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# A Layered Account of the Ways in Which Multiracial Identity is Communicated Within Interpersonal Relationships

## **Keywords**

Multiracial Identity, Identity, Interpersonal Relationships, Interpersonal Communication, Microaggressions, Layered Account

## **Cover Page Footnote**

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**A Layered Account of the Ways in Which Multiracial Identity is Communicated within Interpersonal Relationships**

Jessica Frydenberg

Jessica Frydenberg is a recent graduate from at Santa Clara University where she studied Communications and Sociology. This paper was completed as part of her Senior Thesis, the topic chosen due to personal interests and experiences in interpersonal communication and the multiracial identity. This paper would not have been possible without all the help and support of Dr. Laura Ellingson.

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*My psychiatrist sits across from me, nodding his head along to everything I say. He is a petite older man, with rounded glasses and a balding head. His voice is calming, matching his very laidback and relaxed demeanor. I tell him about my insecurities, my fears, my every thought. He smiles, takes notes, and encourages me to dig deeper and embrace all parts of myself.*

*“Your multiracial identity is not something to be ashamed of nor should it be a source of insecurity,” he says. “Why should it be? You get the best of both worlds. You have the Asian brains and exotic beauty and the height, athleticism, and all around good demeanor from your Scandinavian heritage.”*

*He means it as a compliment but I immediately retreat into myself, uncomfortable that he doesn't think I am proud of my two races but especially that he's taking the most stereotypical characteristics of my ethnicities and saying they are advantages. I sit in my armchair, now hunched over, my arms tight across my body like a shield. I am confused by what this has to do with my severe depression and anxiety, the reason I am there to see him.*

*“It is the root of all your mental health issues,” he explains, seeing my pained expression. “If you learn to be grateful for what you are the pain you are feeling will start to fade.”*

*While to many this sounds great, I am disheartened. I know that by embracing his ignorant views, I will only end up hurting myself more. And while it may be true that I inherited attributes from both sides of my family that are unique, strong, and beautiful, I know deep down inside that I will never win when those around me expect me to be and behave in a particular way according to my race.*

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Identity is vital to the essence of an individual. It is qualities, beliefs, and worldviews that make people unique and help them shape an understanding of their roles within the world (Mead, 1934). It has the power to not only influence who a person is and how they fit into the world but also how they communicate and present themselves to others and how others will identify them.

The multiracial identity is one that is becoming increasingly visible in today's modern age despite dating back at least three centuries (Nagai 2016). Multiracial peoples are one of the fastest growing groups of people across the globe. It is projected that one in five Americans will identify as multiracial by the year 2050 (Christian 2000; Winters and DeBosse 2003; Jackson 2009; Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Sriken, Vargas, Wideman, and Kolawole 2011; Shih and Sanchez 2009) and yet little is truly acknowledged, understood, and even known about multiracial identity and how it is communicated in interpersonal relationships.

The mixed race experience is shrouded with much mystery and is often clumped with that of racial minority experiences despite the unique circumstances and struggles multiracial peoples must additionally face. We live in a time and culture that encourages if not expects us to follow inclusionary-exclusionary practices. When people do not fit into our traditional sorting categories, our response is negative. People are either in or out, they are foreign or native, they are black or white. There is no gray area but rather a dichotomy that forces people to embody a particular identity or be excluded, leaving those who do not fit in with extremely negative sentiments. Williams (2006) states that, “To see the world in black and white is to live within the contours of extremism.” This is a mindset that we are socialized to have from childhood; this black and white thinking is unrealistic and fails to address the complexities of our nuanced and gray world (Williams 2006). Multiracial peoples challenge this traditional dichotomy because they are the gray area when it comes to racial sorting, fitting not into a single racial group but rather two or more racial groups. Unfortunately, because of the reinforced dichotomy, multiracial peoples have experience difficulties when it comes to interactions with others and understanding oneself and one’s place in the larger society.

This paper will examine the ways in which the multiracial identity is internalized, presented, and communicated within interpersonal relationships such as in families, with peers, in the workplace or with strangers, paying particular attention to microaggressions experienced.

## METHOD

This research was completed from an arts-based approach meaning that I use narrative writing as a form of art in my inquiry into the multiracial identities in interpersonal relationships. Arts-based research is fluid and constantly changing rather than rigid, fixed, and singular in its definition and usage (Osei-Kofi 2013). It is a method used by qualitative researchers to adapt aesthetic and creative art tools to discuss, analyze and address research questions in a more

holistic and engaging way (Osei-Kofi 2013). It not only stimulates creativity, openness, interpretation, and reflexivity but it also allows the researcher to share their frames of reference and how their research might be influenced by their standpoint (Osei-Kofi 2013; West and Turner 2006). An arts-based approach allows for subjugated knowledge, ways of knowing and information that is intentionally left out, ignored, or not appreciated by the dominant culture or group, to be recognized, validated, and legitimized (Osei-Kofi 2013). It provides a stage for minorities and non-dominant knowledge such as multiracial peoples to be discussed.

Non-subjugated knowledge is a form of canonical narrative, a way of knowing that is viewed as the dominant and conventional story of the culture and is accepted as the truth (Bolen and Adams 2017). Historically, we have accepted the racial dichotomy as the true narrative of society; that an individual is either black or white but cannot be somewhere in the middle nor can they be both. Individuals who do not fit into this dichotomy have internalized and come to terms with this socially constructed story about race. Using an arts-based approach for social justice, I explore the truth about the multiracial experience from a minority perspective rather than the traditional dominant narrative (white, heteronormative, and male). By taking a critical approach, the voice of the marginalized multiracial identity can shine through and be explored (Manning and Kunkel 2014). This sense of voice illuminates not only the similarities to mono-racial minority experiences but it also highlights the unique experiences mixed race people endure in their lives, something which is muted or mixed with mono-racial minority experiences.

To make sense of the research and provide an impressionistic sketch of what the multiracial identity looks like in lived experiences, I decided to write a layered account, a series of brief narratives detailing vivid memories of my multiracial identity coming into play in my daily life, which, together with the essay, creates a layered account. This postmodern ethnographic reporting technique provides a method for incorporating consciousness, self-

reflectivity, and representations of an actual lived experience (Ronai 1995). As Richardson (2000) stated when discussing the power and strength of creative analytic practices (CAP) ethnography, this type of work “displays the writing process and the writing product as deeply intertwined; both are privileged. The product cannot be separated from the producer or the mode of production or the method of knowing (930).” While the research itself provides a detailed explanation of multiracial experiences in interpersonal relationships, it is important to recognize the role that I play as the researcher and storyteller. All knowledge has values and pre-existing views attached to it (Pearce 2009) because we construct and establish meanings and ascribe truths to everything. Being multiracial myself, my experiences, knowledge, and understanding of the topic influences and informs my interpretation and representation of the research (Bolen and Adams 2017). By acknowledging and exposing my standpoint along with my personal narratives, it helps flesh out the research and theoretical framework into something just as real and complex as the issues and experiences themselves (Richardson 2000).

