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The Relationship between Racial Ambiguity and Self-Concept in Multiracial Individuals

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RACIAL AMBIGUITY AND SELF-CONCEPT IN MULTIRACIAL INDIVIDUALS

by

James R. Jobe

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RACIAL AMBIGUITY AND SELF-CONCEPT IN MULTIRACIAL INDIVIDUALS

James R. Jobe, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2014

The present study examined the relationship between racial ambiguity and self-concept in multiracial individuals. Research as to the experiences of multiracial people is limited both in frequency and in scope. As multiracial individuals continue to grow in number, understanding their unique experiences will become more important to social scientists (e.g., psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists) across disciplines. The current study examined two hypotheses and explored a series of additional relationships. The theoretical framework that was utilized for this study was Symbolic Interaction Theory. This theory provided an effective way to understand how people use and make meaning of their surrounding social contexts to understand themselves (i.e., through reflected appraisals). Participants for this study were solicited from various Facebook and Yahoo subgroups. One-hundred twenty-eight participants completed a web-based anonymous survey. Descriptive data were collected and reported. T-tests and ANOVAs were performed as part of the preliminary analyses. Bivariate correlations were then calculated to determine the degree of relationship between the study’s variables. It was predicted that self-concept would correlate negatively with racial ambiguity. The study’s predictions were mostly supported. Self-concept was negatively impacted by racial
ambiguity. Ethnic identity was less impacted. At least one group difference was observed as Asian/White participants tended to answer differently than other respondents.

Research implications, significance, and limitations are included.
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This section really does not do my feelings of gratitude justice. In some ways I feel overwhelmed by the support that I have received from people all over. Despite the dissertation process being one of the more isolating phases of a doctoral program, there is still an amount of solidarity that I have sensed in others that ultimately is comforting.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about race and how we as human beings tend to use it and think about it both as an implicit and explicit grouping mechanism. The need for people to categorize or group each other into distinct boxes is a particularly salient concept in the United States and impacts interpersonal interaction in many different ways. On the surface, the idea of categorization may not pose much of a problem or seem to carry much in the way of consequences. However, I was drawn to this topic because of my personal connection to race, race “mixing”, and how multiracial people are essentially direct challenges to traditional notions of race categorization. Simply by existing, multiracial people force consideration of what race is and the meanings we associate with it.

In its simplest sense, my general question is – if we see and understand race historically one way, what happens when the “view” changes? As the walls of racial segregation have gradually, but continuously dissipated over time both politically and socially, the number of multiracial individuals born in this country has increased. Although race mixing is not a new concept, it has gradually increased over time and is more common now than ever. The problem is, our current assumptions about race – that race is fixed and biologically meaningful – are obsolete and untrue.

What follows in this dissertation is an exploration of race, how it was created, how it is maintained, and a theoretical consequence associated with outdated race categorizations in an increasingly diversifying racial world. This study is important
because it addresses how superficial race is and underscores the idea that the importance of race lies in the meanings we attach to it. I acknowledge the vast intricacies and depth associated with the intersections between race and culture and emphasize that this study’s central focus is specific to race only.

**Literature Review**

The process of experiencing and understanding race is like a two-way street. It is based on both how you feel or recognize yourself as well as how you are treated or recognized by others. In other words, race does not exist in a vacuum; it is a product of both self and society. At its core, race is primarily based in physical or phenotypical characteristics – how a person looks and how those looks compare to others. The following literature review is an understanding of what is involved with this two-way street.

To understand the two-way street, one must have a grasp of this country’s history with race as well as how race currently exists according to race scholars. The following literature review is made of up four major sections. The first section grounds the study with a brief historical perspective on race, is followed by more contemporary ideas of race and includes an overview of the state of the literature pertaining to multiracial individuals. The section concludes with the purpose of the study. The second section specifically reviews literature that describes one half of the aforementioned two-way street; race perception, or how we observe race. The third section describes the other half of the two-way street; race identity development, or how we experience race. The fourth section combines both the observation and experience of race to form the theoretical framework of the study.
Race

Race is a salient part of everyday American life. It impacts where we choose to live, who we choose to marry, who our friends are, and what television shows we watch. We see race in our schools, our prisons, our government, and in our company’s boardrooms. Regardless of why, race is typically one of the first things the average American notices and uses to classify others. The physical features that define typical “races” are used as filters, or ways of creating knowledge of other people. Broadly speaking, race is seen or is assumed to be a biologically driven set of boundaries that group and categorize people according to phenotypical similarities (e.g., skin color) (Pinderhughes, 1989; Root, 1998). The concept of race being used as a classifying system can be traced back to the 16th century Linnaen system of human “races” where each race was seen as a particular type that included distinct genes (Omi & Winant, 1994; Spickard, 1992; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Race in the United States initially began as “a general categorizing term, interchangeable with such terms as “type” or “species”” (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 19). Over time, race began to transform into a term specifically referring to groups of people living in North America (i.e., European “Whites”, Native American “Indians”, and African “Negroes”). By the early 18th century, race represented a new way to illustrate human difference as well as a way to socially structure American society (Smedley & Smedley, 2005).

The primary reason for this type of categorization came as a result of the colonization of newly acquired American territories at the turn of the 18th century. It was during this time that colonial leaders needed a moral justification to enslave Africans (Allen, 1994; Fredrickson, 2002; Morgan, 1975; Smedley, 1999) and race became the
convenient way to accomplish this (Allen, 1994; Smedley, 1999). Despite the pervasive political philosophy of the time, a philosophy that called for freedom and equality, Africans were placed into a subhuman category and were assumed to have been created separately from Whites (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). By the middle of the 19th century, the idea of race was normalized and internalized by most Whites living in the United States. In addition to the enslavement of Africans, race was also a convenient device to justify the “taking of Mexican and Indian lands, exclusion of Asian immigrants, and acquisition of overseas territories” (e.g., the Philippine Islands) (RACE, 2003). White racial superiority was believed to not only be innate, but a factor that was clearly represented in ideas like Manifest Destiny or the White Man’s Burden. These ideas helped in justifying and condoning the American colonization and imperialism of the time (Sober, 2000).

**The Social Construction of Race**

The idea of race being a socially constructed, or man-made, phenomenon is well-documented in race research and scholarship (e.g., Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gaskins, 1999; Harris & Sim, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Spickard, 1992; Zack, 1995). The social construction of race is also not a new idea. Anthropologist Ashley Montagu published his pioneering work *Man’s Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race* in 1942. He wrote, “When human beings are defined on the basis of the differences in physical traits we narrow the definition of their humanity. And that is, perhaps, the most telling criticism of the concept of race” (p. 48). Additionally, in 1950, after acknowledging that all racial groups were of the same species, the United Nations Cultural, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proposed to
formally eliminate the term “race” and instead use the phrase “ethnic group” (UNESCO, 1950). It may come as a surprise to know that the ideas behind racial deconstruction have been around for a long time. The acknowledgment of race’s outright futility and obtuseness however, was not enough to prevent race from becoming a fixture in American society.

One of the more straightforward and concrete examples of how race is a social construction is evident in the changing racial definitions in the United States across time. For example, “Indians”, a label used to describe people from India, were once called “Hindus” according to early 20th century (i.e., 1920 and 1940) U.S. Censuses. They were then called “White” from between 1950 and 1970, and have since been classified as “Asian or Pacific Islander” (Office of Management and Budget, 1995; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Thus, meanings associated with racial labels in fact change over time. The American Anthropological Association (1998) stated that despite the power and prevalence of race in today’s social world, race has been proven to be scientifically insignificant. The AAA went on to suggest that categorizing terms like "ethnicity" or "ethnic group" are better categorizing terms than “race” because they contain less offensive connotations and do a better job of describing what meaningfully links groups of people together (American Anthropological Association, 1998). At the very least, it seems as though there has been a formal understanding of the problems associated with the idea of race and what it intends to encompass.

According to Smedley and Smedley (2005), debate in regards to the existence of race should center around three main questions; are racial groups (a) discrete, (b) measurable, and (c) scientifically meaningful? The majority of scientific scholars across
disciplines (e.g., anthropology, evolutionary biology, psychology, sociology, etc.) conclude, “racial distinctions fail on all three counts – that is, they are not genetically discrete, are not reliably measured, and are not scientifically meaningful” (p. 16). All human beings belong to the hominid subspecies: Homo sapiens (Lee et al., 2008).

Geneticists have concluded that any two people on earth are about 99.9% the same from a DNA standpoint (NCHPEG, 2012). Not a single characteristic exclusively belongs to a particular racial group while at the same time not belonging to individuals of another racial group (Zack, 1995). Some evidence exists to show that geography plays a role in shaping phenotypical similarities (e.g., skin color) between peoples inhabiting specific regions of the world (Relethford, 2009). However, the distinctions between “races” are actually meaningless as scientists have agreed that there is more variation within a race than across races (AAA, 1998). Anthropologist John Relethford (2009) recommends that it would be most appropriate “to consider race as a culturally constructed label that crudely and imprecisely describes real variation” (p. 20). Furthermore, there is no scientific evidence for the belief that certain groups are morally or intellectually inferior to others (Marks, 1996; Tucker, 2004).

In the United States, the normalization and usage of race is deep and powerful in its social consequences. The grouping together of people based on selected physical attributes will continue to act as justification of unequal policy and social relations (Marks, 1996; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Spickard, 1992). While people continue to classify others and self-classify according to these physical characteristics, it is the meanings assigned to these characteristics that ultimately make race a social construction.

meanings
(Omi & Winant, 1994). These meanings are complex and can often manifest in forms that hurt or oppress (e.g., racial stereotyping) members of certain racial groups.

**Race and Racism**

The wide variety of physical characteristics among human beings (e.g., skin color, eye shape, hair texture, nose width, lip thickness, etc.) is used to denote racial differences in the United States. Despite what we know about race and its biological insignificance, the use of race criteria continues (Smedley, 2002). These criteria, when connected to assumptions about groups of people (e.g., stereotypes), are root causes of racism. Therefore, it is not the differing physical features among people that actually cause racism and discrimination, but the culturally manufactured ideas, beliefs, and assumptions about these differences (Smedley, 1999). Racism is not simply a dislike or distrusting of differences of the “other”, but an adherence to cultural stereotypes created and maintained by those in power. Ideas embedded in race tend to distort, exaggerate, and maximize human differences. Physical features tend to now represent aspects of identity. One cannot escape the process of racialization in the United States, as it is both an important and pervasive element of the social system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Smedley, 1999).

The classification of human beings according to race acts as an oppressive force by creating hierarchies of power, privilege, and human rights (Root, 2003; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). It is embedded within historical discussions of science and law, and maintained by social dialogues that perpetuate these meanings and the associated hierarchy. Though discriminatory laws and practices have largely been phased out, the social meanings attached to them remain. Underlying beliefs of White superiority and
non-White inferiority still persist (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Smedley & Smedley, 2005).

**The Treacherous Bind**

It is important to note, despite a growing progressive, multicultural movement in the United States within such disciplines as sociology and psychology, the continued existence of racial classification and stratification (Winant, 2000). Research pertaining to race is seen by some researchers as only perpetuating racist ideology just by including it as a researchable topic of interest (Pascoe, 1996). Gunaratnam (2003) warns that a discussion regarding race must come with an awareness of two factors co-occurring: (1) racial discourse and (2) how the phenomenological experience of race is researched. Gunaratnam calls this the “treacherous bind” in race theory and research. Essentially, if race and racial categorization schemes continue to be used by researchers, they run the risk of perpetuating racist practices that promote Whiteness. However, it is impossible to conduct social psychological research without also incorporating the existence of racial categories. Race is present in the everyday lived experiences of people. Even though race is understood theoretically as relationally and socially constructed, there are real social and political reasons to continue to use commonly understood racial labels. In other words, race has and will continue to matter (Gunaratnam, 2003).

**Multiracial Individuals**

Prior to 2000, multiracial people were permitted to only identify with one race on the U.S. Census. It was thought that by forcing multiracial individuals to pick one race, they were denying other parts (Gaskins, 1999; Shih & Sanchez, 2009). The U.S. Census change in 2000 marked a significant movement forward of the recognition of the civil
rights and social realities of multiracial individuals (Miville, Constantine, Baysden, & So-Lloyd, 2005). Americans from that point on could choose more than one race on U.S. Census forms. This move raised a different level of awareness about race membership, social boundaries and how each are strongly connected to the larger issue of racism (Binning, Unzueta, Huo & Molina, 2009; Dagbovie, 2007; Telles & Sue, 2009). Since then, the number of people who identify with more than one race has been steadily increasing. In 2010, nine million people identified with two or more races as compared to 2000 when 6.8 million did so, a 32% increase (U.S. Census Bureau). Social scientists across disciplines have subsequently become increasingly focused on the nature of racial identity and how multiracial people fit into pre-existing social categories. They tend to conceptualize race from either a) a biological perspective, b) social-constructivist perspective, or c) a combination of both (Aumer, Hatfield, Swann, & Frey, 2012).

A number of reviews have surfaced in the last several years in an attempt to summarize and describe collective findings in regards to multiracial individuals. For example, Shih and Sanchez (2009) described four general themes of multiracial related literature: “a) multiracial identity construction, the multidimensional aspects of multiracial identity as well as the psychological consequences and precursors to multiracial identity, b) multiracial people’s views of race, how multiracial people view other races and the boundaries between the races, c) society’s perceptions and representations of multiracial people, how multiracial identity is represented in the media and how multiracial people are evaluated by their peers, and d) public policies and their consequences for multiracial people, the current attitudes and content of public policies for multiracial people and how these policies affect multiracial communities and people.”
In a review of multiracial related literature from 1986-2006, Aumer, Hatfield, Swann, and Frey (2012) noted three themes: a) The difficulty of classifying multiracial people, b) the complexity of multiracial people’s views on race, and c) multiracial people’s flexibility concerning race related ideas. Aumer et al. (2012) also highlighted the importance of physical appearance (e.g. skin tone), family relationships, and context.

In a 20 year-review of multiracial research, Charmaraman, Quach, Woo, and Erkut (2014) concluded that 133 studies were published between 1990 and 2009 with a specific focus on multiracial people. Most studies were quantitative in nature (i.e. 69%) while 24% of the studies were qualitative in nature. The remaining studies (7%) were of mixed method design. Charmaraman et al. noted that the majority of quantitative studies were published after 2000 indicating an increase in both the presence as well as the accessibility of the multiracial population. In terms of sample demographics reported in the 133 studies, 55% of participants claimed a Black/White racial identity, followed by Asian/White (39%), Latino/White (25%), and Native/White (20%). Participants claiming three or more races made up 13% while 30% of participants claimed a minority/minority racial background. The subgroups also tended to shape specific research ideas or foci. For example, according to Charmarman et al., studies pertaining to multiracial Black/White and Latino/White participants tended to be focused on belonging, discrimination, and peer influence. Asian/White related studies tended to be focused on cultural practices with fewer studies focusing on the experience of discrimination. Native American/White research was highly focused on the impact of geography and political beliefs. Furthermore, most participants were female (65%) and also relatively young, as 39% of multiracial participants were between the ages of 18-25. In terms of geography,
Charmaraman et al. indicated that most participants were from the West Coast (31%), followed by the Midwest (15%), East (14%), and South (5%).

