of their student population (Midwest Department of Education, 2011). Finally the chapter explores multiracial identity and history. It begins with a discussion of Park's marginal man and Erikson's mono-racial adolescent identity development, which until recently was viewed as the foundation of how multiracial individuals failed to develop healthy adult identities. The section then takes a more

specific look at multiracial history from colonial times to today. Not only did early multiracial people hold an intermediate status between whites and blacks, but also formed part of a black elite, both politically and culturally. During the Jim Crow era, the focus turned toward blackness and strengthening black identity and working toward racial equality. The post-Civil Right era brought new interest in multiracial people claiming an identity that was a marriage of both their white heritage and their black heritage. As multiracial intellectuals and individuals in interracial unions sought space and place in the political, social and cultural arenas, they fought against not only the black deficiency model, but also for the ability and right to claim part of their white heritage that traditionally has been ignored. The chapter discusses how multiracial black and white students are in essence an invisible minority forced by government and historical group categorization to understand themselves as black. The final section discusses the various theories of how multiracial individuals categorize themselves in spite of normative pressure from both blacks and whites. The purpose of this literature review is to situate my dissertation within the academic literature and as a lead into the primary research questions that have guided the review and framed the whole research project.

These questions are:

- To what extent does racism in schools impact multiracial identity conception and affect ethnicity and racial choice in teens?

- To what extent do multiracial children feel the „stigma“ associated with their mixed identity affects school relationships, with peers and teachers?
- In what ways do biracial and multiracial teens develop identity in the mono-racial context of U.S. schools?
- And finally how do students develop advocacy for themselves in the school context?

Overall this dissertation is an attempt to expand the understanding of how multiracial teens conform to the racial identity categories, resist or refuse to be categorized at all, as well as to discover and expand the understanding of biracial students in our schools in hopes to be more inclusive and develop a more multicultural pedagogy that allows all students to succeed and develop full, healthy adult identities. It also attempts to show the fallacy of mono-racial categories in an increasingly multicultural, multiethnic and multiracial culture and society. The paper addresses multiple audiences not just multiracial individuals and their families, but teachers, school counselors, administrators and anyone who works with multiracial teens, in order to better support students who are and will continue to move through the U.S. educational system. The paper in no way attempts to devalue the difficulties that minority students encounter in schools or society, but rather expand our understanding of who they are, how they think and how they approach their struggles in a system where racism remains a significant problem. The following chapter introduces the methodology used for data collection, speaks to the method of analysis of the data as well as introducing the population who participated in this study.

Chapter 3: The Elusive Methodology of Critical Ethnography

This chapter discusses the methodology, data collection and analysis methods for this critical ethnography. It includes a brief discussion of the city and state where the research project takes place, as well as the researched population. The primary methods of data collection used for this critical ethnography are: unstructured, in-depth interviews of ten high school students, four teachers and two school administrators; participant observations; focus groups; student writing, poetry and music; and researcher field notes. The methods were selected to frame an understanding of how multiracial high school students construct and understand their adult racial and socio-cultural identities vis-à-vis their school and their social environments. The analysis was framed first through thick description of the data collected by the interviews, observations, and field notes. These multiple data collection methods form a more comprehensive picture of the students' experience in schools, and their experience with race, racism and the dichotomous categorizations that exist in the U.S. They further allow for the exploration of the solutions the students have used to help them form positive self-concepts and stable multiracial/ multicultural identities. Once the data were discussed, categorical themes were generated from the data. The themes were used to interpret the students' reality in the greater cultural context, allowing for inferences on how race affects the schooling and identity of these teens and others like them.

Objective

This study seeks to develop a clearer understanding of how multiracial/multiracial teens understand, navigate and construct self in a school system where they can often be seen as monoracial students. The primary reason for using ethnographic methodology is its ability to provide thick description of what is seen, said or experienced. At the same time, it is a way of extracting and constructing meaning from the experience using the subjects own words, behaviors and cultural artifacts. The data collection is framed around developing not only an understanding of how teens see themselves in the school environment, but also as means of critically examining the need for clear racial categorization of people that is required by schools and U.S. society. These themes are built into this study using ethnomethodology, but first the paper examines the methodology of critical ethnography its theoretical underpinnings.

The Ethnographic Frame

Ethnography is the study of lived experience, typically a group's experience or lived culture. It allows the researcher to do two things: describe and interpret what is being observed and cataloged. Since ethnography is not based on 'hard' numbers or science, it is, by nature, both objective and subjective (Creswell, 2003). An ethnography can study a group, organization or an individual in a bounded situation (Patton, 2003).

> ...[E]thnographies very appropriately focus on a certain situation, a group, a culture or an institutional location to study it for what goes on there, how these individuals or members to this group perceive things and how they might differ in time and place from other such groups or situations (Van Maanen, 1990, p. 22).

In the case of this study, the group focused on is multiracial/multiracial teens in Midwest high school (MWHS) in Heartland City. They are not a “naturally” occurring ethnic group, but, rather, a social and economic group. Stake (2003) argues that such groups are clear and defined units of study. Thus, the paper looks briefly (due to research constraints) at students in their “native habitat”: the schools, classrooms, school yard, home and neighborhood. Critical theory adds to this experience a lens that explores the status and interactions of underrepresented groups and directs its gaze to help expose the both overt exclusionary practices and the more subtle forms of subjugation in U.S. culture.

> Critical ethnography is a way of applying a subversive worldview to the conventional logic of cultural inquiry. It does not stand in opposition to conventional ethnography. Rather, it offers a more direct style of thinking about the relationships among knowledge, society, and political action. The central premise is that one can be both scientific and critical, and that ethnographic description offers a powerful means of critiquing culture and the role of research within it (Thomas, 1993, p. vii).

Not only does this study examine the experiences of ten teens, but it also looks at how racial perceptions of these students affect their self-conception as well as their projection of self to others.

Embedding Ethnographers

While ethnographers traditionally use a variety of methods to collect data, all of these methods help to focus data collection on lived experience. Ethnographic researchers are embedded in the community that they are studying: “The ethnographer seeks a deeper immersion in others' worlds in order to grasp what they experience as

meaningful and important" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Goffman (1989) has argued that ethnography is the attempt to penetrate an "other's" social situation. Because field research is not a passive experience, the researcher develops an understanding of the research participants' experience and the inner workings of the researched community. However, a field researcher cannot assume that she is a "detached observer." The ethnographer engages at a deeper level in the lives of those whom she studies, and, in this case, the ethnographer is a part of the researched community as a parent of a multiracial child (Emerson et al., 1995). As Patton (2003) notes, such researchers are interested in observing what is naturally occurring. "[E]thno-methodologists attempt to make explicit what might be called the group's 'tacit knowledge'... by forcing it to the surface through disrupting violations of ordinary experience, since ordinary routines are what keep tacit knowledge at an unconscious, tacit level" (p. 110).

Ultimately, this paper is a look at the perspective of the students in the community of school as they engage with teachers, administrators and other students. Perspective includes both the individual's actions and the beliefs and understanding about the actions.

> [Perspective] assumes that a human being is an active agent, constantly engaged in the process of construction of his social self, and that what he does depends on how he perceives himself in relation to various feature of his environments. In turn, his beliefs reflect an evaluation of his actions in terms of their success or failure. It is the dynamic process of interaction between self and environment and the resulting combination of an individual's beliefs and actions in relation to that environment that the term 'perspective' attempts to explain (Cusick,1973, p. 11).

Because school is often considered outside of the community in which it is placed, a case more so now when schools serve large metro areas and no longer are tied to the area in which the campus is found, they are considered as isolated entities that can be compared with other schools without examination of the culture within which the individual school is found (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2007). Since schools are located within a given community in this country, they are affected by the people who work within their walls, who are in turn products of not only the school but also their respective communities. Without a perspective on the students within school walls, a complete understanding of school and school culture cannot be formed. “Implied in this concept is the assumption that a school, or indeed any social situation, may not be taken as a single, plainly discernible entity, commonly perceived and understood by all those related to it” (Cusick, 1973, p. 5).

The perspective that Cusick is discussing is important because, to comprehend how people make sense of their lives and what they do, the research must make “a genuine attempt to see and understand their world as they see it and understand it” (Cusick, 1973, p. 8). This is especially relevant for school administrators, counselors, teachers and anyone who works in an educational setting. In studying the environment, it is key to look at the view point of the person or people who create it; here, that is the "perspective" of the multiracial student. To do this adequately, both the participant observations and in depth interviews, as well as focus groups, that this research proposes to utilize are important.

Methods

Methodology is, as Van Maanen (1990) puts it, “the theory behind the method.” It is what drives the researcher’s methods forward and carries the weight of a theoretical bend. In this case, there are five methods being used, each with a different but overlapping outcome: in-depth, open ended interviews with students, teachers and administrators; participant observations; focus groups; author self-reflections; informal group observations; informal interviews and field notes. These methods combine well, as they allow for varying depths and varied perspectives of the subject's experience (Geertz, 1973).

Unstructured and informal interviews present a more personalized view of the problem and give voice to the individual who otherwise might not be heard, while at the same time being guided by the interviewer. Participant observations place the researcher in the thick of things, allowing her to see first-hand how the questions' themes play out in daily situations. Informal observations (which in this case will be community events such as dinners, picnics, and community organized events) supplement the interview data by capturing the lived experiences of the students and their teachers, as well as observing the interactions and community's discussion and understanding of race and its role in student identity development, unveiling deeper issues that the researcher might not have discovered in the interviews or the observations alone.

Focus groups offer the opportunity for students to interact with each other, share experiences and create meanings that might otherwise not emerge in an individual interview or during observations, as well as creating a safe space where they can express themselves openly. The final method, included self-reflection of the researcher. The author also collected her field notes to serve as a supplement to the data collected through the other avenues, documenting the researcher's perceptions, feelings, reactions and immediate observations.

Participant observations. Observation does not rely on what people say, but is based on the direct observations of the researcher. It puts to test what people say they do by seeing if they do it. Participant observations require fieldwork, putting the researcher in direct contact with the subjects, but in a more generalized manner rather than in direct contact with an individual. Participant observations are anthropological in nature and help to “understand the culture and processes of the groups being investigated” (Denscombe, 1998, p. 140). In this fieldwork situation, the observations occur in the subjects' “natural” environment, the schools.

The use of participant observations in the classrooms focuses on the intersection of race and culture in the students’ lives at school and in their community. The frame for the observations will be qualitative. The researcher uses a rubric that serves two functions: number of times a behavior is observed, and a means of capturing description of the class periods as they progress. The categories to observe are demonstrated through both teacher and learner initiated discussion of race and racial issues during

class time and student peer discussions and reflections of race outside of classes. Included with the observations the researcher constructed a “contact summary form” which was completed after each observation to note significant events, or problems with the structure of the observation (Miles and Huberman, 1994). (See Appendix A for observation protocol).

Some data were recorded during the observation, but, since the focus was participant observations, the researcher was in the thick of things and recorded more detailed and personalized observations after the observation was completed. Creswell (1998) recommended that the protocol sheet for observations be open enough for each question to allow sufficient recording of observations. In the case of participant observations, the initial observations focused on the observation and introduction of the observer in the school site. The purpose here was to build trust, adjust participants to the observer's presence and for the observer to familiarize herself with the observation site, the rhythm of the school and its classroom and the teacher's mode of working and instruction.

In 2010, I spent two days a week for nine months at MWHS. In the beginning, I spent time in the main office to experience the ebb and flow of the school day. This was the first time I spent any extended time in an American high school, as a student or as an observer. I wanted to become familiar with all aspects of the school day, from the working of the front office to the classrooms, hallways and lunch rooms. I also wanted to become a familiar face in the school before I spent any extended time in the

classrooms. Before I entered any class, I asked the assistant principal, Ms. Adams, to send an e-mail to the faculty that I was available to help in any classroom. Once I was more comfortable in the school, I began working mainly in two very different classrooms, a language class and a science class. After I few weeks, at the request of the science teacher and because a number of student participants were in his classes, I began to spend most of my time in his class. Five of my student participants were found in his classes; the other five were introduced to me by Ms. O'Brien.

Once I had identified the students for my study, I contacted each of the students' teachers by email and introduced myself and my study, and I requested permission to spend time observing in their classrooms. The majority of teachers were very receptive to my requests. During the spring semester, I split my time between the science classroom and following each of the students for their school day, including on invitation eating lunch with the student and friends. In total, I followed each student approximately 10-12 times; it was difficult to tell the exact number as some of the students were in the same classes, so I had more time to observe them. With other students, I increased the number of times for observation. When first entering any of the classrooms, I introduced myself to the teacher and explained the purpose for my visit and requested that I be allowed to return at later times. The majority of the time, I spent my time in the back of the classroom or in the most unobtrusive place in the room; at other times, I would help with class assignments. Sometimes, the students in the classes would ask me why I was there; otherwise, they tended to ignore me. By the

time I was conducting the individual observations, I knew quite a number of students in the school, so I did not stand out as much.

Drawbacks. Initially, the time used to observe is limited as the researcher needs to adjust to the intense demands and sustained concentration required during observations. Some other drawbacks of participant observations are defining the roles and switching between the role of a classroom aide and observer, having enough time to develop more in-depth observation techniques within the classroom, assessing veracity of observations and moving from broad observations to more narrowly focused observations. Participant observations are further complicated because the researcher brings her own learned behavior and the preconceived notions of what she should or would find.

Interviews. Both formal and informal, interviews with key informants in a community are one of the fundamental methods in ethnographic research. Since ethnographic studies are qualitative in nature, the qualitative interviews were used. "Qualitative interviewing explores the shared meanings that people develop in work groups, ethnic neighborhoods, recreational centers, hospitals, churches and any other places where people interact" (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 8). This form of interviewing is more like a conversation than a question and answer session between the interviewer and interviewee. "Qualitative interviewers listen to people as they describe how they understand the worlds in which they live and work" (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 3). They explore social phenomena, like race and identity in the context of this study. Qualitative

interviews delve deeply into the world of the interviewees and extrapolate larger socio-cultural themes from the data collected. Using this technique of interviewing makes the researcher and the researched into partners in the research. It allows the subject to elaborate on the questions rather than fitting the subject into predetermined categories, as a structured interview does.

The interviews used in this project are unstructured interviews with open-ended questions. These types of questions allowed for more flexibility in the interviewing process, since each informant is different and may share their information more or less readily. “Asking everyone the same questions makes little sense in qualitative interviewing where the goal is to find out what happened and why, in rich and individualistic terms” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 11). Collecting data like this allows for thick description, which is so valuable to the ethnographic researcher. At the same time, it gives the subject voice within the research, rather than just having the researcher's observations. It also created a better rapport between the interviewer and the students, and they were able to ask questions as well during the interviews. Cultural interviews search for “the special and shared meanings that members of a group develop, the kinds of activities that group members typically do, and the reasons why they do them” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 28). This is done by eliciting stories and anecdotes of the informant's life and experiences, which the researcher then interprets to create models of shared cultural meaning within a community. As a critical researcher, one of the

purposes of qualitative interviewing is to expose the flaws and faults in society and offer suggestions and means to change the social structure (Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

Student interviews. The ten student participants were each interviewed twice over a nine month period that began in October 2010 and ended in June 2011. The interviews were comprised of open-ended questions. The selected students were interviewed once early on in the observation phase and then again at the end of the school year. Because the interview questions were open-ended, the author audio-taped them for transcription and review during the coding period. A digital audio recorder was used to capture the interview data, and files were stored on a separate, password protected hard drive in my home office. It is here that the students own views and words inform the students' perceptions of their life and racialized experiences.

I did not begin interviewing until late in the year when I felt the students were comfortable enough with me to talk openly. Each interview was done either over a lunch hour or after school, depending on the student's after school schedule. The students were interviewed and audio-taped in settings where they were comfortable, mostly on the school grounds, in the lunchroom, quite hallways or outside when the days were nice.. I also had many informal discussions with the students during the school say, which I took notes on afterward. The nature of both the formal and informal interviews was explained when consent was obtained.

Family/ parent interviews. When conceiving of the project, I intended to interview parents and caretakers. This proved more difficult than I thought, and I ran out of time

and had to end my data collection without these interviews. I met some of the parents casually at various school events, but I was unable to arrange meetings with all but one parent.

Group interviews. I also conducted four group interviews. Group interviews provided a different forum for students, a place where they could interact with each other, share similar stories and build supportive relationships with each other. I conducted three pair interviews and one three person group interview. The pair interviews were co-ed with juniors who knew each other but had not really interacted outside of class time. The three person interview was with the two sophomores and one of the freshmen. These interviews were conducted after school in a coffee shop near the school campus. All students were invited to participate, but they did not all choose to participate. The students learned more about each other than they expected and created new friendships. These group interviews created bonds between students that allowed them to help each other out when they were having hard times. These interviews were also digitally audio-taped.

Teacher and administrator interviews. I also included four teacher and two administrator interviews to explore how the adults in the students' lives view these students and the racial environment in the school as a whole. I interviewed the school choir teacher, the dance teacher, an English teacher and a Mathematics teacher; they were all European American. The dance teachers and the math teacher had been teaching for 20+ years. The choir teacher had been teaching for fewer than 4 years, and

the English teacher was in her first year of teaching. Each teacher was formally interviewed once, but, as with the students, I had a number of informal interactions and discussions with many of the teachers in the school. I also interviewed two school administrators. The majority of the faculty at the school was European American; there were two Asian teachers, a six African American sports coaches. The administrators were all European American with the exception of one assistant principal and the school nurse, who were both African American. As the only African American faculty at the school, I chose to include them because they provided the minority perspective, which was different from other adult informants.

Informal interviews and group observations. As part of the researched community, I attended various functions that allowed for informal conversations, interviews, and moments of informal observation where the students discussed their experiences in a more relaxed and comfortable setting. I attended two school plays, two school talent shows, a school musical, the school home coming football game, other football games and basketball games. One of the notable things about school based educational research is that it operates from a notion that students and student learning is contained within the education itself rather than looking at the students as beings with varied home, social, cultural and economic experiences (Ayers, 2004). Because neither the student nor the teacher can truly leave herself and cultural being behind when she walks into a classroom, it is my contention, along with others such as Ladson-Billings (2003), Anyon (2006), and Pollack (2008), that the student should be viewed as a whole

rather than a semblance of parts where class-time makes up only one part of the equation.

Other forms of data collection. Along with the above data collected, I collected student poetry, music, video projects, and papers, as well as school newspapers. These types of data provide further insight into and another dimension to the students' experiences.

The researcher in her duality. As mentioned before, although perhaps not explicitly, the researcher plays a dual role in this project she is the data recorder and author as well as a subject within the project. During the design phase of the project, I reflected on my own experiences both as a bicultural white woman and as the parent of a multiracial and multiethnic child. I collected memories and stories, and wrote my own history of my experience as a bicultural child in communities where being more than one thing was confusing at best and exclusionary at worst. My journals and notes that focus on my experiences aim at doing two things: to fill in the home versus school blank that was mentioned above, but also as a framework of how I understand the 'problem' of being multiracial in the United States of America. As an embedded participant-researcher and ethnographer, I participated in the local community while learning about the community and observing the community's reaction to race and racial issues.

Field notes. The researcher uses field notes as a way to record personalized thick description of the researched population and the community. While this would seem to be a straight forward, perhaps even simple, task, it is not nearly that transparent, which

is why notes are not the only form of data collected; rather, they are supplements to the formal data collection. Field notes are not just simple notations that 'accurately' capture the reality observed, but are subject to the perceptions and the interpretations of the author and there is no one real or true way of understanding of an experience. Field notes are an act of interpretation and 'sense making' that selectively feature what the researcher chooses to see and what she chooses to ignore.

Effectively, an ethnographer records life's experiences, which exist in the moment, turning it into something that can be read or experienced again. This form of notetaking is called inscription, which “transforms” witnessed events, persons, and places in to words on paper” (Emerson, 1995, p. 9). Field notes are a free form of writing very different from the interviews and the participant observations, which lend character and complexity to the research. This is a selective process, which frames understanding of the situation with the sensitivity of the researcher who has lived through the experience. Field notes add to the final product, by providing not just a frame for the people being observed, but also showing the way the researcher perceived, understood and constructed meaning from the research experience. Since no research method is truly objective, field notes make explicit the subjective nature of the researcher and the observations. As Van Maanen (1988) notes, field notes are the researcher's means for preserving insights and understandings that occur during field research that might otherwise be missed. An advantage to field notes is that they accrue over the time of

the project, and become a day to day record of the experience. In this way, field notes add a dimension and depth to the research as the study occurs.

Technology used in the study. The researcher used digital audio technology for all of the data collection, except the field notes and auto-ethnographic pieces. Audio recording is a tried and true means of collecting and storing data. This tool has the advantage of capturing the informant's language for direct use in the data analysis phase as well as providing authenticity in the report through the use of direct quotes. All of the sensitive data was stored on a password protected hard drive used explicitly for this project and only the researcher had access to the raw data. Audio recordings, which seemingly catch and preserve almost everything occurring within an interaction, actually capture but a slice of ongoing social life. What is recorded in the first place depends upon when, where, and how the equipment is positioned and activated, what it can pick up mechanically, and how those who are recorded react to its presence. The researcher never transcribes an interview or field notes verbatim, but makes selective choices on such simple things as sentence structure, punctuation and grammar. The transcript is itself a product of interpretation and analysis by the researcher.

Analysis

After data collection began, I identified developing themes, as they related to the research questions. I looked for themes related to the topics of whiteness/blackness, urban educational experiences with race, means of identifying self, and reaction to others identification of the subjects. Because this was an emergent design project, the

analysis, as with many ethnographic studies, developed as I collected and coded the data. The analysis looked for recurring themes and patterns across the interviews, observations and video ethnographies. It teased out consistent cultural themes and took note of exceptional occurrences. These themes and patterns allowed the researcher to develop inferences for a larger model of the multiracial educational experience and general deep understanding of how the population is being served or underserved in Central City schools.

When I completed the data collection, I transcribed all of the interview data and coded for themes to interpret the data. The first interviews and observations served as the guide to generating the themes for data analysis. The analysis section begins by what Patton (2003) and Geertz (1993) call thick description. I have, earlier in this chapter, described in loose detail the setting where I conducted my research. In the analysis section, I describe in more detail the school settings where the actual research occurred. This may include descriptions of the school, the student body, teachers, the school day, their community and the locales where the students live, work and interact.