Using a layered account was also to ensure that both the historical and the narrative truths were considered and analyzed. The historical truth, the facts of an experience, and the narrative truth, the meaning and significance of an experience, although can be very different from each other, have the power to complement and strengthen one another as well (Bolen and Adams 2017). The historical truth is presented through the research and findings on the communication of multiracial identities within varying interpersonal relationships whilst the narrative truth was reflected through my personal anecdotes and the lessons I learnt from these encounters.

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*One of my friends in college was a naive and wealthy white girl whose parents spoilt her rotten. Nonetheless, we initially got along great and talked every day leading up to moving-in. The first time we met face-to-face however, she looked at me as though she'd just seen an alien.*

*Her bright blue eyes widen with surprise and her brows furrow. She looks me up and down puzzled, her lips pursed tightly. Before saying hello, she says, “wait how are you so tall? I thought you would be shorter because you’re Asian.”*

*My body shivers with discomfort. Thoughts race through my head to try and justify the comment: She’s not trying to be rude...Did she really just say that?...Maybe she hasn’t travelled internationally and hasn’t interacted with people different from herself...What a joke.*

*I smile back, “Well like I said, I’m half Norwegian and half Chinese-American but I was born in Denmark and grew up all over Europe but mostly Belgium. That’s why I say I’m from Belgium, it’s easier for people to digest.”*

*She looks over at her mom with a quizzical look on her face as if I just said something jarring. Her mom shrugs, out of confusion herself or disinterest I’m not entirely sure. She turns back to folding my friend’s clothes and putting them away in the closet.*

*“Wait...But then what are you really? Where are you really from?”*

*I look back at my mom, her focus is on setting-up the bed but her eyes look pained and her face flushed with irritation. I look back at my friend, who eagerly awaits my answer, and I realize that no matter what I say, she won’t understand that I am mixed, or if she did, she wouldn’t fully accept the complexities that make me, me.*

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## STANDPOINT REFLECTION

A standpoint is “a location, shared by a group within the social structure that lends a particular kind of sense making to a person’s lived experience” (West and Turner 2006:382). In other words, what shapes an individual’s perspective on the world or an issue stems from their lived experiences and interactions. An individual comes to understand how they see and understand certain issues, topics, or aspects of the world through interactions with others.

My standpoint is greatly shaped by my multiracial identity and the experiences that have stemmed from this defining aspect of my identity. I am a HAPA child. Being asked, “where are you from,” “where are you *actually* from,” and “what are you” are questions that have become all too familiar to me. If I am feeling sassy I will ask them what they are, a curveball they never expect. What they are trying to figure out is what race I might be because I do not appear to fit in one phenotypic racial group. The term HAPA originates from Hawaiian pidgin and was used as a derogatory term for mixed-children of Asian plantation workers in the early twentieth century (Laughlin 2014). Today however, the term means being of mixed race, more specifically



partially Asian or Pacific Islander and partially white. Alex Laughlin of NPR and National Journal beautifully writes, “it’s this confusion of identity that characterizes the experience of being HAPA - struggling to find a balance between being ‘too white’ and ‘too Asian.’” I am also a third culture kid (TCK); a global nomad of sorts, finding myself to be a stranger in my own country. A third culture kid typically has parents of two different cultures and find themselves living in a third culture (Tokuhama-Espinosa 2003). They spend most of their developmental years in a foreign country and culture that is different from their own (Tokuhama-Espinosa 2003).

I also identify with so many different cultures that it is difficult for me to really explain who I am and what I identify as to someone in a few words. I was born to a Chinese-American mother and Norwegian father, but I was also born in Copenhagen, Denmark and raised in five other countries across Europe over the course of the first 18 years of my life. I am from everywhere but I am also from nowhere. I belong everywhere but I also belong nowhere. Identifying as multiracial and multicultural is an endless challenge because I am constantly trying to find my place in the world. I experience the hardships of being a minority; I am also told that I have the best of both worlds. I am constantly asked where I am *really* from and what my heritage is because “I am Chinese-American and Norwegian” is not enough. It is easy for me to understand why so many friends, co-workers, and even strangers think like this but it is also frustrating that they do not understand nor try to understand what it means to be multiracial.

I know that I do not fit into one racial, ethnic, or cultural category in society today because it is something that has been told to me repeatedly, by friends, family, peers, teachers, and strangers alike. Communication is the backbone to an individual’s standpoint; it is through communicating with others that we learn more about ourselves, moreover, our identity and our place in society (West and Turner 2006). Through interactions with others I have learnt that I

belong nowhere and everywhere; that I will never really be accepted with the Asians, but I will never be accepted by Caucasians either. My experiences, knowledge, behavior, and identity are shaped by these social groups, especially the groups that I so clearly belong or do not belong to, which in turn impacts how I behave, what I know, and how I view myself, in a continuous cycle (West and Turner 2006). It is through communicating with others that I have and will always be viewed as and feel like a minority.

Individuals' stances are based on their privilege. The standpoint theory assumes that everyone will have a limited understanding of social relations or social issues because of their location in the class structure, socially, economically, politically, and demographically (West and Turner 2006). I, for example, come from a well-off family and have been lucky enough to have a stable income that allows my family and I to travel the world, attend the best private international schools, and live comfortably without having to worry about expenses too much. Because of this, I cannot understand the viewpoints of an individual who struggles with finances and are barely getting by or a family who does not have enough food for everyone.

This being said, I still worry. I worry because I am a college-aged woman in a patriarchal society; a culture wherein the dominant, but very partial view is that men are stronger, smarter, more successful, and all around better than women. Moreover, I am a young multiracial woman in a patriarchal and unfortunately, still extremely racist world. Because of racism, people of color have learnt and understand how the perceived dominant race, Caucasians, view the world but the same cannot be said for Caucasian people understanding the experiences and views of minorities (West and Turner 2006). My global multiracial identity allows me to understand the perspectives of the dominant racial groups, mostly the Caucasian race. I understand their heritage, their mentality, how they interact with and view other races; I know and understand the world from the Caucasian perspective but I cannot say the same for my Caucasian friends, peers, and co-

workers who admit that they will never have a complete understanding of the multiracial identity and experience. With their partial, subjective views on race and ethnicity, interaction is often extremely challenging because they unintentionally force me to choose and embrace one of my races over the other (West and Turner 2006). As the dominant mono-racial group, they decide, according to their partial knowledge and understanding, what is considered normal, abnormal, included or excluded when it comes to race and racial categories.

## THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

A social constructionist approach was taken to study multiracial identity and interpersonal communication. This approach assumes that all that makes up the world, including reality itself and our knowledge of it, is “wholly or in part, the product of our own actions” (Pearce 2009). In other words, we make sense of things such as the multiracial identity based on our relationships and interactions with others and how we talk or do not talk about it (Duck 2011). There are infinite possibilities for what it means to be multiracial just as there are infinite meanings to the term “burn-out” or the hook-up culture because we construct and communicate the meanings of these over time (Pearce 2009). This is then culturally and socially reinforced in the sense that the external force of societal beliefs, views, and assumptions influences and helps construct and communicate the meaning of something (Duck 2011). The structure of society and its rules and regulations, both subtle and implicit, provide a guideline for what is acceptable communication and understanding about a topic of and what is not (Duck 2011). The lack of discussion of and content on multiracial identity in school for example, reinforces the view that people of mixed race are nonexistent or not important enough to be a part of the curriculum.

Manning and Kunkel (2014) explain that meaning is created, learned, shaped and negotiated continuously and is constantly changing because of this process. This interpretivist approach holds that meaning is not in our heads nor is it a natural occurrence but rather it is

constructed between people and we all help in the process of constructing, modifying, and understanding the meanings of something (Manning and Kunkel 2014). This ever-changing state extends to peoples' selves in communication in the sense that an individual's sense of self develops in the family, society, and daily interactions and communication with others. Every question a person is asked, every glance a person receives, and every interaction one has will influence how their identity is formed and the kind of standpoint they develop.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Theoretical Frameworks of Identity*

Identity is a flexible and fluid state of being that can be changed, concealed, and revealed in different social interactions, interpersonal relationships, and intra- and intercultural contexts. In other words, an individual can control and present their identity according to their desires and what they deem appropriate (Kim 2007).

The Communication Theory of Identity Management, originally coined by Goffman, argues that identity changes in each situation an individual may face because of the way in which they manage and handle their identities (Cupach and Imahori 1993; Goffman 1959). In this sense, an individual will decide on a certain presentation of their self in order to influence how they are perceived and how their identity is interacted with (Cupach and Imahori 1993; Goffman 1959). This can be used as a means of survival, protection, acceptance and fitting in. Depending on the circumstance and social context, a multiracial person may change how they communicate and present themselves for these reasons. Building on this, the Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) explains that every individual has the ability and the power to, to some degree, negotiate their cultural identity with others in diverse interaction situations (Kim 2007). In the case of multiracial identities, multiracial people can emphasize or deemphasize certain aspects of their identity in order to effectively send a particular message or create a particular narrative about

themselves that they want others to recognize. In this sense, cultural identity becomes a part of the broader identity orientation of the individual or communicator. The inclusivity or exclusivity as well securities and insecurities of one's identity further influences how one communicates and behaves when interacting with others (Kim 2007).

### *Theoretical Models of Multiracial Identity Development*

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*When I was in eighth grade, I took my first SAT exam. I was taking it for my application for the Educated Program for the Gifted Youth at Stanford University, per my English teacher's request. This was unbeknownst to the upperclassmen, who see a young Asian girl and likely presume that my tiger mom is just prepping me early. They don't have to say anything for me to know what they're thinking; it is all in their looks. As I stand awkwardly in the corner of the room alone, a little mousy Asian girl with her six 2B lead pencils pre-sharpened, an eraser, and a calculator with extra batteries, I watch the older students take turns glancing in my direction and whispering to one another. They stifle their laughs and snicker at me as I quietly walk to my room, head down, trying not to notice the extra attention on me.*

*The proctor tells us to fill in our information, quickly and quietly. I sit in my cramped wooden seat, pressed up against the burning radiator and stare blankly at the race categories available. Choose one. I scan the list of options for multi-racial but come up short. I look around to see what other people are doing. "Eyes on your own paper" the proctor booms, scowling.*

*I see white, I see Pacific Islander, I see Asian, but I don't see mixed. How do I choose one when I am both Asian American and White? I read down the list further and find an Other option and realize that that is what I am; an "other"; a person who does not belong to any racial category; a person who does not belong anywhere.*

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The concept of multiracial identities has been around for centuries, dating back to before America was even discovered but society only began to truly recognize the social phenomenon in the mid- to late 80s (Christian 2000; Nagai 2016). Arguably race, along with racial categories, are a social construction and are therefore not fixed or undisputable categories (Shih and Sanchez 2009). Likewise, identity, a group or categorical membership in social groups, our essential personal characteristics, and the traits ascribed to us by others, is not immutable but rather constantly moving and changing over time in relation to our interactions and relationships with other people and the development of larger society (Christian 2000; Mead 1934). We make up the meaning of the term race and define and regulate what constitutes what race or identity

someone is (Pearce 2009). This way of thinking became apparent in the late 1980s and especially in the 1990s with the appearance of multiracial marches, protests, and town hall meetings demanding that a new racial category be created for people of multiple ancestry (Debose and Winters 2003). Despite the vast variety in ethno-racial mixtures and mixed heritages, these activists presented themselves as a single unified and supportive group, a collective consciousness (Debose and Winters 2003). The mid-90s was one of the first documented times and string of events that brought attention to the concept of multiracial peoples in a way that had not previously been discussed or explored (Christian 2000; Debose and Winters 2009).

The experiences of multiracial people have been defined and describe as a mix of “betweenness” and “marginality” (Jackson 2009; Rockquemore and Brunnsma 2005). This dates back to the work of Park, a Chicago School sociologist, and his theory of the Marginal man (Christian 2000). Park asserts that human migration and the social interaction of different peoples produces a series of mixed offspring that were essentially the “marginal men” because they did not fit in anywhere (Christian 2000; Park 1928). Moreover, they were people who lived in two worlds, both in which they were deemed a stranger that did not fully assimilate (Park 1928). These perspectives resulted in false genetic and societal claims of the mixed blood person being not only below all races in the racial hierarchy, but also beneath humans because they were deemed the work of the devil and therefore naturally immoral, unbalanced, emotionally unstable, and degenerate (Christian 2000; Dover 1937; Jackson 2009). Based on the standpoint theory’s assumption that the understanding of the dominant group will be both partial and harmful in situations wherein there is a dominant and subordinate group (West and Turner 2006), multiracial individuals have quickly have to learn and understand the dominant mono-racial races and that racial group’s view of the world; individuals’ of mono-racial heritage not only do not understand multiracial people and attribute inaccurate characteristics to them but they also do

not completely acknowledge them as a racial category and exclude them (Nadal, Davidoff, Davis, Wong, Marshall, and McKenzie 2015).