Researching the multiracial population has come with a variety of methodological and conceptual considerations and challenges (Aumer, Hatfield, Swann, & Frey 2012; Charmaraman, Quach, Woo, & Erkut 2014). Multiracial individuals represent a relatively small segment of the U.S. population and are unevenly distributed throughout the county. Thus, it is not surprising to note that most early studies (i.e. up until 2000) were qualitative in nature as qualitative research requires fewer participants. What also makes studying the multiracial population difficult lies in the fact that the multiracial population tends to be an extremely diverse segment within an already diverse U.S. population. Recruitment has been challenging and expensive (Root, 1992). Distinction between the definitions of race and ethnicity have also proved to be significant as for example, Latinos have only been included in about 20% of multiracial related literature. Some researchers have deemed Latino heritage to be an ethnic idea as opposed to a racial one (Aumer, et al., 2011; Charmaraman et al., 2014). Additionally, given the wide range of races represented, the sheer number of possible multiracial combinations is large particularly when multiracial people endorse more than two races. These combinations of racial groups tend to have differing socio-political histories as well as distinct outside perceptions, economic histories, as well as health outcomes (Charmaraman et al., 2014). As a result, conclusions found in multiracial literature tend to be mixed and often time inconsistent. For example, in a review conducted by Shih and Sanchez (2005), evidence suggested within clinical samples of multiracial adolescents struggle with acceptance of a multiracial identity. However, they also concluded that within non-clinical samples that
there is little evidence to suggest that multiracial adolescents were “dissatisfied, unhappy, or uncomfortable with their racial identity” (p. 587). Conversely, Udry, Li, and Hendrickson-Smith (2003) concluded that adolescents who checked more than one box for race had substantial adjustment problems as compared to their monoracial peers. Additionally, Tracy and Erkut (2010) concluded that only particular racial combinations of multiracial adolescents experienced issues related to their racial identities.

The Current Study

As the racial landscape of the United States continues to shift and evolve, so does the racial climate and subsequent experiences of multiracial people. As a growing segment of the U.S. population, multiracial people are rapidly becoming a larger part of the broader racial conversation. More specifically, there is some evidence to suggest that race in and of itself is in the midst of a transition period, moving from fixed and rigid boundaries to a more inclusive explanation. The 2000 U.S. Census Bureau decision to allow for respondents to check as many boxes under “race” as they wanted acknowledged the need for people to self-identify in the manner in which they so choose. As race is known to be a socially constructed phenomenon, the choice of racial self-identification can be seen as being impacted by the social world as well. In other words, racial self-identification can be seen as a process that involves both an individual and the people surrounding that individual. Why a person chooses to self-identify a certain way, racially speaking, is an important component of the proposed study as it is driven in part to understand how the “why” of racial self-identification develops. More broadly speaking, the proposed study is concerned with the experience of race as well as the perception of race or how one “sees” race and how these components contribute to one’s racial identity.
Racial identification is defined in this study as what an individual chooses to self-identify as from a race standpoint (e.g., “I am Asian”).

Empirical research in regards to the multiracial population is still in its relative infancy. A number of theoretical models have been proposed as well as rudimentary studies designed to capture specific elements of the experiences of multiracial people. However, little research has been conducted to specifically addresses the impact of holding a multiracial identity in a largely monoracially constructed and identified world.

As American society has begun to transition and shift toward a new paradigm of race (Bonilla-Silva & Glover, 2004; Rockquemore, Brunsma & Delgado 2009; Shih & Sanchez, 2009; Wijeyesinghe, 2001), rigid race boundaries still exist as the dominant social force.

How an individual typically acquires and establishes his or her racial identity can be thought of as a straightforward process: the individual possesses a combination of physical features, or phenotype, that he or she recognizes to be common amongst a subgroup of people that he or she is surrounded by (Helms, 1990). These surrounding people also recognize that this individual either possesses these features and react or respond to the individual as an “own-group” member or see that this individual does not possess these features and react or respond to the individual as an “out-group” member (Pauker, Ambady, Sommer, & Ivcevic, 2009). This reciprocal and circular process that involves an individual and his or her social context represents how one acquires a racial identity (Root, 2003). It is a process that utilizes both the lens through which race is experienced as well as the lens through which race is seen. I posit that phenotype plays a large role in the racial identification process and has the potential to disrupt the racial
identity formation process for multiracial people. If racial identity is determined in part by the level of physical likeness, a racially ambiguous individual could potentially face challenges toward establishing a racial identity. The current research is an attempt to learn more about this potential cost for multiracial people.

The following section will address how race is used, socially constructed, and perceived by Americans as well as how race is conceptualized and experienced by multiracial people. The interpretation of race is especially crucial to the understanding of the potential challenges a multiracial individual may face. These challenges are linked to how a multiracial individual determines how to identify racially and will be discussed in the subsequent section.

**Social Perception of Race**

Social perception of race is a way to describe one half of the race identification and race experience process. In other words, race is both an internal identity experience as well as a mechanism through which people perceive others. This perception aspect is important because how we perceive others informs how we treat others. The following section reviews literature pertaining to the perception aspect of the race process. Because this study is be based in the United States and its researcher is American, the current section begins with some information about race in the United States.

**Race in the United States**

The U.S. Census allows for Americans to self-identify according to six main race groups. These include: White, Black or African, American Indian and Alaska Native (a respondent is asked to print the name of the tribe), Asian (there are 11 sub-categories as well as a space to print an Asian country that is not listed in the sub-categories), Native
Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and more recently Some Other Race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). As was previously mentioned, a respondent can “mark one or more boxes”, a change enacted for multiracial people first offered in the 2000 Census. Additionally, the U.S. Census recognizes a related but distinct category with a more explicit connection to ethnicity as opposed to race; Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. It is interesting to note that the U.S. Census recognizes people from the Middle East as being “White”. This includes individuals who have ancestry in countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine. This racial grouping has not come without protest from Middle Eastern Americans. For example, a group of Arab Americans from Anaheim, California sent fliers to local Arab Americans encouraging them not to check “White” on their 2010 U.S. Census forms, but “some other race” instead (Carpenter, 2010).

According to the U.S. Census, about half (49.5%) of all children born in 2010 were born to racial minority and mixed race coupled parents – the most ever in American history (Associated Press, 2012). Although White individuals still account for more than half of the total U.S. population, the relatively recent influx of Latino and Asian immigrants is expected to continue to outpace and eventually supplant the White majority within the next 50 years (Associated Press, 2012).

An individual’s assigned membership to a particular race sets the stage for where one is societally placed. In regards to racial classification Williams (1996) notes; “In a highly racialized U.S. society, one’s assignment into a socio-politically defined single racial group is necessary in order to be a socially recognized, functional member of the society” (p. 193). The need to categorize people according to race is a functional requirement in a racialized world (Corneille & Judd, 1999; Devine & Sherman, 1992).
Categorization allows for quick perceived understanding of individuals and situations around us. Current projections suggest that by 2050, 1 in 5 Americans could potentially identify as multiracial and that by 2100 the ratio could climb to one in three (Lee, 2010). These predictions are direct challenges to prevailing ideas around racial categorization.

Because physical traits determine racial group membership, a multiracial person can straddle multiple racial categories and not completely belong to one group or another. Multiracial people are often rejected by both component groups of their racial background which lead to a multiracial person’s feeling of not belonging (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001). Perceptual similarities aid in the social categorization process (Banks & Eberhardt, 1998; Corneille & Judd, 1999). One way of understanding how a multiracial person may have trouble fitting into a racial group is connected to how an observer perceives the race of a given individual. What a person experiences and perceives regarding race greatly impacts both the way he or she approaches another person as well as the content of that approach. The biological basis of race or “proof” of its existence is continuously reinforced through social categorizations that place emphasis on physical characteristics (e.g., skin color). Society deems that a visual inspection of others usually will provide enough “evidence” of a certain race (James & Tucker, 2003). Social memberships are relatively easy to discern as individuals are routinely assessed and judged based on information that is inferred from race membership (Bruce & Young, 1998; Macrae, Quinn, Mason, & Quadflieg, 2005). However, not all of these memberships are easily discernible. Some social categories are concealed (e.g., sexual orientation), whereas others, such as race, are more obscured by conflicting cues or contexts (Pauker, Rule, & Ambady, 2010).
Recognizable and identifiable combinations of phenotypic features represent a simple form of human categorization. A monoracial individual can normally be observed and thus categorized into a racial category according to any number of combinations of skin color, eye color, hair texture, hair color, eye shape, or lip shape (Maddox, 2004). For example, an individual with fair skin, blue eyes, and blonde hair would usually be seen as belonging to the White racial group. In the United States, combinations of phenotypic similarities are seen as indicating membership to specific racial groups such as White, Black, Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern or Native American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Multiracial people are more likely to be born with combinations of phenotypic features that do not cleanly or accurately represent one of the aforementioned racial categories that are essentialized in American society. For example, a multiracial individual who possesses phenotypic features commonly associated with two different racial groups (e.g., dark skin and blue eyes) will confuse an observer’s attempt to categorize that individual. Conflicting phenotypic features can potentially make it difficult for an observer to make sense of another’s race (Anastasi & Rhodes, 2006; Pauker et al, 2009; Shutts & Kinzler, 2007; Wright & Sladden, 2003). This idea is likely to be true for multiracial people who are more likely to possess an ambiguous racial appearance and do not fit neatly into a normalized racial category (e.g., Asian). Multiracial people fitting this description are more likely to be “othered” and assigned to the “out-group”.

The process of seeing, identifying, and categorizing an individual according to phenotypic similarity is how one comes to see race or more simply put, race perception. Race perception is important to this study as it provides an understanding of the potential
confusion a multiracial individual represents to general conceptions of race and more specifically, to observers.

**Race Perception Theory and Research**

The following section will highlight relevant research and theory regarding race perception. Race perception is a core component of the proposed study because how people interpret and reflect what they see in regards to race impacts how an individual regards his or her own race. The subsections: race recognition and memory, determinant features, and contact hypothesis represent the most salient areas of research pertaining to race perception. This section concludes with literature specifically addressing race perception and multiracial people. Altogether these sections describe how race is internally seen, stored, and processed.

**Race recognition and memory.** Memory bias is a well researched phenomenon present in the social-cognitive literature. Over 100 studies indicate that people tend to have problems recognizing people from racial groups outside of their own (Pauker, Ambady, Sommer, & Ivcevic, 2009). Own-race bias or own-race bias theory asserts that people simply remember better people of their own race as opposed to people outside their race (Meissner & Brigham, 2001). Similarly, Sporer (2001) called this phenomenon the cross-race effect. “People are generally better at recognizing faces from their own race than from other races” (Hayward, Rhodes, & Schwaninger, 2008, p. 1018). In other words, “in-group” members (i.e., people of the same race) are remembered better than “out-group” members (i.e., people of a race different from their own) (Anastasi & Rhodes, 2006; Pauker et al., 2009; Shutts & Kinzler, 2007; Wright & Sladden, 2003). Multiracial people are susceptible to being perceived as “out-group” members as they are
more likely to both feel and be perceived as not fully belonging to a particular racial group.

In a four experiment study conducted by Pauker et al. (2009), monoracial White and Black observers were found to be unable to accurately recall racially ambiguous faces particularly when compared to less ambiguous monoracial faces. Pauker et al. concluded that the participants were simply not motivated enough to include the racially ambiguous faces as part of the “in-group”. This research suggests that those who do not fit into typical (i.e., easily discernable) categories for race are less likely to be included as an in-group member and will thus be regarded similarly to other out-group members (Pauker et al., 2009). Using Pauker et al.’s rationale, an observer is more likely to categorize a multiracial person with ambiguous phenotypic features as an “out-group” member as opposed to an “in-group” member.

According to the cross-race effect, facial recognition is based on the social perception of faces (Sporer, 2001). When one person observes another person one of two things happens, either: (1) an “in-group” (or default) automatic processing occurs with configural coding (e.g., when a White person sees another White person, the assumption is that he or she is an “expert” in the ability to process that person’s race); or (2) when confronted with an “out-group” member (e.g., a non-white person), perception of an out-group characterization cue triggers a categorization process first before configural coding can occur. To switch away from in-group to out-group processing, an obvious out-group categorization cue must be present and detected. This process is thought to be automatic, unconscious, based on visual cues and not necessarily equivalent to any specific physical feature. If a multiracial person’s physical appearance does not provide an obvious
categorization cue, the configural coding process is stunted and an observer may not be able to accurately identify the race of that individual.

The following two theories; the determinant features hypothesis and the contact hypothesis, focus on more specific aspects of race perception.

**Determinant features.** The determinant features hypothesis is a perspective that emphasizes the role of physical appearance when it comes to identifying the race of another person. According to the determinant features hypothesis, individuals rely on certain physical characteristics to distinguish between races. Using photos of faces, both Brigham and Barkowitz (1989) and Ng and Lindsay (1994) ascertained that it was the physical characteristics of people that determined whether or not an observer could discern their race. In research conducted by Brown, Dane, and Durham (1998) observers rated the importance of different facial features to determine an individual’s race. Observers in the study rated skin tone as the most important factor, followed by hair, eyes, nose, mouth, cheeks and eyebrows, for correctly identifying a subject’s race.

**Contact hypothesis.** The contact hypothesis perspective emphasizes the life experience of an observer and how this experience tends to inform a person’s ability to accurately identify another person’s race. The contact hypothesis is based on the idea that recognition of faces is not a genetically programmed skill in human beings. According to the contact hypothesis, it is the experience of the observer that actually determines how accurate an individual is in identifying the race of another, and thus a socially acquired ability. For example, the amount of contact an observer has with people from diverse racial backgrounds will have the strongest effect on an individual’s ability to racially identify others (Carroo, 1986; Galper, 1973).
Monoracial people’s attitudes toward multiracial people. Little empirical research has specifically explored monoracial people’s attitudes toward, or perceptions about multiracial people. This information would potentially be helpful in ascertaining what kind of impact these sorts of beliefs about race, which stem from the dominant race culture (i.e., monoracial), have on multiracial people. Most of the existing research has focused on how monoracial adults perceive multiracial children. For example, Jackman, Wagner, and Johnson (2001) found that monoracial adults held beliefs that multiracial children were awkward in social situations and tended to be socially ostracized. A similar study (i.e., Chelsey & Wagner, 2003) concluded that monoracial adults saw multiracial children as tending to struggle in finding social acceptance. Additionally, White college students were found to possess unfavorable attitudes toward multiracial people more so than Black college students (Jackman et al., 2001). However, Pittinsky and Montoya (2009) found no significant differences between White and Black students’ support of policies benefiting multiracial groups. Sanchez and Bonam (2009) found that monoracial people tend to discriminate most against those who identify as “multiracial”. More specifically, in a study measuring appropriateness for race-based scholarships, Sanchez and Bonam found that multiracial people were viewed as less warm and less competent than if they had simply self-identified as being monoracial.

In a review of newspaper articles, Thornton (2009) found that White-oriented newspapers code the increasing multiracial presence as evidence of a transition toward a color-blind society. This “evidence” is ideologically problematic or misguided as the idea of any individual being “color-blind” is unrealistic or unattainable and ultimately not helpful when it comes to addressing societal inequalities and injustices. Despite this,
Thornton found the “color blind” sentiment to be growing in strength. Conversely, Black-oriented newspapers perceive the growing multiracial presence as evidence of a denial of Blackness and a strategic movement dictated by the majority culture in power.