Progressive analysis. Part of the analysis occurred during my observations and early interviews, which guided my honing of the interview questions and led me to include the group interviews. After I collected the data, I spent a few weeks transcribing the interviews. I felt it was important to transcribe the interviews myself, because it allowed me to interact with the data at a much deeper level. Since I had to listen to each interview a number of times, it allowed me to develop categories and themes that

frame the four data chapters that follow. For clarity and coding purposes, I developed a spreadsheet for the data, which included demographic data for the students, categories of self-description, author descriptions of students and other relevant data for the analysis; it is attached in Appendix B. As I filled out the data matrix and reread the interviews, I began compiling vignettes and quotes that were relevant to the meta-themes: self-perception and social life; overt racial experiences; micro-aggression experiences and finally the means that students used to make others they interact with more or less comfortable in the interactions. The sub-categories for each chapter developed as I wrote each chapter. Each chapter explores in-depth experiences, stories and observations relevant to the meta-categories. Throughout the analysis and writing phase, I checked in with the students and faculty to make sure I was accurately reporting their stories. Ultimately, the research not only tells the story of these students, but it also examines how they fit into or do not fit into previous schema of multiracial identity. Furthermore, it expands on the context in which the students find themselves in school, as well as how they develop self in a social context.

Cultural Politics in the Research

The topic chosen for my research is a very complex and sensitive topic. It involves both cultural issues, moral issues and a topic that remains controversial in the minds of most people in the United States. Racism has touched many people's lives. As mentioned in earlier chapters, it is exacerbated by poverty, cultural misunderstanding and miscommunication, as well as entrenched notions of racial inferiority and

superiority. I recognize that researching vulnerable populations such at teens under the age of 18 can include risk for the subjects, and accordingly the interviews, focus group and observation protocols were reviewed by the Human Subjects Research Board and the Central City school district research committee before I began the data collection. All of the participants signed consent forms and the researcher explained in detail the purpose of the research and how the individual's data is used. In the paper, all student and faculty names are pseudonyms. At any time during the process, from data collection to final draft writing, participants were allowed to withdraw from the project and their individual data was destroyed, as happened with three subjects.

Researcher bias and effect. In this chapter, I have discussed the various issues with ethnographic and auto-ethnographic methodology. This included, but was not limited to, the fact that it fails to produce statistical and numerical data. It is uniquely subject to the author's interpretation of the data. Ethnography makes the study difficult to replicate and to generalize to wider populations. The second section examines the issues related to the data collection methods: participant observations, unstructured interviews, group interviews, student art work, school event observations and author reflections and field notes. All of these methods are subject to author bias; thus, it is important for the author to take note of what is not said, seen or expressed as well as what is.

In general, the researcher brings in her own preconceived ideas regarding the nature of the study and, at the same time, attempts to keep those ideas at bay in order to

objectively examine the problem she has proposed. A skilled ethnographer learns to distinguish between her objective observations and her subjective understanding of the situation. Not only does the researcher bring her own notions, but her presence effects what is taking place, and through interaction affects the individual participants. This means that by interacting in the classrooms and in the school, I alter what happens, how the people react and what is done. This is even more an issue when people are audio-recorded, as happens in this study. However, "'[c]onsequential presence,' often linked to 'reactive effects'[30],...should not be seen as 'contaminating' what is observed and learned" (Emerson, 1995, p. 3).

Author bias and cultural context affect: how I chose my methodology, how I wrote my questions and observation rubrics, as well as how I conducted the data collection. This bias and context also affect how I analyzed and understood that data and its interpretation. Being as transparent as possible, I briefly discuss my bias and context here, but expand on it during the data discussion and analysis section of the paper. I am a 38 year old Icelandic-Irish American white woman. I grew up middle class in a Scandinavian socialist democracy with a mother who sought to teach me that everyone was equal, but who still held some of the biased views of minorities discussed in chapter two. I have spent much of my adult life on the margins of society, both by choice and by sociocultural difference in my beliefs, values and need to support those who are less fortunate than I was. I was raised in a Eurocentric social and educational system both in

[30]Reactive effects: the effect the researcher's presence has on the researched population.

Iceland and in the U.S., but I have struggled to understand the irrationality of racism and racial categorization so inherent in the West. In some ways, I have lived through racism, but most of the time I have managed to surround myself with like-thinking, liberal-minded people and have thus insulated myself from too much direct contact with those who see me as a race traitor or a thrill seeker. This paper is in many ways a dialog with my experience as a single white female with a multiracial son, a way for me to critically examine our treatment at the hands of a society and educational system that I am only now coming to deeply understand and attempt to change.

School Population

Midwest High School (MWHS) is in a well-to-do Central City neighborhood, where the mean household income is $50,000 +. Central City encourages open enrollment, so many students bus to the school either on district busses or through the Central City Metro Transit system. The total population of the school is 1730. Table 3 shows the student population breakdown for the year I was in the school. Neither the Central City school district nor the school collects data on mixed race students.

Table: 3 School demographics 2010-2011

Total population	*Native American*	*Black*	*Asian*	*Hispanic*	*White*
1730	23	392	86	168	1097
	1.3%	22.2%	4.9%	9.5%	62.1%

Sample Selection

This dissertation identified student participants using purposive sampling. After I spent a few weeks working in the main office of MWHS, I spoke with my contact, Ms. Adams, an assistant principal, to request help in identifying students. Three of the young women, Camille, Jayden and Kaimi, became participants after Ms. Adams introduced me to them. Six of the students: James, Elizabeth, Denis, Chris, Lucas and Saed, were students in the science classroom where I assisted much of the academic year. The final student, Monique, was introduced to me at a basketball game by Jayden. I waited until the middle of fall to identify the participants, because I wanted to have a better sense of the school environment and culture before I began observing students. Chapter 4 discusses some of the demographic data in more detail as I introduce the ten students. My goal in selecting these students was to find a sample of average students at this school, who were representative of the cultural, ethnic and racial make-up of MWHS.

Conclusion

This dissertation directly addresses the effect forced racial categories have on student identity choices and behavior in their classrooms and within their communities. The results of the study offer a picture of students' social-cultural identity development in their lives narrated in their own words, which can better inform teachers, advisors, school officials and parents of other multiracial teens about their needs and how they think. It further opens the discussion of how to help these teens develop into successful multicultural, multiethnic and multiracial adults. Chapter four begins the discussion of the data I collected beginning with general introductions of the student participants.

Table: 4 Student Participant Demographics

Participant	Saed	Chris	James	Denis	Lucas	Monique	Kaimi	Elizabeth	Jayden	Camille
Age	17	17	17	17	18	15	15	17	16	15
grade	11	11	11	11	12	9	9	11	10	9
gender	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
ethnic mix	is/bl	na/bl	eu/bl	na/bl/wh	it/bl	ha/bl	bl/na/wh	bl/eu	eu/bl	bl/eu
self-label	mixed	Native	Mixed	Mixed	Biracial	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
mother-ethnicity	Isaeli	NA	Europea	European	Italian	Philipino	European/NA	European	European	Black
mother ed	BA	AA	N/A	BA	N/A	N/A	BA	High	BA	BA
mother marital status	Single	Single	Single	Partner	n/a	Single	Partner	Partner	Married	Partner
father-ethnicity	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black	Mixed	Black	Black	European
Father ed	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	BA	High	BA	N/A	BA

(A more detailed table of demographic data can be found in Appendix B).

Chapter 4: This Examined Life
An Exploration of Identity Creation and Projection for Multiracial Teens

"Cut me,
I bleed in many shades,
Almost as if my body can't decide what color I truly am,
I am trapped in this skin like an old Halloween costume,
And I've grown so big that it is beginning to rip at the seams,
Letting light and colors drip down my limbs,
And while my blood drips and mixes with the black dirt,
I rub the paste along my muscles,
Hoping this crimson brown color will become my new home,
What you all call skin,
That maybe society will forget I'm biracial,
Consider me black,
I'm so sick of being that "Other" option,
(Please specify),
How can I tell you what ethnicity I am and I'm still in the gray,
I'm not a bag of skittles,
More like a bag of M&Ms,
I can be any color and still have that big ass M tattooed across my chest,
Standing for Mixed,
And my grandmother tells me my ancestors blood runs through me deep,
And I'm wondering if there is a civil war going on in there,
Because none of them seem to want to show,
My black girl naps are the color of white girl hair,
And I'm beginning to think my Native side is buried beneath my heart and beyond my knee,
Those African slave wounds seem to have healed,
And I tell myself being white is wrong,
Like the Caucasians have nothing to be proud of,
Maybe I'm afraid I will end up forcing people from their lands,
I wish color had no history,
Because the older I'm getting the more I realize I'm not part of one story but many,
And this is something most people would be proud of,
But when your entire families history consists of them raping, pillaging, murdering, and forgetting about one another,
Which story do you decide to tell?" (Kaimi, 2011)

As an introduction to the ten students who participated in my study, I begin with my own development in understanding these ten students. My comprehension was at first guided by existing research. However, as I got to know students, I discovered the limitations of my conceptions. This discussion moves on to the students backgrounds, which includes students' descriptions of self and their home life. A discussion of students' choices of labels follows and leads to an examination of multiracial students who are questioned in a school setting. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of current categorizations and how others and my own conceptions of multiracial students forecloses how they are understood.

Sorting the M&M's: Seeing Multicultural and Multiracial Students at MWHS

The students who participated in this study are a direct reflection of the multiplicity of relationships and the intricacies of cultural blending in the U.S. They are as ethnically, racially and culturally diverse as the society from which they spring. This calculated focus on diversity became important to the integrity of the study. When first proposing this project, I intended to include only students of European and African American heritage, but as I got to know the school and its students, I realized this was an artificial limitation placed on the research by much of the literature that preceded this study.

The first time these restrictive boundaries confronted me was during my first days at Midwest High School (MWHS). After my tour of the school, I took a seat at the front desk with Sue, one of the four hall monitors. I wanted get a feel of the school day's ebb and flow, and to watch the population. A mother stopped by the front desk after she

dropped off homework for her son; Sue introduced me: "This is Brynja. She is researching multiracial identity." "That's very interesting, my son is Nepali and German American," the mother told me. At the time, I still planned to focus on black and white students, so I did not see her son as fitting my proposed sample population. I soon realized that following the literature and the current ways of categorization failed to provide a representative picture of the school's mixed race student population. As my goal was to look at the mixed race students, I decided to broaden my inclusion criteria to include any racial mixture. As a result, I gained a wider view of what being multicultural and multiracial meant at MWHS.

An incident in early fall further cemented my changing conception of student participants. One of the student participants, Denis, and I were sitting in the lunchroom after school right before football practice. We had just started our first formal interview, when Denis' friend Chris wandered into the empty lunchroom, using it as a short cut. He greeted Denis with a cheerful "Whad'up cuz?"[31] and came over to exchange a hand greeting. As Chris left the room, I turned to Denis "I really like Chris; he is a lot of fun. Too bad I can't include him in my study." Denis smilingly replied "He's my cousin, he's mixed, too." This gave me pause. Here I was in the school to look at mixed race student experience and one of my student friends was mixed race, but I did not even recognize it.

[31]I did not think he meant a relation as "cuz" is a term used by many African American boys. It distinguishes between gang group members. The Bloods use the term to identify each other without flying colors that can cause problems. This term as well as "fam" (which identifies crips) has become part of the language that students and minorities use with each other even when they themselves are not affiliated with any gang, which neither of these teens is.

At that moment, I realized I had been caught up in the same fallacy I was trying to illuminate, how categorization essentializes people who are so much more than just a number in racial category data sets. Chris is of medium build, muscular, with tight curly hair that was most often kept in a tight fade[32]. He smiles and laughs easily, is very good with quick repartee and gets frustrated when confronted with what he sees as willful ignorance or mistreatment. We had quickly become friends in his science class as I demonstrated a knack for the same kind of teasing and good humor that he showed. Yet, I failed to look past the brown color of his skin, his phenotypical markers of "blackness." I had reduced him to the "lowest common denominator" and passed him over in much the same way as others often do with mixed race children. Multiracial students are categorized as mono-racial on Central City district school forms. While this was not the first time I had come face to face with my own assumptions about the proposed study population, this experience made me wonder how often other adults viewed these students in a similar way. Assumptions like mine can and do affect how students engage in the academic environment. This aspect is further discussed in the following chapters.

Getting to Know You: Seeing Identity Changes

Adolescence is a time of exploration and self-creation. It is the time to pull away from familial influence and develop a sense of self. Given the significant changes in society in the past 50 years, I believe that current theories of identity offer a limited

[32] Fade: a short haircut, common among black young men. The hair is cut very close to the scalp, essentially fading from the crown of the head to the base of the skull.

understanding of what makes a person an individual in modern society. The rapid development of technology, the "purported" increase in standard of living, the nearly unlimited access to data and information, increased mobility, even the current economic downturn and erosion of the middle class affect identity and how it is portrayed to others. These developments suggest the need for a reexamination of how we develop identity as well as what is really meant by a stable identity.

There may exist a "foundational" identity that answers the question of "who are you?" As an ecology, identity is made up of many moving parts. The question holds many answers which may change depending on the context. For example, in one instance, I define myself as a mother, but while I was at MWHS, I was a researcher. And, identity begs the question, what goes into the making of the modern mixed race adolescent identity? "Sociocultural definitions of personhood may threaten to 'repressively categorize' biracial individuals into appearance-based groups that overlook individual notions of identity and group connectedness" (Jayden & Nanney, 2011, p. 197). As the quote illustrates, overlooking these aspects are at the heart of this identity discussion. Race and gender identity among other points on the identity spectrum can be, and often are, malleable, especially in the teen years where students are exploring various aspects of their identity.

The Opportunity to Choose

It has been argued that non-whites have less of an opportunity to choose which groups they can adhere to from a racial perspective considering that race is confined by

phenotypical characteristics as well as 'the one drop rule' (See chapter 2, p. 66). This section focuses on student self-description, self-justification and social interactions, as well as their self-reporting of family life, and their understanding of their ethnic origins. While some of the students and I became quite close, others were more reserved. The majority of the students lived in single parent, female headed households. Some students had contact with their non-custodial parent(s). All of the students had aspirations to go to college, and some even knew what they wanted to study.

Asking Permission: Finding Mixed Race Students

After I found out that Chris was mixed, I approached him about being in the study.

> Me: "I didn't know you were mixed. Why didn't you say anything?"
> Chris: "You never asked."
> Me: "True that. So what are you mixed with?"
> Chris: "I'm black and Native."
> Me: "Oh, what tribe?"
> Chris: "Blackfoot or blackfeet, I think. I don't know which.[33]"

Chris transferred to Midwest High School (MWHS) from a majority African American high school in Heartland City. "I came here from a different school cuz my cousin [Denis] wanted me to come play football with him." He lives with his mother and siblings. Chris' mother worked for the Central City school district. Chris often told stories about spending time with his family. "The other day, me and my sisters watched *Gnomeo and Juliet* on my phone. We all lay on my bed." He was most of the time easy going but was

[33] Blackfoot and Blackfeet are part of the same confederacy of an Algonquin tribe that live in Canada and in Montana.

quick to anger. “I used to be on a learning plan for attention but not anymore.” He had a job after school, and I often saw him making up his homework in other classes.

Saed, a junior, had an African American father and an Israeli mother. Saed’s mother was trained as an accountant. “My mom and dad had drug problems, so they took me out of my home. I lived with a family in Baxter, but now I live with my uncle in Heartland City.” He was removed from his home at 12. When I met him, he was a new transfer from a rural high school. “I talk to my mom when I can and my uncle takes me to see my dad when he goes to see him down in Bloomington.” Saed was a serious and studious young man with a quick wit who enjoyed writing poetry and rap songs. He considered himself an outsider, someone who got to know many students, but “I don’t belong to any group.” He was not initially happy at MWHS.

Denis was African American and German American; he lived with his mother, younger brother and his mother’s current boyfriend. “I have some problems with my mom’s boyfriend, he doesn’t trust me. He’s always emptying out my bag looking for stuff, you know drug stuff. It makes me angry and sometime I fight with him.” Denis’ mother worked for a financial company. While he did not consider himself a strong student, he was a hard worker. “I’m ok at school, but I try. I’m not really good at math, that’s my younger brother. He’s really good at math.” He admitted to me that he had trouble with anger. “Yeah, I have an anger problem, but I channel it into my [football] playing. I like to hit people really hard, I mean really hard. I’ve hurt a couple players.”

James, a quiet young man, lived with his mother and three younger siblings. He was African American, German and French. When I asked James if I could speak to his mom, he told me “No she’s not interested.” I found out later through our Facebook friendship that his junior year had been quite difficult. His mother had been very ill and passed away in the spring. James was a good student and often showed me his grades at the end of the term. “Hey B, want to see my grades from last semester? See three A’s and two B’s.” He was also considered one of the best basketball players at the school.

Lucas, the senior, was the most reticent of my subjects. “Yeah, my dad’s black and my mom’s Italian, but I live with my grand-parents.” His grandparents were retired college faculty, but Lucas would not share any information about them. “Yeah, they’re ok, they let me do what I want.” He graduated on time, but admitted he transferred from private school for his final year. As a senior, he did not take his classes seriously, and was frequently found wandering aimlessly around the classroom and the hallways. “I came there to have an easy year, just goof off and party, you know, just have fun. I knew I wouldn’t have to work hard here and only I needed to take a few classes.”

The young women’s heritage was as varied as the young men’s. Elizabeth reported that her father was African American and her mother was Spanish, French and Canadian. Elizabeth’s mother was the manager at a hair salon, “but she won’t ever do my hair.” Elizabeth was not happy at home and spent as much time away from it as she could. “I can’t stand it at home. I have to parent my mom all the time. It feels like we’ve

switched roles." Elizabeth was very involved in dance and drama at the school as well as being on the city wide student government.

Kaimi's mother was Anishinabe Ojibway, German and Irish American and her father was mixed African American and European American. Kaimi's mother worked at a medical clinic and was working on her BA in journalism. Kaimi was a very outgoing young woman with many friends. "My freshman year I felt like I had to stay with my same group of friends, from before, but now I feel like I want to meet more people different people." She was active in a teen program for Planned Parenthood. She was an accomplished poet and singer; it is her poem on identity that opens the chapter. Kaimi was a good student, but we rarely discussed her classes or her grades.

As a very quiet and thoughtful young woman, Monique rarely actively participated in class. She usually sat in the back or on the side of the classrooms. Monique, she answered questions when called on, took notes and did classroom work as asked, but as she said "I'm an ok student, school's alright." She was involved in sports, "I'm playing softball this spring. I was on dance line in middle school, but I don't do that anymore." Her mother was Filipino and her father was African American. She lived with her mother and her three siblings. Her mother was a masseuse. Her dad lived in the cities. As a young girl, Monique and her family had moved a lot. She changed schools and often had to make new friends. "In middle school, some of my friends turned on me. Started telling bad stories about me and I didn't like it. Now I don't have a lot of friends, just my

boyfriend, his cousin and his girlfriend. We hang out a lot after school." She and Jayden were lifelong friends and had spent a great deal of time at each other's houses.

Jayden is a very outgoing young woman, with an infectious laugh. She is very self-possessed. She and I often had lively discussions; she was as curious about me and my life as I was about hers. "So what about you? How come you're interested in people like me, you know mixed race kids?" "Well, I have a mixed race son, he's nineteen. His dad is Haitian and I'm Icelandic and Irish American." She grew up with her mother, "I would say my mom is my best friend. We do lots of stuff together, girl stuff, like getting our nails done or going to the movies. You know just girl stuff." Jayden's mother was a property manager with a degree in business. Her mother married that summer, and they had moved in with her stepfather. Jayden had a large group of friends and acquaintances. I frequently ran into her at sporting and other school events. In class, she was often reserved or spent time talking to her seat mates.

The final participant, Camille, was perhaps the quietest of all the students I worked with. She and I developed an instant rapport; one of the assistant principals introduced me to her one day during lunch. We sat down and talked for the whole 20 minutes. She struggled a bit in math. "I just don't get why we have to take algebra. I just don't get it." Camille was not happy with her grades from the fall semester. "I really slacked off. I need to work harder this semester." She lived with her mother and two younger siblings. Camille's mother was a nurse, and her father was an engineer and mechanic.

Often students are understood by their on-paper racial categorization and phenotypical markers. Yet, the students are more than this. These students knew both their racial and their ethnic heritages. They were aware of their academic abilities and were active in school sports and arts, as well as non-school organizations. By just looking at the boxes the students tick on forms, the students are reduced to very simplistic terms that may benefit funding, but does not help students develop adult identities.

College aspirations. All of the students expressed an interest in going to college. The young men were less clear about what they wanted to learn. "I'm looking to get a football scholarship to college, I have recruiters talkin' to me all the time…I don't know maybe business or construction. I'm good at building things" (Denis). He received a scholarship to play football at a small Midwestern college in the fall of 2012. Chris talked about food a lot: "I don't know; business I guess, maybe a restaurant thing, I really like food, I like to eat. [Laughing] But not to cook." James once told me: "B, you know that [basketball highlights] video you helped me make? It helped a recruiter find me and I got a scholarship to a good school. They, like, help their students a lot with school. The coach won't let you play unless your work is done." Lucas talked briefly about learning about business. He, like Denis and Chris, knew he wanted to attend college but was not sure what he wanted to study. "I don't know business maybe." "Like working in the entertainment industry, so maybe like hotel management." He attended a local community college in the fall of 2011.

Saed was the only young man who knew what he wanted to do and had developed a plan for it. “I wanna be a nurse…I want to help people. I like helping people.” His grades were good enough to attend Heartland University. “I got into Heartland University, but I’m going to go to Central Midwest State, because they support their students better and have a higher graduation rate for student like me.” This was more in line with how the young women thought about their futures. Elizabeth attended a Midwest State college in fall 2012. “They have a really good dance program. I want to study dance and psychology, maybe learn to be a therapist, like an art therapist.” Kaimi, a more serious student, also indicated she had an idea of what she wanted to do after high school: “I want to study psychology and sociology. I think people are really interesting and I want to help people.”

Like Kaimi, Monique and Elizabeth, Jayden expressed a desire to go to college to be a counselor. “I want to be a psychologist and you know like help people. My friends are always asking me for advice; you know they know I’m a good listener. I tell them straight.” Camille, even as a freshman, knew what she wanted “…to be a midwife. I always liked kids. I love helping people and I really like taking care of babies. I take care of my cousins all the time. I’m just good at it.” All of the students were interested in service oriented jobs that required empathy and patience. While the young men indicated that they were more interested in business related professions, those also require people skills. These students recognized that they had the skills and sensitivity

required for helping others and were interested in finding professions where they could really use the skills.