Multiracial people have a much more flexible understanding of race and race relations than their mono-racial counterparts because they are on the margins of racial groups and can be part of more than one racial group (Shih and Sanchez 2009). They have a malleable identity that changes with each social context and interaction in which they find themselves (Goffman 1959; Shih and Sanchez 2009; West and Turner 2006). Unlike mono-racial groups, multiracial individuals tend to show greater comfort with interracial social interactions simply on the premise that race does not have the same meaning and weight as it does with other groups (Shih and Sanchez 2009). Unfortunately, because societal structures place an emphasis on maintaining racial distinctions, the mixed blood experience is one of not only more self-consciousness and understanding of oneself but also an experience of conflicting narratives and marginalization (Park 1928; Shih and Sanchez 2009). These external forces and interpersonal relationships have the power to shape not only how multiracial peoples understand and identify themselves but also how they then chose to present themselves to others. Multiracial individuals have the power to define their racial identity and communicate it in a way that ultimate suits them and what they believe. Tiger Woods is an excellent example of this in that he created an entirely different and unique racial identity, which he calls “Cablinasian” (Caucasian, Asian, Native American, and African American ancestry) as opposed to changing his identity to fit one of the pre-fabricated racial categories (Shih and Sanchez 2009).

Goffman (1959) posits that we are constantly enacting performances of our selves, performed in a particular manner and geared for a particular audience with the purpose of advancing an image that is beneficial to us. People symbolically communicate in ways that allow them to guide and control the version of their selves that the audience (those around them and

those they are interacting with), see and perceive (Goffman 1959). The behavior and image of the self that a person puts forward will likely reflect what they deem as highly valued and central aspects of their self that they want others to recognize and accept (Goffman 1959). For a multiracial identity, this may be emphasizing one racial identity over another; or it could be highlighting the beautiful blend of attributes that individual gets from their mixed heritage.

### *Multiracial Identities and Intimate Relationships*

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*When I was 14 years old and my sisters 11 and 9, my family and I went to Thailand for three weeks of exploration and relaxation. Over the years, we had travelled all over the world but this was our first family trip to Southeast Asia. We are not surprised by the looks of concern and the sneers of disgust we receive when walking around. It's a normal part of our lives - my father, a 6'3 slim, white businessman walking around with three young and petite Asian-looking girls and a tall, older Asian woman. This time however, felt different...*

*As my middle sister and I walk alongside my dad, arms linked as we giggle and talk about what we want to see next, the sneers and concerned looks quickly become nods in our direction, smiles, and thumbs up. The more and more it happens, the more I notice that the positive responses and glances are coming from older white men, all sporting a young Thai girl or two no older than 25 years on their own arms. Confused, I look back to my mother. Clearly, I was not the only one to notice this new-found support of our supposed family dynamic. Both of my parents seem tense, carrying a mix of angst, anger, and irritation on their faces. It finally hits a breaking point for my father when two older Australian, white men approach us outside of one of the local markets. They take their time to look my sisters and I up and down before saying, in awe, "Wow...Oh my...They are beautiful. Where did you find them? How much did you pay?" My sisters and I shrink back into our seats and quickly pull our sweaters tight to make ourselves smaller. The smaller of the two men, probably in his late 60s smiles down at my youngest sister and strokes her arm as he says, "hello beautiful." My poor baby sister sits, frozen and panicked, a look of sheer terror and helplessness in her eyes as she looks to my parents for help.*

*My father's calm demeanor quickly explodes: his fists clenched, his face wrinkled and red, anger in his eyes. He steps in front of my sister and pushes the man away. "They are my daughters you sick fucking bastards and they are NOT for sale." His voice booms causing my baby sister to cry into my mother's protective arms while my middle sister and I wrap our arms around each other for security. Foreigners and locals alike begin to stare at us, disturbed by the loud aggressiveness of my father's tone and yet also curious by our family make up. My parents take positions in front of us, acting as a shield. My mother had otherwise been invisible to every person that glanced our way. The two men scoff and wave their hands at my parents. "They aren't worth the hassle" they say as they walk away, leaving us in complete shock, feeling violated and confused as to why someone would ever think we were prostitutes for our father.*

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Having parents of two or more different races shows and encourages multiracial children from a young age that it is acceptable and permitted to marry someone of a different race. “Multiracial individuals, by virtue of coming from interracial families and having parents from different racial backgrounds, are likely to have different race-related experiences compared to monoracial individuals who come from families and parents belonging to a mono-racial group” (Bonam and Shih 2009:88). By growing up in a diverse household and observing and experiencing how people of different backgrounds can live together in harmony and love one another, a contradiction to society’s messages about racial conflicts and divide, parentals’ interracial relationships encourage comfort with intimate interracial relationships (Bonam and Shih 2009). Multiracial people typically regard race as an unimportant factor in their relationships but an important aspect of their self-identity (Kang and Bodenhauser 2015). Because of this, they are more likely to be interested in intimate interactions with other people who have a similar understanding and experience about mixed racial backgrounds and minority identities (Kang and Bodenhauser 2015; Lichter and Qian 2005).

Looking at intermarriage and interracial intimacy, racial and ethnic boundaries are more defined and prominent for some groups over others. Individuals that identify themselves as minorities, any race other than White, are typically more flexible with the category boundaries and intimate relationships between different racial groups (Lichter and Qian 2005). In not only friendships but also intimate interracial relationships, individuals with multiracial identities are more comfortable simply because they are accustomed to seeing races intermingle positively (Bonam and Shih 2009; Kang and Bodenhauser 2015). Overall, multiracial individuals report being much more open to interracial relationships both at the platonic and working level as well as the intimate, marriage and love relationship level than their mono-racial counterparts (Bonam and Shih 2009). Multiracial peoples will typically view race as a form of social construction by

the dominant culture and are less likely to categorize people based on race or other characteristics such as faith (Bonam and Shih 2009). They are comfortable discussing race and their interracial relationship with their significant others and will find ways to ensure that their partner is also open-minded and comfortable with their multiracial relationship (Bonam and Shih 2009).