From a sociopolitical standpoint, the influx of self-identifying multiracial individuals has increased the amount of discussion about race on a macro-level. During the 2000 Census debate as to whether to create a “multiracial” category, many politicians were concerned with whether a multiracial category would change the racial makeup of America overnight, which would in turn affect billions of dollars in government funding (Gibson, 1998). Civil rights pioneer and leader Jesse Jackson argued that the creation of a separate multiracial category would only serve to undermine affirmative action and disempower minority groups by decreasing their numbers and subsequent political power (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). The federal taskforce in charge of addressing the concerns about race for the 2000 Census ultimately ruled that a person could check as many boxes as he or she wanted (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

On a more micro-level, Herman (2008) posited that multiracial people face discrepancy when it comes to the level of agreement between how an observer racially identifies an individual and how the observed individual self-identifies. She called this phenomenon, congruence. Congruence between an observer and a monoracial individual is presumably simple; the observer is either “correct” or “incorrect”. However, congruence between an observer and a multiracial individual is potentially more complex given that a multiracial person may appear racially ambiguous or may choose to identify in more than one way (Brunsma 2005; Campbell & Rogalin 2006; Herman 2004, 2008).
**Conclusion.** Multiracial people represent a challenge to how race is typically perceived by observers as they potentially confuse the “in-group” and “out-group” dichotomy. Racially ambiguous people are typically more difficult to categorize as often time they possess physical features that do not wholly match or fit with a particular racial group (e.g., White). This inability to precisely “match” represents a problem or disagreement for the observer who is likely to possess the aforementioned schema of race and which labels fit with whom.

Someone who observes another person who possesses a combination of his or her own race as well as another’s is more likely to be unsure of which group to categorize that person to (Herman, 2008). Herman also notes that multiracial individuals further confound the “in-group” and “out-group” dichotomy as there is not a single “multiracial” group to which multiracial individuals belong. Multiracial people, though considered a collective group (including for the purposes of this study), do not represent a specific community in the same way a monoracial group does.

**Racial Identity and Development**

Given what is known about how people see and interpret race, it is logical to then consider how people develop a racial identity. In other words, because race is an important social construction that is likely a part of every social interaction, how does one come to know and understand his or her race? The following, beginning with an overview of identity, will serve as a way to illustrate how we come to develop a racial identity as well as its implications. Included in this section are a review of racial identity theory and research, multiracial identity development models and challenges, and an
introduction and discussion of the role of physical appearance and its relationship to racial identity in the context of this study.

Identity

Identities are meanings acquired through social interactions that are crucial to understanding the self (McCall & Simmons, 1966; Stryker, 1980). Identity can be influenced by a combination of inherited influences and traits within an intersection of demographic variables like class, gender, and regional history of race relations (Herman, 2004). Furthermore, identity can change over time and across contexts (Root, 2001). Bronfenbrenner (1986) suggested that the social world impacts a number of aspects of human development, including identity. Closely related, Erikson (1968) theorized that a key to a stable identity was the development of a sense of uniqueness through comparing and differentiating oneself from others. In other words, identity does not just spontaneously generate in a vacuum or without a societal influence. Racial identity in particular is based on societal conceptions of race, as well as the claiming of a membership with a particular group of people. Racial identity theory serves in part as a way to help in understanding how people interpret external messages about race.

The experience of race is most commonly theorized and researched through the lens of identity and identity development. One’s racial identity is a commonly cited component of the self that aids in the discovering of meaning and interpretation of race. Moreover, racial identity development is the mechanism that describes the process of how an individual attains a racial identity. Racial identification, or how one labels or describes oneself racially, is a core piece of the current study because it is suspected to be directly impacted by racial ambiguity.
Contemporary race theorists and researchers contend that a self-understanding of race is most salient to members of racial minority groups of which, multiracial people are inherently a part. Critical race theory asserts that American racial minorities are born into and exist in both an overtly and covertly racist society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Racial minorities are consistently confronted with the meaning of their race and typically develop a thorough understanding of the implications that accompany it. A number of studies confirm the heightened connection racial minorities have to their race and race membership as compared to their White counterparts as White individuals consistently report less connection or awareness of their race or racial identity (Phinney & Alipuria, 1996).

Traditional racial identity theory and research has primarily focused on monoracial minority groups and more specifically, on African Americans (e.g., Cross, 1971). Given the volatile history of race in the United States, White privilege, and imbalances of power, conceptions of race have historically been dichotomous (i.e., Black/White) in nature. In other words, research pertaining to race has been dominated by the relationship between the White race and the Black race. More recently, as the racial landscape has begun to shift and racial borders have begun to blur, the demand for a wider variety of race related research has emerged to include more racial groups.

The following is a literature review covering multiple aspects of race and identity that are pertinent to the current study. More specifically, the following includes discussions on racial identity, multiracial identity development models, multiracial identity challenges, and the significance of physical appearance in regards to race.
**Racial Identity**

Helms (1990) defined racial identity as a “sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage to a particular racial group” (p. 3). Furthermore, “the development of one’s racial identity has a bearing on the ability of the individual to modify and interpret messages received about race in light of one’s experiences” (Middleton, Erguner-Tekinalp, Williams, Stadler, & Dow, 2011, p. 202). In a race-based society, race is one of the primary and more powerful ways in which an individual can choose to identify as well as a critical aspect of an individual’s sense of self (Stephan, 1992; Winant, 2001). Racial identity represents an unspoken connection between people and acts as a primary catalyst of culture and connectedness. Racial identity is particularly salient to individuals where one's group membership is clearly evident, for instance, to groups of color (Deaux, 1992). Furthermore, Shih and Sanchez (2005) note that racial identity has been linked to preferences for same-race counselors (Austin, Carter & Vaux, 1990), stereotype threat (Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006), self-esteem and psychological distress (Collins, 2000; Mahalik, Pierre, & Wan, 2006), Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory scores (Whatley, Allen, & Dana, 2003), psychological functioning (Carter, 1995), feelings of psychological closeness (Brookins, Anyabwile, & Nacoste, 2006), internalized racism (Cokley, 2002), and skin color preference (Coard, Brelan, & Raskin, 2001).

Early racial identity development models pertained to specific monoracial groups. Among the more influential models are Cross’s (1971, 1991) model of psychological nigrescence, Helms’s (1984, 1995) White identity model, and Phinney’s (1989, 1990) conceptualization of ethnic identity development. Cross’s work in particular has directly
influenced at least 22 subsequent models of racial identity (Constantine, Watt, Gainor, & Warren, 2005; Ponterotto, Utsey, & Pedersen, 2006). Central to each of these models is a focus on uncovering psychosocial processes that racial groups experience as they interact with other racial groups. Cross, Parham, and Helms (1991) suggested that individuals should immerse themselves in their racial groups as a way of exploring the roles of race and racial group membership in their lives. Quintana (2007) concluded that broadly speaking, each monoracial identity model reflects two major emphases: (a) the need to develop a positive affiliation toward a racial group and (b) the need to prepare for discrimination and or racial bias.

Theory and research on racial identity development in monoracial individuals stems from the intersection between psychology and the racial pride movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Root, 2003). Though this research has proved to be an invaluable and important bridge to multiracial identity development scholarship, monoracial identity development models fail to capture the complexities, nuances, and non-linearity of multiracial identity development (Root, 1996; 2003). The following section highlights some of the multiracial identity development models being utilized today. These models are helpful in understanding the theoretical racial identity trajectories of multiracial individuals.

**Multiracial Identity Development Models**

Multiracial identity development models are designed to help explain the developmental journey and the potential problems a multiracial person faces along the way in developing a racial identity. As race is a central and poignant aspect of a multiracial person’s existence, a number of multiracial identity development models have

Multiracial identity development models have evolved across time over four distinct approaches; the problem approach, the equivalent approach, the variant approach, and the ecological approach (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). The problem or “oppressive” approach emerged in the late 1930s (e.g., Stonequist, 1937) and addressed multiracial identity development from a deficit perspective and in terms of social marginality. It took another 40 years until theorists began to de-emphasize pathology as the multiracial population began to grow and the racial landscape of the United States began to evolve. The 1960s and 70s (e.g., Cross, 1971) brought forth developmental models that moved multiracial identity development toward an emphasis on the developmental trajectories of multiracial people and the assertion that the identity development process in multiracial people was equivalent to the racial identity development process of African Americans. A movement away from this sentiment grew in the 1980s and 90s (e.g., Kich, 1992; Poston, 1990) as theorists began to conceptualize identity development in multiracial people as being distinct from any single racial group. Known as variant approaches, these developmental models emphasized how multiracial people faced unique and personal challenges and that multiracial individuals could attain, develop, and maintain a healthy, integrated sense of their racial heritages. More recently, theorists have moved toward an ecological approach (Renn, 2000; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002), a set of theories that emphasize context and the non-linear process of
racial identity development in multiracial people. These theorists focus on multiracial individuals as a unique group for whom identity can be fluid across time and contexts.

One prominent example of the ecological approach is Root’s (2003) multiracial identity development model. Root developed an ecological framework for understanding racial identity based on nearly 10 years of research with multiracial individuals. Root asserted that multiracial identity is a process that does not proceed along a linear course, but as a “spiraling and circular process” (p. 77) where the goal is to resolve tensions and accomplish identity. Informed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), Root posited that there are five positive outcomes of identity development for multiracial people: (1) acceptance of assigned identity, (2) identification with both racial groups, (3) identification with a single racial group, (4) identification with a new group (e.g., “I am multiracial”), or (5) adoption of a symbolic race. Root’s model incorporates a number of contextual factors including: (1) regional or generational history of race and ethnic relations, (2) gender and sexual orientation, and (3) social class. Additionally, Root acknowledged that a number of factors influence or impact how a multiracial individual comes to develop his or her racial identity. The more commonly understood factors influencing multiracial identity are (1) family functioning (sense of belonging), (2) family socialization (language, ethnic identity), (3) traits and aptitudes (temperament, health, attractiveness), (4) community attitudes and socialization (school, work, friends), and (5) physical appearance (phenotype).

Overall, identity development models for multiracial people have evolved from a rigid deficit perspective to a more holistic, open, and positive one. Contemporary models of multiracial identity development (e.g., Renn, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002;
Root, 2003) share several ideas in common. First, each model acknowledges the environment and social context in some way as compared to earlier models that relied more on the theoretical focus of internal characteristics of the individual. The second commonality is the suggestion that multiracial people do not necessarily develop their racial identities on a linear trajectory. A number of factors can influence the way in which a multiracial individual develops his or her racial identity (e.g., physical appearance, cultural knowledge, or connection to family). Also central to the current models of multiracial identity development (e.g., Root, 2003) is the idea that a multiracial person has more than one way to achieve a healthy racial identity as opposed to just having one fixed option (e.g., integrated racial identity). The more contemporary models (e.g., Renn, 2004; Root, 2003) also offer a more positive view of the multiracial individual as opposed to the earlier deficit based, marginalized description (e.g., Stonequist, 1937) of the identity development process in multiracial people. However, despite this evolution, multiracial people are still thought to face a number of unique developmental challenges. The following section highlights some of the major challenges multiracial individuals face with regard to establishing a racial identity.

**Multiracial Identity Development Challenges**

Racial identity development is particularly important to multiracial individuals because of the unique developmental challenges that multiracial people face (Root, 1996). Scholars tend to agree that multiracial people face identity development challenges that their monoracial peers do not (Gillem et al., 2001; Logan, 1981; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). In a review of the literature, Shih and Sanchez (2005) summarized research pertaining to multiracial people and concluded that multiracial
individuals face at least six potential identity development challenges: (1) conflict between private and public definitions, (2) justifying identity choices, (3) forced-choice dilemmas, (4) lack of role models, (5) conflicting messages, and (6) double rejection.

**Conflict between private and public definitions.** Identity develops through a process of negotiating between an individual’s self-concept and expectations of those around them (Newsome, 2001). Multiracial individuals are likely to face inconsistencies between how they define themselves compared to how the world defines them. For example, a racially mixed White/Black individual might be deemed Black to most of the world while that person may self-identify as “multiracial”.

**Justifying identity choices.** As multiracial people strive to come to terms with their own identities and grapple with the fact that they encompass two different racial groups, they must also work at justifying their identity choices to society. Multiracial individuals have inadvertent pressure to label themselves according to rigid race definitions that dominate society. Monoracial individuals are less likely than multiracial people to face questions regarding how they choose to label themselves racially. More importantly, monoracial individuals are less likely to face challenges as to how they choose to identify racially than their multiracial counterparts. Miville, Constantine, Baysden and So-Lloyd (2005) described this as the *chameleon* experience. According to Miville et al. there is regular pressure on multiracial people to determine where and how they fit according to social context.

**Forced-choice dilemmas.** The pressure for multiracial people to come to a strong and open consensus regarding their racial identities is best illustrated by one of the more common race-related questions they face: “what are you?” This question communicates
two things: First it communicates confusion and “othering” on the part of the observer. Secondly, it communicates an expectation that the observed individual have an answer that is readily available and accessible for the observer. Feeling forced to choose a racial label can be potentially taxing to a multiracial individual (Root, 1992; Standen, 1996).

**Lack of role models.** Rigid notions of racial categories make identifying with role models difficult for multiracial people. Although there are more and more multiracial people entering into the spotlight to serve as role models (e.g., Derek Jeter), their presence is still limited. Developmentally speaking, role models are especially important for adolescents and young adults. Having a positive representation of oneself in the outlying environment is helpful to understanding where one fits. Renn (2000) found that multiracial college students reported difficulties in meeting other multiracial peers and longed to be around people who shared similar experiences with race. Miville et al. (2005) reported a related theme in their research as respondents of their qualitative study consistently reported a lack of a visible or accessible multiracial community.

**Conflicting messages.** A multiracial individual’s sense of self is impacted by the degree to which parents are unified in their perception of their child. A number of theorists postulated that divided parents inadvertently instilled a weaker sense of self in their multiracial children. These children are more likely to exhibit feelings of being misunderstood and or isolated. Furthermore, they are at risk of suffering from anxiety, depression, and lowered self-esteem (McRoy & Freeman, 1986). Miville et al. (2005) reported that the emotional connection one has toward their racial identity is directly related to their connection to family members, particularly their parents. Participants in Miville et al.’s (2005) qualitative study of multiracial people acknowledged that a
parent’s physical and emotional availability was the most important part in creating a connection to race and culture.

**Double rejection.** Multiracial people are at risk of suffering from rejection from multiple groups; each racial group with whom the individual shares racial heritage (Root, 1996). When this happens it is typically because the individual is not perceived to be a “full” member or hold a pure, distinct racial identity within a given racial group. Root explains that this sort of double rejection is another way of society communicating what a multiracial person is not, but providing few messages of what they are. Rejection of this magnitude could be potentially isolating as well as devastating to a multiracial individual’s sense of self. Miville et al. (2005) described this as “encounters with racism”. Respondents in Miville et al.’s (2005) research consistently reported that being phenotypically “unusual” or “unique” regularly exposed multiracial individuals to overt racism and visible confusion.