Homelife: Trials and Triumphs

The students' home lives and school lives form part of how the students understand themselves, as what they learn from their families is as valuable as what is learned in school. Home is the first place students learn about identity and belonging. Teens, while trying on new ways of being, are constricted by familial and academic demands that often do not make sense or are not logical to them. Often this creates a great deal of tension between parent and child, even more so when there is one primary parent and there are many children in the household.

Our conversations about Elizabeth's family revealed that she had difficulties with her mother. "My mom, I feel like I have to parent her, she goes out drinking on the weekends with her friends. I can't stand it at home." Elizabeth's parents got divorced a few years ago and her father remarried. "I don't get along with my dad's wife at all. She is far too controlling and doesn't trust me. She never lets me go out. Before my dad married her we got along really well, but now he sides with her [his wife] all the time." Many of Elizabeth's complaints were typical adolescent problems: not being allowed to stay out late, fighting with her siblings. At the same time, Elizabeth had quite a bit of freedom for a young woman her age. She was out of the house most evenings, as she was involved in many extracurricular activities.

Developing ethnic pride. Other students had closer relationships with their families. “Me and my family do a lot of things together. We like to eat Chinese food together; we watch movies all the time. When I was younger my mom used to show up at school to give presentations about Native Americans. She used to bring us fry-bread and tell stories” (Chris). Chris was often exposed to Native cultural events such as language classes. “Me and my brother were taking Ojibwe classes, but I don’t remember much. My brother remembers all the names of animals and stuff.” Chris’ experiences with his native side were important to him; his voice filled with pride when he talked about it.

This contrasted with Kaimi, who had not been exposed to her Anishinabe culture until recently. “I have been spending a lot of time with my grandma learning about my Native heritage. My mom never talked about it, I think she had some bad experiences when she was younger.” Kaimi felt it was important as a developing adult to learn about her various heritages; her poem is a testament to this learning process. Knowing where they came from helped the students feel rooted and have a sense of who they were, in essence giving them a rock to stand on.

A father as a guide. Elizabeth was very proud of her father. He had been very involved in his neighborhood and in education through the school board. This involvement led Elizabeth to become involved with student government at the district level. Monique smiled when I asked her about her father: “My dad is in a group called Mad Dads…I’m not sure, something to work with the community, help keep the neighborhoods safe, that kind of thing.” Mad Dads (Men Against Destruction Defending

Against Drugs and Social Disorder) is an organization that focuses on bringing safety and family values into struggling communities by reducing gang related violence and finding ways of helping young people to get ahead.

Not all of the students had positive things to say about or experiences with their fathers. Kaimi told me: “I spend the weekends with my dad. We have a lot of fun and I get to see my sisters. My mom worries about it a bit. She doesn’t think he’s a good influence.” During our talks about family and family life, she mentioned this same issue in regard to her younger half-sisters. “I worry about my little sisters, my dad doesn’t treat their mom right. I don’t want them growing up thinking it is ok to treat women like that.” Many of the young men spoke of their fathers in semi-humorous, but derogatory terms, calling them whores, cads or druggies. Chris did not see his dad that often, “I don’t see him much he lives over the other side of town. He’s a whore.” “What do you mean?” “You know a whore, he has a lot of kids.” Two of the young men were unaware of who their biological fathers were. “Yeah I don’t even know my dad’s name. I just know his initial T” (Denis). Denis felt the gap of not having a male figure in his life. “I’ve had some good coaches, one who helped me a lot. He was kind of like a father to me.” While the students may be raised in mostly female headed households, they still maintained various levels of contact with the parent who did not live in the home.

Other adult as support systems. In the absence of a father figure, some of the students found male support in the form of sports coaches or uncles. Adult support was important to the students; if it was not there, they sought it out. I spent some time with

Elisabeth, Saed and Kaimi, when they needed support and were having difficulties, especially with school work or relationship problems. Talking to me was grounding for the students. “You were one of the main reasons I graduated” (Denis). “I miss talking to you, it was always so helpful when I needed advise” (Saed). Adolescence is a turbulent time and having adult support is important to helping students develop into responsible adults. In some ways, my interest in these students helped them develop a better relationship with each other, with the school and even with their parents. “You know after you talked to my mom, our relationship got much better, we can talk to each other more openly now” (Kaimi). In the absence of strong familial relationships, students looked for a connection with an adult.

School Choice

None of the students lived within walking distance of the school and only Kaimi lived in the neighborhood. Parents and students chose this school for its academics and arts. MWHS is considered the best public school in the state (US News and World Report, accessed 7.31.2012). Elizabeth had to take two busses. “I have to get up really early like 5 to take the bus to get to school. But I knew this was a really really good school, so it’s ok.” Camille lived in a neighboring town and her mother drove her every day. Kaimi’s mother moved into the school district so her daughter could attend the school.

James told me he had given up a good opportunity to attend a suburban school and play football because the academics were considered good at MWHS. “There was a recruiter from a different school that wanted me to come there, but my mom knew this

school was a good school so I came here." Chris transferred at the request of his cousin Denis to play football with him. Both he and Chris lived in a different school area, but due to open enrollment, were attending MWHS. Monique, Elizabeth and Jayden attended the school for the arts and sports programs. Elizabeth and Monique were both very interested in dance and were taking dance classes. "I want to be a dancer, and I knew Midwest had a good dance program" (Elizabeth).

Distance affected some students' attendance. Chris frequently missed his early classes; on days that I shadowed him, I would be in his classes waiting for him, while he was still waking up or on the bus texting me that he was on the way. Even when the students did not think they themselves were good students, both they and their parents were well aware of the school's success. They sought MWHS because of the opportunities it provided them.

"What are you?"

Being in school, feeling a part of a community is as important as the academics. A sense of belonging helps students participate more easily in the classroom. Part of belonging is having the student's personal and group identity validated. Mixed race students are often asked to validate who they are. The most frequently asked question of mixed race people is "What are you?" They are asked this question so frequently that it becomes a matter of course how they answer it. I avoided asking this question initially with the students, since I find it a rather insulting question. In Icelandic, there is a more appropriate question, "Hverra manna ert þú? (Which translates as 'who are your

people?') This question is perhaps more appropriate in a small community, but it gives the person the opportunity to describe themselves in her own words.

The 'what are you' question was saved for the formal interview phase of the study. Since this question is so frequently asked, it was important to get a deeper understanding of the students prior to asking the question. As other researchers have found, the responses vary by context and to whom the student is speaking. The students said they most frequently told people they were "mixed", "mixed race" or "biracial." Chris was the only student who selected a singular identity, "I'm a Native." He claimed: "I do it because people don't expect it."

A majority of the students knew their parents racial and cultural make up, their people, as the descriptions earlier indicated. Many of them did not feel that race was a relevant measure, and they put little stock in how others saw them. "I don't know why is so important" (Lucas). Some students, such as Elizabeth, Saed and Kaimi, also shifted between cultural frames with ease and had large groups of acquaintances. These students also felt they had experienced little overt racism from other students at MWHS. "No the students here are pretty cool. They haven't said anything like that."

The one student who seemed quite stunned and taken aback by my questions about negative racial experiences was Monique; her primary group of friends consisted of African American students. When I asked her the question, she responded "I'm mixed. You know, mixed Filipino and black." Monique saw no reason to talk about race even when it came up in school during a math class (which is further discussed in chapter 5).

She rarely spoke about her race, “I don’t know why people think it is so important. You know I’m just me.” During our discussions, it felt that I was forcing her to think and talk about it. I tried to ask the question about racial experiences in a fairly ambiguous way ‘Have you ever been in a situation where you felt uncomfortable or out of place?’ Or ‘Have you ever felt like you have been treated differently because of who you are?’ It was important to get students to reflect on their experiences with race, but not to color their responses.

> Me: Have you ever had anyone treat you differently?
> Monique: What do you mean?
> Me: Has anyone ever said anything mean to you or made you feel bad?
> Monique: No, never. I don’t remember.

These questions were open-ended enough to lead in any direction, but since the students knew they were being studied as mixed race students, the context was implied. I ran into Jayden, Monique and another young woman at a basketball game. Jayden was very excited about the project and told the other girls about it.

> Jayden: Hi, this is Brynja. She’s doing a project on mixed kids.
> Monique: Really, like about what?
> Me: I’m doing a research project on mixed race teen experiences in high school. So I’m following students around and interviewing them. Seeing what their school life is like.
> Jayden: Yeah I’m part of it. My mom signed the papers.
> Monique: I’m mixed.
> Me: Would you be interested? I can give you the information and forms so you can take them home for your parents.
> Monique: Sure that would be cool.

Yet, during her interviews, Monique was much more reserved. As I mentioned above, she did not feel race was really important. “I mostly just hang with my boyfriend”

(Monique). However, her previous experiences in middle school had led her to maintain limited relationship with others.

Jayden felt comfortable in the various settings I observed her in. During our conversations, Jayden was more outspoken with regard to her race and the way she thought about her identity. Her response to the question “what are you?” was, “I am biracial, sometimes I say I’m mixed.” It was important to her to be biracial; it formed a strong foundation for her understanding of herself. “I think it is really important to be biracial, it makes me different. You know special. I can understand it when white people make certain kind of jokes and the same with black people.” She noted that she spoke about it with her mother at times, and this was evidenced in the stories she told. “Yeah sometimes I have to explain things to my white friends. You know kind of like translate something that they don’t understand in a song or a movie.” She was proud of her heritages. She was aware of her history and of the different perception of black and white people. She saw herself as a cultural intermediary.

Camille presented a different story. Though she was as equally light skinned as Jayden and also had mostly African American girlfriends, she felt the direct effect of her skin color. Unlike Jayden, whose mother was white, Camille’s mother was black. “I’m the lightest skinned kid in my family. My family tease me about it a lot. Call me white girl and stuff.” This created some tension for her. “Once in grade school my mom had to come in, because they thought I was being abused. I bruise really easily and had been

wrestling with my sister" (Camille). She noted that people often did not think she was part of her family because she was so fair skinned.

Fluidity versus stability. In dealing with uncertainty, people often ask "What are you?" Like the other young women Camille was familiar with the question and spent a lot of time answering it. "Sure I get asked that all the time. I say I'm mixed, or black and white. It depends." The changeable answers may give the impression that they have difficulty fixing a 'stable' identity.

> Me: What do you mean it depends?
> Camille: Well it really depends on who is asking, like if it is someone I know I answer: Yeah I'm mixed, my mom's black and my dad's white.
> Me: What if it's someone you don't know?
> Camille: Then I say I'm biracial.
> Me: Why the difference?
> Camille: Well, when I don't know the person they don't need to know everything, I'll say more if they ask, but usually it's just like oh ok.

Her answers were fluid and often context driven, as it was with the other students. Some researchers have argued that because of this fluidity, students such as these struggle to develop a stable adult personality, and this leads to a host of psychological problems. The students I interviewed had a great sense of pride in who and what they were and did not exhibit any insecurity about their racial identities. They had ready answers and were consistent when people asked them questions; as Camille's answers indicated they, however, varied their answers depending on who was asking. When we talked, the students used varied terms: "I'm mixed." (Lucas) or "I'm biracial, black and white" (Elizabeth). Lucas and Monique felt race was unimportant and preferred not to

talk about it and when asked they even acted surprised. “No, I don’t have people who act differently; I just don’t think it is that important” (Lucas). Chris told me he often told people “I’m native. You know cuz people never believe it,” but he, as the others, shifted back and forth between labels when asked.

The students were comfortable with the ambiguity they posed for others, but also fielded questions about their ambiguity often and they just shrugged it off. “People ask me all the time, it’s just kind of normal” (Jayden). People often associated wrong ethnicities to the students. “Yeah lots of people think I’m Mexican and I have to say like no man I’m Italian and black” (Lucas). Some of them found this frustrating and rude, while others handled it with humor. Students used their flexibility to interact with multiple social groups.

Friendship Groups

Comfort with different reference groups is often a measure of how students’ openness to new experience and joining new cultural groups. Students such as Elizabeth, Jayden, Camille and Monique appeared to feel more comfortable in mono-racial groups. Elizabeth spent most of her time with European American students, but was very active in school drama and music as well as student government. Her best friend was a young white woman. The other three young women had African American friends. During lunch, they sat with their mono-racial peers. However, I often saw all of them interact with a wide variety of students. The young men seemed to have much wider friendship groups. Denis, Chris, James and Lucas were all involved in sports and

spent a lot of their time with their teammates. “I don’t have a lot of friends, I know a lot of people but mostly I hang out with my family” (Chris). Saed knew many students, but only developed a real friendship group late in the year, and then with some of the mixed race students who participated in the study. Kaimi’s group of friends changed over the course of the year as she got to know more students at MWHS. Their varied friendship groups say quite a bit about the level of acceptance they found with the student body at the school, as Chris noted he had not encountered any racism at MWHS.

Foreclosure of Categorizing

It occurred to me in the research process how race is based on the imaginary drawn line between white and the other. When a student who was mixed race and their parents were from different minority groups, they less frequently encountered racial questions, and they also placed less salience on race, as my conversation with Monique indicated. The continued divide between whites and other racial groups drives much of the research on mixed race people. Both Monique and Chris came to the study through my discussions with other mixed race students; otherwise, I would have continued to see them as black. This leads me explore the assumptions that come along with hypodescent. I learned early on not to judge a person by the color of their skin. I spent time in Africa as a young girl. Having lived in France, Africa and Saudi Arabia, I have met a wide variety of people. Yet, two of the students in my study came to me from corrections I had to make of my own perceptions of who was mixed race and what it

meant to my research. These experiences presented me with an opportunity to illuminate some assumptions I had made.

As the discussion above showed, there are problems with how these students are placed into racial categories by others and how they react to these placements. Through my data collection, it became clear that even if students did fit into prescribed identity categories, the issue was not with how the students saw themselves but how their ambiguity and self-expressed identity was received and reflected by others. With research focusing on only one group or looking at checked boxes on school forms, we foreclose on developing a deeper understanding of what mixed race and mixed ethnicity really are and how they function in schools. The group of students calling themselves "mixed" was much larger and more diverse than just black/white or Asian/white. Often the students know each other, as Monique and Jayden did, and through their interactions, they developed mutually supportive friendships. Through my research and analytic reflections, I learned about my own assumptions when thinking of mixed race, but had I conducted a survey or interviewed students outside a school context without observation and longer association, I too would continue to look at how students present themselves on paper.

Conclusion

These students are proud to be mixed race; they feel it adds flavor and uniqueness to who they are. Their uniqueness helps them understand different relationships and aids in transgressing boundaries within social groups at the school. They are more sensitive

to other people's moods and needs and often are looked to as the peace makers or advice givers. They lived straddling their worlds, but maintained patience and humor when dealing with questions related to their race. They were interested to know who they were as a group, how they were understood and to correct any misunderstandings about them or their identity. At the same time, they had common everyday adolescent problems from family issues to girlfriends who talked about them behind their backs. Their complaints were similar to complaints I heard from other students: "This teacher does not like me." "I am crushing on this boy or girl, what should I do to get his or her attention?" "I am too far behind and the teacher won't help me catch up."

Some of them spent time in all of their cultural enclaves. Some students lived in two parent households with both biological parents until they were in their teens. Others were raised between households, whose parents had split up but continued to live in the same town and who remained on reasonable terms. I saw no evidence that the students were uncomfortable with themselves, or rather no more that you see in any teen floating in the in-between of adolescence. I would argue that they have stable identities, where stability is contained in how you feel at a given moment and the ways you express yourself to others. This can vary in contexts depending on the group of people you are with and how accepted you feel. As Kaimi's poem at the beginning of the chapter illustrates, there is a strong awareness of the in-between. She acutely feels her history and the pressure for her to be one specific type of person. For this group, at least, the notion of non-integration of self was an alien and confusing question. It was

never obvious that they were willing to sublimate their mixed race identity or felt forced to choose. As shown in the next chapter, this, sadly, did not mean they were not affected by racism or stereotyping.

Chapter 5
"You think you're special light-skind'ed bitch:"Student Interactions and School Curriculum

> "To display or not display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where" (Goffman, 1978, p. 42).

Saed stepped outside the gymnasium to smoke a square.[34] Patting his pockets he realized he did not have a light. A bit further down the wall stood a young dark skinned woman. Saed, an outgoing friendly young man, casually approached her to ask for a light. The young woman responded: "You think you're special don't you light-skinned bitch." Taken a back Saed replied: "No I don't, I am just like you." Saed told me this story in response to my questions about racially charged encounters. Saed transferred to MWHS mid-year. Before that, he had been living with a foster family in Baxter that had a predominately white population. Saed told me: "I was one of ten or so black students at the school. I liked the school I had a lot of friends and

[34] Square: cigarette

the teacher were really nice." When incidental racist comments came up in class, Saed said: "The other students would point them out to the teacher. I didn't have to say anything." In the late fall Saed got caught with marijuana paraphernalia. "I got into a fight with my foster family and ran away for a week. Social services came and brought me to Central City to my uncles." When he first came to MWHS, Saed said he was quiet depressed. "I miss my friends and my girl."

Saed described himself as "light-skin'ded." His black hair was curly and he was wearing it long so he could get it braided in corn-rows. His hazel eyes crinkled in the corners when he smiled or when he was concentrating. His encounter happened at an MWHS away basketball game. The young woman's response to his request for a light made a significant impact on him: "I was genuinely surprised at the girl's anger and the way she talked to me." Most of the time, African Americans are not thought of as racist or colorist. In fact it is an oft heard statement that African

Americans cannot be racist, or bigoted.[35] Yet Saed met hostility from someone whom he felt was part of his social peer group. Because minorities are not thought to be bigoted, the effects of intra-group colorism are glossed over. Often, this type of discrimination is harder to process, hence Saed's defensive response. He remembered the experience because it stood out and was unexpected.

As mentioned in *Chapter 2 My grandma told me,* belonging is important during the teen years. Saed told me: "I guess you could call me an outsider. I know a lot of people at school but I don't really hang with anyone." He missed his old friends, although later in the year he developed friendships with a few of the other students who participated in the research study. The preceding vignette illustrates a student's experience with overt "othering" or bigotry. Many of these experiences were not confined to the classroom. Similar stories were related by other students and their experiences were not limited to strangers.

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[35] Bigotry is the behavior, the attitude or beliefs of intolerance and prejudice (OED, 2012).

The impact of such experiences on students and student responses are explored in this chapter. The chapter then turns explores both negative and positive student experiences in MWHS classrooms. The school curriculum is examined for the inclusiveness and how it engages students.

"You don't just belong:" Finding Place in Social Groups in and out of School

The student participants were sensitive to other's attitudes and developed responses early. At a summer pow-wow, Chris and his younger brother were walking away from the main tent, "and a little native girl came up to us and said 'Why are you here? You don't belong here, you're not Native.' And I was like 'Yes we do, we're Native.'" Chris said he did not remember feeling hurt or offended by the young girl's comments. "No I wasn't upset, but my little brother was. I had to talk to him and tell him just cuz we don't look Native, we still are. That girl didn't know what she was talking about." Students found themselves supporting others when unpleasant experiences occurred.

Saed's and Chris' encounters are illustrations of what mixed race students experienced not only from whites, but from members of other ethnic and racial groups as well. Outsiders' reactions stemmed from the question, "what are you?" Since many mixed race people are phenotypically hard to place, students often hear comments like the ones discussed above. As Pollack (2004) argued, race talk can be either very detailed or very limiting. All of the students in the study reported being asked to place themselves on the racial, cultural and ethnic scales. "Sometimes it's hard, people want to you explain yourself" (Jayden). "Some people are like it's cool and are like 'Ok', but sometimes, like, you are expected to explain things that have nothing to do with you" (Camille). As they straddled two or more very different cultural frames, sometimes they found themselves and their heritages used as positive examples and then saw them turned into behavior problems for even minor misbehaviors.

Teasing: Student to student interactions. Although the students did not report having any peer-related experiences that they considered racially motivated, I did witness a great deal of 'racial teasing.' Chris and Kevin, two good friends, often got into long discussions about racial issues during science class. Kevin, a young white man, had an air of innocence about him that helped him carry off his presentation of disbelief when discussing racial inequality. At first, I thought Kevin started these discussions out of innocence and ignorance of racial issues. He started discussions with comments like: "I don't understand why it was so much more difficult for black students to find jobs?" Chris would then get all riled up about Kevin's lack of understanding about racial issues. "You're so stupid, you just don't get it, it's way harder for me to get a job cuz I'm black. People think all kinds of things about me that aren't true, like I might steal something or that I won't come to work on time" (Chris). Kevin eventually indicated that he knew differences existed, but enjoyed teasing Chris.

Chris was not the only student participant to encounter racial teasing. As I interviewed Camille, Greg, a senior and a mutual friend of ours, walked by and teasingly asked me: “Why you talking to her? She a white girl.” Camille has light grey eyes, creamy skin and curly shoulder length hair. In reaction to Greg’s question, Camille giggled; Greg was a “cute guy,” and he made her feel shy. She responded: “My mom’s black and my dad’s white.” Greg knew that Camille was mixed and knew what my research was about, but he felt comfortable enough to tease Camille. Camille was not offended by what Greg said because he was a peer. When the teasing came from peers, it was not seen as offensive. In Camille’s case, Greg’s attention was even a little flattering.

At other times, the teasing seemed to be sparked by my presence in a classroom. When I visited Monique’s Algebra class, a few of her classmates asked about me. When this happened, I let the student explain my role to the classroom. After the students learned about my research, there were loud and

lengthy discussions about people's race. Quite a bit of teasing went on.

> Student 1: What are you?
> Student 2: I'm Ecuadorian.
> Student 1: Naw you're not you look like a Mexican.
> Student 2: No I am Ecuadorian, Mexicans look different.

During these kinds of exchanges, the students would look in my direction to see my reactions and if I was paying attention. These students reacted more to my being present and "knowing" my research topic, than when the talk came from a student centered discussion. This encounter contrasted with Chris and Kevin's and Greg and Camille's interactions, which were clearly part of their relationships. The few times race come up in a classroom, the discussions were student initiated and not noticed by teachers.

Being part of the group can be challenging. The students reported that their right to be part of a group was often questioned. Jayden and Camille were asked "what are you?" questions on a nearly daily basis. "I get asked it like almost every

day" (Camille). As Jayden put it "It was just a question people ask, it is nothing to get upset about." Context[36] mattered quite a bit, as did who asked. When peers asked these questions, they were viewed as harmless. When strangers asked these types of questions, the student responses were often defensive, such as Saed's "No I am not, I am just like you" comment, or with Chris' quick "yes we are, we are Native too." The questioners' responses to student answers came in many forms; sometimes it was acceptance: "That's cool" or "wow you are that is so awesome." At other times, the less friendly: "No you're not." "How do you know?" "Really, you don't look… (insert whatever racial or ethnic group here)."