### *Microaggressions in the Multiracial Experience*

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*As my sister belts out Eponine's heartbreaking ballad in Les Miserables on the stage, surrounded by twenty other students restlessly awaiting their turn, I sit in the audience, tense, palms sweaty and my face flushed and hot, praying that everything goes smoothly. Musical theatre that is her dream, a dream that my mother, seated nervously beside me, prays she achieves.*

*Seated in front of us are the five admissions officers who will decide my baby sister's future. I scan the back of their heads and their profiles for any inkling of what they might be thinking. They are all straight faced, calm, and serious. As my sister's performance ends, they slowly and quietly clap, their faces still unmoved. One officer leans over to the woman next to him and says, "She has a "castable" face and is ethnically ambiguous. Does that count as diversity?"*

*The woman chokes on her water and tries to stifle her laughter and coughing fit so as not to draw attention. She turns her face to him, smirks and nods. They dismiss my sister, anxiously scanning their faces for reactions, with a simple wave of the hand, as though she isn't even worth their time or words.*

*"Don't tell your sister what they said," my mother whispers to me, her lips quivering. "It will destroy her." I sigh, pained in knowing that she is right.*

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The manifestation of microaggressions can occur in many different situations, between many different individuals and groups of people; they also range in their subtle or overtness as well as the intentions of the individual communicating the message (Nadal, Sriken, Davidoff, Wong, and McLean 2013). "Microaggressions are subtle forms of discrimination, often unintentional and unconscious, which send negative and denigrating messages to various individuals and groups" (Nadal et al. 2015:147). In other words, microaggressions communicate some degree of hostile, derogatory, or plain rude messages that target an individual or a group of people based on their membership in a marginalized group, in this case, race. The phenomenon

of racism as subtle and covert microaggressions occur daily, and is often invisible to the perpetrator because of their unconscious bias and partial perspective or standpoint (Johnston and Nadal 2010).

Research on microaggressions focuses on individuals' experiences with singular identities for example being a woman, non-heteronormative, or being a person of color but fails to recognize the intersection of multiple minority identities such as being an LGBT person of color or a female with a disability (Nadal et al. 2015). Moreover, racial microaggressions have previously targeted mono-racial individuals of color but fails to recognize and include the experiences of multiracial people (Nadal et al. 2013). Multiracial peoples are targets of "traditional" racial microaggressions, negative or derogatory comments based on one's race or skin color, in addition to unique multiracial microaggressions, enacted by mono-racial persons to communicate hostile or exclusionary views or sentiments of inferiority (Johnston and Nadal 2010). The following sections discuss the different types of multiracial microaggressions that occur in different settings: the family, the workplace, with co-workers, in education, in public spaces and with strangers.

#### *Microaggressions in the Multiracial Family*

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*When I was three, I spent my first Christmas at a tropical destination, Maui. I was a social butterfly with everyone I met and was a fish in the water; my parents had a hard time getting me to do anything but swim and play with my newfound friends. One day, I became buddies with a petite blonde Russian girl and invited her to play games with my dad and I in the pool.*

*We take turns having my dad throw us in the water, squealing with excitement and laughter. As I run back to my dad to get thrown in again I notice a young couple standing with him, smiling graciously and pointing to my friend and me.*

*"Oh my god, that is so cute. You have one daughter that looks just like you and one that looks like your girlfriend! Honey do you see that? That is so precious." She tugs at the man's arm; her eyes are sparkling and wide like a child staring into a candy store.*

*The man stands there in his swim trunks and flip-flops stiff and unmoved. He leans closer to my father and nods his head in my direction as he quietly asks, "or is she adopted?"*

*I did not understand what he was saying until I was older and my parents recounted the story to me. To this day I cannot help but laugh to myself. My parents had been married for five years when this happened and my friend and my father had no similarities besides being white and having different shades of blonde hair and blue eyes.*

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Nadal et al. (2013) asserts that there are five main themes in the types of microaggressions and interactions with others that occurred within multiracial families: “(a) isolation within the family, (b) favoritism within the family, (c) questioning of authenticity, (d) denial of multiracial identity and experiences by monoracial family members, and (e) feelings about not learning about family heritage or culture (195).” This is not to say that all multiracial individuals and their families experience all these microaggressions, nor does it mean that these are the only experiences people of mixed heritage experience in their familial relations. No experience is the same especially with regards to how family’s shape one another’s understanding of their ‘racial self’ and influence one another’s racial identity however, research on multiracial identities all explore similar key ideas to that of Nadal et al. (Christian 2000).

All mixed-race persons experience some form of exclusion or isolation within the family because of their multiracial identity (Nadal et al. 2011; Nadal et al. 2013). This is generally from older generations with traditional views on race relations as well as with an individual’s extended, often monoracial, family (Nadal et al. 2011; Nadal et al. 2013). Participants in research have continuously expressed sentiments of one side of the family belittling or treating the other side of the family poorly because they do not approve of the interracial relationship and mixed race offspring (Nadal et al. 2011). There was extreme discomfort and a sense of isolation and discrimination because they did not necessarily fit in and share the same heritage as the rest of the family (Nadal et al. 2011; Nadal et al. 2013). Multiracial individuals can often feel judged and excluded because they do not speak the same language, share the same traditions and culture, or simply do not look like the rest of their family further enforcing a sense of isolation

(Nadal et al. 2013). Because of this alienation, they find ways to “prove” that they are part of the family by emphasizing one side of their racial identity or behaving in a similar way to or would be acknowledged by their family (Nadal et al. 2013).

Mixed race persons felt that their views and understanding of identity and race relations and how they communicated their own multiracial identity to others in society largely stemmed from the ways in which their parents’ discussed these issues (Christian 2000). In families, wherein the parental figures willingly talked about race relations and the experiences of their respective racial, ethnic and social groups, people were more honest, open, and supportive of one another and their experiences than in families that did not take the time to have a dialogue about race (Christian 2000). One of the most difficult experiences of multiracial peoples is the lack of racially similar role models (Shih and Sanchez 2005). Parents have the inability to fully empathize with and understand the experiences of their children because they will likely not have the same racial identity (Christian 2000; Shih and Sanchez 2005). Siblings will have a better understanding of one’s experiences but this can also differ depending on their gender and their phenotypic traits and may be experienced differently. Multiracial individuals might experience difficulties trying to talk about this within their immediate family because their parents will not fully understand what they are going through, leaving them feeling extremely isolated and alone (Nadal et al. 2013). In other words, parents can support their multiracial children and foster a mutually respectful environment and an open dialogue but are unable to be immediate role models. Some parents also use color blindness to teach their children about race despite this conflicting with external forces. Multiracial individuals therefore have difficulty understanding where they fit in larger society, what is expected of them, and above all do not know how to understand and react to how others’ views and behavior toward them from a very young age (Shih and Sanchez 2005).

Sentiments of differential treatment and in some cases favoritism from family members is another common experience of multiracial peoples (Nadal et al. 2011; Shih and Sanchez 2005). This is especially apparent in grandparent-grandchild relations wherein the grandparent still holds traditional views on race and race relations. Multiracial individuals experience both favoritism and ill treatment based on if they behave the way the grandparent thinks they should, such as a half Black, half White female being favored and privileged by her grandparents because she behaved “the way a White girl should” while her sister was mistreated and denigrated because she had Black features and did not behave like a White girl (Nadal et al. 2013). This type of interaction results in distress and tensions between siblings who may feel that they are treated differently despite having the same multiracial heritage and identity.