**Conclusion.** Identity development for multiracial people can potentially be problematic. The identity development challenges highlighted in research pertaining to multiracial people (e.g., Miville et al., 2005; Shih & Sanchez, 2005) is largely connected in some way to physical appearance (i.e., ambiguous features). Public and private race definition conflict will most likely arise because of phenotypic interpretation or confusion. The same can be said for justification of a race identity choice. Disagreement would most likely occur if one’s race is ambiguous and thus left up to interpretation. This room for interpretation will automatically cause reason for debate. Lack of role models is cited most likely because of the visual representation that a multiracial role model would represent; it’s important for adolescents to see people that look like them. Outside of a
few major examples (e.g., Tiger Woods, President Barack Obama, Derek Jeter), there
simply are not that many multiracial role models. Even the multiracial role models that
do exist are not necessarily known for or are publicly classified as being multiracial. For
example, President Obama is more likely to be classified as being African American as
opposed to multiracial. Furthermore, the idea of being rejected twice is at least in part due
to ambiguous phenotypic features as membership into one of the component racial groups
is questionable to their monoracial members.

Understanding the experiences of multiracial individuals is steadily improving
through the improvements in identity development models as well as in the identifying of
core challenges that multiracial individuals face. However, empirical research remains
limited and disjointed. In multiracial identity development research, only a small number
of studies have explicitly made the connection between phenotype and identity (and
identity related issues). Furthermore, within this research, racial ambiguity is alluded to
but not expressly identified as a primary factor impacting the racial identity development
in multiracial individuals. This information is important because as was previously
mentioned, an individual’s interaction with another is at least in part, based on the level
of ease with which they can perceive, identify, and categorize. Thus the question
becomes, how significant is physical appearance in the perception process? The
following is a review of literature pertaining to multiracial individuals and physical
appearance.

**Phenotype: The Significance of Physical Appearance**

“Racial self-identification refers to the genophenotypical ancestry groups one
names when asked to identify oneself racially” (Herman, 2004, p. 732). Because a
A multiracial individual is more likely to possess racially ambiguous physical features as well as straddle multiple racial categories (or none at all), it can be assumed that self-identifying from a racial standpoint could potentially be more complicated and problematic for a multiracial individual than for a monoracial individual. A number of researchers have addressed this idea and have explored the impact that physical appearance has for multiracial people. The following highlights the state of existing research regarding multiracial people and the relevance of their physical appearances.

Salahuddin and O’Brien (2011) developed a scale designed specifically for multiracial individuals called the Multiracial Challenges and Resiliency Scale (MCRS). The MCRS is meant to measure challenges and resiliency in multiracial people and was used in the current study. The MCRS contains six factors, one of which directly pertains to racial ambiguity called “others’ surprise about racial identity”. Salahuddin and O’Brien concluded that this factor should be included after multiracial participants in their focus groups spoke directly and consistently about hassles pertaining to instances in which they revealed their multiracial heritage. These participants reported feeling annoyed at having to consistently face other people’s surprise or confusion after they revealed their racial background to someone. The resulting items that were included in the Multiracial Challenges and Resiliency Scale based on this type of confusion included questions about the believability of one’s racial background (e.g., “I told someone about my racial background, but they did not believe me”) and the assumptions people hold of a multiracial individual’s race (e.g., “Someone placed me in a racial category based on their assumptions about my race”).
Brunsma and Rockquemore (2001) noted that a number of factors such as ethnicity, surname, and physical appearance influence how an individual determines his or her racial identity. Brunsma and Rockquemore theorized that “presentations of self and the reviews of others are reflexive and function within a socially constructed set of parameters” (p. 31). Moreover, multiracial individuals are a unique group of people because they can potentially straddle two racial groups at the same time. Thus, Brunsma and Rockquemore wanted to better understand how physical appearance and social context affected racial identity using Rockquemore’s (1998) racial identity typology. In a sample of Black/White multiracial individuals, Brunsma and Rockquemore learned that appearance on its own was not a primary factor in racial identity choice, and that social context and socialization experiences appeared to have the greatest effect on racial identification. Participants who grew up in predominantly White areas were more likely to say that they had dark skin while participants who grew up in predominantly Black areas were more likely to say that they had lighter skin. Participants who reported receiving negative attention from one group (i.e., White or Black) identified less with that group regardless of skin color.

In another study investigating the racial identity of Black/White multiracial individuals Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) concluded that two aspects of perceived physical appearance were most important: (1) self-perceived skin color and (2) socially perceived physical appearance. When asked to describe his or her appearance, the most common response from respondents (56.2%) was that his or her physical appearance was ambiguous and thus, most people would assume that he or she was Black. Skin color was not associated with identity, however socially perceived appearance was. In other words,
it is not solely the actual physical appearance that informs one’s racial identity, but how one believes he or she is perceived by others. Rockquemore and Brunsma concluded that there is a strong relationship between socially perceived appearance and racial identity. This finding is well illustrated in a quote from a participant reporting a singular black identity, “I look Black, most people assume I am black” (p. 350). Conversely, for those who reported a singular White identity, none reported that others would assume that they are Black.

In a study addressing how multiracial individuals determine their racial identity and subsequent racial label, Herman (2004) surveyed a sample of adolescents ranging in age from 14 to 19 years old. Herman wanted to better understand the self-identification process. Herman noted in her discussion that skin tone played an important role in this process, both in terms of how one perceives him or herself as well as how that person believes he or she is perceived by others. For example, Herman found that generally speaking, lighter skinned parents and youth often try to pass or identify as being White so that then they will be treated more like Whites, a racial designation that has specific social and socioeconomic advantages.

In a qualitative study that explored racial identity themes of multiracial individuals, Miville et al. (2005) noted the existence of “multiracial racism” a theme that often time came in the form of the seemingly ubiquitous question, “what are you?” Respondents possessing ambiguous physical characteristics dealt with the question across many different settings and contexts. One respondent reported that the question bothered him and that he wished he “could be normal” (p. 510). Miville et al. noted how
psychologically impactful a unique physical appearance can be toward identity
development, particularly without any peer social support or empathy in regards to race.

Studies that specifically cite the connection between physical appearance and
racial identification are few, but existent enough to underscore the importance phenotype
has on how one self-identifies from a racial standpoint. Based on the literature reviewed,
scholars have speculated and noted the importance physical appearance has on a
multiracial person’s racial identity and corresponding view of him or herself. Brunsma
and Rockquemore (2001; 2002) address physical appearance and racial ambiguity the
most directly, but focus solely on samples of Black/White multiracial individuals as
opposed to including a wider variety of multiracial groups.

It is clear that multiracial people develop an awareness of how they are perceived
by other people in terms of their physical appearance. Salahuddin and O’Brien (2011)
viewed this as both a challenge and a form of resilience. Miville et al. (2005) noted this
awareness as a form of racism. It is clear that multiracial people tend to face a slightly
different brand of racism from the racism that has long since been experienced by
monoracial minority group members. Multiracial people tend to face confusion and
belongingness questions that are directly connected to their physical appearance.
Furthermore, social context seems to be paramount and uniquely important to multiracial
individuals and the race they identify as. Each study mentions the heightened significance
of others’ perception of a multiracial individual’s race. The aforementioned research
highlights the importance of physical appearance in social interaction. Physical
appearance is particularly important for multiracial people because they tend to possess
physical characteristics that break from socially defined race categories. For the purposes
of this study, this phenomenon will be referred to as “racial ambiguity”. The following is intended to define and provide a conceptual discussion of racial ambiguity and why it is a key variable of this study.

**Racial Ambiguity**

Race is commonly defined, conceptualized, and discussed from a monoracial perspective or in terms of one of the primary racial and ethnic categories - White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Hispanic. While the U.S. Census may vary slightly in terms of how it categorizes and measures the population according to race, Americans tend to identify people according to one of the aforementioned racial groups. Given the rigidity with which race is interpreted and perceived both socially and systemically, multiracial people face challenges by simply existing in a largely monoracial world. As a person’s physical appearance tends to be the first piece of information offered in social interactions, individuals who are not perceived as members of a specific racial group will likely face implicit and explicit confusion and questions. Racial ambiguity is a way of describing the confusion people have in deciphering a person’s race.

**What are you?** The challenge represented in one person’s difficulty in discerning another person’s race is commonly and directly expressed in the question, “What are you?” Qualitative studies aiming to capture the experiences of multiracial people document the frequency with which multiracial people field this question (e.g., Kellogg & Liddell, 2012; Miville et al., 2005; Renn, 2000; Williams, 1996). Though it is not necessarily meant to be offensive, “What are you?” comes with unintended consequences as it assumes and ultimately communicates a perceived foreignness of the multiracial
person being questioned (Williams, 1996). More specifically, the question “reveals an awareness of unfamiliarity due to variances in physical features” (Bradshaw, 1992, p. 77). Williams (1996) offers this blunt, first person explanation of the “What are you?” questioner’s mindset:

In my construction of the world, your look, your speech, your behavior, your mannerisms, your name, and your overall presence do not have a place. You defy my limited understanding and social application of race. I have no label to fit you, to pigeon-hole you, and therefore to make assumptions about you. I need to know what you are so I can ease this discomfort I feel for being unable to peg you. (p. 203)

For some multiracial individuals, the “What are you?” question is regularly occurring and could potentially come with costs. The question typically comes unsolicited and blatantly carries with it a marginalizing and exotifying tone (Williams, 1996). Although a multiracial person is usually not looking for a person to ask questions about his or her racial identity, for some it does develop over time as somewhat of an expectation (O’Hearn, 1998). Additionally, the feeling of uniqueness or the perception of being a sole member of a group, heightens self-awareness and can potentially impact performance (Lord & Saenz, 1985). At the very least, the impact of the “What are you?” question posed to a multiracial individual is complex. On a somewhat more positive note, the question gives (or forces onto) a multiracial person an opportunity to contemplate, develop insight, and clarify his or her racial identity. Generally speaking, monoracial people do not have this same sort of opportunity to create or interpret their ascribed racial identities. Williams (1996) asserts that the question itself is clear evidence of race being a
“process of social interaction” (p. 209), an important foundational aspect of this study. In other words, for multiracial people in particular, race is a two-way street. Multiracial individuals are not just one-way recipients force fed racial messages, but the creators and shapers of their racial realities and subsequent racial identities. Furthermore, the social aspect of race for multiracial people creates a heightened race salience which can be empowering but also potentially confusing and or exhausting.

**Where.** The experience of being racially ambiguous is likely to vary and shift according to context as well as the overarching geographic region of the country and possibly the world. In applying the aforementioned Contact Hypothesis, the way in which observers will react to a given person’s race will largely be connected to the amount of racial diversity in a given area. A largely homogeneous (e.g., White) area would be more likely to cause individuals with more ambiguous physical features to stand out and be recognized as different. This standing out will in turn inform a multiracial person’s experience and self-perceptions in terms of race identity. On the other hand, a more diverse area with a wide representation of racial groups will likely yield a different experience for a multiracial person. For example, in a large metropolitan city with a wide range of racial groups, the idea of being racially “different” is likely to be less provocative or even noticeable than an existence in a more homogeneous area of the country. Thus, the way in which a racially ambiguous multiracial individual experiences and interprets his or her own race will be informed by where he or she is residing in the country as well as the amount of diversity in that town, city, or region.

**When.** As the United States continues to expand and diversify from a racial standpoint, so does the race awareness of Americans in general. Although still in its
relative infancy, the idea of holding more than one race has recently become a more
societally accepted form of identification. The transformation of the U.S. Census options
(i.e., inclusion of more than one race) is symbolic of the changing racial landscape of the
United States. A multiracial person who is born today will likely interpret and be
experienced from a racial standpoint much differently compared to a multiracial person
born in the 1980s. This comparison can also be made according to older generations as
well. For example, a multiracial person born in 1950 experienced a vastly different racial
landscape and likely had far fewer multiracial peers or confidants to relate to.
Subsequently, multiracial individuals from that generation likely embody a wholly
different perspective both on their own racial identities as well as on race in general. It is
interesting to point out the parallel process that has also occurred in terms of racial
identity development theory. Racial identity models designed specifically for multiracial
people line up well with how multiracial people were and are perceived in the greater
society. In other words, as acceptance has grown for people choosing to identify with
more than one race, so have the developmental models conceptualized to capture their
experiences. A multiracial individual born at the turn of the 20th century was theorized to
have a litany of developmental problems and concerns whereas today, a multiracial
person is seen from a much different and more positive perspective. This is both a
reflection of the changing societal attitudes toward race as well as the changing racial
landscape. Therefore, in addition to geography, the experience of holding a racially
ambiguous racial identity is likely to also be informed by that multiracial individual’s
historical cohort.
**What.** Specific racial combinations could also potentially be a factor in terms of how racially ambiguous a multiracial individual appears to others. If an individual’s component racial parts are from members of non-White races, the ambiguity may be interpreted differently depending on context. For example, a multiracial individual with an Asian and African racial make-up will be more likely to yield an ascribed “minority” status that supersedes his or her racial ambiguity. In other words, depending on context, this individual will be more likely to be automatically assigned to the “person of color” category by observers, thus removing perceived confusion at least within a broad context. While still being “othered”, the added layer of being racially ambiguous is potentially overlooked in this respect. This is especially true when compared to a multiracial individual embodying, for example, Asian-White racial component identities. In this case, this individual embodies both a majority and minority racial identity status. The added layer of status further complicates an observer’s ability to identify and categorize from a race standpoint. For some Asian-White individuals, they would seemingly hold certain phenotypical characteristics (e.g., skin tone) that could potentially pass as being fully White. (For a more detailed description of the concept of “passing” see Dawkins, 2012). For a multiracial individual, passing is essentially the inverse of being racially ambiguous. An individual who “passes” does not face the kind of scrutiny (i.e., questions) that a racially ambiguous person faces. An individual who “passes” is likely to embody the same privileges and or challenges with racism that a monoracial individual from that group has. For example, an individual who can pass as White will also hold privileges that come with being White (i.e., White privilege). Conversely, an individual who passes as being Black will likely face the same racism that a monoracial Black
American faces. Thus racial ambiguity is likely to be informed by a multiracial individual’s component race parts.

Altogether, a racially ambiguous racial identity is likely to be impacted by a multiracial individual’s location within the country, his or her age, and what racial component parts make up that person’s racial identity.

**Conclusion**

Multiracial identity development is theorized to be complex and wrought with unique challenges as compared to monoracial people (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Racial identity in multiracial individuals has only recently begun to be explored as well as understood beyond a conceptual level. However, the specific idea of racial ambiguity as it relates to a multiracial person’s racial identity has not been explicitly explored by researchers. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2001, 2002) have contributed research to this area but focused on one particular multiracial combination, Black/White, and did not offer much thought or speculation as to the broad implications of holding a racially ambiguous racial identity.

Physical appearance is critical to racial identity development because physical appearance represents a collection of cultural meanings that project basic information to observers and foster specific stereotypes (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Phenotype simultaneously presents one’s identity while also serving as the source of identity. Ordinarily, and for the most part in monoracial people, an individual’s physical appearance and racial identity are congruent. However, multiracial people are less likely to possess this congruency. This lack of congruency is referred to in this study as racial ambiguity. Racial ambiguity is a primary variable of this study.
In order to explore the potential impact of holding a racially ambiguous racial identity, a theoretical framework was required and utilized to ground the core ideas with theory and research. Social psychology’s Symbolic Interaction Theory (SIT) serves as the theoretical framework for this study. The following section will focus on this framework and will include relevant literature that anchors its importance.