However, students' reactions were not always so easygoing. A few times during my observations, some of Elizabeth's friends of various racial and ethnic backgrounds teased her, saying: "You're Mexican." When I saw this happen, Elizabeth became angry and defensive. Like Kevin did with Chris, the students were acting in a

[36] Context is just as much about who asks as where the students are when the question is asked.

familiar teasing way to get her to overreact. Later, I asked her about this, and she told me: “This happens often, because people can’t figure out what I am.” It seemed that the lighter-skinned or more ambiguous the student was, the more often they were questioned. Comments such as the ones Elizabeth encountered were harder for students to ignore or forget.

Complex Problems with Simple Answers: Student Classroom Experiences

On the surface, it may be easy to brush off comments such as the ones Saed, Chris, Camille and Elizabeth heard, but over time the comments sink in and students began to believe the comments. In math and science classes, Chris was quick to grasp complex concepts. He could give the answer to a complex logarithmic math problem by figuring it out in his head. His math teacher would then talk him through the problem in reverse in order to get him to explain how he reached the correct answer. One day during the curricular segment focused on chemistry, Mr. Burton, a science teacher, had a tray of tricolored marbles for making the atomic structure of the elements. Chris became

engrossed, creating the most complex elements. Afterward, I mentioned to him how smart he was. He brushed my comment aside and told me “I’m not smart, don’t say that. I hate it when people tell me that.”

Chris, a gregarious young man, was often told to be quiet in class, but ten minutes later he could be found working on homework for another class. In English class he was a willing participant, if often rather silly. He enjoyed teasing his classmates and even the teacher with whom he had a good relationship. Toward the end of the semester, during the poetry section, he wrote a series of brief poems that were very cleverly worded and funny. Even though he was often distracted, Chris was not one of the students who were regularly asked to leave the room. He could be seen as a behavior problem, but his playful demeanor and cleverness revealed a much deeper and more thoughtful young man than his errant behavior led an outside observer to believe, making his comments about not being smart even more perplexing.

Mainstream or not so mainstream classes. Over the course of my observations, I was told by some teachers that these students were in remedial classes. “This class is really a remedial English class, some of the kids can’t even borrow books from the media center” (Ms. Ellison). “These kids are here because they aren’t doing any science after this.” (Mr. Burton). This did not correlate with what the school counselors and assistant principals told me. “Those are the mainstream classes, not advanced placement or international baccalaureate classes” (Mr. Martin). Ms. Ellison’s junior English class was reading *Othello* the first time I visited. In a play rife with racial issues, she engaged the students by having them create videos from the play. The black student in each group acted the part of Othello; this indicated student racial awareness, but race as related to the play was not discussed.

In many ways, the school operated with the firm belief that it was a post racial society where race does not require discussion. It was often glossed over as many of the teachers did not feel it

had a place in the classroom due either to their own lack of knowledge on the subject (Mr. Davis said, “I don’t know much about ethnic music I wouldn’t even know where to start, if I had the time to look), or because it was not seen as relevant to the subject matter, as Mr. Parker noted: “Why would I talk about race, it’s a math class.” Mrs. Smith, the school nurse, felt that teachers did not make much of an effort to reach out across boundaries to make the classrooms more inclusive. “That’s a cop out, they just don’t do it.” This does not mean that racial issues were not explored, but exploration of race or minority cultural frames were often absent in many of the classrooms I visited.

The back of the classroom: Race talk in the curriculum. As an “International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, Midwest High School provides a balanced curriculum. Our primary focus is preparing all students for college. Most courses and programs at Midwest High School are considered to be college preparatory or college equivalent” (MWHS website, Sept 2012). Despite these

high curriculum goals, the canon[37] was still focused toward common and "safe" human experiences. Students read *Othello* or Nora Zeal Hurston's (1937) *Their eyes were watching god.* Even then the focus was on the common human conditions: jealousy, love, sorrow and betrayal. At the same time, both these texts were fertile ground for racial and social discussion, as they are about racial boundary crossing. Othello, a moor, is married to a white woman. And Janie Crawford, Hurston's protagonist, was the daughter of a mixed race woman.

When race did come up it was often not well received by other students. As Mr. Davis, the choir teacher, noted: "One of my students performed a rap in class one day and it upset some of the white students. They didn't consider it music." He also remembered a presentation given by a researcher on his work in Antarctica. During the question and answer session a black student asked, "Are there any African Americans in Antarctica?" The student was scoffed at by white students as if the question

[37] The standard U.S. high school curriculum.

were completely irrelevant. “The African American student was interested in the topic and the student was trying to ascertain how comfortable an African American would feel in a research environment like that” (Mr. Davis).

These reactions from the European Americans student’s part were teachable moments to intervene and open a discussion about cultural differences and competencies, but as Mr. Davis pointed out, “I don’t know how to begin such a discussion or carry them on in a meaningful way. It could get out of hand.” This has often been the case for teachers in urban schools where the cultural gap between white and minority cultures remains. Fear and lack of experience in leading a discussion of racial issues were the common reasons teachers would not engage in these areas (Delpit, 1995). A teacher’s awareness is the first step in trying to bridge a gap that exists in a school where at least superficially there appeared to be few racial divides, but awareness was only the first step to addressing the issue.

Will the real … please stand up: Bearing witness for a culture group. The teachers' stories and awareness was only part of the student experience. Student participants often found themselves being cultural brokers. As the previous stories and interactions illustrated, this need to explain one's self came up in many contexts. Questions about who and what people are often come up when people first meet. For mixed race and minority students, the novelty may never wear off. If a student happened to be in a class or school where there were not so many members of the cultural group, she was often be called on to be the witness for that entire cultural group. Among whites, she was expected to be the expert on black and African American culture. "Yes, sometimes I'm asked stuff like 'is that really what black people think?' Or 'Why do black people do that? Like talk in a movie theater during a movie" (Jayden). And, with blacks, she was expected to explain why white people behaved this way or say such "stupid" things. "Why do white people make such dumb jokes, they're not funny" (Saed). This happens even when the student says "I can't really speak for others" (Lucas). Other

people might not listen to the protest and believed the student to be a representation for the whole culture group. These comments speak to the habit of seeing cultural groups as monolithic: All Spanish speakers are Mexicans, all whites are the same (Seaton, 2009). For mixed race children, this happened on many occasions. These attitudes of generalized categories and lack of attention to race when they came out in curriculum and in student talk, allowed for continued misconceptions and contributed to the belief that race was not an issue in the school environment.

Student and teacher interactions. Students spent seven hours a day at school, but had few personal interactions with adults. Teachers at MWHS teach more than 200 students in a day. This paired with the required daily reporting teachers do, “makes [it] difficult to connect with the students individually” (Ms. Jones). MWHS’ four student counselors for a student body of 1730 meant each counselor was responsible for 400 students, whom they saw once or twice a semester for class registration, college

applications and if they had significant academic problems.[38] Other student issues were the purview of the school social worker.[39] These ratios meant that even the counselors and social workers were not likely to make significant connections with a majority of students. While adolescence is a time for separation from parents, students still needed and wanted adult role models to guide them through a tumultuous time. Without these connections, students found school a cold and distance place that did not reflect their stories.

"Our history is still not their history too:" Student Connection to School Curriculum

In the course of our conversations, many of the students asked me about multiracial history. I noticed that the students were proud of their families and their multiracial status, but they had little knowledge of the history of race and of

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[38] Central State ranks in the 40th percentile in counselor / student ratios. The state average is 770. (U.S Department of Education, http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/pdf/scratios2009_10.pdf retrieved 08/22/12)

[39] Here the federal guidelines are 1 social worker to 800 student ratio in schools with no Special Education programs, in schools with Special Education and significant minority populations the ratio decreases significantly. MWHS only had one social worker on staff. Ibid

multiculturalism in America. MWHS history course descriptions reflected a focus on inclusiveness:

> Students will learn the outcomes and consequences of decisions made, as well as use the skills and tools of the historian. They will examine primary course documents, read what other historians have theorized regarding controversial issues of the past. This course is highly participatory including seminars, debates, role plays, etc. (MWHS Student handbook 2010).

However, the student participants did not see themselves or their socio-cultural groups reflected in classroom topics. The student participants appeared disconnected from the subject matter. During a visit to Monique's European history class, they were learning about the beginning of the First World War. The teacher discussed the archduke's assassination and noted that the Slovakian assassin was an anarchist. Then, the teacher moved on to which countries sided with whom. He did not touch on the social and economic reasons for the shooting. Afterward, I tried to engage Monique in a discussion of the topic as I noticed how disconnected she was during the class, asking: "Why do you think the anarchist killed the archduke?" Monique just shrugged

and said: “I don’t know.” Then we moved on. Not only were the students disengaged from the subject matter, but the teachers seemed distant from their students, asking questions and answering them when no one spoke up.

Some teachers appeared to reach out, but did not connect with their students. The student participants’ interactions were most frequently about homework assignments and other course mechanics. Even the younger teachers were not seen as approachable.

> Me: Why don’t you talk to Mr. M?
> Elizabeth: He’ll just tell me again what he said in class, it’s not very helpful.
> Me: What if you’re more specific in what you don’t understand?
> Elizabeth: I don’t know, I’ll figure it out.

Teachers often spent a large portion of each class period on quiet reading and note taking of the daily assigned text. Many of the students were not permitted to take the texts home[40] or the teachers needed the photocopies for the next class period. Many

[40] This was usually because students had outstanding fines or had failed to return books to the school media center.

of the student participants did not like history class. Elizabeth considered it her worst subject, “I’m just not good at remembering those names and dates.” She and the other students seemed not to see the classes as interesting or relevant to them or their lives.

Sometimes it does not add up: Student and teacher interactions. The student participants reported to me that they did not have many favorite teachers. “I like my dance teacher, but not really anyone else” (Monique). The students made attempts to talk and work with their teachers. Denis, for example, tried to work with his math teacher when he fell behind in class but felt he could not get the support that he needed.

> When I got sick I wanted to make up the work I missed. I did the work and when I tried to turn it in my teacher wouldn’t let me. Now I am so far behind I don’t think I can catch up. I am going to have to go to summer school. (Denis, 11/2010)

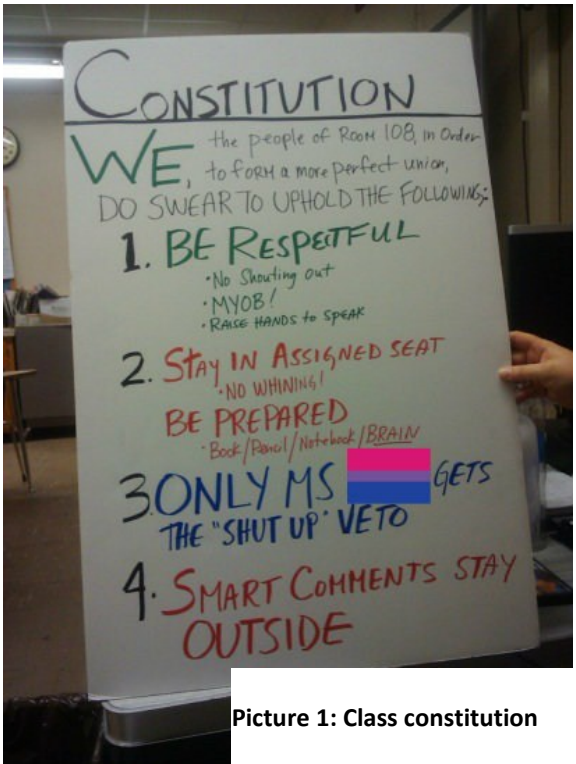
Saed also struggled in his math course and told me: “I don’t understand what my Math teacher is saying; my Math teacher in

Baxter was much more helpful. I did well in that class, but not in my Math class here. Yeah, even when I ask she just doesn't explain everything well, I don't get it."

> Me: "So you don't feel you can go to her for help?"
> Saed: "No. I don't get what she is saying."

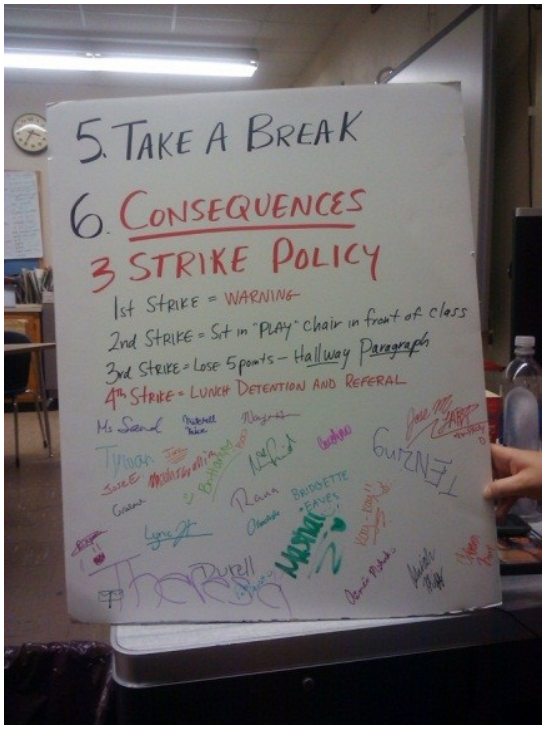
Disconnects, like these, led to students giving up and not trying to understand, requiring them to take summer classes or believe they were not good at some subjects.

"Playing school:" Being present in the classroom. At the same time, there were teachers who did try to connect with students. Most MWHS' classrooms were quiet and orderly. Silence was highly prized in the school. Mrs. Wolf's 9th grade classroom was an exception to the quiet rule. She had "controlled chaos" in her classroom; the students were



Picture 1: Class constitution

active and chatty, but at the same time they were on task and engaged with the materials. Mrs. Wolf turned the idea that the teacher makes the rules on its head. At the beginning of the school year, the students and she made up the classroom rules. The rules the students came up with (pictured) were the same rules I saw in other classrooms where the teachers did not allow the students to make up the rules. As can be seen, the class framed the rules as a constitution. At the bottom of the



constitution, everyone, including the teacher, ratified the contract. “By allowing the students to feel in control I got them to buy into the class and take ownership of their own learning.” Mrs. Wolf incorporated democratic ideals into the class, thereby

empowering students. By allowing the students to make the rules, she gave students, who had felt a marked lack of control elsewhere, a sense of control in her class.

Picture 2: Class constitution

Ms. Ellison brought their world into the classroom, showed spoken word poetry. Ms. Wolf had the students translate scene from *Romeo and Juliet* into modern English. In both cases, students were engaged, and they dropped the teenage façade of ennui and disconnection in order to fully participate. At the end of the term, Ms. Ellison had the students write poems in the various forms they had studied and the students engaged in the project whole heartedly, with both seriousness and humor. At the end of the year the replacement science teacher, Ms. Peters, managed to reengage the students. “Ms. P is awesome, for the first time this year I feel like we are learning something” (James). While she was only at the school for two months, she connected with the students by showing them respect and they returned that respect. Even though Ms. Peters was hampered by not having

permission slips, she managed to create experiments with non-dangerous chemicals. Within weeks, she had transformed the classroom in to an active learning environment. These three teachers recognized the gaps in student learning and they looked for ways to engage students who elsewhere felt less than successful.

I had observed that Mrs. Wolf's 9th grade mainstream class was markedly different from other rooms where silence and obedience were the norm. While she and I talked, I asked her about the noise level and structure in her class and she responded:

> Many of the other teachers don't approve of my methods. Overall I get better results when I create ownership and democratic participation with students who didn't know how to play school. They don't come prepared and don't know what is expected of them, they don't show up with all the tools to be successful. My role is to help in that as much as I can. (Mrs. Wolf)

A loud and busy room, her students were engaged and willing participants, while in other classes students appeared reticent and disconnected from the materials. During her interview at the

end of the school day, several students stopped by to chat with her. In a day where students moved from class to class, having a touchstone, such as Mrs. Wolf was important. Mrs. Wolf was one of the few white teachers I saw minority students, like Camille, go to for support and advice when they had racially charged experiences with teachers. It became apparent that many students were looking for an adult who would listen, just listen.

Student skills and teacher distance. At the same time, the students were intuitive and sensitive to how people saw them. As apt listeners, these students were aware of themselves and others. “My history teacher doesn’t like me. I’m always in trouble in her class” (Saed).They often noticed when a teacher did not care for them or when they made someone uncomfortable. I often heard other older and more veteran science teachers make quiet disparaging remarks about the students in the mainstream classes. They seemed impatient with the students who were not in their courses. “Those student are just trouble, they don’t take these classes seriously” (Mr. N, a

physics teacher). This was a similar attitude that I found with some of the math teachers. Certain students were “lost causes” who could not be made to succeed, as was the case with Denis and Jayden in their math course. Their math teacher told me: “Denis just couldn’t understand, he can’t do it” and Jayden “forgets things immediately and had too much tutoring over the course of her schooling” by which he was implying that the tutors did it all for her. (This was the same teacher that Denis had tried to approach about make up work.) The students believed they were no good at science or math, because they had not gotten the right kind of encouragement and help. “This [science] class doesn’t matter, I just have to pass and I’ll still graduate” (Lucas). They disconnected and followed the path of failure and least resistance by fulfilling the expectation of not succeeding or doing enough just to get by.

The students felt the distance the teachers had from them. I asked Elizabeth why she thought the teachers were distancing themselves from the students as they progressed through high

school, and she responded “I believe that it was because they were preparing us for college.” Yet many of the students would attend smaller colleges where the teacher to student ratio would be much lower than at this high school. The official ratio at MWHS was one teacher per 21 students, but that does not take into account the lower ratios in special education and English Language Learner classes. Some of the students also felt that the classes they took in high school were not preparing them for college. In casual conversations with students who were participating in PSEO (Post-Secondary Education Option), the students found: “Where high school spoon-feeds you what to do, what to say and how to respond to the specific teachers expectations, college doesn’t do that. Instead you are given papers to write with minimal instructions and a specified length” (Saed). Many students, even high achieving ones like Saed or Elizabeth, struggle with their first year of college. In the mainstream English classes at MWHS, the students were still studying vocabulary and parts of sentences but not getting the tools they would soon need to be competitive and successful in

college. This gap can result in many of these students dropping out of college early (Maydun, 2010). With such little support, students continued to feel as they had all along that they are not smart or capable.

Often multiracial and multiethnic students experienced negative attention or discouragement, if not overt racism, in the many spheres they inhabited. They all too often found themselves explaining or justifying their right to belong. They received reminders that they were not expected to achieve and were labeled as behavioral problems, not as students needing a bit of extra help or attention, nor did they see themselves reflected in the curriculum. Opportunities to talk about racial issues were missed because the teachers did not see it as relevant or were not comfortable with the topic. Rather than help and support, they experienced distance and subtle cues of disregard.

This chapter began with a discussion of how students faced overt racism and exclusion. It then explored how the students

were excluded from the curriculum. With appropriate support and positive feedback, they found power and were encouraged to explore and they succeeded. All five juniors who participated recently graduated and attended smaller state colleges and private parochial colleges, in the fall of 2012. The next chapter examines in more detail, how students interacted with teachers and the results of such direct, but subtle interactions. It also examines the types of attention students received from adults and the repercussions they encountered for misbehavior.

Chapter 6
"Ear-hustling" and Unsavory Experiences: Micro-aggressions are the Hidden Racial Interactions in School.

This chapter continues the discussion of race and student encounters at MWHS. The focus here is on more subtle yet consequential experiences that students had with teachers and peers. These experiences are labeled micro-aggressions, racial slights that on the surface do not appear to be racially motivated. The chapter focuses on teacher and student interactions. When students were seen as difficult or under-motivated, it affected how they interacted with the adults in the school. A strong feeling of disregard made it more difficult for the students to respect authority figures. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how some students were singled out for negative attention and their resulting punishments.

Who is Listening? And What Do They Hear?

MWHS' lunchroom was a busy place. The student population of 1730 did not allow for a single lunch period. The two lunch times were staggered with a 30 minute gap between first and

second lunch. This way, there were fewer students populating the halls and fewer students who exited the school. Only seniors and juniors were permitted to leave the school during lunch. To leave, a student had to present a student identification card. All of the school doors were locked during the school day, except the main entrance to the building on the south side. Students who could leave the school often did, to get lunch elsewhere, smoke a square[41] or just to get away. During the day, they were monitored and supervised every minute if not by a person, then by cameras. The lunch hour was the only twenty minutes that students could hope to find a quiet moment to themselves. "Lunch is the only time I can hang with my friends, sit and chat with my friends without getting into trouble" (James). The students expected that they did not have adults "ear hustling"[42] and bothering them unless they became too "rowdy."

Typically, four or five adults "patrolled and monitored" the lunch room: two assistant principals, two school counselors and

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[41]Smoke a square: smoking a cigarette, which is forbidden on school property and punishable by suspension.

[42] Ear hustling: listening in on a conversation.

the head special education teacher. The hallways were patrolled by the four hall monitors: Susan, Steve, Talia and O.G., as well as the third assistant principal. Certain areas of the school were closed off during the lunch hours, to keep students from being disruptive in the hallways where classes were being held. Walking through the building, students lined the walls in the main hallway around the lunch room, seated in groups of threes, fours or fives chattering away. A trip down the stairwells became an obstacle course of mostly veiled young women, in groups away from the crowds, speaking a mixture of Somali and English. After lunch, the hallways were littered with lunch debris, wrappers, empty paper food trays, napkins, and milk containers.

Camille, a freshman, often spent the whole lunch period at a table near the detention table[43] with her close knit group of girlfriends. This group of African American girls was one of the more lively groups of students at lunch time. “We talk about the usual stuff. Who’s been trash talking. The boys we think are cute,

[43] This is the table where students were written up for various misbehaviors must sit during lunch time. I often sat at this table during lunch to observe student, while giving them time to socialize with friends alone.

you know girl stuff" (Camille). Various words such as "bitch" and "fuck" were sometimes tossed around. The girls ate and talked, and pushed each other around. They were often loud, even over the noise of the lunch time crowd.

One particular day, Ms. Hintzer walked by ear-hustling. "She does it all the time" (James). She overheard a word she did not care for, stopped and turned around. Camille told me "She heard me say fuck, but I din't, said bitch." Addressing Camille, Mrs. Hintzer said: "We don't use that kind of language here. This isn't the streets." This seemed like an innocuous, though rude statement. Many white people would not find it noteworthy or offensive. For Camille, this phrase took on a deeper meaning. "It means this is not the ghetto," which to a black American is incredibly offensive. It implies at the very least: "you are poor, you live in a bad neighborhood, you have parents who can't provide for you, you are lower class" (Denis). Most of all, it is a loaded racial stereotype: "that blacks live in ghettos, or hang

around the street loitering" (Saed). Researchers have identified this type of comment as a micro-aggression.