The pathologizing and denial of identity and experiences with microaggressions is another commonality shared by many if not all multiracial persons (Nadal et al. 2013). By and large, strangers make assumptions about multiracial peoples’ family relationships and the interracial relationship of their parents and do not shy away from expressing their inappropriate sentiments of disgust or confusion (Nadal et al. 2011). Rude and intrusive stares during family outings, being verbally attacked (intentionally or unintentionally), and in extreme cases being spat at or physically attacked, leave individuals feeling upset and alone (Nadal et al. 2011; Nadal et al. 2013). Moreover, the mono-racial family member’s lack of concern or dismissal and invalidation of these microaggressions leads to further feelings of isolation and a lack of support (Nadal et al. 2013).

Many multiracial individuals experience conflicting messages from their parents and their community because of their clashing racial backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives (Nadal et al. 2013; Shih and Sanchez 2005). Even if a multiracial child grows up with parents who deemphasize the importance of race or try to encourage peaceful race relations and views on

cultural awareness and sensitivity, that child will likely experience and be forced to learn about interracial conflict, racial prejudice, racism, and discrimination from other interpersonal relationships and societal structures (Shih and Sanchez 2005). While race may be viewed and openly discussed in a positive manner within the family, a multiracial individual quickly learns that race is salient and still shapes people's experiences beyond the family bubble (Shih and Sanchez 2005).

### *Identity and Stigma in the Workplace*

Many individuals with stigmatized, non-normative, or minority social identities, including multiracial identities will consciously and deliberately chose to conceal and not disclose these aspects of their identity in the work place to be accepted and avoid being interrogated by their colleagues (DeJordy 2008). With the historically dominant ideology of the model worker being a white, middle class, married man with children, it is no wonder that anyone who did not fit this image would present themselves differently to try and be included or be given certain work (McUsic and Selmi 1997). This image of the model worker has loosened over the years, allowing marginalized peoples to work the same type of jobs, however many have continued to give up or change aspects of their own racial identities to fit in (DeJordy 2008; McUsic and Selmi 1997). As McUsic and Selmi (1997) stated, "although for many the concept of the melting pot still captures the essence of American society, there is a growing realization that such a goal too often requires individuals to melt down to blend in and thereby lose their distinctive identities (1340)." The denial of one's identity in this situation becomes a consequence of the reinforced racial categories and racial dichotomy of the larger society. Like many other aspects of the multiracial experience, multiracial employees will experience objectification and exoticization from their co-workers and bosses (Nadal et al. 2011). They are

viewed as the atypical employee who does not fit into any racial group or line of work but as rather an ambiguous body (Nadal et al. 2011).

### *Multiracial Identity and Microaggression in Education*

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*“Why are your eyes closed? Don’t fall asleep in class, that’s not nice. Keep your eyes open!”*

*The joke seems harmless or unintentionally rude coming from my best friend in the middle of our class lecture on the human digestive system. I laugh it off and dismiss the mockery as my friend simply trying to be funny.*

*“Jessy! You’re letting your brain go to mush. You’re letting your Asian side down, eyes open, Jessy! Eyes open!”*

*Each crack she makes hits closer to my heart. She out of all people should understand my insecurities, she herself is extremely mixed and gets annoyed when people make jokes about part of her identity and take it too far.*

*I tune her words out and try to focus on memorizing the diagram of the digestive tract that the teacher has drawn on the board. My mind is miles away, thinking about the many times my friends made “Asian F” or other racial stereotype jokes and how I brush them off like they don’t bother me and my friends don’t mean it. Somehow, the Asian scale always drags me down.*

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The role of race and race relations in the education system is something that has been studied extensively over the years but has failed to address the interpersonal experiences of multiracial students (Williams and Chilungu 2016). Multiracial students especially at the high school and college level must deal with and navigate microaggressions and potentially hostile structures and interactions every day in a system that is largely monoracial (Johnston-Guerrero and Renn 2016; Williams and Chilungu 2016). The extent to which multiracial students become comfortable with expressing their identity is influenced by how open the peer culture is to fluid racial identities and how prevalent mono-racism is on campus (Johnston-Guerrero and Renn 2016). It is extremely difficult to find spaces in which they are comfortable and feel their entire multiracial identity be communicated and presented as opposed to one specific aspect of their identity such as in the racial and ethnic student unions (Johnston-Guerrero and Renn 2016). This endorsement of a mono-racial society and norms results in the second-class status and treatment of multiracial people and their inherent exclusion and isolation (Nadal et al. 2011).



Mixed race students not only experience the racial challenges of exclusion and marginality, racial stereotypes, ignorance, awkwardness, and racial hostility that monoracial minority students' experience but they face a series of unique challenges due to their multi-raciality including being alienated and excluded from the monoracial minority student groups (Museus, Sarinana, Yee, and Robinson 2016). A hallmark of the multiracial experience is the unintentionally rude "what are you?" question (Museus et al. 2016). While a question about one's background may be deemed harmless by the inquirer or even bystanders, the constant queries and expectation to explain one's racial heritage results in many multiracial students feeling that they do not belong in these monoracial campus spaces or with their monoracial peers because they are different (Museus et al. 2016; Nadal et al. 2011). Furthermore, multiracial students are often ascribed monoracial identities and labels based on their appearance as perceived by classmates and teachers, forcing them into a specific racial category that they may not even be a part of (Museus et al. 2016).

The marginalization of multiracial students from monoracial groups is also a common experience especially when it comes to multicultural and racial groups and communities on campus (Johnston-Guerrero and Renn 2016; Museus et al. 2016). Multiracial students are told that they are not Asian, Black, Latino, or White enough to be a part of a group or they are not deemed minorities in today's culture despite being a minority both in numbers and in social context and treatment (Museus et al. 2016; Nadal et al. 2011). In other words, if a student is not "racially pure", they are often excluded from monoracial minority groups unless they demonstrate loyalties or key qualities of that race as means of justifying, legitimating, and authenticating their heritage (Museus et al. 2016; Nadal et al. 2011). This type of racial essentialization, or reducing one's mixed-race identity to a singular racial category occurs because students and teachers alike are unable to fit multiracial students into a racial category

and therefore do not acknowledge and validate their identity as real (Museus et al. 2016). Most multiracial individuals experience a mix of social acceptance and rejection growing up; students would go through periods of not fitting in or feeling targeted because of their multiracial status through ridicule or racial slurs as well as periods wherein they felt that they could move easily between different racial groups and be met with little to no resistance (Shih and Sanchez 2005). This is not only dependent on the peer culture and monoracial dominance of the community but also the type of school that multiracial students went to (Shih and Sanchez 2005). If they were at a school with a large international student or mixed racial and ethnic student population, multiracial students were met with greater social acceptance and support than if they were in a very monoracial school system (Shih and Sanchez 2005). Tying into this, multiracial students are forced to endure racial stereotyping based on one racial component of their multiracial identity whether it be that Asians are smart or African Americans are untrustworthy; these stereotypes get reinforced by students' chatter and their policing of that multiracial student to ensure that they are following these ascribed traits (Nadal et al. 2011).