**Theoretical Framework**

Racial identity is thought to encompass both an internal feeling of membership to a group of people as well as that group of people’s communicated validation of that person’s membership to the group. Thus, racial identity can be described as a negotiated process between the individual and society (Khanna, 2010). One theory that is helpful in extending thinking about the process of acquiring a race label, or racial identification, is Symbolic Interaction Theory (SIT).

**Symbolic Interaction Theory**

Symbolic Interaction Theory (SIT) asserts, “human beings are symbol-using animals who collectively give meaning to the objects, events, and situations that make up their lives” (Korgen, 1998, p. 4). Paralleling the idea that race is a socially constructed phenomenon, SIT supports the notion that people are active agents in creating their social realities. Symbolic interactionists focus on the interpretive aspects of our social lives (Blumer, 1969). According to SIT, individuals are pragmatic “actors” who continuously adjust their behaviors according to the behaviors of others. SIT is based on three tenets: “(1) human beings act toward things on the basis of meaning that the things have for them, (2) the meanings of such things are derived from social interaction, and (3) these meanings are modified through social interaction” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). Thus, the
essence of symbolic interactionism is social interaction. Social interactions between family, friends, peers, and others help to create an understanding of “the self”. “The very notion of identity development is steeped in the search for a sense of self that stems from the successful negotiation between self identity and world perception” (Hershel, 1995, p. 173). This sentiment aligns firmly with the idea that race is socially constructed and that racial identity is developed and maintained through the interactions that one has with the people around them. Furthermore, as race represents such a powerful categorizing and grouping mechanism, it is clear how important an individual’s race membership is to the self.

An individual’s sense of belonging to a group (e.g., via race) and their use of comparisons between groups are a critical component of an individual’s sense of self (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The self is a social product and a social process that includes an individual’s subjective stream of consciousness (perceptions, thoughts, feelings, plans, and choices), as well as that individual’s concept of self as a physical, social, and moral being (Sandstrom, Martin, & Fine, 2006). Essentially it is through interaction that individuals experience, sustain and transform their sense of who they truly are. An individual’s sense or barometer of the self is better known as the self-concept (Lindzey & Aronson, 1985). Self-concept is broadly defined as an individual’s self-perceptions formulated through lived experience with and interpretations of that individual’s environment (Shavelson et al., 1976). A person’s self-concept is influenced by “significant others, reinforcements, and attributions for the individual’s own behavior” (Bracken, 1996, p. 58). The idea of the self-concept is important to this study because it is a way to describe how a person sees, feels, and understands himself or herself in relation
to the surrounding world. In this way, the self-concept is directly impacted by race as race is a pervasive factor in social interaction. Moreover, an individual’s race is instrumental in informing that individual of how he or she is connected to and identified by others.

Self-concepts are formed as reflections of the responses and evaluations of others in society (Cooley, 1902). Individuals first imagine how they are perceived by others. Then they develop some sort of conjecture as to how others’ judge them based on that perception. Lastly, the individual develops a perception of him or herself, or a self-concept, based on the aforementioned conjecture (Khanna, 2010). Felson (1981) called this the reflected appraisal process. The following will provide a more thorough look in regards to the reflected appraisal process.

**Reflected Appraisals**

Reflected appraisals are a way to describe the mechanism through which an individual comes to see him or herself as others do (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; Sullivan, 1947). Similarly, Cooley (1902) described this phenomenon as the “looking-glass self” or the idea that people learn about themselves from other people. It has also been referred to as “social identity” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), or the way in which an individual defines him or herself through the perception or belief of how he or she is observed by others. Evidence suggests that people do in fact respond to the feedback they get from others (Baumeister & Bushman, 2008). According to Tajfel and Turner, observers possess the potential to strongly exert influence on an individual’s view of him or herself. Similarly, Felson (1981) suggested that “self-perception does not occur in a social vacuum” (p. 79) as observers exert a strong influence on how people see themselves. More specifically,
individuals understand and evaluate themselves and others through the process of social interaction and external validation.

Shrauger and Schoeneman (1979) asserted that the reflected appraisal process contains three components: (1) others’ actual appraisal of the person, (2) the person’s reflected appraisal (i.e., the person’s perception of others’ assessment), and (3) self-appraisal (i.e., the person’s own assessment). Shrauger and Schoeneman found that although there was evidence that reflected appraisals are related and consistent with self-appraisals, there was less evidence that self-appraisals were related to others’ actual appraisals. In other words, what an individual believes another person perceives is actually more pertinent than what that other person actually perceives. This idea is crucial to the rationale of the current study and is consistent with the research and findings of Rockquemore and Brunsma (e.g., 2001, 2002). Therefore, if an individual perceives an observer’s confusion or disagreement in regards to that individual’s race, the confusion or disagreement will reflect toward the self. Reflected appraisals can therefore be problematic when they generate an undesired differentness from what might be expected (Brown, 1998). Brown posited that although reflected appraisals within an inter-racial interaction may contribute to feelings of stigmatization, interactions with same-race individuals could be more positive. Burke (2004) suggested that reflected appraisals have important implications for well-being. Reflected appraisals act as a way to validate an individual’s identity and thereby limit the possible identity claims that an individual can make (Brown, 1998; Weinreich, Luk, & Bond, 1996). Helms (1990) posited that observers communicate race-related messages that shape how individuals view their own value and self-worth. In regards to stigmatized groups, a negative reflected appraisal
could contribute to the experience of low self-esteem and racism (Alvarez & Helms, 2001). Furthermore, if there is a gap between reflected and self-appraisals, the possibility of experiencing depression (Jung & Hecht, 2008) or discrimination (Wadsworth, Hecht, & Jung, 2008) is high. In a study done to examine the relationship between self-esteem and reflected appraisals, Jaret, Reitzes, and Shapkina (2005) concluded that an observer’s’ reflected appraisal in terms of social roles, negatively impacts self-esteem, particularly in a public setting where there is sparse information about the individual. More specifically, when individuals are out in public they are less confident that others have accurate and thorough information about them and therefore their self-esteem is more likely to be impacted by reflected appraisals. Conversely, when individuals are socially interacting in a private setting and feel more familiar with the people around them, reflected appraisals are less important for overall self-concept (Jaret et al., 2005).

In the only known study applying the idea of reflected appraisals to multiracial people, Khanna (2004) reported that reflected appraisals were important in shaping racial identity in multiracial Asian/White individuals and that how they believed they were perceived by others influenced their racial identities. Using qualitative survey data taken from 110 Asian-White adults, Khanna found that two factors exerted the strongest influence on their racial identities; the reflected appraisals of others regarding (1) their physical appearance, as well as their (2) cultural knowledge and exposure.

Individuals tend to possess certain views of themselves and these views can bias the way they believe others view them. In some cases it is the individual’s perception of how he or she is viewed, not how he or she is actually viewed by others, that has the strongest impact on their self-concept (Leary & Tangney, 2003). This idea may be
particularly important to multiracial individuals as they are more likely to possess racially ambiguous physical features which collectively may or may not be validated by the people around them. This could potentially impact that individual’s self-concept.

Conclusion. The self-concept surfaces as a particularly important construct based on the aims of this study, SIT, and the reflected appraisal process. The self-concept of multiracial individuals would be a likely variable to be impacted based on how racially ambiguous they appear to be. To understand how to conceptualize the construct of self-concept, self-concept theory and research was reviewed. The following sections highlight existing models of self-concept, research pertaining to the self-concept in multiracial individuals, and definitional concerns.

Self-Concept

Models of self-concept. Generally speaking, self-concept is theorized from either a unidimensional perspective or a multidimensional perspective (Byrne, 1996). The unidimensional perspective encompasses the oldest view of self-concept - the nomothetic model (Soares & Soares, 1983). The nomothetic model defines self-concept as a unitary construct that consists of overlapping facets of information. Instruments grounded from a nomothetic theoretical perspective consist of items that when summed, yield a global self-concept (e.g., general self-concept) score. Unidimensional model supporters posit that it is impossible to differentiate between subcomponents of the global self-concept. Marx and Winn (1978) argued that self-concept facets were entirely dominated by a general factor and that separate factors could not be efficiently differentiated. However, construct validity research conducted by Marsh and Hattie (1996) largely discount self-concept as a unidimensional construct. In addition, Shavelson and Marsh (1986)
concluded that the self-concept cannot be sufficiently understood when ignoring the multidimensionality of it.

Multidimensional perspectives of self-concept ascribe to the idea that the self-concept is composed of different facets representative of the human experience. For example, the self-concept could theoretically be comprised of or linked to, an academic self-concept or a physical self-concept. The most commonly utilized multidimensional models include the independent factor model, the correlated factor model, the compensatory model, the hierarchical model, and the taxonomic model (Byrne, 1996). The following will briefly summarize these models as a way to describe how I conceptualized the best model and subsequent instrument for this research.

The independent factor model posits that the self-concept is made up of facets that exist independent of each other. This model denies the existence of a global self-concept or a hierarchical structure (Soares & Soares, 1986). Byrne (1996) noted that “little if any justification of a strong independent factor model can be found in the self-concept literature” (p. 16).

The correlated factor model encompasses dimensions of self-concept that can be correlated with each other, as well as to a separate global self-concept (Byrne 1996). Self-concept according to the correlated factor model is thus conceptualized on a continuum of specificity (i.e. from very specific to more global) where a person can weigh and combine each dimension in the manner that person chooses as a way of formulating a global self-concept (Harter, 1990). The correlated factor model has had some indirect support (Bryne).
The compensatory model was initially formulated by Marx and Winne (1978). It is conceptualized as both a global level of self-concept and “multiple bipolar facets (e.g. academic, social, and physical)” (Byrne 1996, p. 17). The domain-specific facets are negatively correlated with each other. If an individual attains a lower academic self-concept score, he or she is more likely to have higher scores on an opposing self-concept (e.g., physical self-concept). Support for the compensatory model has been mixed (Bracken, 1996).

The hierarchical model posits a hierarchical structure of self-concept facets. A general self-concept exists on top (i.e., the apex) while domains (e.g. physical self-concept) yield specific separate subscales (e.g., physical appearance) (Bracken, 1996; Byrne, 1996). Hierarchical models in general have gained the most traction most recently as they tend to have the strongest empirical backing (Bracken). However, the hierarchical models are somewhat weak because “the hierarchical model, at least at the level of abstraction considered thus far, may not be falsifiable” (p. 52).

The taxonomic model is a factorial model that yields multiple levels of self-concept. Based on a model of intelligence, the taxonomic model posits that specific components of self-concept (e.g., family self-concept) reflect the intersection of two or more facets, which in turn yield at least two or more additional levels (Marsh & Hattie, 1996). The specific number of levels per factor is dependent on the instrument being used. One instrument that utilizes the taxonomic model is the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS). The TSCS purports a complex structure consisting of six external frames of reference (i.e., physical, moral, personal, family, social, and academic/work) that are informed by three internal frames of reference (identity, satisfaction, and behavior). The
TSCS is grounded in the idea that an individual’s self-concept is formed through a process that incorporates both an individual’s internal and external experience.

The taxonomic model of self-concept was chosen for this study because it emphasizes the idea that the self-concept is contextual and multifaceted. In other words, self-concept is layered and can be expressed in a number of different ways. The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) in particular, provides a measure of self-concept that yields a number of different aspects of self-concept which are important to describing the whole picture of an individual’s experience. Furthermore, the TSCS’s emphasis on an internal/external formulation of self-concept parallel’s nicely with the idea that a person’s racial identity is both an internal and external product.

**Self-concept in multiracial individuals.** Morrison (1995) conducted one of the earliest studies regarding the self-concept and multiracial people and found that self-concept was a paramount issue for development. In research conducted by Field (1996), it was noted that in a race-conscious society, holding a multiracial identity came with inherent “risk”. Field sought to see if there was a connection between this risk and self-concept in multiracial individuals. Multiracial participants in Field’s study who reported a white reference group orientation (RGO), had a more difficult time developing a positive self-concept than their multiracial or Black counterparts who adopted Black or bicultural RGOs.

Lou, Lalonde, and Wilson (2011) conducted a study which examined multiracial identity in a social context. More specifically, Lou et al. were interested in understanding how multiracial identification is related to the way self-understanding is organized (i.e., identity integration) and structured (i.e., self-concept clarity) among Asian/White and
Black/White multiracial individuals. Lou et al. used an existing framework of “multiracial identity categories” created by Rockquemore (2009) and correlated those responses with scores from the Self-Concept Clarity scale and Biracial Identity Integration scale. Asian/White participants in this study endorsed the “protean” identity significantly more than their Black/White counterparts. The “protean” identity is a contextually based identity designation where a person will self-identify according to context. Black/White participants conversely, were more likely to have an unvalidated “border” identity. These participants were largely perceived as “black” regardless of how they self-identified.

Results from the study indicated that possessing a socially validated versus a socially unvalidated identity carries different implications in terms of the self-concept. Possessing a socially unvalidated racial identity can fragment the view a multiracial individual has of him or herself. This individual may feel caught between self-definitions and the public ones ascribed by others. This psychological “distance” can lead to a self-understanding that lacks integration and breeds conflict within the self. The extent to which participants of the study perceived their different racial identities as being compatible (identity integration) was positively correlated with the extent to which their self-concept was clearly and confidently defined (self-concept clarity). “The strong positive correlation between identity integration and self-concept clarity suggested that a lack of integration of racial identities occurs in conjunction with a lack of clarity in an individual’s self-concept” (Lou et al., p. 86). Lou et al. concluded that individuals with a socially validated identity reported less conflict between their racial orientations as well as an organized and internally consistent self-concept.
In a three part study, Sanchez, Shih, and Garcia (2009) sought to address whether the changing or shifting of a racial identity (racial malleability), a commonly reported occurrence in multiracial individuals, carried a consequence. Sanchez et al. controlled for group differences and then computed correlations between racial malleability and depressive symptoms. Asian/White participants reported greater malleable racial identification than did Black/White or Black/Latino/Native American participants. Like Lou et al.’s research, Asian/White participants tended to identify racially speaking, according to context.

In general, results of the study suggest that it is important for multiracial people to possess a stable racial self-concept and that greater malleable identification is associated with poorer psychological health. “Those who had little tolerance for change, inconsistency, and contradiction within the self were especially vulnerable to negative psychological outcomes” (p. 245). Furthermore, malleable racial identity was also accompanied by unstable regard, a simultaneous liking and disliking of one’s multiracial background.

Usborne and Taylor (2010) proposed that having a clear cultural “model” to follow or to look to would help an individual in developing a clear sense of self. Usborne and Taylor computed correlations between The Self-Concept Clarity Scale and the Cultural Identity Clarity Scale. Cultural identity was concluded to be significantly positively related to self-esteem and self-concept clarity. More specifically, “the extent to which beliefs about one’s cultural group were clearly and confidently defined was positively related to a clear and confident definition of the personal self and to self-
esteem and markers of psychological well-being” (p. 883). Usborne and Taylor found that cultural identity significantly predicted self-concept clarity and self-esteem.

Self-concept in multiracial people has only been lightly examined in the existing literature. The researchers in each of the aforementioned studies sought to find associations between self-concept and a variety of other constructs, none of which were racial ambiguity. Researchers seem to have underplayed the significance of physical appearance on racial identity and self-concept in multiracial people. However, clear links were made between self-concept, culture, context, and psychological health.