Micro-aggressions

> **"**Micro-aggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of other races" (Pierce, C. M., Carew, 1977, p. 5).

"Do you have a ride home?" or "do you have money for the bus?" are phrases that are meant to be helpful and show concern. Yet, when repeated regularly, they become a mantra of doubt to student abilities and basic knowledge.

There are three types of *micro-aggressions*[44]*: micro-insults, micro-assaults,* and *micro-invalidations. Micro-insults* are verbal communications that convey rudeness, insensitivity and demeans a person's racial heritage and identity. *Micro-assaults* are incidents of name calling, avoidant behavior and discriminations. *Micro-invalidations* include communications that

[44] Micro-aggressions can also be termed lateral violence when the actors are minorities.

exclude, negate or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings and the experience and reality of students (Sue et al, 2007). Non-white students encounter these types of questions when dealing with European American adults. These micro-aggressions are a result of the implicit belief that nonwhites are somehow not as capable or smart as whites (Dyson, 2007; hooks, 2001).

The offhanded remark 'this is not the streets,' a micro-insult, on the teacher's part was based on misheard dialogue. Camille told me that she had said "bitch" as part of a discussion about another girl, with whom her friends were "beefing (fighting)." As inappropriate as the use of the word 'bitch' might be, the teacher's words were hurtful and insensitive. It led Camille to become upset and agitated:

> Camille: I went to see Mrs. Wolf, my English teacher.
> Me: Why?
> Camille: Cuz, I knew she would get it, understand me.
> Me: Why couldn't you talk to Mrs. H.?
> Camille: I was really mad, I would have said something worse, and besides Mrs. H wouldn't get it she would've just thought I was being rude.

Camille could not respond to Mrs. Hintzer directly as her response and anger would have been taken as back talk and even an over-reaction to a simple statement. Mrs. Hintzer did not realize what she had said was offensive. The power structures in the school placed the students on the lowest rung of the school social structure and affected how students sought help when they encountered micro-aggressions (Kinshloe, 2007). Often, the language used with and in reference to students was not as guarded as it could be, as was noted in chapter 5.

Jayden had a similar experience in one of her classes. “The teacher asked me one day ‘What kind of household did you grow up in?’ I called my mom crying and asked her to come get me. She had to come in and talk to the school about it, but nothing happened.” Camille’s and Jayden’s experiences were both micro-insults and illustrate how important it is to be aware of how simple comments can mean so much more to mixed race students. “This isn’t the streets” and “that’s so ghetto” are not just off-hand comments about how students should behave or

not use rude and profane language in a school setting. Such comments are both racially offensive and include assumptions about not only the student's race but also their assumed social class. The school had no explicit code or set of rules for the use of inappropriate language, but, there were rules for bullying, racist and other inappropriate conduct.

> *CentralCity Racial/ethnic harassment definition.* Racial/ethnic harassment consists of physical or verbal conduct relating to an individual's race/ethnicity when the conduct:
>
> 1. Has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or academic environment;
> 2. Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance; or
> 3. Otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment or academic opportunities. (MWHS Student Handbook 2011)

The way that the policy is worded implies that the occurrence must be more obvious, such as the ones the teachers mentioned in chapter 5. According to the above guidelines, Camille, Jayden and others should have been able to seek help and support from faculty for these incidents, but they did not feel they could or if

they did that nothing changed. “No there isn’t really anyone I can go to, and it’s just my story” (Saed). However, the responsibility to point out the teacher’s comments as offensive and racially motivated still rested with the student. “I know my teacher doesn’t like me, but what can I do. You know, it’s my word against theirs” (Jayden). A European American would not necessarily find the comment offensive, but it is also questionable whether this comment would have been made to a white student.

Social norms serve as a guide to when to use what terms and in which social settings such terms are acceptable. The underlying assumptions of these social norms are part of the majority middle class’ concept of norms. In a white student’s everyday experiences in her home and in her neighborhood social settings, she encounters appropriate linguistic and behavioral expectations that other ethnic groups may not have access to or see modeled. Camille was aware she had used inappropriate language: “I shouldn’t have used the word, but I

was excited and it was lunch time and I was sitting with my friends. Mrs. H was ear-hustling us, she does it a lot." Even when students hope to find a semi-private moment to be with each other they can find themselves at odds with the social environment.

Camille's interaction with Mrs. Hintzer was one of many that occurred in the halls, classrooms and offices of the school. Mrs. Wolf, to whom she went for support, confirmed "Camille was very upset and crying. This kind of thing happens all the time." Many of the students told me that this teacher, other teachers and coaches were frequent offenders in use of terminology or turns of phrase that were racially loaded. "Yeah one of my coach makes jokes like that, they are about whites but really they are about us, the black students" (James). Though comments are often small, they had a collective effect on a developing mind. Even seemingly simple verbiage can be loaded. When there is a cultural divide, as there often is between minority students and white middle class teachers, misunderstood reactions by

students that are seen as hostile even threatening can occur (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006).

As a white woman, micro-aggressions were a new concept for me. In the past, I have heard similar comments such as “she is not a real Icelander” or “That’s just Brynja, she always talks like that,” as if the definition of an Icelander was somehow set in stone. One of my parents was Irish American, but I was born in Iceland, can speak the language, and understand the culture and the history. People often said hurtful, demeaning and inappropriate things, but I learned to let them pass or had been told not pay any attention. I, like the students, remembered these interactions but did not realize the long term effect they could have or that they were common experiences for minorities or perceived outsiders.

The burden of change: Students bear the responsibility to conform. Camille was still upset by the encounter when she recounted it. In the course of the conversation, I asked “What do you think can be done differently to make things like this less

likely to happen again?" Her immediate response was: "Act more white." When I asked her to elaborate, she clarified "I need to change my behavior and act more like the teachers expect." Despite my rewording of the question, she did not reflect on what kind of changes the teachers could make to avoid similar encounters in the future. Such a reaction was often the immediate response that students had to my questions about changing adult perceptions. For them, in such an unequal power structure, where the teachers hold most of the power, the students felt that the burden of change and placation of adults was on their shoulders. School is where students expect to learn, and their teachers are their role models. "I can't stand this class, we aren't learning anything. It is so pointless" (Elizabeth, about the science class). It is important for the teachers to be aware of what they say and do and how it affects student. These moments are opportunities for adults to model the type of language, behavior and respect that they expect from the students, but they cannot do this if they are not even aware of what they are saying.

These student and teacher interactions were an interesting contrast from the student teasing discussed in chapter 5. The encounter with Greg occurred just as Camille had started to relate the experience with Mrs. Hintzer. When she laughed at what Greg said, I asked her: “Why is what Greg said ok and funny, but what the teacher said offensive?” She replied: “I know him, he’s just having fun. It’s ok, but she don’t know me and she meant it.” While the teacher was unaware of the insult, Camille knew that the teacher meant what she was saying, without understanding that she was insulting not only Camille, but all of the girls sitting at the table with her. Because Greg was a peer, a good-looking and popular athlete, it made her feel good to have him talk to us. “I like him, he’s cute” (Camille). Even though Greg was joking and Camille did not take it as an insult, Greg’s comment is a reflection of what many of these students encountered on a regular basis.

Shifting allegiances in shifting sands: Micro-invalidations. Inter-actions with peers can have equally upsetting results. For

Kaimi, a broad group of friends was important to her expanding world view. She told me that she had made a new friend at the beginning of the year, Alicia, a shy Native girl, “because I wanted to get to know more aspects of my cultures and the students in school.” A light skinned freshman, with curly blond hair and green eyes, Kaimi told me the following story:

> I’ve been growing my group of friends. I want to have a diverse group of friends, you know. I think it’s important. Before when we were younger you know you just liked someone because they had shoes…Recently I was spending time with Sara, [a young black American woman] and my new Native friend, Alicia. We were sitting and chatting, a couple of boys, one mixed, Mexican and European American and one Caucasian, came by and joined the conversation. Suddenly Sara got up and left. For a few days she avoided me. She did it before and then told me she was sorry for being so silly. A couple of days later I went to Sara and asked ‘Why did you leave like that?’ She told me that she had been uncomfortable; that she felt like out of her element. People in the group weren’t talking about things that she knew and she felt like she couldn’t participate in the conversations. She told me that I had changed and I wasn’t acting black enough, and she didn’t want to hang with me. She just didn’t understand or know me anymore. (5/2010)

Kaimi claimed to be shy, though when I observed her socially, she was outgoing and gregarious. I asked her "How did you feel when Sara said that?" She admitted "My feelings were hurt, I just didn't understand why Sara felt that way." In some ways Sara's reaction can be understood as a micro-assault; she avoided contact with Kaimi afterward. It was also appears to be a micro-invalidation since she expected Kaimi to remain "black enough" and within a cultural framework Sara knew and understood.[45] Kaimi had stepped outside of her usual frame where her old friends knew her and knew what to expect from her, but with this new group of people, she was showing her flexibility and openness to new experiences and people. She showed Sara that she had more than one cultural frame of reference. "I find the world and the people in it so interesting. I don't want to be limited to one group or one way of understanding. My first year at school felt like I had been limited to old friends and other

[45] This interpretation of Sara's behavior is an exploration of the pressure put on multiracial students that harks back to Spenser's (2010) argument that multiracial black and other students are trying to put a rung on the racial ladder to distance themselves from their blackness, which this is not what is being argued here. For Kaimi and others it was not a matter of racial belonging, rather a personal choice to explore all her heritages without ranking one culture or ethnic group above the other.

people's social circles, but this year my sophomore year was different, I had was comfortable enough that I wanted to make my own circle of friends." As a result, Kaimi felt that her older friends were uncomfortable with her and her expanding group of friends, so they distanced themselves from her. She felt hurt that they were unable "to reach outside of their experiences to try something new and learn something different." Kaimi was confused and hurt that Sara and others could not grasp that Kaimi was herself made up of many cultures and ethnicities. These types of responses from peers were not uncommon, and, as Kaimi noted, they were unexpected and even hurtful.

Not Enough: Stepping Outside of the Expected Limits

Micro-aggressions do not have to come from strangers as was evident with Kaimi's losing a friend because she stretched her wings. As both Kaimi and Saed termed it, they are never "quite enough": "neither white enough, nor black enough, nor native enough" (Kaimi). Kaimi's willingness to explore cultural differences, to meet new people and learn about new things

served to separate her from her friends. As a cultural broker, she knew she lived in multiple different cultures and as her poem indicated she relished in it. At the same time, it became tiring or frustrating trying to prove to everyone that she was enough.

> How can I tell you what ethnicity I am and I'm still in the gray,
> I'm not a bag of skittles,
> More like a bag of M&Ms,
> I can be any color and still have that big ass M tattooed across my chest,
> Standing for Mixed… (Kaimi, 2011).

As they matured, multiracial/multicultural students became more aware of what people were saying about them. They understood the true meaning of the words used. By the time they got to high school, some of the comments and deeper meanings had sunk in. As with the three other girls who were light-skinned enough to 'pass,' there were numerous assumptions made about them and their ethnicity, as well as off-hand comments. Most of the time, the girls said they brush off such comments, but, as Elizabeth's reaction to the teasing

showed, at times it rankled, thick skin or not, and the student could become hypersensitive.

Depression: Pressure can come from the need to justify self. The need to justify and explain becomes wearying and can lead to depressive symptoms. During my group interviews with Elizabeth, Saed and Chris, they admitted that they often felt depressed. Depressive symptoms are not uncommon in teens as they vacillate between adulthood and childhood, but some studies have argued that mixed race teens are more prone to depressive symptoms (Gibbs, 1987; Sanchez, 2010). All three students had living situations that were difficult: lack of secure housing, family problems and preparing for college applications. The pressure of racial and ethnic self-definition and explanation of their ambiguity placed an additional strain (Sanchez, 2010). During a period in life were conformity and self-definition are in flux and constantly colliding, it is important to provide supportive, open and aware networks of parents, teachers, administrators and students.

The constant challenge of not being part of one group or another affects mixed race students in subtle ways. This stress can lead to depression, loneliness and feelings of isolation, as Kaimi's story shows (Greene et al., 2006; Taylor & Nanney, 2010). These experiences affect self-esteem, academics and efforts to be successful in school (Cheng & Klugman, 2010). Chris' story from the pow-wow is one such example as it was both a micro-assault and a micro-invalidation. Saed often responded with anger and inappropriate behavior, but the majority of student responses were in some way defensive. Comments can be direct and openly exclusionary, as earlier stories illustrate, or they can be more subtle such as Mrs. Hintzer's was, or they can even be a feeling or physical stance.

Power and Control: Student Misbehavior and Punishment

One of the places where these kinds of actions were at the same time overt and covert was how students were punished. The need for control in schools has in some ways superseded the need for attention to academics (Fuligni, 1997; Noguera, 2008).

A great deal of time in MWHS classes was spent on maintaining order: removing head gear, confiscating cell phones and getting students to sit quietly. It was a classic example of how schools have become centers of discipline and control rather than institutes of learning (Giroux, 2011). “Difficult” students and underperformers were placed in “remedial” classes, such as the science classroom where I assisted much of the academic year.

The study participants were treated on the surface the same way as all students. Yet, there were subtle but observable differences. “If you’re a little black you’re black” (Lucas). Female teachers often sought control young minority men, by looking for ways to “tame” what they saw as inappropriate behavior: talking out of turn, not sitting still, calling out answers or standing up for other students. When observing the same behavior with white male students, it did not merit the same punishment. In some classrooms, black American students dealt with these biases as normal, and they knew better to than to try and challenge the status quo. They were aware the repercussion for misbehavior

would mean a least a trip to the relevant Assistant Principal's office. Some of the mixed race students refused to be subjected to the apparently different rules for whites versus blacks. Their behavior and acting out often led to being removed from the room and having one of the male hall monitors, Steve or O.G., escort them to the office.

Respect: Students need it as much as adults do. Respect as an integral part of student identity was a factor that mediated their behavior. Because of their historical status, teachers and adults expect respect from students, who expect the teachers to in turn treat them with respect. The student participants wanted to be respected by peers, by parents and by authority figures. However, they were often not likely to feel that they were respected (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2006; King, Houston, & Middleton, 2001). These feelings were supported in Denis' saying: "I have to maintain a tough guy front at school, so that I won't lose face with other students." Even Chris' clownin' in class for laughter and attention was a way for him to gain respect by

defying classroom rules and getting away with it. This frontin'[46], the need for respect and quest for it through shows of force and maintaining tough guy fronts, are common in youth male cultures (Hooks, 2004). Frontin' is more than just the culture of putting on a strong macho face; it is fitting in with the group, showing who you are as part of the crowd. This front is often seen by adults as disrespect.

A gap has developed in society between adolescents and adults. Adults have come to see teens as unruly and disrespectful (Giroux, 2011). On a superficial level the students treated most teachers with deference and respect. Some of the teachers mentioned that "these students are so disrespectful." In a world where students struggled enough, the expectation of respect from people who failed to reciprocate that respect was difficult. It was clear that the relationship between the teens and teachers was distant. Conversely, the students did not feel they had respect of the teachers. "My teachers don't respect me, they

[46] Frontin': putting on a tough or cool guy (girl) façade. Clowin' is acting out in a silly fashion.

ignore what I say when I ask for help" (Denis). Saed, Elizabeth and Denis discussed this often. "They have no respect for me or my culture. They hate my music, but they've never really listened to it" (Saed). They felt that teachers showed a great lack of respect.

Speaking out of turn: When teachers fail to connect. Even teachers such as Mr. Burton, who attempted to reach out to by making jokes and cultural references, were never well received by the students. "He is so disrespectful; I don't like it when he says things...like uses quotes from rap songs. He always gets Flokka's name wrong" (Saed). Mr. Burton did not understand the appropriate context for the comments he was making. He did not, in essence, have the students' permission to engage them in their cultural sphere, to use their language or their gestures. His comments became micro-insults rather than a means of connecting with the students. In fact, his use of cultural references was extremely disrespectful and he succeeded in alienating the students. Many of the students saw his attempts

as racist and demeaning. “He thinks he is being good, but it’s just not right, like making fun, but not in a good way” (Elizabeth). Mr. Burton’s science class, where he attempted to enter the students’ cultural frame, was in many ways a deviation from other classrooms at MWHS.

Not interested in learning: Students internalize others opinions. Mr. Burton was not alone in his attitude toward the students. I would hear aside comments like: “these students are going nowhere, they’re just not interested.” Various teachers reported that students in their classes were behavioral problems or unmotivated. “They are just not interested in learning, they have no curiosity” (Mr. Burton). A number of the students reported they were “not good at school,” but their grades, their subsequent graduation and acceptance to colleges indicated something different. When I questioned this, they would say such things as “My brother is the smart one” (Denis); “I’m not good at biology”(Monique) or “I just don’t understand math, and don’t see why we have to learn this stuff anyway” (Camille).

Observing their behavior in the classrooms, it was possible to see why teachers had reached these conclusions. Perceptions and cultural expectations of behavior often affect how students and teachers relate (Ayers, Ladson-Billings, Michie, & Noguera, 2008). If a student acts out, clowns around, talks too much or out of turn, it called a teacher's attention and was returned to the student in the form of negative attention.

This negative perception is a European American misinterpretation of African American, Native American and other minority cultural norms (Delpit, 2006). Students offered respect to teachers and adults that returned that respect, Mrs. Wolf, Ms. Johnson and Ms. Pascal, the science teacher, all had their students' respect. The students who received positive attention and respect from teachers, such as Camille seeking help from Mrs. Wolf, indicated she felt that respect. "She is my friend, she knows me and understands" (Camille). The use of spoken word poetry in Mrs. Johnson's class was something that many of the students identified with and could relate too. "It was

cool, she kind of understood where we're coming from" (Chris). But, if the respect for the student was not returned, then the students felt little compulsion to continue to offer respect for the teacher and classroom environments became places of constant discipline or chaos.

To behave or not to behave: When students act out in unexpected ways. At first glance, the school was quite congenial; every morning, the principal was at the door greeting students. The office staff knew many of the students by sight. Even the hall monitors had student respect, because they stopped to chat, trade taunts and connect with the students daily. Yet, in some cases, I noted a distance and a separation between the white teachers and the student participants. Furthermore, I noticed that teachers often spoke of the students as children and to them as children, such as "Can you say that again in proper English?" (Mrs. Johnson).

At MWHS, the focus was on control. Some of the young men reported suffering from anger issues. Denis told me:

> Denis: Me and my brother have anger problems.
> Me: Oh, are you getting any help for that? Talking to someone?
> Denis: My brother is getting counseling, but I just channel my anger into my [football] playing and hitting my opponent really hard. I have hurt a couple of guys.

Chris indicated something similar: "I get really mad sometimes." But these issues did not overtly affect their behavior in the classroom. The most frequent problems I observed with the male students were lack of attention, inability to sit still and needing frequent reminders to sit down or to pay attention. These problems were not so pronounced with the young women, although they did their share of not paying attention, nor were the young women as openly defiant as the young men. The young women were more likely pass notes and whisper to their seatmates or "zone out." I rarely saw the girls out right defiant toward teachers or authority figures.

Sit here not there: How negative attention affects students.

Once a student had attracted the negative attention of the teacher, it was difficult to change or remove that attention. One

of the primary solutions used to regulate student behavior in the classroom was through forced seating arrangements. Teachers at MWHS often used seating charts to maintain control and authority in the classroom, which often incited chaos and caused lost instruction time due to repeated reminders and corrections. In some classes where certain students were considered behavioral issues, the teachers were quick to single out these 'repeat' offenders. If they continued to stay off topic in the middle of class, they were called out into the hall where they were talked to about behavior. The students who drew attention were often the same three or four minority male students regardless of who else in the room was stepping out of line.

Punishment: How Did it Affect Multiracial Students?

There has been a lot of attention in the media and research to the way punishment is meted out by schools. Minorities make up a disproportionate number of people in the prison system, and of that black males are the largest group of prison inmates given their representation in the general population in the United

States (Noguera, 2007). Current research shows that this hyper vigilant observation begins much earlier during the time at school. The MW school district was aware of this and was attempting to address the issue:

> MWPS has the responsibility to educate every student and to provide a safe and orderly learning environment for all students and staff. MWPS has high standards for all students, and recognizes that a diverse, urban school district needs to use differentiated strategies to assure that all students meet these standards. Previously, African American males and Native American students have had a disproportionate share of suspensions. This policy and the accompanying procedures are intended to help MWPS adjust practice to eliminate gap in suspension rates, while improving behavior, school climate and academic achievement for all students (Midwest Department of Education, 2010).

Data discussed in chapter 2, indicated that there are a disproportionate number of young black men and other minorities, who receive a higher proportion of suspensions, and other disciplinary actions within schools (see page 38). MWHS was no exception. Of the five young men in my study, four got in trouble or were suspended during my time at the school. Lucas was suspended for being high on drugs in school. James got

caught for placing a bottle bomb in a trash can. Saed and Chris were suspended for inappropriate behavior toward a teacher. All of the infractions resulted in out of school suspensions. Out of school suspensions have been found to be ineffective. They do not improve student behavior, lead to more instructional days missed as well as lower achievement (Hennepin County Data, 2008; State of Midwest, 2011). Yet it is not always the unruly student who causes the problems. Even so, the punishment may be unequally distributed among students depending on their "reputation."

The soda bottle bomb incident. During the time I spent in the main office, I saw many of the frequent offenders. None of the student participants were in the main office often. The soda pop bottle bomb was serious enough to receive local media attention (KARE 11, 2011). Three young men were involved in the bottle incident, although the media reported only two students were involved. One young man was white American; one was mixed race white American and black American, and the third was black

American. The two minority boys received disciplinary action and covered for the European American. I overheard him talking to other students about his part even though he told me "I wasn't involved just a bystander."

Making these types of explosives (from everyday household items: window cleaner, aluminum foil and a soda bottle) was a fad the summer before I worked at MWHS. The explosives had received national attention after soda bottles exploded on front lawns. "You can see it on the internet" (Lucas). As a fixture in the classroom most of the students were quite unguarded around me[47].The boys were rather proud of the prank and it was the hot topic the day after when I got to school.