Another form of microaggression experienced by multiracial female students moreso than male students is the exoticization and objectification of their mixed-raced identity because of their unique and different phenotypic traits (Museus et al. 2016). Research concluded that monoracial students were fascinated with the uniqueness of their mixed-raced peers and unintentionally viewed that as super exotic, new and exciting (Museus et al. 2016). While it is often meant as a compliment and has no malicious intent, it can make multiracial students feel uncomfortable and highlight how they are different and do not fit into the dominant demographics and culture of the students (Nadal et al. 2011; Museus et al. 2016).

*Microaggressions in Public Spaces and With Strangers*

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*Christmas markets are my favorite part about the holiday season in my Belgian home. I love the cool, brisk air on my face, the scent of Glögg wine and fresh frites in the air, and the sweet sounds of bells, Christmas carols, and people laughing and enjoying themselves.*

*I walk from stall to stall, checking out the intricate handmade gifts available this year. Stall after stall, person after person says hello to me in a different language - in every language besides English, or the local languages of French and Flemish. “Konichiwa!” “Yeoboseyo!” “Ni Hao Ma!” These are all phrases I am accustomed to hearing no matter where in the world I am. But something about hearing it repeatedly in a matter of minutes causes me to lose my patience.*

*As an older Moroccan man jokingly says, “Konichiwa Ching Chang Chong!” I turn around and yell back at him, “J'appartiens ici tout autant que toi” I belong here just as much as you do.*

*Shocked to see an Asian girl suddenly speak french fluently, he quickly jumps to apologizing and saying that he’s not trying to be offensive but is rather trying to make me feel more welcomed as a tourist.*

*“Excusez-moi madame mais mon français n'est pas très bon” Excuse me miss but my french is not very good.*

*Excuses. I immediately switch to Flemish to tell him off for making assumptions about me, where I am from and what I speak when he himself was not a white Belgian man. My body is tense, I can feel the blood rushing to my cheeks, my voice strong and irritated, “What? You don’t speak Flemish now either?”*

*He waves his hand at me and mutters “grosse putte,” whore, under his breath and turns away. Angry and tired of always giving others the benefit of the doubt I respond with a mix of a French and Flemish, “Va te faire foutre, Onnozelaar.” Fuck off, idiot.*

*It is the first time I intentionally blow up and swear at someone but for the first time I feel stronger and more confident in myself than ever before. I am of Chinese heritage, yes. I have certain traits that could be deemed more Asian, sure. But am I 100% Asian? Definitely not. But people assume that I am. They assume I am a tourist even in my own home of twelve years. A tourist who doesn’t speak English so instead they shout these phrases and laugh when I don’t respond. I’m tired of people thinking they can crack jokes and step on me, I vow to never let someone make assumptions or incorrectly speak about me again, perhaps next time it will be with less swearing.*

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As is now evident, our daily interactions and communication with others has the power to influence how we come to understand ourselves, our identity, our place in the world, and how we in turn interact and communicate with others. The multiracial identity is one that activists are still trying to get recognized by the larger society the societal structures (DeBose and Winters 2003). Being repeatedly asked “What are you?” and “Where are you really from?” continues to be quintessential to the multiracial experience, especially when it comes to multiracial individuals’ interactions with strangers (DeBose and Winters 2003; Museus et al. 2016).

The multiracial identity has become a racialized ideal and a form of poster child for positive race relations in the eyes of many strangers and outsiders causing many multiracial people to feel dehumanized and uncomfortable even if that was not the intention of the communicator (Nadal et al. 2011). People respond to one's multiracial identity as though it is something extremely bizarre and completely out of the ordinary, leaving the individual feeling like their very existence is a strange occurrence (Nadal et al. 2011). Strangers quickly view multiracial people as a symbol of how races can come together and be something good, a form of check mark next to the diversity and equality box. One example of this is a young multiracial woman, being described by her mono-racial friend to others as a melting pot because she looks African American but has a European last name and speaks fluent Spanish (Nadal et al. 2011).

News companies run predominantly by mono-racial Caucasians have viewed the development and appearance of the multiracial identity as a positive step toward and a symbol of a color-blind society even though the multiracial identity is not even entirely acknowledged in public policy and societal institutions (Sanchez and Bonam 2009; Shih and Sanchez 2009). Black and other mono-racial minority run newspapers argued that multiracial people are using their mixed heritage as an attempt to escape discrimination and public devaluing institutions (Sanchez and Bonam 2009; Shih and Sanchez 2009). Both views are partial and based entirely on their own standpoints and experiences but do not take into consideration the interactions, communication, and experiences of the multiracial people themselves. Although there has been an increase in the media exposure of multiracial persons such as Barack Obama and Tiger Woods, often these public figures are also subjected to the same microaggressions and denial of the multiracial identity (Nadal et al. 2011). Both Obama and Woods for example, are solely classified as African-American. Mistaken or deliberate identification as a mono-racial or a different racial identity is one of the most common microaggressions experienced by multiracial

individuals from strangers and public spaces (Nadal et al. 2011). These types of interactions and communication not only invalidate one's identity but it also pathologizes it, leaving multiracial individuals feeling once again, isolated, alone, and abnormal (Nadal et al. 2011).

The denial of the multiracial reality and experiences is another commonplace in public spaces for multiracial peoples along with the "us versus them" complex (Nadal et al. 2011; Tajfel and Turner 1986). The social identity theory states that group memberships and our identities provide individuals with a sense of belonging and place in the social world (Tajfel and Turner 1986). These groups are then often used to enhance the status of one group and discriminate or hold prejudice against another to enhance and promote a specific presentation of their selves (Tajfel and Turner 1986). This us versus them complex quickly becomes used to marginalize and discriminate against multiracial peoples as minorities who not only do not fit any racial category but do not even fit into a minority group. Many multiracial people have described feelings of inadequacy or invalidity because others have dismissed or ignored their identity as a multiracial person (Nadal et al. 2011). Friends and strangers alike did not understand the struggles and hardships that they faced and sometimes appeared not to care. Others would dismiss the multiracial individual's experience or perspective and tell them to get over it because they cannot really be offended by something if they are not purely that race (Nadal et al. 2011).