The existing bodies of work have offered some useful conclusions directly related to the current study. For instance, the existence of a relationship between racial identity development and self-concept was established in at least two studies (Lou et al., 2011; Sanchez et al., 2009). Self-concept was also found to be predicted by constructs such as cultural identity and reference group orientation (Field, 1996; Usborne & Taylor, 2010). However, self-concept has not been theoretically or empirically correlated with physical appearance or phenotype in multiracial individuals.

Previous research has leaned heavily on correlational data, an acknowledgment of the fact that self-concept is a complicated and multifaceted idea with a variety of potential correlates. Examining correlations between racial ambiguity and self-concept will provide a new layer of information about the aforementioned research. Racial ambiguity is imbedded in the idea that context is a crucial determinant of self-concept. A closer look at differences associated with differing combinations of racial group heritage may also support certain findings of the aforementioned research. For example, as Asian/White participants were shown to self-identify more fluidly and according to
context. The current research has the potential to add to this understanding by examining potential differences in experiences of racial ambiguity for individuals with differing combinations of racial group heritage.

**Self-concept definitional concerns.** Understanding of self-concept has come with definitional questions and concerns. Byrne (1996) highlighted several points to consider in terms of a definition of self-concept, including “a lack of a universally accepted definition, assumed synonymity of self-terms, ambiguous distinction between the terms self-concept and self-efficacy and between self-concept and self-esteem, and the tendency to convey informal rather than formal (i.e., systemic) notions of self-concept” (p. 2). The lack of a universal definition seems to be the most pervasive issue as it tends to inform the latter issues. What compounds this is the fact that throughout the literature, self-concept is discussed as though there is a universal definition while at the same time being frequently used interchangeably with a host of other terms like self-esteem or self-efficacy. Self-concept is at a disadvantage because it is assumed that everyone knows what it is (Bracken, 1996). Byrne (1996) noted that the self-concept versus self-esteem definitional task is the most commonly debated aspect within self-concept literature. Though there is overlap between the two constructs, researchers tend to agree that self-concept and self-esteem refer to differing components of the self (Brinthaupt & Erwin, 1992; Byrne, 1996; Hattie, 1992). Self-concept is a broad strokes construct that encompasses cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects while self-esteem is more of a direct evaluative component of the self. Despite general agreement on the distinction between the two constructs, they are still commonly used interchangeably (Byrne, 1996).
Conclusion

Identity can be referred to as a validated self-understanding that situates and defines the self. An individual’s racial identity can be validated to the extent that the individual’s self-understanding is consistent with the responses of others (Rockquemore, 1998). Root (1996), a pioneer in multiracial identity research, agreed that individuals tend to see themselves through the lenses of others. It is clear that society has the potential to influence how a person sees him or herself and thus how that person chooses to identify.

Within a social interaction, each individual is making unconscious decisions and drawing automatic conclusions about others based on what they perceive in terms of race. Felson (1981) suggests that reflected appraisals are especially important to those who lack a clear sense of belonging (e.g., multiracial people) based on objective criteria (i.e., phenotype). Multiracial individuals are more likely to encounter uncertainty when it comes to the perception of their race and are thus more likely to rely on reflected appraisals than individuals with monoracial backgrounds (Khanna, 2010).

Both Symbolic Interaction Theory (SIT) (Blumer, 1969) and the Reflected Appraisal process (Cooley, 1902; Khanna, 2010; Mead, 1934; Sullivan, 1947) can be used as a framework to describe how an individual develops a racial identity. Simply put, racial identity forms as both a product of the self (internal) and a product of society (external). Common physical features (phenotype) represent the primary categorization mechanism to race assignment and identification. Racial identity forms if there is agreement between the self and society. If there is “disagreement” or if that individual’s race is not legitimately validated, how that individual sees, feels, and understands his or her race is potentially impacted. The potential impact can be understood through a
multiracial person’s self-concept. The self-concept is a construct that is at least in part formed through the reflected appraisal process. Consequently, what an observer communicates about an individual’s race will shape that individual’s self-perception which in turn will impact that individual’s self-concept.

If an individual possesses phenotypical features that do not neatly represent one of the primary racial groups common in the US, that individual is more likely to be classified and self-identified as racially ambiguous. Multiracial people are more likely than monoracial people to possess racially ambiguous physical features. Research pertaining to the multiracial population is still in its infancy, while a number of questions exist with plenty of room to explore. This research is designed to explore questions about the potential impact a racially ambiguous appearance has on multiracial individuals.

Descriptive questions: How do multiracial individuals describe their racial identity? How often do multiracial individuals get asked about their racial identity and how does it make them feel? What are some of the common experiences that multiracial individuals encounter?

The primary goal of this research is to explore and quantitatively measure the potential impact a racially ambiguous physical appearance has on multiracial individuals. The research question for the study is: What is the relationship between self-concept and racial ambiguity in multiracial individuals?
CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to gain additional information about the experiences of multiracial individuals, and specifically to examine the relationship between racial ambiguity and self-concept in multiracial individuals. As physical appearance represents an important aspect of racial identity, the goal of this research was to better understand the cost of not having an easily identifiable racial identity. This was accomplished by determining the degree to which the two primary variables (i.e. racial ambiguity and self-concept) were related by calculating correlation coefficients. The research question was, what is the relationship between racial ambiguity and self-concept? A number of other relationships were also explored to further describe the sample as well as to better understand to what degree varying aspects of self-concept are related to multiracial challenges and resiliency as well as ethnic identity. These additional relationship explorations are important as they provide different, more nuanced information that ultimately contributes to the broader picture of the multiracial experience.

This chapter outlines information about the participants, instrumentation, recruitment and data collection procedures, design, and statistical analyses used to examine the research question and hypotheses of this study.
Participants

A total of 162 people accessed the survey. Thirty-four people did not complete the survey for unknown reasons leaving 128 people who serve as the sample for the study. Details concerning participants with partial data are provided in the results section.

Participants reported coming from 30 different U.S. states. Nearly 30% of the sample reported California as home (Table 1). Massachusetts (9%) and New York (8%) were the next most frequent states represented. Regionally speaking (Appendix A), the majority of participants reported coming from the West (45%), the second most coming from the Northeast (26%), while the Midwest and the South each made up 15%.

Participants of this study ranged in age from 18 to 61 years of age with a mean age of 29 ($SD = 7.66$) and a median age of 28. For analyses focused on age, participants were grouped according to approximate developmental similarity as well as sample frequency (Table 1.). Five age categories were created, each thought to encompass distinct life stages (i.e. a = 18-22 (24%), b = 23-28 (30%), c = 29-33 (22%), d = 34-39 (13%), and e = 40-61 (11%)). It was necessary to group the remaining participants into one group due to the small number who reported being 40 years old and older.

In addition, participants were mostly female (74%) as opposed to male (23%). Three participants reported gender identities other than male or female including: transwoman, cisgender woman, and genderfluid man.

Thirty-eight percent of participants reported incomes under $12,000 a year. Ten percent reported incomes between $12,001-25,000 per year. Nine percent reported incomes between $25,001-35,000 per year. Ten percent reported incomes between $35,001-45,000 per year. Eleven percent reported incomes between $45,001-55,000 per
year. Thirteen percent reported incomes between $55,001-85,000 per year. Nine percent reported incomes of $85,001 or higher.

The majority of participants (61%) reported having a Bachelor’s degree or higher. Forty participants (31%) reported having a high school diploma while 10 participants (8%) reported having an associate's degree. Thirty-two participants (25%) of this study had graduate degrees – including 6 participants (5%) with doctoral level degrees.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. High school</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Associate’s degree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Master’s degree</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Doctoral degree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 18-22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 23-28</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 29-33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 34-39</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 40-61</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. West</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Midwest</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Northeast</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. South</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Below $12,000</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. $12-25,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>( f )</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. $25-35,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. $35-45,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. $45-55,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. $55-65,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. $65-75,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. $75-85,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. $85-95,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. $95,000 and above</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Female</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>74.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Transwoman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cisgender woman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Genderfluid cis man</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (No. of races reported)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Two races</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Three races</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Four or more races</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Multicultural/unknown</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (Largest no. of combinations)</td>
<td>( f )</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Asian/White</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Black/White</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Other combinations</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A diverse sample was gathered in terms of participant reported background and racial composition. Eighty percent of the sample identified with two races, 11% reported three races, and 6% reported four or more races in their racial background. Three participants (2%) chose not to identify with any race. Table 2 lists the standardized U.S. Census race options displayed for each participant. The participant was permitted to click
on as many options as he or she chose. Included in the table is the frequency with which each option was chosen. For example, “White” was endorsed by 109 participants while “Black” was chosen by 28 participants. Additionally, if a participant clicked “other”, he or she had the option of filling what his or her race was. Table 2 includes each self-reported race and the frequency with which it appeared in the data. For example, nine participants filled in the word “Thai” after clicking “other” while one participant wrote in “Central Asian” after clicking “other”.

Table 2

Race Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Race Options</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Indian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Central Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guamanian or Chamorro</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Other” (fill-in)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Okinawan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Singaporian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sri Lankan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tongan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were also encouraged to fill in whatever label they use to describe themselves from a race standpoint (Table 3). Sixty-nine different race labels were recorded. “Mixed” was the most commonly cited identifier with 64 participants reporting that they use it to describe themselves. “Biracial” ($n = 35$), “multiracial” ($n = 31$), and “hapa” ($n = 32$) were also commonly cited as race labels by participants.

Table 3

*Self-Ascribed Labels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>$f$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Farang</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Masala</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amerasian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mestiza</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hafu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Half American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Half Indonesian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Mutt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Half Korean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mixed heritage</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian White</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Half Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mixed race</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biracial</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Half Asian</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mixie</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Half Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Multicultural</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black and white</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Halfie</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Multiethnic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blasian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Halffrican</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Multigenerational</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Half Spanish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Half White</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mutt</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hapa</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hawaiian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Paiute</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cryic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Human</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pake</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poi Dog</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jalapenao</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Polynesian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Guessing game</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Shoshone</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurasian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Japanese American</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Slovak</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euroasian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Japanese White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Texan-Punjabi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Leprechauno</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Whasian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farang</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Masala</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>White-passing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Instrumentation**

The measures that were used for the web-based online survey consisted of a 13-question demographic and race-experience questionnaire designed by the student researcher, the Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale (MCRS), the Tennessee Self-Concept scale – Second Edition (TSCS-2) and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure – Revised (MEIM-R) (Fitts & Warren, 1996; Phinney, 1999; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011). When the survey was accessed, the consent form appeared first, followed by the MCRS, the MEIM, the TSCS-2, and finally the demographic and race-experience questionnaire.

**Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale (MCRS)**

The MCRS is a recently developed two-part, 30-question scale designed to measure race-related challenges and resilience experienced by multiracial individuals (Salahuddin & O’Brien, 2011). Part one consists of 15 questions (e.g., “Someone placed me in a racial category based on their assumptions about my race.”) to be answered according to frequency and level of distress. Frequency is responded to based on a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from “0 = Never happened to me” to “5 = Happened to me more than 10 times”. Distress is responded to based on a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from “0 = Not at all distressed” to “5 = Extremely distressed”. Part two consists of 15 questions (e.g., “I love being multiracial”) to be answered according to level of agreement. Agreement is responded to based on a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from “0 = Strongly disagree” to “5 = Strongly agree”.

The MCRS is comprised of six factors, including four challenge factors (Others’ Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial heritage (OSDRRH), Lack of Family Acceptance (LFA), Multiracial Discrimination (MD), and Challenges with Racial
Identity (CRID) and two resilience factors (Appreciation of Human Differences (AHD) and Multiracial Pride (MRP)). Higher scores on each of the subscales indicate higher levels of the construct described (e.g., Appreciation of Human Differences). Two studies were conducted for the development of the MCRS. Both studies utilized a nationwide sample (i.e., study 1, \( n = 317 \); study 2, \( n = 172 \)), collected via the Internet, of multiracial individuals. In study 1, exploratory factor analysis yielded the aforementioned factors. Confirmatory factor analysis in study 2 supported these factors.

Salahuddin and O’Brien (2011) offered reliability and validity estimates for the MCRS. According to Salahuddin and O’Brien the MCRS factors provide adequate internal consistency reliability (alphas range from .79 to .92) with the exception of the “Challenges with Racial Identity” factor (alpha = .67). Reliability estimates were calculated for both part 1 and 2 factors. Cronbach’s alphas for the current study are listed in Chapter III (Table 7).

Salahuddin and O’Brien (2011) report strong discriminant validity as the MCRS factors were not correlated with income or education level. Furthermore, “convergent validity was supported by the MCRS scale’s relationships with scales measuring self-esteem, depression, social connectedness, ethnic identity, and racial encounters”, (p. 503). In terms of stability over time, all factors except for “Lack of Family Acceptance” were consistent over time (over a 2-month period).

For the current study, each subscale’s (i.e., Challenges with Racial Identity (CRID), Appreciation of Human Differences (AHD), Multiracial Pride (MRP), Others’ Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage (OSDRRH) (frequency and distress), Lack of Family Acceptance (LFA) (frequency and distress), and Multiracial
Discrimination (MD) (frequency and distress)) mean and standard deviation were reported first for the preliminary analysis to detect for group differences according to gender, location, education, and age. The data were then used as a way to describe challenges and resilience of multiracial individuals. In order to address other interesting questions and ideas, three subscales were used in additional analyses (correlations); CRID, LFA (frequency and distress) and MRP.

To address the hypotheses of the study, the subscales “Others Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage” (OSDRRH) (frequency and distress) and “Challenges with Racial Identity” (CRID) were used to measure and describe racial ambiguity and were correlated with other scales for the study (e.g. TSCS-2 – TOT). These subscales included items that were ideal in capturing the essence of racial ambiguity (e.g. “I told someone about my racial background(s) but they did not believe me” or “I feel as if I do NOT belong to any racial group”). Salahuddin and O’Brien (2011) discovered during focus group meetings that participants consistently noted that they routinely faced other peoples’ surprise or discomfort when race was disclosed. These participants reported that they felt somewhat bothered by having to deal with others’ responses to their racial backgrounds. This sort of “surprise” is most likely created by ambiguous phenotype. The “surprise” is likely to be directly related to the aforementioned “what are you?” question as well as where the respondent resides, how old he or she is, and what racial groups comprise his or her racial background. Similarly, the CRID subscale includes statements that allude to the degree to which an individual feels a part of a peer group. For example, the statement “I do NOT have a strong sense of who I am” can be connected to racial ambiguity as an individual with racially ambiguous
features will be more likely to feel in-between and not connected to either one of their component race parts.

During reliability and validity testing, Salahuddin and O’Brien (2011) found that the OSDRRH (frequency and distress) factor produced an adequate internal consistency estimate (.79) while also relating positively to depression ($r = .23$) and negatively to social connectedness ($r = -.27$) (p. 498).

For the current sample, internal consistency for OSDRRH was .74 (frequency), and .84 (distress). Though Salahuddin and O’Brien (2011) found that the CRID factor was more questionable in terms of internal consistency (.67), for the current sample, internal consistency was .75. Cronbach alphas for the MCRS and its subscales are listed in Chapter III (Table 9).


Self-concept was measured using the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale – Second Edition (TSCS-2). The TSCS-2 has been administered in over 300 studies covering topic areas such as psychological health, medical conditions, gender, culture, physical differences, social behavior, teaching, work, and fitness (Brown, 1998). The TSCS-2 is an 82-item self-report measure used to assess multidimensional self-concept (Fitts & Warren, 1996). It can be completed by individuals separately or in groups in 10-20 minutes. The standardization sample for the first TSCS included 1,944 people ranging in age from 13–90. The TSCS was restandardized with a nationwide sample of over 3,000 individuals in order to create the second edition (p. 3).