> Student: Did you hear what happen to James?
> Me: No, what?
> Student: He, Sean and Tim made a bottle bomb and it exploded. They took a soda bottle and put window cleaner and tin foil in it.
> Me: Here in school? Where did they make it?
> Student: Here in the science class.

[47] They also thought some of their coded language was beyond my understanding.

The AP told me the three students had made a bomb earlier in the year. “The first time they put the “bomb” in the boys’ locker room. The second time the bomb was placed in a trash can in a corridor toward the back of the school.” They got caught on camera the second time around. The repercussions for the bomb were that the mixed race student was suspended for two weeks. The black American student was expelled. He was already on academic probation due to bad grades. None of the boys were major “trouble makers,” nor were they in the main office on a regular basis. Because only the two minority students were caught on camera and they would not snitch[48] on the white student, they were the ones who received the punishment.

In private conversations with teachers, I was told that the non-white students were more frequently punished, suspended and expelled than their white counterparts.” Schools have limited ways in how they discipline students. The standard disciplinary actions were: removal from class; sitting in the office

[48] Snitching is considered highly inappropriate among minority students. It is part of their code of honor.

for the duration of the class period; lunchroom detention; student and parent in school meeting, permanent removal from a classroom, out of school suspension and expulsion. “It’s like a mini break, you know I can just chill” (Lucas). Students need to have repercussions for misbehavior, but the punishments seemed ineffective.

Lunch detention: A missed opportunity. Students sent for lunch detention were required to sign in and sit for the 20 minute lunch period. There was a list of students who had been referred to lunch room detention. If a student did not show up, there was no attempt at the time to trace the student, although they were expect to show up the next day. There was little conversation at the table, since the AP in charge of the lunch room detention also needed to monitor the lunchroom. Sitting at a table for lunch with one of the assistant principals or a teacher for a period of time could be a more effective of behavior correction if the students had been engaged in a discussion of the behavior that got them there in the first place and

brainstorming ways to avoid the punishment in the future. The opportunity to help correct students' behavior, learn social skills and to develop deeper contact with adults was missed during these brief encounters.

Suspension: A week at the "spa." For a teen, the punishment of "suspension" means staying at home, sleeping in, watching television or playing video games, talking and texting with friends, surfing the internet or complete freedom to wander the streets. They were not able to be present with their friends in a locked cinderblock building with someone watching them at all times. "It was ok, though I did miss my friends. And I can't play ball for a few weeks" (James). "Yeah, I just pretty much chilled. I was grounded too" (Saed). As noted before, out of school suspension does not improve student behavior; it is a means of excluding the student from academic work. In the instance of the bottle bomb, the students had the opportunity to construct it due to the chaotic nature of the science classroom and the teacher's lack of control and supervision of the students. Neither

suspension nor detention requires the student to reflect on his or her actions. Nor do the punishments put the student and teacher on a path to understanding why or how the misbehavior occurred in the first place.

Less serious behavior and its consequences. Other infractions such as Chris and Saed's experiences were due to "disrespectful behavior in the classroom," which ranged from speaking out of turn to talking back to a teacher. (Saed's experiences with his history teacher are further explored in chapter 7.) Some teachers were "threatened" by some of the minority and mixed race students and preferred to refer the students to the hall monitors and the relevant assistant principal. I never witnessed any of the students using threatening language or behavior toward the teachers. The frequent and repeated punishments of certain students were micro-assaults, as only specific students were repeatedly singled out regardless of who else might have been involved. Students were singled out for misbehavior through intensive scrutiny and negative attention. Escalating incidents led

to suspensions, missed school, and increased resentment. “She is such a bitch, my history teacher, I’m always in trouble with her” (Saed). This became a repeated cycle of ‘bad’ behavior and punishment. The students appeared to be behavior problems and developed a history of problem behavior. The male students’ behavior varied in its level of seriousness, but in the end they were all subjected to the same punishment. Ultimately, this affected how the student interacted with the school and responded to the community. If the student did not feel accepted and a part of the community and ultimately it affected how the student saw his academic potential and his success.

This chapter looked at the effects of racism both overt and covert as well as introducing the concept of micro-aggressions. It also discussed how teachers and peer perceptions of students where membership in multiple social circles was not understood or accepted. How teachers and others reacted to the students’ ambiguity and their explanations affected how students presented themselves. It also affected students’ self-perception,

as negative feedback in the form of side comments and teacher attitudes had a long term impact on how the student saw himself as an academic success.

As was noted in chapter 2, with the current attention to the school to prison pipeline it is important to review student discipline policies, which were ultimately part of the pattern of micro-aggression affecting student engagement in school and their academics. The male participants in my study received reprimands, suspensions or other forms of punishment. While repercussions for rule breaking was important to the functionality of the school, the disproportionate distribution of punishments and the methods of punishment were ineffective in changing behavior, encouraging compliance or improving student social behavior. The student participants were aware of the differential treatment and often fought against it, whatever the consequences. The following chapter explores how these students moderated their behavior, demeanor and language in different situations. It considers the students intentions with

these modifications and proposes a different lens with which to understand student reactions and behavior.

Chapter 7

„To thine ownself be true:" Appeasement, Objection and Cultural Compliance

> The imposed template does not fit with my reality. While the society imposes Black or White, I look at my reality and feel both. I feel the pull from both sides; yet strangely rejected too. At times, I feel like a diplomat, brokering an uneasy truce between warring parties. However, at others, I get the impression that no one understands me and that I am destined to walk alone (Taylor, 2004, p.94).

As an examination of mixed race student identity in a high school context, this dissertation focused on two primary perspectives. The way students saw themselves was explored in chapter 4 and how students were perceived by their peers and teachers were the topics of chapters 5 and 6. This chapter brings together the topics of 4, 5 and 6 to explore how these projections were aspects of the students self. In this final data chapter, I explore how the student participants position themselves and react in situations with adults. Turning from previous explorations of racialized experiences, this chapter

looks at the unique ways that students react and insulate themselves from these experiences.

What first drew my attention to this was how differently the students treated me from other adults in the school. Socio-linguists use the term *code-switching*, to refer to how an individual switches between languages or dialects. The shifts in behavior and language that I observed with the students were much more complex than simple change of language. Students used different language, postures, gestures and physical stances based on how they assessed their social environment. This chapter explores the complexity of these interactions through student vignettes and relating back to stories from previous chapters. Students' awareness of the shifts they make is introduced, as it has implications for how they interact with peers and adults, as well as the stressors students encounter as a result of conforming or not conforming. Finally, this chapter proposes a new lens through which to examine the shifting realities that multiracial students inhabit. Appeasement and

objection, the topics of this chapter, are an exploration of students' projection of self in their school interactions.

Additive Parts: Making up Identity

Mixed race students of color were often targets of a teacher's negative attentions. In some classes, I witnessed many students being off task or being loud, even disrespectful, as I noted in chapter 6. In his 20th century American history class, Saed was a very different person. Where he was reserved in his other classes, here he was talking and joking with his seatmates. It was not uncommon for the majority of the students to be off task, but the history teacher focused on certain students, and both Chris and Saed were frequently reprimanded. One afternoon Saed, Chris and a third student were having an animated discussion about basketball playoffs, rather than doing the assigned quiet reading. After a few reminders to the three young men, Mrs. Jackson called them out into the hallway to remind them that it was important to be on task. They then all returned

to the classroom, the young men continued to chat and eventually Saed was asked to report to the main office.

Saed had many negative encounters with Mrs. Jackson. A few of them led to him being suspended from school. We talked about the class, since his behavior was so different from elsewhere at school. I often saw him get frustrated and angry in class, not because of the material, rather because of his treatment at the hands of Mrs. Jackson. His experiences in history class came to a head toward the end of the semester, when Saed was suspended for being rude to his classmates. “We were all assigned a final power point presentation. You remember Angela, the French exchange student? She had a strong accent in English. Some people had a hard time understanding her.” During the presentations, Mrs. Jackson had explicitly asked that the students be quiet, attentive and respectful. “While Angela was presenting, many of the students were talkin’ and makin’ fun. So I told people to shut up. Mrs.

Jackson sent me to the main office. I got suspended for a two days."

When Saed "witnessed an injustice," he often felt compelled to speak out and stand up for his friends. Saed's defensive reactions and loud responses were disruptive behavior in a classroom setting, yet he was not the only disruptive element in the class. He and I often talked about his behavior and the resulting punishment.

> Me: You know what you can do to avoid this in the future?
> Saed: Yes, I can be quiet and act more white. Not call attention to things.
> Me: So what keeps you from doing that?
> Saed: It's just not right for her to treat me like that, she's being a bitch.
> Me: That's pretty strong language. So why did you stand up for Angela?
> Saed: The other students were being rude and Mrs. Jackson on had asked us to respect everyone and listen to their presentations. This one girl was talking over Angela and making fun of her accent and saying how they couldn't understand her. And Mrs. Jackson wasn't doing anything.

He clearly knew what was expected of him, that he could act more "white," as he and Camille called it, but he chose to ignore

the rules because he saw an injustice. He often spoke of how this teacher had difficulty with her non-white students overall. “It’s hard to see some students get in trouble, while other students get away with rude behavior.” Saed chose in this case to be non-compliant to gain Angela’s respect, in spite of the actions’ futility and the repercussions. Nonetheless he was willing to accept the consequences of his non-conformity, because he saw it as doing the right thing.

More than Code-switching: When Linguistic Analysis is not Enough

Code-switching is frequently used to discuss how individuals change the way they talk in different social situations (Nilep, 2006). Such socio-linguistic analysis does not include behavior and personal presentation. Not only did I observe how students changed the way they talked depending on the context, but they adapted their physical bodies, adjusted their clothes, stance and demeanor. One mode of speech was used when talking to peers, another when talking to teachers, and another for authority figures. The distance between people when they conversed

often changed, more intimate with peers and teachers they were comfortable with or liked. Camille often stopped by Mrs. Wolf's, to chat with her at the end of the school day. "I like her, we're friends. I can talk to her about things" (Camille). Mike, O.G. or Mrs. Wolf got immediate compliance; others might get a grumble and then grudging compliance. Following an adult's requests were signs of attention and respect.

One of the students invited me to the annual teacher appreciation basketball game. "But I'm not a teacher." Greg: "You are to me, I want you to come." That night at the game I got a "shout out." I held a special place in the school; I was neither a teacher nor a school authority figure, yet many of the students considered me a teacher and treated me like one. As I reflected on my interactions with students, I began to wonder why when I made slip-ups or said things that could be misconstrued (i.e. micro-aggressions), the students took them with a grain of salt. I asked James: "How come some people like me can make inappropriate comments, but other teachers are

considered to be over stepping the bounds?" James responded: "We know you. You're not racist. You make mistakes." The students felt free to be who they were around me. I attributed some of my intimacy with these students to their desire to have an adult, who respected them and treated them as equals, in their lives.

After having worked on a basketball highlights video clip with James, I was driving him back to school and we were talking about attitudes, particularly how some comments that did not seem racially motivated or racist for white people were insulting to non-whites. I knew that I had made the micro-aggressive comments similar to the ones discussed in chapter 6. James noted that his white coaches had made jokes during practice about white students playing certain kinds of sports, which the non-white students found inappropriate. "Yeah, one of my coaches used to make comments like: 'a white player could never do that.'" James felt that the coach was trading on stereotypes at the expense of the minority students, even

"though it [the comment] seemed like the coach was making fun of the white team members, he was really saying something about us, the black players." Like James, Saed's and other student experiences related in earlier chapters were connected to the concepts of acculturation and assimilation examined in the following sections. In certain ways, the school expected conformity through assimilation, while the students struggled with acculturation in order to not give up their multicultural frames.

Act More White and Play School

> A bloodline full of slavery and racial tension,
> 50% Hebrew that I forgot to mention.
> Most hated two races on the face of the earth
> Programmed to believe we were lower since
> birth…(Saed, 2011).

James' and others comments illustrate how sensitive and aware the students were of the juxtaposition of their lived racial identity and what the school and the white teachers expected of them. When Camille told me she needed to 'act more white,' I realized that the students see it as manifestly their failure to

succeed and conform in a different social environment. Saed knew that he should not stand up for his friend, Angela, but he did anyway. Camille or Jayden could stop being those loud black girls, change their language, lower their voices and not laugh so loudly. Many of the students were aware of the teachers' expectations for them speak proper English, stop sagging their pants and conform.

Play school. "They need to 'play school;' to emulate the framework where they spent the most time. Many of the students came from other schools to attend MWHS, but not all primary and middle schools were of the same caliber and some of the students were not prepared to "compete" at a sophisticated academic level" (Mrs. Wolf). For some students, including the mixed race students, this meant assuming a different persona in order to conform to the school's expectations. Mrs. Wolf felt that often her ninth graders were not prepared for the academic expectations at MWHS. "Some were not even prepared enough to have a pencil or pen and

paper in order to participate in the classroom" (Mrs. Wolf). She recognized that some students were under-prepared, but also that they had different cultural frames that were not always welcomed in the classroom. Because of the variety and varied quality of schools in the cities, students came in ready to compete or it takes them some time to adjust. Promising students, who do not have the schooling experience and are often the first generation to possibly go to college, are enrolled in Advancement via individual determination (AVID).

Learning to play: AVID teaches both performance and expectations. AVID was a tutoring program designed to help students be successful in their classes.

> For one class period a day, they learn organizational and study skills, work on critical thinking and asking probing questions, get academic help from peers and college tutors, and participate in enrichment and motivational activities that make college seem attainable. Students enrolled in AVID are typically required to enroll in at least one of their school's toughest classes, such as honors or Advanced Placement, in addition to the AVID elective (AVID, retrieved 9.25.2012).

These classes were intended to bridge the gap in understanding, to help the student develop the needed skills to be successful in high school and in college. The focus was to 'mold' the student to fit the school and academic environment. The AVID classes not only helped with academic skills, but also helped students' master linguistic and social cues that they might not learn elsewhere. There were overt instances of this and more subtle ways it was done. Discussed later in the chapter is Jayden's response to her teacher's request to "say it again in proper English" as an example of some of the more overt means of "correcting" student behavior and language.

A discussion of the word 'ghetto' occurred on one of my observation days. One of the tutors caught that the students were upset and was trying to engage the students. He wanted to better understand why they were upset and at the same time he wanted to engage the students in a deeper discussion of the term. 'Ghetto' had been brought up in a different class and had upset the students. For the black American students like Denis

and Saed, the use of the term was insulting. 'Ghetto' implied not only living in a run down and poor neighborhood, but "that you are uncultured, lack opportunities, need help and are a victim" (Denis, 2011). This discussion crossed racial lines and had clear class issues underlying it, but the students in the group focused on the racial aspect of the term. Overall in the school, the notion of class was just as absent as discussions as race.

The AVID tutors were all young and white, who engaged with the students, on many levels, and a few of them worked to connect at a cultural level as well as on an academic level. "It says a lot about the assumptions people make about you, when someone says 'that's so ghetto.' It means you don't have class, you don't have the right understanding of how to behave, that you dress trashy, use inappropriate language, you know 'talk street'" (Saed). Like the "this is not the streets," 'ghetto,' implies that you do not meet the standards of the white middle class school environment. It holds within it an implied meaning that the student could not "rise above where you are and what you

will become" (Saed). Programs such as AVID were created to help students adjust to the expectations of white culture, but there remained a gap in understanding. The cultural learning was unidirectional, where the minority students were taught to conform to the middle class white school cultural expectations. AVID classes were bridging classes for students and they focus on average students to help them build skill for success in school.

Assimilation or Acculturation

Dasein, "being there" and *befindlichkeit*, "feeling one's self;" framed the student participants' interactions with the school environment and with other students and adults. This locus of being was also where the individual student felt and perceived herself and her environment. The discussion about the word 'ghetto' and Camille's experience with Mrs. Hintzer placed students on the outside of the cultural environment. "The biracial experience (of self) has historically been imposed upon by external forces, specifically, the dichotomous and limited socio-historical constructions of race that may or may not match

with an individual's sense of intra-psychic, familial, and cultural realities" (Taylor & Nanney, 2011, p. 199). Previous research focused on the way this construction of self had been internal to the student's experience. As the quote at the beginning of the chapter implied, it was not the internal focus that affected the experience of mixed race individuals, but it was an externally imposed phenomena that moderated the student's behavior and reactions, her *befindlichkeit* and *da sein*. The views of society and institutions affected how the individual reflected self. The reflection of self was not the self per say, but more the person's adaptation to external demand, stimuli and expectation. Who the person perceived herself to be could and often did differ from this projection. These perceptions mediated students' use of assimilation or acculturation.

Assimilation implies and expects a shedding of the home or original culture, because it is incompatible with the new cultural frame, in this case the white dominant culture of a U.S. middle class high school. "As a result, some may feel compelled to adopt

a cultural worldview that does not fully reflect their unique heritage and experience" (Taylor & Nanney, 2011, p. 199). The assimilationist frame expects the sublimation of the culture(s) of origin in order to be a functional adult (Harris & Sim, 2002; Phinney, 2004). This concept was the basis of research which found the individual was torn choosing between the old cultural frames and being permanently uncomfortable in the assumed cultural frame. The concept of the 'tragic mulatto'[49] was based on this idea of needing oneness to be a whole functioning adult, but not being able to find stability due to the clash of cultural frames and world views (Spenser, 2010). An internal self-hatred and struggle for dominance of one culture over the others was believed to develop. For many students, assimilation meant ignoring one or more of their cultures to fit in, making it feel like a betrayal of self. This feeling of betrayal was linked to the perceived dichotomy that exists between being black or white in

[49] The tragic mulatto is related to Park's concept of the marginal man. The tragic mulatto is constantly waging an internal war causing psychological turmoil. The concept can be found in many novels including Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

U.S. culture. Students felt that they were being asked to betray their own culture in order to be successful in the school setting.

Acculturation is where people learn, accept and navigate disparate aspects of different cultures yet at the same time developed and maintained their own unique cultural identity. In this case, a person's identity becomes a fusion of cultures, allowing the person to easily navigate from cultural frame to cultural frame without becoming a 'sell-out' to his or her origins. Acculturation, unlike assimilation, is less about leaving behind one way of being to assume a different persona; instead, it is about learning to function within, respecting and honoring multiple cultural environments. Multiracial/ multicultural students operated in varied social worlds at school where the expectations were predominantly white middle class. Kaimi's heartfelt poem eloquently points out:

> Cut me,
> I bleed in many shades,
> Almost as if my body can't decide what color I truly am,
> I am trapped in this skin like an old Halloween costume… (Kaimi, 2010).

Acculturation became the flexibility to maintain different guises and sensitivity to the surroundings that allowed the students to put others at ease. They could do all of this without feeling that they have forsaken one culture for the sake of another. Students, who did not feel at liberty to genuinely do this, felt it was a betrayal. “I know I should act more white, but then I feel like I am betraying my other parts” (Jayden). The concept of acculturation allowed for flexibility in identity shifts. Mixed race theories of identity saw this as a means to integrate identities and allowed for shifts between social groups. Acculturation could also be seen as resistance to the assimilation demanded in the school cultural milieu, without engaging in openly oppositional behavior.

It is context as much as language. Since this chapter examines how the individual perceives how others perceive her, it also explores how others’ perceptions affect her self-perception, as well as how she reflects this self to others in the ‘expected’ manner. The question remains whether the student participants

were aware of making this shift. How this shift happened in a classroom has received little scrutiny. Students spoke African American Vernacular English, Somali or Spanish at home, but were required to speak English in classroom interactions. However, there was more to this shift than language. It was how the person stands; the tone of what is said; the gestures used; her facial expressions and the distance a person maintained from others. All of these aspects reflect the student's interactions and how the student responds in a given situation.

Context was as important as the language shift. In this case, context included place and space; who was around, as well as clothing and physical carriage. What students wore said something about who they thought they were, who they said they were and how they wanted other people to read them. Jayden often wore a shirt with the phrase "Jayden's band" on it. I asked, "Do you like that band? What kind of music does the band play?" but Jayden explained, "It's not that I like the band. I like

that the band has my name." Rather than supporting the band she was using it to show her pride in her name and herself.

This encounter made me realize how context was much more than just code-switching. Camille's closeness with Mrs. Wolf was also an indication of her comfort and trust with an authority figure that allowed her to go from a hostile context in the lunch room to a more nurturing space with Mrs. Wolf, where she felt accepted and safe to express her hurt and frustration without the fear of getting into more trouble. Saed's combative stance and language toward his history teacher were also illustrations of reaction to context.

Appeasement or Objection: How Mixed Students Reflect Expectations

> There is risk inherent in "standing one's ground" against the limiting racial dictates of society: threats of being misunderstood, not accepted, and alienated. Thus, the choice of allowing the context to exclusively guide personhood is perceived as attractive and ultimately safe, for the end result is most likely some degree of fit, a measure of acceptance, and an outside appreciation from the other that the multiracial individual made the cultural or interpersonal adjustment (Taylor & Nanney, 2010, p. 211).

The students were aware of the cultural differences and aware of their liminal status among many worlds and the risks that conforming or resisting had. In this state, students were participants and observers, simultaneously engaged and assessing the environment. Instead of assimilating to the school's expectations, students used their knowledge and cultural fluidity to interact, get along and be successful in the school setting, and part of this was to make teachers and peers more comfortable with their ambiguity. Kaimi's experience with her friend Sara was an illustration of how Kaimi had hidden a part of herself from her friend, and when she finally shared herself it was unaccepted.

Appeasement. To appease someone is to make them feel more comfortable in the social setting or situation. *Appeasement* is a conscious effort to change one's behavior and physical demeanor in order to make others more comfortable. I propose the term *appeasement*, because student interactions with others varied in both obvious and subtle ways. It changed when they were with friends, acquaintances, teachers or me. Many people

do this to some degree, but often they are not aware of their doing this. Minority students often put their cultures on hold in school or suffer negative repercussions for what is seen as oppositional behavior (Delpit, 2006). “[W]e are products of our cultural environs, the summation of its additive parts; yet, at the same time, culture is always instantiated, interpreted, and acted out by an individual” (Taylor & Nanney, 2011, p. 200). The student participants were simultaneously interpreting and reacting to their surroundings while they were also engaged in reflecting expected behavior. I often saw the student participants use a cloaking technique in a conscious fashion, rather than as an automatic response. Cloaking through appeasement was the way students presented a side of themselves in order to better fit in. It was cloaking because it may or may not have been part of the student’s identity, but the student was reflecting behavior and language that they perceived was required in that setting. The mixed race students in their liminal status had the ability to recognize what adults and peers wanted and then chose to conform or not to conform.