The exoticization and objectification of the multiracial identity is especially prevalent in multiracial peoples' interactions with strangers (Nadal et al. 2011). This not only encompasses unintentional objectification such as viewing multiracial people as the "racialized ideal" but it also includes not being acknowledged a multiracial (being mistaken as monoracial), being acknowledged as exotic, and the sexualization of being an exotic blend of different racial groups (Nadal et al. 2011). Research found that many multiracial people experience strangers staring at them from afar, asking them what they are or coming up and complimenting the beautiful blend

of phenotypic characteristics they have, an experience which is extremely atypical for people of monoracial backgrounds (Nadal et al. 2011). One research participant described being unintentionally dehumanized by an interracial couple who asked about her heritage and then told each other that they could “have one just like that” (Nadal et al. 2011, p. 41). Not only are experiences like this disturbing, intentional or not, but it proves to be uncomfortable and confusing for the recipient, the multiracial individual. For many multiracial women, the sexualization of their multiracial identity is apparent. They experience men (and women alike) coming up to them and calling them a sexy hybrid, mysterious and exotic, or a sexy blend and the best of two worlds, referring to the best physical attributes of two or more different racial groups (Nadal et al. 2011). These interactions dehumanize, sexualize, and objectify women but also reinforces the rarity or abnormality of being multiracial in a predominantly monoracial society (Nadal et al. 2011).

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*We sit huddled around the People gossip magazine in our dorm room, laughing as we read article after article about how to find the perfect man, the best and worst dresses at the Golden Globes, the latest fashion trends, and the cutest and most stylish babies of beloved celebrities. Page after page I notice that there are mostly white models and celebrities. I frown and look up at my friends, none of whom seem to notice.*

*“Hey...did you notice that all but one of the babies they include in this piece is white?” I point out to my girlfriend sitting beside me. She pauses for a second, her eyes skim the pictures on that page and shrugs.*

*“It’s probably because most celebrities in Hollywood are white,” she says nonchalantly before going back to giggling over the worst dressed celebrities. Not satisfied with her brushing off answer, I sigh and shrug back, “yeah I guess.”*

*We stop on a picture of a male model that looks to be of mixed-race. The two other girls ooh and ahh, googly eyes, all taking turns looking at the magazine up close.*

*“Damn he’s hot,” one of them says.*

*My friend gasps, “oh my god you and this guy would have such cute mixed babies!”*

*What? I stop and look over at her, taken aback and stunned. “Umm, what?”*

*She is super excited, she bounces in place, giddy as she says, “I think Blasian babies are the absolute cutest. I hope I can have one too one day.”*

*I sit back, surprised by her random comment. She has no reason to say something like that other than just she really thought I’d make cute babies with a completely random racially*

*ambiguous model, as though I was even thinking about kids let alone a significant other at this point in my life. Unfazed by my clear negative and confused reaction to her statement, she absent-mindedly continues to go through the magazine.*

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## IMPLICATIONS

The “marginal men” are increasingly common today and it is important to not only recognize this but to really try to learn and understand the perspectives and experiences of mixed race peoples. As Park (1928) states, “the marginal man holds the key to our understanding of human progress even though he lives a life of supposed ‘inner conflict’ and outer oppression from the social forces at large in the dominant society (881).” Multiracial persons clearly experience a great deal of internal conflict and difficulty understanding their identity in addition to the external positive and negative multiracial interpersonal interactions with family members and loved ones, with peers and teachers, with friends, with co-workers, and with strangers. Because no multiracial identity or set of multiracial experiences will be exactly alike it is difficult to provide a specific practice that will work for all people in all circumstances and situations. It will ultimately all come down to the promotion of healthy multiracial identities and open discussion and supportive dialogue about race and ethnicity (Nadal et al. 2013). The open dialogue of race and ethnicity is a challenge when our society continues to deem it a taboo topic and people who speak out are nuisances. Multiracial people must be willing to confront microaggressions head on and address them with the individual communicating it, whether intentionally malicious or not, for there to be any progress towards a more accepting and positive multiracial experience (Shih and Sanchez 2009; Nadal et al. 2011; Nadal et al. 2013). Families must not only teach their multiracial children about the social construction of race and race relations but they must also be ready and willing to address issues of racism, prejudice and discrimination that their children will face in other aspects of society such as in the education

system, with friends or in public spaces (Christian 2000; Nadal et al. 2013; Shih and Sanchez 2005). Families should and must discuss the issues of race among other power divisions with their children from a young age and explain the complexities of the issues associated with being a minority race.

The multiracial student experience is very complex however it is important that administrators, faculty, and staff understand the growing concerns and experiences of the population and find ways to make them feel supported on campus, whether it be through organized meetings, clubs or events for multiracial peoples to come together, or simply acknowledging them and being there for support and guidance (Johnston-Guerrero and Renn 2016; Williams and Chilungu 2016). In the curriculum for history classes and race-related courses, faculty should incorporate a discussion and examination of the multiracial experience as they do with minority races such as African-Americans and Asian-Americans. By educating students and exposing them to accurate information and experiences from a young age, we can ensure that the alienation of mixed race peoples is diminished.

Another fruitful research investigation and step forward would be to delve deeper into the role that media and social media plays in not only forming our understanding of multiracial identities and how that plays into interpersonal relationships and communication but also how an individual will internalize their identity and how they are seen by the rest of the world. Having a lack of mixed race role models, like mono-racial minorities, available in the media has the power to influence the societal normalcy and discussion of race and race relations.

We live in a time of great uncertainty and high tension as the world clashes across races, religions, classes, and immigrant statuses, amongst many others. So much needs to be changed for the multiracial population to be fully recognized, acknowledged, and accepted as valid



members of society. Ultimately, it will come down to identity and how society chooses to communicate, react to, and treat one another's identities.

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*Amidst the 2016 presidential elections, tensions were at an all-time high. People were going at it with one another and every type of minority out there was being threatened and feared for their safety. Perhaps it was too naive of me to think this couldn't possibly happen here, and on the outskirts of Santa Clara's campus. Perhaps I believe people are better than they really are.*

*I stroll down the street as I do every day for class, face to the blue sky, enjoying the beautiful sunny weather and humming the tune to the latest song stuck in my head, One Republic's Counting Stars. It is a day like any other. I stand at the light, patiently waiting to cross, watching the cars zoom by, imagining what each of their lives is like. One car catches my attention and I feel my stomach surge with discomfort. I take a step back from the curb and wrap my arms around my stomach. Despite the green light, a red jeep wrangler slows down as it nears me, rap music blasting and a group of four maybe five guys hooting and hollering out of their open windows.*

*"Your time in the US has come to end, Chink!" one yells at me, followed by a laugh.*

*"Go back to where you belong you dirty mutt" another one booms, preceded by their attempts at howling like dogs.*

*Whore. Disgusting. Ching Chong. Die. They hurl insult after insult at me, each one stinging more than the next. I stand still and alone at the light for another five minutes, my arms tightened around me, in complete shock and disbelief that my Claradise, my home away from home, could cause me so much hurt and fear.*

*The blaring horn of another car startles me, throwing me back into reality. I immediately turn back around and head home, wanting to hide my shame and embarrassment in my bed even though I know I have just as much as right to be here as those boys or anyone else.*

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