Structurally, the TSCS-2 utilizes a taxonomic model (i.e., a 6(external frame) X 3(internal frame) design) that yields 15 scaled scores. The TSCS-2 scaled scores are
comprised of an overall self-concept score, a conflict score, as well as six self-concept subscales including: Physical (PHY), Moral (MOR), Personal (PER), Family (FAM), Social (SOC), and Academic (ACA) self-concept. In addition, the TSCS-2 yields four validity scores including: inconsistent responding, self-criticism, faking good, and response distribution. There are also three supplementary scores that include: identity (IDN) (e.g., what I am), satisfaction (SAT) (e.g., how I feel about me), and behavior (BHV) (e.g., what I do) (Fitts & Warren, 1996). “The supplementary scores are groups of TSCS: 2 items from each Self-Concept subscale that have historically been classified as expressing one of three primary messages: (a) this is who I am, this is how I identify myself, or Identity (IDN); (b) This is how satisfied I am with myself, or Satisfaction (SAT); and (c) This is what I do, this is how I behave, or Behavior (BHV)” (p. 25). The supplementary scores are meant to be compared to each other and to supplement the interpretation of overall self-concept (TOT). They differ from the subscales in that they are assumed to represent a theoretical, internal frame of reference within which an individual describes oneself.

Each item of the TSCS-2 (e.g., “I am a friendly person”) is answered on a Likert-type scale ranging from “1 = Always false” to “5 = Always true” as a way to describe the extent a respondent feels a statement is true or not. The total self-concept score (TOT) is a summary score and a general measure of how a person views him or herself as competent and valuable. Higher TOT scores indicate higher levels of self-concept. The self-concept scales (i.e., Physical, Moral, Personal, Family, Social, Academic) or subscales describe different aspects of self (Fitz & Warren, 1996).
The psychometric information is based primarily on accumulated studies from previous versions. Reliability has been estimated using Cronbach’s alpha with internal consistencies ranging from a low of .73 on the Social Self-Concept scale to a high of .93 on Total Self-Concept (Brown, 1998). For the current sample, internal consistency for Total Self-Concept (TOT) was .95. For the current sample, internal consistency estimates of the subscales of the TSCS-2 ranged from .78 to .88. Cronbach alphas are listed in Chapter III (Table 7). Fitts and Warren (1996) reported internal consistency ranges from .47 to .82 (Brown, 1998). Test-retest reliability was taken from 135 high school students who took the measure twice over a two-week span. Test-retest reliability ranged between .70 and .80 for total self-concept and subscales and .69 to .78 for the supplementary scales. Concurrent validity information shows acceptable levels of correlations of the TSCS-2 with other psychological measures such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory – 2 (MMPI-2) and the Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale, Second Edition (Fitts & Warren, 1996).

The TSCS-2 was chosen for this study for several important reasons. In addition to being a simple (i.e., it requires a 4th grade reading level and takes 10 to 20 minutes to complete) as well as a widely appropriate instrument (i.e., ages 19-90), the TSCS-2 was specifically chosen because of the way it addresses the multidimensionality of self-concept. Fitz and Warren (1996) noted the importance of a priori factors and the intent to capture the respondent’s “self-picture”.

Thus, the TSCS-2 is theoretically rooted in the idea that the self-concept is developed and maintained from both an internal and external frame of reference. More specifically, Fitz and Warren (1996) posited that the “who am I?” question can be
explained in terms of two separate systems: traits (i.e., internal frames of reference) and ecological domains (i.e., external frames of reference). This conceptualization aligns firmly with my position regarding racial identity and development and is further supported by the guiding theoretical framework of Symbolic Interactionism. Just as race is both an internally and externally formed construct, so is the self-concept. According to Fitz and Warren, the internal frame of reference refers to an individual’s private experience or how one thinks and feels about oneself – the “what” of self-concept. The internal frame of reference can be expressed in three different ways (i.e., supplementary scores): identity, satisfaction, and behavior. Conversely, the external frame of reference, expressed in the TSCS-2 through the six self-concept scores (i.e., Physical, Moral, Personal, Family, Social, and Academic), refers to how the outside world informs an individual of his or her self-concept. The external frame of reference is another way of describing how an individual utilizes outside sources in the formulation of how one perceives him or herself. This idea also aligns firmly with racial identity and development theory as well as Symbolic Interaction theory. Individuals make meaning of outside stimuli through interactions with people and use this information to make sense of their thoughts and feelings about themselves.

For this study, means and standard deviations for each TSCS-2 scale (TOT), subscale (PHY, MOR, PER, FAM, SOC, ACA), and supplementary scale (IDN, SAT, BHV) were reported as a way to describe the self-concept of the participants as well as to understand how the scores compare to people (i.e., T-scores) in general. TOT was also used in the preliminary analysis to detect group differences according to gender, location, education, and age. To address the central research question of the current study, TOT
was correlated with OSDRRH and CRID to establish to what degree and in what direction self-concept was related to racial ambiguity.

Additionally, in order to capture some of the theoretical ideas outlined in the literature review, several subscales and a supplementary scale were chosen to describe participant’s internal and external frames of reference. From an internal frame of reference perspective, the supplementary scale IDN was used as a way to describe the “who am I” question of participants. Fitz and Warren (1996) noted that the IDN score is highly indicative of self-views; “This is who I am, this is how I identify myself” (p.25). Conversely, important external scales were also examined including; PHY, FAM, and SOC. PHY was chosen as it directly relates to physical appearance or “how an individual views his or her body, state of health, physical appearance, skills, and sexuality” (Fitz & Warren, p. 23). The FAM subscale score reflects an individual’s “feelings of adequacy, worth, and value as a family member. It refers to the individual’s perception of self in relation to his or her immediate circle of associates” (Fitz & Warren, p. 23). This is another way of describing how well a person is “fitting in” with the immediate people surrounding him or her. Family functioning (e.g., sense of belonging) and family socialization (e.g., language) is important in the development of a racial identity for multiracial individuals (Root, 2003). Closely related, the SOC subscale score is another way of measuring how the self is perceived in relation others. It “reflects in a more general way the individual’s sense of adequacy and worth in social interaction with other people” (Fitz & Warren, p. 24).
Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure – Revised (MEIM-R)

The MEIM-R is a six question, Likert-type scale, which yields a measure of a participant’s ethnic identity. Additionally, the MEIM-R also yields two subscales, Exploration (EXPLOR) and Commitment (COMM). EXPLOR addresses a participant’s level of exploration of his or her ethnic identity while COMM addresses a participant’s level of commitment to understanding his or her ethnic identity. Higher scores represent greater levels of ethnic identity, exploration or commitment. The MEIM-R includes questions such as; “I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group” and “I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group”.

Psychometric properties of the MEIM-R have been reported by a number of researchers. Construct validity was originally formulated by Phinney (1992) through correlating the MEIM-R total score with the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (1986) \( r = .31 \). In a study of 241 diverse college students, Phinney and Ong (2007) reported good internal consistency for the MEIM-R with an alpha of .81. In a study consisting of 189 racial minorities, Yoon (2011) reported an alpha of .88. Yoon (2011) concluded that the MEIM-R is “psychometrically and theoretically solid” (p. 153). More recently, Brown et al. (2014) examined the psychometric properties of the MEIM-R across a wide range of racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Asian \( n = 630 \), Black/African American \( n = 58 \), Hispanic \( n = 240 \), and White \( n = 375 \) and subgroups (e.g., multiethnic \( n = 160 \)), using a large sample \( n = 1,463 \) of women. A Cronbach’s alpha was reported at .88. For the current study, internal consistency was .85 (TOT), .79 (COMM), and .82 (EXPLOR) (see Chapter III, Table 10).
The MEIM-R was utilized for this study because primarily because it is another way to examine identity and the connections one makes to his or her background. Although ethnicity is distinct from race, a measure of ethnic identity could be helpful for this study’s aim. For example, ethnicity is a way to describe the meanings associated with group (e.g., race) labels. As was implied earlier, race in and of itself is not necessarily a controversial or volatile topic. However, it is clear that the meanings associated with race can be both controversial and volatile. If race is a way to describe the concrete phenotypical qualities visibly seen across people, ethnicity can be about the connections between people from a cultural standpoint regardless of phenotypical qualities. Ethnic identity can be a way to describe a person’s feeling of connection to others. Thus, the MEIM was a good fit for this study. Furthermore, the instrument is well-known, commonly utilized, and could be helpful in further describing the sample.

For this study, means and standard deviations of the MEIM-R (TOT) and its subscales (EXPLOR and COMM) were reported as a way to describe participant’s ethnic identity, exploration, and commitment. MEIM–R (TOT) was used in the preliminary analysis to detect for group differences according to gender, location, education, and age. The MEIM-R was also used in the correlational analyses when it was correlated with other measures representing other aspects of identity (CRID, MRP, and OSDRRH (frequency and distress)).

**Demographic and Race-Experience Questionnaire**

The demographic and race-experience questionnaire consisted of a total of thirteen questions. The first seven questions pertained to participant, age, gender, income, education, location, and race/race labels. Following the demographic section were seven
Likert-type questions (e.g., “I am asked the question, “What are you?””) pertaining to the participant’s experiences with being multiracial. The response choices for these items ranged from “never” (1) to “frequently” (5). The questions were developed both from the author’s personal experiences as well as through immersion in seminal multiracial related literature (e.g., Root, 1992, 1996). The questions could be potentially useful to the study’s aim of further understanding the experiences of multiracial individuals as well as describing the sample.

**Recruitment and Data Collection Procedures**

Data were collected via an online survey which was hosted by a private website company called Psychdata.com. The online survey and procedures were reviewed by HSIRB and the study was approved April 11th, 2014 (Appendix B). Permission was given to advertise for participants on the following website groups and subgroups: Mavin, Swirl, Inc., Hapa, and Critical Mixed Race Studies.

Mavin is a free web-based informational and support oriented organization for multiracial individuals designed to build “healthier communities by providing educational resources about mixed heritage experiences” (Mavin, 2014). Similarly, Swirl is also a free web-based organization with the intention of providing information as well as support to multiracial people. More specifically, Swirl describes itself as “a multiracial community committed to initiating and sustaining cross-racial, cross-cultural dialogue” (Swirl Inc., 2014). Both websites offer information, links to resources and other race related websites, and an email listserv. Either site also mentions that it has volunteer opportunities and provides information as to how to find out more. Additionally, each site has a presence on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
Hapa is a private access Facebook subgroup page with 5,556 members. Hapa is a Hawaiian word used to describe individuals of mixed race descent. Because it is a Hawaiian word, it is often time associated with half Pacific Islanders or Asians in general. Hapa is a term of endearment for many half Asians. However, the Hapa Facebook subgroup is meant to be inclusive of all multiracial people. Membership is open, but group moderators do have to approve a membership request before a user is allowed access to the page. No exclusionary criteria are listed. The masthead describes the purpose of the page as a social networking resource where one could “meet cool people and share experiences”.

Critical Mixed Race Studies (CMRS) is also a private access Facebook subgroup page with 3,004 members. CMRS describes itself as “an open group for scholars interested in critical mixed race studies to connect with each other and with community workers and cultural producers. Participants are encouraged to discuss issues and to share their work and relevant news.” Group moderators also have to approve a potential member’s request to join. No exclusionary criteria are listed.

The recruitment flier (Appendix C) was posted on each website’s front page. The flier contained general information about the study, contact information of the student researcher, a clickable link to the survey, and a password to access the survey. Those who were interested in participating were able to click on the link and enter the password. The opening page of the survey contained the consent document which explained the details of the survey, including information regarding the: (1) research, (2) researcher, (3) potential risks, (4) benefits, (5) confidentiality, (6) contact information and (7) the right to discontinue participation (Appendix D). If a participant wished to continue, he or she
clicked the “I agree” button and was thus accepting the terms of participation. He or she was then transported to the survey for completion. A participant who read over the consent document but opted to not participate was given the choice to click “I am not interested” and was then transported to a thank you page with the option of providing open-ended feedback. Not a single participant clicked on the “I am not interested” option while the survey was open. The response data collected was privately and securely maintained by Psychdata.com. Upon completion of the survey, participants were shown a debriefing page (Appendix E). This page (1) thanked the participant for completing the survey, (2) displayed the researcher’s name and contact information for the last time, (3) invited any lasting questions or comments, and (4) gave the participant an option to enter an email address to participate in the amazon.com giftcard drawing. If they were interested, they clicked on a link that took them to a separate page where they could provide an email address. Email addresses collected for the giftcard drawing were stored in a separate location apart from the collected data as a way to ensure anonymity of survey responses. If a participant was not interested in the drawing, they could click “no thanks” and were redirected to another and final thank you page. One-hundred one (79%) participants left email addresses to be eligible for the drawing. Three random participants were chosen and were emailed a $50 Amazon.com giftcard.

**Research Design**

This study employed a correlational research design as described by Heppner, Wampold, and Kivlighan (2008): “A simple correlational design examines the relationship between two variables, and then uses a statistical analysis to describe their relationship” (p. 244). Survey data were obtained from multiracial individuals to help
understand the relationship between the constructs: racial ambiguity and self-concept. No manipulation of the variables by the researcher is possible; instead a correlation coefficient is provided as an index to the degree of linear relationship between the two variables (Heppner et al., 2008).

**Data Analysis**

Pearson $r$ correlations, means, and standard deviations were computed for each of the scales and subscales (i.e., MCRS, MEIM-R, and TSCS-2). Data were computed using SPSS 21 statistical software and the significance level for all statistical analyses was set at .05. Additionally, descriptive statistics were used to describe characteristics of the sample. The following question and hypotheses were examined:

Research question: What is the relationship between self-concept and racial ambiguity in multiracial individuals?

H1: The MCRS scale representing racial ambiguity, “Others’ Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage” (frequency and distress) will negatively correlate with the TSCS-2 total self-concept (TOT).

H2: The MCRS second scale representing racial ambiguity, “Challenges with Racial Identity” (CRID) will negatively correlate with the TSCS-2 total self-concept (TOT).

In addition, a number of other interesting questions and relationships were considered as a way to more fully describe the sample. These relationships will add to the understanding of multiracial individuals and their given experiences. The following is a series of predicted relationships between instrument scales and subscales.

1. **MCRS subscales: Others Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage (OSDRRH) (frequency and distress) and Challenges with Racial Identity (CRID)**
will correlate negatively with TSCS-2: Identity (IDN) and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure – Revised (MEIM-R) (Total, Exploration, and Commitment).

2. MCRS subscales: Others Surprise and Disblief Regarding Racial Heritage (OSDRRH) (frequency and distress) and Challenges with Racial Identity (CRID) will correlate negatively with the TSCS-2: Physical Self-Concept (PHY).

3. MCRS subscales: Lack of Family Acceptance (LFA) (frequency and distress) will correlate negatively with the TSCS-2: Family self-concept (FAM) and Social self-concept (SOC).

4. MCRS subscale: Multiracial Pride (MRP) will correlate positively with the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure – Revised (MEIM-R) (Total, Exploration, and Commitment).

5. MCRS subscale: Challenges with Racial Identity (CRID) will correlate negatively with the TSCS-2: Social Self-concept (SOC).