When students took on guises that were expected and welcomed by the group, they were engaging in appeasement. This was in order to get by in social situations and as a way to be successful in academic situations. In some ways, appeasement required them to sublimate their mixed race personalities. The student acquiesced to the group's expectations either explicitly or implicitly by straightening up, maintaining a more deferential stance, looking down or away, letting intended or unintended slip-ups or slurs pass. When a student engaged in *appeasement,* it was like holding up a mirror to others so they saw their own reflection or the image they expected to see. Students assumed a cooperative stance to speak and spoke standard English, when they felt it was in their interest to do so. Kaimi exhibited such behavior when she laughed at the off key and derogatory jokes her African American girlfriends made about whites. As she noted: "In my first year I stayed within my 'expected' friend group. I didn't want to stand out too much or seem too different, so I laughed when they made comments about white people."

The student participants were aware of expectations that were placed on them. Some, like Elizabeth, conformed in order to work for the benefit of all students. “I’m a member of the city wide student government and was elected student council president for the 2011-2012 school year. I want to make schools better for all students. This year we are working on improving the school district’s smart phone policy.” Saed often pulled on a cloak of respectability and whiteness using language that other students did not understand, but for him it fractured because of how others behaved towards him and how upset he got about being unfairly treated.

Camille knew she could take on a whiter persona and “stop acting like that loud black girl who says inappropriate things.” Many of the student participants felt that this compliance was a betrayal of who they were. “I’d be ignoring who I am all the parts” (Jayden). They chose not to sublimate their personalities to make others comfortable; they wanted to be seen and accepted for who they were, not corrected. “I wish color had no

history/ because the older I'm getting/ the more I realize/ I'm not part of one story but many…" (Kaimi). They were aware of how they were viewed and what people expected of them, resulting in them disconnecting, acting out or conforming. Teachers and friends did not always realize that the students were doing this to make others more comfortable. When students used appeasement, it was a way to avoid negative attention or exclusion.

Objection. When mixed race students in this study did not conform, they were seen as misbehaving and being disruptive, not as students who were expressing themselves and learning to demarcate their realities in reaction to the multiple realities they inhabited and the expectations placed on them to conform to a white middle class model of behavior. In some cases, they chose not to present an acceptable persona. *Their objection* carried with it an awareness of action that was deliberate and engaged in regardless of consequences and was a truer projection of students' self. Examples of objection stood out more starkly in

the classrooms. In this aspect, the student acted with forethought in the opposite fashion than was expected by the group. Students had varying reasons for doing this. Sometimes it was in defense of others; at other times, the student did this to be contrary and have a little fun.

While the mixed students had learned and assimilated the need to appease adults, even at a cost to their own personality, they sometimes chose to do just the opposite. Jayden was graceful, full of life; her laugh was infectious. In a group of other adolescents, Jayden was hard to miss; outspoken, even loud, she brought light and laughter into a room with her. Often quiet in the classroom, when the academic topics were of interest to her, she actively participated. One day as Jayden was leaving her AVID class, her teacher, Mrs. Jackson, asked her to work on an assignment for the next class. Jayden responded: “I’m finna git on dat.” Mrs. Jackson replied: “Can you say that again in proper English?” Jayden repeated without changing the wording or the intonation: “I’m finna git on dat.” Again the teacher repeated:

“Can you say that again in proper English?” Jayden finally acquiesced saying “I *will* work on that.” It was clear from the teacher’s reaction and Jayden’s semi-playful response that this kind of correction often occurred in the class, not only with Jayden but with other students.

Jayden’s use of the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) was deliberate, as was clear from her repeating the phrase rather than correcting it as she was asked. I found that many of the students used both AAVE and ‘proper’ English. The students appeared to switch fluidly between the two linguistic traditions. Jayden was very aware of when and where she used the two different speaking patterns. As she and I got to know each other, her speaking style changed. When we first met, she used very proper English, because she saw me as a middle class white woman. The more we talked, the more she loosened up and became more comfortable with me, and she switched back and forth, especially when she realized how much AAVE I actually understood.

This ability to switch between what can be conceived of as two similar but distinct languages has been found in bicultural children. The fluidity with which the mixed students switch between languages was required as they walked from the classroom into the hall and back into the classroom. They learned early to gauge situations and make other people comfortable. Jayden's interaction indicated a disregard for the standard rules of play. She knew that she should speak proper English, but deliberately chose not to use the correct language. Mrs. Jackson's reaction indicated that she saw an aspect of the classroom was a way to train students to use appropriate language in the school context. She did not react as if she was aware that Jayden had the ability to use the appropriate turn of phrase, which she had shown previously; rather, Mrs. Jackson reacted to hearing the wrong turn of phrase in response to her question. Jayden was playing with the teacher. Jayden and Mrs. Jackson had a good rapport, but still the teacher failed to see Jayden's teasing and attempt to bring light heartedness to a long school day.

Objection was not only an overt refusal to conform, but it was sometimes as subtle as a disconnect in the classroom. Students chose to zone out or sit in silence rather than sublimate their personalities, language and social behavior. When Saed first came to MWHS, he was reserved and polite. As the semester progressed he became more outgoing and more overtly resistant. Jayden's interaction was an example of overt objection and then she switched to appeasement. As I noted earlier, Monique, Camille and Jayden were outgoing even boisterous. The afternoon we went out to a coffee shop, the three young women got along very well. Jayden was quick to make Camille feel comfortable and include her in the conversation. By the time we reached the coffee shop, the girls were chatting like old friends, laughing and teasing each other.

Each one of these young women behaved completely differently in their classes. They sat in the back of the class. They all answered questions when called on, but only showed their outgoing personalities at lunch or in the AVID class where

collaboration and discussion were expected. In classes, Jayden was often off task, chatting with her seatmates. Monique was generally a quiet young woman, but she was much more reserved in class, even disconnected. She was much livelier at lunch and outside of school. Similarly, Camille was a shy and quiet young woman in class and as the ear-hustling story indicated she was a different person with her friends and with Mrs. Wolf, in spaces where she felt she could be herself.

Many of the stories related in the previous chapters are examples of the students' appeasing or objecting to others in their environment. Kaimi's experience with her African American girlfriend showed the results of refusing to maintain an appeasing manner with her African American social group, as she chose to move into broader social circles. Saed's aggressive behavior in his history class and his withdrawal in his math classroom were also examples of objection. The students were used to sublimating their regular behavior in order to find a place in the classroom and appease the cultural expectations of the

teacher. Withdrawal and distance made the students less likely to seek out help and participate in classrooms when they feared that their response would be corrected as Jayden's was with her AVID teacher.

Repercussions of objection and appeasement

Often, it did not occur to teachers that students did not feel culturally comfortable in the classrooms. My interview with Mr. Stevens, a mathematics teacher, indicated this. "I was on a committee that interviews students for a college scholarship. One of the students, a young mixed race student mentioned that he had never felt comfortable in the classroom, which kept him from participating." In his math classroom, culture was often not included. "Why would I talk about race? It's a math class" (Mr. Stevens). Math class was a place to learn the formulas and solve assigned problems. The history and background of mathematics was absent from classroom discussion, yet the student's comments indicated that students can feel uncomfortable even in an "a-cultural" classroom. This can not only affect student

behavior, but also affect academic performance. “When individuals deny or restrict the full possibility of their existence and quest for identity, allowing their possibilities to be dictated solely by others or the environment, what results is an inauthentic mode of being-in-the-world and ultimately a measure of guilt” (Taylor & Nanney, 2011, p. 209). Sometimes the guilt and the discomfort the mixed race students experience led them to experience depressive symptoms.

> At night i think about all the lonely shit on my mind
> trackin down so many thoughts always losin track of time
> i think about my future, bout my present and of course the past
> wishing i could turn around and give that shit a fukkin blast
> cause if i could do it all again id do it in the skin im in
> niggas would accept me for both nationalities and origins
> To the colleges who denied people imma get rich and than
> buy the fukkin schools and make sho you aint never hired again
> cause bein turned away can make a nigga feel nasty sick
> now tell me how rejection feels you cold hearted selfish bitch
> im jus touchin on some topics i think people should score

> since you movin backwards i guess this niggas movin forward
> my words are like the needle givin people that bilious feel (Saed, a rap, 5.2012).

Saed was not the only one to experience depression due to the social stress; as noted in chapter 6, many of the students in this study reported similar feelings, but Saed's poem eloquently points out the feelings of loneliness and exclusion multiracial student participants felt. Along with this feeling of isolation, students can feel betrayed, as Kaimi did when her friend pointed out how much Kaimi had changed. Her poem and Saed's rap indicate the high level of self-awareness these students have, and the pressures they feel to conform to prescribed identities and roles.

Even if teacher tried to be helpful, students could be disconnected from the classroom environment. Saed struggled in his trigonometry class. "I don't understand what the teacher is saying. She doesn't ever explain everything in a way that I understand, my teacher in Baxter was more helpful." My observations in Saed's math class found that Saed tried to

understand and his teacher would stop by to help him, but he was very withdrawn and disconnected from both her and the subject matter. Teachers may not even be aware of this disconnect as Mr. Stevens noted with the student in his math class. If they perceived the gap as the music teacher Mr. Nolan did, they did not feel comfortable enough to bring the issues into classroom discussions.

The pressure to appease or to object to others externally imposed perceptions caused the students to feel stress. Jayden noted "I often felt like I have to be different people." Kaimi felt this way as well, and her use of "which skin" shows her awareness of what people were looking for without realizing that they were asking her to only show certain aspects of herself. Saed's description of himself as an outsider or Denis' façade of the tough guy were all instances of them appeasing others. Sometimes their choices caused them problems. Jayden found when she brought her lunchroom persona into the classroom, her behavior was unacceptable and, ultimately, she acquiesced

by assuming the expected persona. The common element was that they were reactive behaviors to outside expectations, not struggles to define who they were. Student stress came in many forms. Camille's experience with Mrs. Hintzer was upsetting and memorable. Jayden needed to go home after her teacher's comment about her home life. James' remarks about his coaches' jokes when he knew he could not respond indicated his discomfort. Saed's experiences in history class were also examples of appeasement or objection and impacted both the students' classroom engagement and their feelings of stress and depression.

Appeasement required that the student was aware of the expectation and that the student made a conscious choice to cloak herself to meet those expectations. O*bjection* was a refusal to engage in the cloaking, as is evidenced by Saed's experiences in history class. *Objection* could also be a subtle disconnect in the classroom when a student chose not to actively engage, because she was aware of the repercussions, as Jayden discovered when

she used AAVE with her AVID teacher. *Appeasement* could be equally stressful as a student engaged in actively cloaking even though it was not ultimately how she saw herself, but was more her sense of *dasein* and *befindlichtkeit* in a given social situation. These projections were not an issue of the students' internal identity being in conflict, but related to external pressures to be acceptable to others. It was an unspoken request to make others more comfortable with the ambiguity mixed students represent. These students did not see their blended identities reflected in the school environment. They learned little to nothing of their multi-racial/ethnic/cultural histories or achievements. They were expected to conform to the school culture regardless of the impact on their personhood. They felt the pressure to conform to expectations and sublimate their personalities or otherwise face correction like Jayden or more stringent repercussions like Saed encountered.

This chapter is a culmination of my ethnographic research project. The multiracial student participants did sometimes feel

stress in the school environment. To shield themselves, they used appeasement or objection as buffers from the demands of assimilation in school. Their reactions were either negative or positive in nature depending on the impact the student wanted to have. These outward projections caused the students internal stress as they projected an inauthentic self. Despite these stressors, I found that the students continued to succeed in academics and in their personal lives. The following chapter concludes the paper reviewing the data discussion, looking at portions that demand further exploration and offering some suggestions on how to improve student experiences.

Chapter 8
Beyond All of the Pieces: What was Missing and Next Steps

Through the voices and the statements of the multiracial students in this study, it became clear the students had greater self-awareness and cultural literacy due to their identity formation and continued navigation of disparate cultures. Their awareness provided them with insight that needs to be encouraged within an educational setting, but simultaneously made them more sensitive to problems inherent in the current system. Because these students had received little attention in academic research, my dissertation explored multiracial identity in adolescents and student experiences in a secondary educational context. This chapter reexamines briefly the topics covered in this dissertation. This includes a brief review of the four data chapters. The chapter includes some recommendations for teachers and school administrators that could make school more inclusive for multiracial students. And, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of this research

and tentative findings, which lead to suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2 “My grandmother told me” began with an examination of the development of race and racial categorization in the U.S. from the colonial period to present time. While this was not an exhaustive review of the U.S.’s racial history, it traced the development of the racial class system and the dichotomy between whites and minorities. The section concluded with a brief examination of mixed race history in the U.S.

It also examined racial issues, academic views on race and the affect this has on minority student school experiences. It can be all too easy to see a group of students as adhering to a specific category; this was also true when examining mixed race students. Such reification impacted how individuals were perceived, created stereotypes and created negative generalized group identities. One of the challenges in critical theory and research has been not to create reified group categories.

The final section of the chapter explored current research on multiracial identity. The ambiguity multiracial people exhibited, both physically and in culture, confounded a great deal of research and thought on human identity. This section focused on two fundamental theories which frame multiracial/multiethnic identity research. In many ways, early research pathologized multiracial identity as an eternal struggle to find equilibrium. More recent research has refuted these theories by examining how an individual categorized herself and how she had been perceived by others. The three primary theories of multiracial identity were discussed as they form part of the basis of analysis for the data in chapters 4, 5 and 6. The research into multiracial children has focused on how students are categorized by parents and by school authorities. Other recent studies have focused on psychological well-being, violence and substance abuse continuing the deficit model of research on minorities groups. These sections of the literature review formed the basis for my own research on multiracial, multiethnic and multicultural identity and school experiences of mixed race individuals.

The study was an ethnographic examination of student life. Data was collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and self-reflective journaling and field notes. My analysis of the data looked for commonalities among the students' experiences. I then constructed stories and vignettes around the collected stories. From the outset, I felt it was important to understand the experiences from the student perspective, rather than from either a numerical stand point or from an adult's view of what the students' school experience were like. This dissertation sought to better illuminate multiracial self-identity conception and the student participants' school experiences.

Chapter 4, Being and belonging, introduced the students and explored their self-identification and school choice. The chapter delved into the racial and ethnic mixes of the students and outside of school factors of students' lives. The chapter closed with a discussion of how the focus on categorization limits the development of a deeper understanding of multiracial student

experiences. Students' racialized experiences were the focus of chapter 5, Light-skinned'd, and chapter 6, Ear-hustled. These chapters discussed how mixed race students faced blatant and subtle discrimination from many people, not just whites. Saed's and Chris' vignettes illustrated that exclusion can come from many sides and all of it was isolating and distressing. Mixed race students were aware of this from a young age.

The overt racial experiences were not the only difficulties students faced; they also encountered more subtle and institutionally based discrimination and racialized experiences. The students had little control over these experiences. Ear-hustling investigated the gap in understanding and power between the students and the school authority figures. The expectation of conformity helped restrain student participation in classrooms. The teachers and administrators who were advocates for minority students felt that teachers could do more and could find the time, but many teachers chose not to reach out. The students maintained labels and histories which affected

student teacher interactions. Students at the edge of adulthood begged for respect, but few found it, and some found punishment instead.

In spite of these experiences, the students were well liked and plagued by the normal teen issues. Light skinnd'd bitch and ear-hustling examined the overt and covert racial experiences of the student. Multiracial students often encounter questions of group belonging, as Saed's and Chris' stories illustrated at the opening of the chapter. These experiences may have not openly bother the students, but the memories remained and impacted how students interacted with others. These students often do not feel respected by the adults in the school which affected their interactions with teachers and the school. Some teachers recognized this disconnect and took steps to make their classes more inclusive and mutually respectful learning environments. In spite of overt and subtle cues of exclusion the students remained resilient. The more subtly racialized experiences were not only more difficult to identify as micro-aggressions, but due to the

power structures in the school students had no redress, since the experience may not have been seen as racist by adults. Both types of interactions were not limited to students and teachers. Students often felt pressure to conform from their peers or risk losing friends, as Kaimi found.

For mixed race students in this dissertation, the need to fit in was not as important as making others comfortable. Chapter 7, Appeasement and objection, explored how students change their behavior, self-presentation, and language in order to appease external expectations. Students donned these guises as needed. Multiracial students were aware, in much more subtle ways, of the social roles expected.

Mixed students recognized what adults and others wanted and then chose to conform or not to conform. *Appeasement* was posited a means of understanding the way students reacted differently to other adults, while objection was the act of not conforming to expectations. Positive experiences were where students took on guises that were expected and welcome by the

group. *Objection* was used in a very deliberate manner to make others uncomfortable and could result in punishment. Their use of appeasement and objection also could cause personal stress for students. This stress was often externally imposed by the need to justify self and conform to these external expectations. The key was that students used both appeasement and objection in a conscious fashion, rather than as an automatic response.

Recommendations

My research and study of the students at MWHS revealed that they had strong self-images, but rarely found themselves reflected in the school culture or curriculum. In researching and writing this dissertation, I learned to question my assumptions and knowledge about mixed children. It was important to understand, acknowledge underlying assumptions and that differences exist among students, even mixed race students. Meaningful curriculum and educational experiences for multiracial students will help them develop a deeper understanding of themselves. More meaningful interactions with

students begin with letting them express who they are, not just categorizing them by their phenotypical appearances and current racial norms.

Changing attitudes. Schools must and do have rules, both the ones they impose themselves as well as the ones that are district and state specific. However, whites have an understanding of what is acceptable classroom behavior, ways of talking to people and even the level of respect offered the students, which are not explicitly clear to other ethnic groups. The attitudes that certain teachers held about the mixed students were often inappropriate. Even teachers who did not know the students would make off-hand comments about how unteachable and untrainable certain groups of students were. These teachers were not racist or bigoted, but if the students were not attending the higher level classes (IB or AP), they were seen as unmanageable and underprepared to be teachable. The mixed race students were aware of these attitudes and they often felt

they could not approach their teachers for help when they needed.

School diversity expert. It would be helpful to designate or create a diversity position at the school, with a person specifically dedicated to addressing diversity needs and problems that arise at the school. This individual would handle matters at the school related to racism, gender and sexuality issues. The addition of a diversity and integration expert would serve several functions. First, this person can lead the teacher discussion/ exploration group. The expert helps develop curriculum for a teacher discussion that would facilitate exploration of whiteness, white privilege and guilt. The expert would create and model positive interactions as well as creating a safe space for teachers to learn about and explore sensitive topics. She will serve as a sounding board to keep the group from falling into blame or guilt sessions that would not move the discussions forward. This expert would also be available to help teachers develop more culturally relevant curriculum. Since teachers are already

overloaded, the diversity expert can be tapped to research and co-develop the curriculum. She can even develop cross subject units, integrating history, science and math. Not only is this more inclusive of all students' heritages, but helps to enforce learning across the curriculum.

The diversity expert would be responsible for developing, soliciting subject matter and community and teacher educators for week long immersion experiences. She would collect suggestions from both teachers and students and then develop the programs. A further role for the coordinator would be to create and lead a multiracial/multiethnic/ multicultural student support group. The student participants in this study felt supported by the group discussion and time together as it created bond between them that they have relied on, and it would be beneficial to continue this support group model. With the help of students, she would invite guest speakers, set meeting topics and mediate group meetings.

The final duty of this individual would be to coordinate the student grievance council to address issues such as the ones Camille and Jayden encountered. She would receive the complaints, conduct background research (such as teacher and student disciplinary records), and even conduct classroom observations. She would serve first as a mediator and, if need be, convene a committee of teachers and students to review problems. The variety and depth of work that is required of this person is enough for a full time position.

"Check yo'self…" Teachers and administrators need to begin questioning their assumptions not only about the students but also their own racial assumptions. However, teachers cannot be expected to do this on their own; as the choir teacher noted, he did not even know where to start. To address this, the first thing to be done is to create a teachers group explicitly designed to address the overt and covert assumptions teachers may have. The discussion group should be led by someone who has experience exploring white privilege and white guilt, racial issues

and can direct the conversations effectively to help participants examine their personal biases in a safe and encouraging environment. This encourages teachers to examine their language use and underlying attitudes and their effect on students. This group needs to be more than a simple diversity training exercise. The group should meet once a month or more often. The first teachers to be included could be ones who self-select or are selected through an examination of which teachers refer the most minority students for discipline problems. To better guide this work, a survey of minority students focused on their perceptions of discrimination should to be conducted.

Teachers and school staff should reflect more of the student body. Students need to see themselves reflected in the staff, not just in the curriculum. “Thus, in the school context, supportive teachers, relevant curricula, and a welcoming school environment can impact students’ interest in learning” (Borrero & Yeh, 2011, p. 118). A greater effort to hire more minority staff and faculty, who can be role models and provide greater support

for all minority students, needs to be made; in the absence of this, minority classroom assistants can be hired.

Ownership of learning. The more ownership that students have in their own education and the more they are treated as adults, the more they will stand up to prove themselves over and over again. To begin with, it is important toacknowledge who students are, by listening to their stories as part of the curriculum. Mrs. Wolf's actions made the classroom much more inclusive, with a very simple tool to get students buy in to her class. Because the students often felt powerless, they disengaged or openly defied. Other small but effective changes were the rewrite of Romeo and Juliet or the poetry writing section work in Mrs. Nelson's English class, and I have little doubt these things happen more often than I observed. However, as some teachers expressed, they did not feel they had time to do the research required to create more inclusive curriculum. This curriculum development could also be put in hands of the diversity specialist mentioned above.

In the science and mathematics courses, more opportunity to include examples of minority successes would help make these courses more appealing and inclusive. The field of ethno-mathematics is well developed and includes both historical examples as well as tools to create activities that are living examples of mathematical concepts. Mathematics can and should be a hands-on experience. Fields such as engineering are examples of this. Often mathematics and sciences are taught as separate fields, even though they are intimately bound together. Collaborating on curriculum in the various fields will help students explore the fields more deeply and make much needed connections between the sciences. Hands on experiences can be larger projects, such as building parabolic long houses or a green house, or smaller projects, such as furnishing and designing the layout of a room or putting together a budget for back to school. Hands on tools would engage a wider group of students, such as Denis. Developing a collaboration with other subjects such as economics, government, history, and even English also helps contextualize the learning experiences and aids in answering

questions like “Why do we have to learn this stuff?” (Camille). Including examples of successful minority contributions to the sciences and mathematics can reflect the diversity of the student population. These examples would also encourage students to reflect on the diverse careers available to them.

In the social sciences, a greater focus on minority history needs to be included. This is included as part of the curriculum description for the social sciences but was not reflected in the classrooms I visited. Again, collaboration between the various social science fields and group development of supportive curriculum could easily address this. Including the sciences, mathematics and English together would be beneficial. Course readings in English could mirror the historical period being discussed. Developing student led research projects that encourage students to explore their heritages, such as looking at African American participation in the Second World War, the role Hmong played during the Vietnam War or looking at business experiences of the Chinese during the building of the railroad,

are examples that could help students relate to what they are learning.

In classes where race comes up, the discussion of race should not be avoided, but encouraged. Supported by the diversity group, teachers can learn to guide these discussions and create safe spaces for these discussions. The focus can be shifted from the standard canon of the development of the West to include other cultures developments such as ancient African civilizations, the development of Asia as well as a deeper examination of the Native American cultures. These discussions need not be limited the AP and IB curriculum; in fact, they would greatly benefit the minority and mixed race students in the more mainstream classes. This would not only bring relevant history to students but also allow for discussion about various racial and social issues in history. Through inclusive curriculum, the ability to be heard and with support, students like Saed, Chris, Jayden and Monique can find a school environment that is welcoming and acknowledging of them and all of the richness that they bring to

the school environment. These changes would further help to build trust with minority students and encourage them to offer the teachers more respect.

Supporting mixed identity development. Through my group interviews, the students got to know each other better and were able to make friendship networks that supported each other. This informal relationship could be formalized creating a multiracial and multicultural student group. This group should be all inclusive allowing anyone interested to join. This would be a place where students have the ability to bring up issues with each other and ways to solve these problems and avoid future situations. With the support of the diversity expert, this group can explore various issues and incidents that the students encounter both in and out of the school environment. This group would be different from a bullying group that may already exist. Bullying is a much more overt experience and is already in the public eye, but the experiences discussed by the students in this dissertation are more subtle and easy to miss. It should include

community and specialist guest speakers as well as outside of school experiences.

The Matter of Power and Punishment

Students in this dissertation had little power in the school setting; by offering a safe space for students they will not have more power, but they will have a place where they can discuss issues and develop tools to deal with difficult scenarios. The development of a student/teacher grievance committee would help bring issues out into the open. This committee would be a place where students can bring grievances. The committee should be made up of both students and teachers. The committee would review the grievance and then decide to hear the grievance and mediate a solution with all parties. This would create a place where student can seek support for such experiences as Camille's.

The current methods of punishment are ineffective. Student referrals and suspensions per teacher need to be explored so the school can form a clearer picture of who is punished and what

punishments are used. Addressing punishment as cultural miscommunications and cross cultural conflicts will help to decrease some of the tensions. Conflicts between teachers and students, such as the ones between Saed and his history teacher can be brought to the grievance committee which can mediate a solution without resorting to suspension. With both the increased awareness of racial and general diversity issues, teachers may reduce referrals. Through the discussion group, the more inclusive curriculum and the grievance committee, students will feel more empowered and more ownership in the school. By including these students, taking their issues seriously and not setting racial issues aside, it shows the students that the school respects the students and their cultures.

Other potential changes to help students. An effort to expose students to difference through multicultural events will help build stronger community and greater sensitivity for all students. Other changes can include hosting multicultural events. Many schools offer January terms which focus on academic and

cultural areas not included in the regular curriculum; this could be as short as a week or two where students become the leaders and show case their research on cultures, their own or ones that interest them. Community experts can offer a great deal of insight and encourage deeper reflection, including them in curriculum segments and as group leaders for the multicultural weeks. These changes will not only help students like the ones who participated in this study, but also other students at the school through the increased exposure to cultural diversity and the socio-historical achievements of non-Western experiences.

Directions for Future Research

There were many more multiracial and multicultural students at MWHS than I was able to include in this project. The limited number of student participants makes it difficult to generalize to a wider population even outside of the MWHS school environment. It would useful to sample a larger student population, perhaps including a statistical component and closed ended interviews in order to capture a better picture of the

multiracial student population. It would assist in the creation of a more detailed picture of the diversity at the school. This would aid the diversity coordinator's development of better curriculum support for teachers.

Comparative and longitudinal studies can be carried out at other schools in the metro area to help develop more targeted interventions for multiracial students. With a better understanding of the demographic make-up of the student body, it would be easier to create interventions, social support and curriculum for multiracial students and relieve some of the stressors discussed in the data chapters. A first step in this would be to include on school registration forms the option to mark more than one category and record this data for the school and the whole district. These data could be used to examine the student body more closely as well as the unequal distribution of punishment in the school, especially if it were combined with data on which teachers refer the most students for disciplinary interventions.

Research on multiracial students would be enhanced through the inclusion of a wider variety of ethnic and racial mixes. A broader sample would serve to illustrate the depth of diversity within the MWHS community. I attempted to do that with this group of students, but this too was limited by participant constraints and time. There were indications that students who were not of white and black mixed race experienced less racism at the hands of peers and school adults. If this is true, it would be useful to better understand why they differed from the black and white multiracial students. It could be that these students did not often interact with people outside of their ethnic and friend group, limiting the opportunity for racialized experiences. Were teachers less likely to interact with these students, or did the students miss the subtle racist comments and cues? However, this is only a speculation and needs deeper exploration that than my data allowed.

In writing this paper, it seemed negatively biased toward the teachers. None of the teachers or administrators at MWHS was

mean spirited or ill-willed. As is illustrated in the discussion, this is more an issue of a culture clash and a lack of cultural awareness than overt racialized attention. I have attempted to be objective and draw clear lines between the teacher experience and the student's experience and perspective. While I interacted and spoke with numerous teachers, I only interviewed four teachers out of a staff of 79. I also spoke with the two only black staff members at the school, who both confirmed that, overall, many of the teachers and the nonwhite students had a divide between them that they saw as difficult to bridge. They felt that the middle class white teachers made blanket assumptions about minority students (Smith, 2011). Further interviews with the staff would help develop the needed interventions and educational directions that need to be taken to decrease the rift between teachers and multiracial students.

It is unclear how well parents understand the student's experiences and the types of support that are available at home. Parent input would add significant depth to the research. It

would allow future researchers to see how parents understand their students' experiences and how it differs from the student perspective. It could also permit researchers to create literature to guide parents of multiracial children through tough situations and difficult times in their education. The one parent I did interview gave me added insight to the student's ethnic and racial history. Kaimi also told me that as a result of my interview with her mother, she and Kaimi had strengthened their relationship. I did not include this interview in the project, because I had only the one parent interview and this would have skewed the data.

The Last Pieces of the Puzzle

Cusick's (1973) ethnographic study *Inside High School* conducted 40 years ago found a similar disconnect between teachers and students. It is a shame that in the best public school in Central City, this disconnect is still present. Overall, it appeared that the school had only moderately changed in the intervening years. Segregation still exists in the school, just not

overtly. MWHS was a predominately white school until open enrollment in 1990, and, in some ways, it still seems underprepared to support the increasing minority population within its walls. Students from minority groups are less prepared to be in the more rigorous courses, leaving a larger proportion of them in the mainstream classrooms. The intense focus on rules and supervision continues to limit how students interact with adults as well as how students can access course related materials. The significantly greater likelihood that mixed students will be suspended was also supported by the experiences young male participants. Yet, at the same time, these students could find support when they needed it. They found teachers who were supportive of them and willing to help them succeed.

The student participants exhibited incredible resilience in stressful circumstances. They had a unique willingness to stand up for their rights and the rights of others, even if it meant punishment. They were cultural brokers, peace makers and

sympathetic shoulders for their friends. Some experienced feelings of isolation and depression, but through the research and with each other, they developed a support group for themselves to help through the hard times. The students managed to complete their required coursework and continued to learn and mature. The students who became my participants also became my friends. We continue to stay in touch as I watch them become adults and move on with their education. I look forward to watch them into mature adults.

I will always be grateful for the friendships that developed during my stay at MWHS. I found a great welcome from administrators, staff, teachers and students. I continue to be warmly welcomed in the school when I visit. Midwest High School is a very orderly and successful school despite of the problems these students encountered. Then there is always room for improvement, and this dissertation noted some of the gaps where improvement is needed. And I hope this research will help the school and the district look more closely at how some

students experience the school environment and begin to make the needed adjustments.

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Appendix A: Research protocols

Observation protocol

Observation location:	
Event being observed:	
Dress: (Type of style, kind of sociocultural image portrayed: ghetto, grunge, preppy, sporty, country, skater, emo…)	
Language: (Nigger, cuz, fam, whitey, cracker, blood, girl, boy, whigger, prep, boy, bitch)	
Gestures: Handshakes, posture…	
Behavior: stance, posture	
Others involved:	
Type of interactions: Friendly, horsing around, playing, studying	
Description of environment:	

Student questions:

Demographic info.

Age:

Gender:

Race:

Ethnicity:

Nationality:

Marital status:

Number of children:

Tell me about yourself and your family:

Where were you born?_____

Where did you grow up? _____

Where are your parents from?

Father:_____ Mother: _____

Mother's/father's occupation?

Father:_____ Mother: _____

What is /was your family like?

What does your family do together? (religious, social, community, school, …?)

What do you like to do with your family?

What languages are spoken at home?

Do you think you are at all like your parents? In what ways?

Did your parents go to college?

Tell me about your siblings.

Did your parents ever talk about your racial, ethnic, cultural, national, religious, social heritage? Do you remember the last time? What were you talking about?

Growing up did your parents ever talk about being different? What do you think are the general messages they gave you?

Have you had times where you have been asked or told that you had to choose one or the other race? Tell me about it.

Tell me about school.

High school:

Tell me about high school?

What year of school are you in?

Have you always been at this high school?

If no, where did you transfer from and why?

What classes are you taking? Why?

What were your favorite and least favorite classes? Why?

Tell me about your teachers? Are there any that stand out? Why?

Which extra curricular activities did you participate in? Which ones are school related?

Did you participate in other non-school related activities? Which ones?

Classes:

What kinds of things do you discuss in your classes?

What is/has been your favorite class? What has been your best class?

What has been your least favorite class? Why?

Have you ever talked with classmates, teachers or friends about being multi racial ethnic cultural? How?

Extra curricular activities:

Do you belong to any school clubs, associations, teams or programs? Which ones? What do you do in these programs? Why did you join the program?

Peers:

Tell me about your friends.

What are they like? In what ways are similar to you? What about different?

What kinds of things do you do together?

How long have you been friends?

How did you meet?

Do you have a girlfriend or a boyfriend?

How would you describe them?

How do you spend your time together?

In what ways is she or he similar to you? What about different?

To whom would you go if you needed to talk confidentially about your S.O. friends, your family, parents siblings, your teachers?

School Social experiences:

Did you participate in extra curricular activities? Which ones?

Did you participate in school activities? Which ones?

Have you ever talked about your mixed heritage at school? In classes, in an assignment, teacher comment, student comment, clubs, friends…

Have you ever participated in groups, projects or activities related to your mixed heritage?

Do you belong to any school clubs (drama, glbta, 4H…), associations, teams (sports, debate, glee club…) or programs (theatre, …)? Which ones? What kind of things have you done in these activities? Why did you join the program(s)?

Identity:

In your experience what does your mixed heritage mean to you? In what ways has it helped you?

In what ways do you think it has affected your life?

In what ways have you discussed your mixed heritage with your friends?

Do you ever change how you talk, behave or dress among different people? When? In what ways? Do you feel more comfortable among people who are like you? Or do you feel like you can fit in anywhere?

Has anyone you don't know asked you where you were from?

When people ask you about yourself how do they phrase the questions?

Do you ever feel like people make assumptions about you based on your apearance? In what ways?

How would you describe yourself to friends/ strangers?

How would you describe yourself to strangers? How about friends?

How would your friends describe you? How about your siblings? Or your parents? How is it different from how you would describe yourself?

What do message do you think you convey with the way you dress?

Popular culture:

What kind of music do you listen to? Why do you listen to it?

What kind of tv do you like to watch?

What kind of movies you like to see?

What kind of books, magazines and comic books do you read?

What are your favorite Internet sites?
Which social networking sites do you use?

What influences your choices?

Behavior: leading questions but things to note if they come up in conversations or in observation

With what types of people do you feel most comfortable?

Have you ever talked with classmates, friends, teachers, school councilors and administrators about being multicultural/ethnic/racial. How? In what situations?

Has anyone you don't know asked you where you were from? How did they phrase the question? How did you answer it?

What kinds of assumptions have people made about you based on your appearance?

Primary school:

What was grade school like for you?

What were your favorite and least favorite classes? Why?

What kind of friends did you have?

Tell me about your teachers? Were there any that stand out? Why?

Which extra-curricular activities did you participate in? Which ones were school related?

Did you participate in other school related activities? Which ones?

Junior High School:

Tell me about junior high school?

What were your favorite and least favorite classes? Why?

What kind of friends did/do you have?

Did you participate in extra curricular activities? Which ones? Did you participate in school activities? Which ones? Tell me about your friend in junior high school? Are you still friend with them? Do they go to the same school? Tell me about your teachers? Are there any that stand out? Why?

Teacher questions:

Demographic info:

Teacher's age: _____

Teacher's gender: _____

Teacher's ethnicity/race: _____

Teaching experience:

Teacher's education level: _____

Teacher's subject area: _____

How long have you been teaching?_____

How long have you been working at this school? _____

Schools:

When did you first become aware of having multiethnic/racial students? _____

Can you recall some of your earliest experiences with ethnicity and race in schools? How about some of the more recent experiences?

How about interactions with "multiracial" students?

What have been some of the benefits of having a diverse student population?

How about some of the challenges?

Students:

How have you found out about your students' ethnicity?

Do you /have you discussed the students' social, cultural, ethnic, racial status or identity with them? In what circumstances has the topic arisen?

What types of things have you discussed with your students?

Let's talk more specifically about your multiracial, multiethnic students.

Classes and teaching:

How do you address the issue of multiculturalism/ multiracialism in your classes? Can you give me some examples?

In what ways do you discuss this in your courses?

In what ways have you integrated the diversity of the student body into your curricula? Can you give me some examples?

Other questions:

Over the years have you been aware of having multiracial students in your classes? In what contexts did you become aware of these students?

Appendix B

Male participant coding rubric

	Saed	Chris	James	Denis	Lucas
Age	17	17	17	17	18
year in school	11	11	11	11	12
Gender	1	1	1	1	1
ethnic mix	is/bl	na/bl	eu/bl	na/bl/wh	it/bl
self-label	Mixed	native	Mixed	Mixed	Biracial
form label					
Family					
m ethnicity	is	na	Eu	eu	it
m education	aa	aa	Unk	ba	unk
m marital status	s	S	S	part	unk
f ethnicity	bl	bl	Bl	bl	bl
f education	un	un	Unk	unk	unk
Siblings	12	13	6	1	0
School					
favorite class	English	English	Math	English	PE
worst class	sci	Sci	Sci	sci	sci
self-report of grades	good	Good	Good	ok	ok
teacher descriptions of student	good, rude, inattentive	good, disruptive, talkative, late, goof-off	good, inattentive	good, quiet, forgetful, not motivated	good, out of seat, wanderer
living status	foster care	mother	mother/faster care	mother	grandparents
contact with non-custodial parent(s)	sometimes	Yes	No	No never met	?

Family Relations	**Saed**	**Chris**	**James**	**Denis**	**Lucas**
family relationship mother side	Phone convos	sees kyle and all	Yes	yes	lives with grand undisclosed
family relationship father side	lives with uncle	none	none	noe	idk
Phenotypical descriptors					
hair color	curly black	short tighter curls	straighter short	black	black straight
skin color (mine)	caramel	chocolate	chocolate	carmel	latte
eye color	hazel	brown	brown	hazel	hazel/green
hair color	curly black	fade	short curly	fade	curly medium long
Social experiences					
Outcast	yes			yes	yes
light skinned bitch	yes				
social group	many none close	sports, many, gf	sports team mates	sports team mates	ladies
Racial discussion					
discussion of race at with friends	sometimes	chris	with sports friend	avid	
discussion of race at school	in Avid	class	sports teachers	avid	joking in class
discussion of race in class	Othello	Othello	no	Othello	joking in class

	Saed	Chris	James	Denis	Lucas
Race talk					
thinking about race	writes about it in raps and poems	native, summer pow-wows, language camp, mom at school	mixed thats okay, wanted to know history	sometimes, about dad not knowing	not important
integration of mixed identity	yes	Yes	yes	yes/anger	not important
Depression	yes	Yes	no	yes/anger	no
feelings of exclusion	yes	No, date for prom, too many issues with girls	no	sometimes, cool guy	no think I am a pothead
sense of being an outsider	yes	sometimes	no	sometimes	no
negative self-images	trouble maker	bad at school not smart	none that came up	anger issues	none mentioned,
academic asperations	college nurse	college	college	college	college, hotel business
Dating	some	not the year I was there	yes mixed girl diff school	no	lots of gf

	Saed	Chris	James	Denis	Lucas
recognition of abilities	writing did much better at other school.	math, science, not smart, hate it when people say that.	math, hard time in french listened to mcsolaar	football hit hard, was always proud of his writing	not into school, s'ok
social groups					
Heros	brothers	mom		old coach	
experience with diversity	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
knowledge/learning about ethnic origins/cultures	rap	summers powwow lang	nope	no	no
sense of security in self	y	yes	yes	sometimes	yes
ethnic pride	y	yes	yes	yes	yes

	Saed	Chris	James	Denis	Lucas
student to student interactions	angela	little girl no probs at school, teasing	none	angry	none really
student to teacher interactions	history suspension		coaches	math teacher	
Teasing		Kevin	coaches		
negative racial experiences with peers	presentation	powwow girl			Surprised I asked
negative racial experiences with family					
negative racial experiences with teachers or admin	his		coach		
negative racial experiences with students at other shools	lightskinned bitch	Powwow			

	Saed	Chris	James	Denis	Lucas
Appease-ment experiences	angela	Native		tough guy	transfer from cath. school
Punishment	suspension	suspension for back talk	bottle bomb 2 weeks suspension	not	suspension, high in school, office for lighter in back pack
Fronting		no date to prom, clowning		tough	
I am just like you	light skin	Powwow			

Female participant coding rubrique

	Monique	Kaimi	Elizabeth	Jayden	Camille
age	15	15	17	16	15
year in school/ed level	9	9	11	10	9
gender	0	0	0	0	0
ethnic mix	ha/bl	bl/na/wh	bl/eu	eu/bl	bl/eu
self-label	mixed	Mixed	mixed	mixed	mixed
family					
m ethnicity	phil	eu/na	eu	eu	bl
m ed	unk	Ba	high	ba	ba
m marital status	s	Part	part	m	part
f ethnicity	bl	Mixed	bl	bl	eu
f ed	ba	Hi	ba	unk	ba
siblings	2	3	4	2	3
School					
favorite class	dance	Health	dance	Eng	Health
worst class	idk	Art	sci/his	na	Media
self-report of grades	good	ok could be better	ok	ok	work harder
teacher descriptions of student	good, quiet, nice girl	good, inattentive, not a good student	good, angry, not motivated	loud, interuptive, boistrous, good, too much tutoring	quiet, good, funny
living status	mother	Mother	mother	mother/stepfather	Mother
contact with non-custodial parent(s)?	younger	Yes	yes	yes, younger	Yes
family relationship mother side	good	yes neighbors	yes some	yes strained with gp	Yes
family relationship father side	distant	sees often, some issues with dad behavior	ok, not so good stepmother	ok, some difficulties cuz of dad behavior	so, difficult with race issues

Phenotypical descriptors	Monique	Kaimi	Elizabeth	Jayden	Camille
hair color	black, straightened or wavey	blond/curly	black straight	black,flat ironed	black straight ironed
skin color (mine and student)	dark brown	latte	high yellow/ creamy	latte	high yellow/ cream
eye color	dark brown	green/grey	hazel	green/hazel	grey
hair color	long black straightened	blond/red curly/mid length	short, straight	long, dark brown, straight or curly wavy	shoulder length wavy, black flat ironed.
social experiences					
outcast	Yes	yes	yes	No	no
light skinned bitch					
social group	bf	gf Af am, na	white girl, white boys	Af am girls	Af am girls

	Monique	Kaimi	Elizabeth	Jayden	Camille
Discussion of race					
discussion of race at home	no	Yes	Yes	Yes	sometimes
discussion of race with friends	nope	yes a lot, gf making cracks i.e.white people	teasing, Mexican	some not so much	ghetto
discussion of race at school	nope	Nope	nope	teacher home life	teacher, not the streets
discussion of race in class	student teasing		teasing	nora zeal, nothing	romeo
thinking about race	no	writes, talks jokes about it, changed friend group	important talks about it with gfs, but not elsewhere	very important made special	with gfs some with mom and dad
integration of mixed identity	not important	yes, learning about it	yes, cool to be	yes special	yes, but hard because she was so light
depression	no	yes	yes	No	sometimes
feelings of exclusion	no good friends stays with bf, talked behind her back	yes not black enough, teasing from gfs,	yes, grade school bullied	No	no, but she was reserved
sense of being an outsider	yes	Yes	yes	No	sometimes
negative self-images	none	struggled with art			
academic aspirations	college counselor	college counselor	dance, counselor	psychiatrist	midwife

	Monique	Kaimi	Elizabeth	Jayden	Camille
dating	on bf	No	no	yes, afam	no
recognition of abilities	s'ok do good but not too interested, quiet in class, history un interest	English, and health	not good at history, study dance, and involved in theater		loved english class, didn't like media not what she expected
I					
heros	dad	grandma	dad grandpa		
experience with diversity	not really	yes	yes	Yes	yes
knowledge/learning about ethnic origins/cultures	some from mom	no from gramma	some from gp and dad	No	no
sense of security in self	quiet lonely	yes and proud	yes sometimes	yes	sometimes
ethnic pride	didn't talk about it	yes and proud			yes
student to student interactions	teasing in math	not black enough	Teasing	friendly all around	She a white girl
student to teacher interactions	history distance	art teacher	science not learning	what kind of home	not the streets
teasing		Sue	Mexican		white girl
negative racial experiences with peers	back talk	Sue	grade school, Mexican		
negative racial experiences with family		dad sexism		grand pa	grandma
negative racial experiences with teachers or school admin			Sci	span	lunchroom
negative racial experiences with peers			grade school		

	Monique	Kaimi	Elizabeth	Jayden	Camille
Appease-ment experiences	disengagement	gf who didn't know her	student gov	Avid	lunchroom
punishment	no	No	no	no	no
fronting	maintaining distance from others	Acting black		Quiet in classroom	Checked out
I am just like you			smelly		
offhand comments					