**Summary**

This chapter outlined information regarding participants, instrumentation, recruitment and data collection procedures, design, statistical analyses, the research question, and hypotheses of this study. Several instruments were employed to measure aspects of the multiracial experience (i.e., the MCRS, Appendix F, G), self-concept (i.e., the TSCS-2, Appendix H), and ethnic identity (i.e., the MEIM-R, Appendix I, J), along with a race experience and open-ended questionnaires (Appendix K, L). One-hundred twenty eight participants took part in this study. Data were described by means and standard deviations and analyzed by using Pearson $r$ correlations. Results are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER III
RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to gain additional information about the experiences of multiracial individuals, and specifically to examine the relationship between racial ambiguity and self-concept in multiracial individuals. As physical appearance represents an important aspect of racial identity, the goal of this research was to better understand the cost of not having an easily identifiable racial identity. This was accomplished by determining the degree to which the two primary variables (i.e. racial ambiguity and self-concept) were related by calculating correlation coefficients. The research question was, what is the relationship between racial ambiguity and self-concept? A number of other relationships were also explored to further describe the sample as well as to better understand to what degree varying aspects of self-concept are related to multiracial challenges and resiliency as well as ethnic identity. These additional relationship explorations are important as they provide different, more nuanced information that ultimately contributes to the broader picture of the multiracial experience.

The current chapter is divided into several parts. First, the preliminary analysis is described and findings are reported. Second, descriptive findings are reported for each scale and subscale. The descriptive findings are used to increase understanding of the experiences of multiracial individuals. Third, bivariate correlations are reported, described and expressed in a correlation matrix table. The correlation coefficients are
used to examine the study hypotheses. This chapter ends with a brief summary of the results.

**Preliminary Analysis**

Prior to conducting the main analyses, the data were screened for completion and outliers. A total of 162 people accessed the survey. Thirty-four people did not complete the survey for unknown reasons and their partial data were not counted in the analyses. Participants were given the option to opt-out of the survey at the informed consent page and subsequently given space to indicate why. No participants utilized this option. Additionally, open-ended questions were available to participants at the end of the survey, but only to those who answered each question of the survey.

Each question asked was required to be answered in order to move forward through the survey. Participants chose to stop in four different areas of the survey. Six participants stopped at the demographics question, “What state or US territory do you reside in?” question. Four participants stopped at the “I’ll never be as smart as other people” question of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale – 2 (TSCS-2). Four participants stopped at the “Because I am multiracial, I do NOT have a strong sense of who I am” question of the Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale (MCRS). The rest of the participants who chose to discontinue ($n = 20$) simply did not answer a single question of the survey beyond clicking “yes” to the consent document.

While interesting to note that participants chose to discontinue in clusters around three specific questions, it is difficult to ascertain why they chose to stop at those particular questions. However, one logical reason participants chose to stop at the demographic question requiring a participant to indicate what state they were residing in
could be a reflection of international participants attempting to complete the survey. Several participants included additional demographic information in the “optional feedback” section. Two participants explained that they were American but living outside of the United States currently. One participant claimed Canadian citizenship and clicked “Colorado” for state of home residence. Lastly, at least one participant acknowledged European citizenship and residence and had randomly chosen a state to move forward in the survey. That participant’s survey information was not included. Therefore, it is possible that the six aforementioned participants reached the state of residence question and chose to stop as they recognized they could not claim a U.S. state of residence. This point is discussed in further detail in the discussion chapter.

Before examining the hypotheses of the study, it was important to explore whether contextual factors impacted the data that was collected (i.e., TSCS-2, MEIM-R, MCRS). Contextual factors are aspects, sometimes uncontrollable ones, of a participant’s life that may impact his or her lived experience. For the purposes of this study, group differences in scores on the TSCS-2, MEIM-R and MCRS were examined based on participant location, age, gender, education, and race. Using SPSS 21 statistical software, a t-test (i.e., for gender and race) and ANOVAs (i.e., for location, education, and age) were performed for each demographic variable. When differences were detected, they were further examined to detect specific interactions. This step was performed as a way to determine if demographic variables should be incorporated into hypothesis testing analyses. The following will describe these analyses.
Gender

Results in this domain should be interpreted with caution because of the low number of men represented in the study, 31 (i.e., 24%) out of 128 participants. T-test analyses (Table 4) indicated no significant differences between men and women in either the TSCS-2 or the MEIM-R. However, women tended to endorse higher scores on two subscales of the MCRS; Lack of Family Acceptance (frequency) \( (t(126) = -2.45, p = .02) \) and Lack of Family Acceptance (distress) \( (t(126) = -2.95, p = .00) \).

Table 4

Gender Difference T-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Men M</th>
<th>Men SD</th>
<th>Women M</th>
<th>Women SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. TSCS - TOT</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
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<td>2. TSCS - PHY</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
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<td>3. TSCS - MOR</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. TSCS - PER</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.60</td>
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<td>0.66</td>
<td>3.71</td>
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<td>0.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. TSCS - FAM</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.68</td>
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<td>6. TSCS - SOC</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.37</td>
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<td>7. TSCS - ACA</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.49</td>
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<td>8. TSCS - ID</td>
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<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.50</td>
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<td>3.47</td>
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<td>0.56</td>
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<td>10. TSCS - BHV</td>
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<td>0.45</td>
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<td>11. MEIM - TOT</td>
<td>3.79</td>
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<td>0.79</td>
<td>3.75</td>
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<td>12. MEIM - EXPL</td>
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<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.98</td>
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<td>13. MEIM - COMM</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. MCRS - CRID</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. MCRS - AHD</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. MCRS - MRP</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. MCRS - OSDRRHf</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. MCRS - OSDRRHd</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.28</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. MCRS - LFAf</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. MCRS - LFAd</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>0.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. MCRS - MDf</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. MCRS - MDd</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.79</td>
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</table>

Note. TSCS = Tennessee Self-Concept Scale – 2; TOT = overall self-concept; MEIM = Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (R) – TOT = overall ethnic identity; MCRS = Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale; CRID = Challenges with Racial Identity; AHD = Appreciation of Human Differences; MRP = Multiracial Pride; OSDRRH = Other’s surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage (f = frequency, d = distress); LFA = Lack of Family Acceptance (f = frequency, d = distress); MD = Multiracial Discrimination (f=frequency, d=distress). N = 128, **= p < .01; *= p < .05.
The potential impact of observed gender differences for Lack of Family Acceptance (frequency and distress) was further explored by examining correlations computed according to gender. When calculated separately, female participants yielded statistically significant negative correlations between LFA (frequency and distress) and FAM (frequency; $r = -.42, p = .00$, distress; $r = -.37, p = .00$) while the men did not. Despite this, the overall pattern of results stayed the same regardless of gender. Thus, gender was not a strong enough demographic variable to be included in the main analyses.

**Location**

To examine group differences according to location, participant data were divided up according to reported state of residence and assigned a specific region of the country (Appendix D). Four regions were created: West, Midwest, South, and Northeast. A series of ANOVAs were performed to test for significant mean differences across each of the four different geographic regions represented in the sample. The Tukey post hoc analysis was performed to examine statistically significant differences for individual variables. The Tukey test was chosen as the conservative nature of the test would guard against errors due to a relatively small sample size. There were no significant differences in self-concept (TSCS:2 and each subscale), ethnic identity (MEIM-R and each subscale), or MCRS subscale responses according to geographic region.

**Age**

To examine group differences according to age, participant data were grouped according to age. Participants were divided up into five different age groups: (a) 18-22, $n = 31$; (b) 23-28, $n = 38$; (c) 29-33, $n = 28$; (d) 34-39, $n = 17$; and (e) 40-61, $n = 14$. The
participants were grouped according to perceived cohort. Each age cohort was thought to represent stages in an individual’s life which could include overlapping aspects of education, family, and career. For example, the youngest aged cohort, 18-22, could represent college students.

The three youngest groups were fairly balanced with group d and e having significantly fewer participants than groups a-c. A series of ANOVA’s were performed across five age groups to test for significant mean differences (Table 5). The Tukey post hoc analysis was performed to examine statistically significant differences among individual variables. There were no significant differences in overall self-concept or ethnic identity according to age. However, there was a significant difference in one of the factors of the MCRS; Multiracial Pride \( F(4, 123) = 4.26, p = .00 \). Multiracial pride was significantly higher for participants aged 23-28, than for participants aged 40-61.

The potential impact of observed age differences for Multiracial Pride was further explored by examining correlations computed separately for the 23-28 age group and the 40-61 age group. The youngest participants yielded statistically significant positive correlations between MRP and TOT \( r = .34, p = .04 \), PHY \( r = .405, p = .01 \), FAM \( r = .36, p = .03 \), and IDN \( r = .52, p = .00 \) while the oldest participants did not. Despite these correlations, the overall pattern of results stayed the same regardless of age. Thus, age was not a strong enough demographic variable to be included in the main analyses.
Table 5

*Age Difference ANOVA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>18-22</th>
<th>23-28</th>
<th>29-33</th>
<th>34-39</th>
<th>40-61</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. TSCS – TOT</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. TSCS – PHY</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. TSCS – MOR</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. TSCS – PER</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. TSCS – FAM</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. TSCS – SOC</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. TSCS – ACA</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. TSCS – ID</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. TSCS – SAT</td>
<td>3.47</td>
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<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>3.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. TSCS – BHV</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>3.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. MEIM – TOT</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. MEIM – EXPL</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. MEIM – COMM</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>3.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. MCRS – CRID</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. MCRS – AHD</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. MCRS – MRP</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>4.44**</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. MCRS – OSDRRHf</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. MCRS – OSDRRHd</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. MCRS – LFAf</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. MCRS – LFAd</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. MCRS – MDf</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. MCRS – MDd</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Note.** TSCS = Tennessee Self-Concept Scale – 2; TOT = overall self-concept; MEIM = Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (R) – TOT = overall ethnic identity; MCRS = Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale; CRID = Challenges with Racial Identity; AHD = Appreciation of Human Differences; MRP = Multiracial Pride; OSDRRH = Other’s surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage (f = frequency, d = distress); LFA = Lack of Family Acceptance (f = frequency, d = distress); MD = Multiracial Discrimination (f = frequency, d = distress). N = 128, **p < .01; *p < .05.
**Education**

To examine differences according to education, data were grouped according to reported participant education: (a) High School, \( n = 40 \); (b) Associate’s degree, \( n = 10 \); (c) Bachelor’s degree, \( n = 46 \); and (d) Graduate degree, \( n = 32 \). Master’s degree holders were combined with Doctoral degree holders to balance the group sizes. A series of ANOVAs were performed to test for statistically significant group differences across the four education levels represented in the sample. The Tukey post hoc analysis was performed to examine statistically significant differences among individual variables. There were no significant differences in self-concept (TSCS:2 and each subscale), ethnic identity (MEIM-R and each subscale), or MCRS subscale responses according to education level.

**Race**

Participants were encouraged to endorse each race that was included in their racial backgrounds. This gave participants freedom to express who they are from a racial standpoint. Because each participant was given this opportunity, a wide variety of racial identity responses was recorded. Given this wide variety and small sizes of racial subgroups, it would not have been useful to make comparisons across all groups given the low statistical power.

One group that did have an adequate size was that of participants who reported a racial background with both Asian heritage as well as White racial heritage. There were 67 Asian-White participants who comprised approximately half of the entire sample (52%). To examine differences between Asian-Whites and the rest of the sample, t-tests were performed. T-test analyses indicated no significant differences between Asian-
Whites and the rest of the sample in self-concept or ethnic identity (Table 6). However, there were significant differences in five scales of the MCRS: Others’ Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage (frequency \[t(126) = -1.99, p = .05\]), Lack of Family Acceptance (both frequency \[t(126) = -3.53, p = .00\] and distress \[t(126) = -3.17, p = .00\]) and Multiracial Discrimination (both frequency \[t(126) = -2.97, p = .00\] and distress\[t(126) = -2.24, p = .03\]). Asian-White participants reported significantly less surprise and disbelief regarding their race as compared to the rest of the sample. They also reported significantly more family acceptance as well as less multiracial discrimination as compared to the rest of the sample, both in terms of frequency and level of distress.

During the correlational analysis, race was controlled for to see if Others Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage (OSDRRH) (frequency), Lack of Family Acceptance (LFA) (frequency and distress), and Multiracial discrimination (MD) (frequency and distress) were affected. More specifically, correlational coefficients were calculated separately for the Asian-White group and the remainder of the sample to examine the pattern of statistically significant correlations between the two groups.

As a group, the Asian-White participants yielded a number of statistically significant correlations that the remainder of the sample did not. Of the five MCRS scales where mean differences were detected, each yielded statistically significant correlations except for OSDRRH (frequency). Multiracial Discrimination (frequency and distress) was correlated negatively with Total Self-Concept (TOT) (frequency; \(r = -.28, p = .02\) and distress; \(r = -.37, p = .00\)), Physical Self-Concept (PHY) (distress; \(r = -.32, p = .01\)), Personal Self-Concept (PER) (frequency; \(r = -.29, p = .02\) and distress; \(r = -.44, p = .00\)),
Social Self-Concept (SOC) (distress; \( r = -0.34, p = .01 \)), Identity (IDN) (frequency; \( r = -0.34, p = .01 \), and distress; \( r = -0.47, p = .00 \)), Satisfaction (SAT) (frequency; \( r = -0.28, p = .02 \) and distress; \( r = -0.32, p = .01 \)), and Behavior (BHV) (distress; \( r = -0.28, p = .02 \)). The remainder of the sample did not yield these statistically significant negative correlations.

Additionally, MD was significantly correlated in a positive direction with MEIM-EXPL (frequency; \( r = 0.27, p = .03 \) and distress; \( r = 0.25, p = .04 \)) whereas the remainder of the sample was not. Lastly, Lack of Family Acceptance (distress) was negatively correlated with Social Self-Concept (SOC) \( (r = -0.27, p = .03) \) while the remainder of the sample was not.

Table 6

*Race Difference T-Test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>( M )</th>
<th>Asian/White</th>
<th>( SD )</th>
<th>Remaining</th>
<th>( SD )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. TSCS – TOT</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. TSCS – PHY</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. TSCS – MOR</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. TSCS – PER</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. TSCS – FAM</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. TSCS – SOC</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. TSCS – ACA</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. TSCS – ID</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. TSCS – SAT</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. TSCS – BHV</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. MEIM – TOT</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.91</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. MEIM – EXPL</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.55</td>
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<td>13. MEIM – COMM</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>3.54</td>
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<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. MCRS – CRID</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>2.17</td>
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<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.07</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. MCRS – OSDRRHf</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. MCRS – OSDRRHd</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>0.09</td>
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Table 6—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Asian/White</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Remaining</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. MCRS – LFAf</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>0.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. MCRS – LFAd</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>0.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. MCRS – MDf</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>2.59</td>
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<td>22. MCRS – MDd</td>
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<td>1.18</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. TSCS = Tennessee Self-Concept Scale – 2; TOT = overall self-concept; MEIM = Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (R) – TOT = overall ethnic identity; MCRS = Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale; CRID = Challenges with Racial Identity; AHD = Appreciation of Human Differences; MRP = Multiracial Pride; OSDRRH = Other’s surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage (f = frequency, d = distress); LFA = Lack of Family Acceptance (f = frequency, d = distress); MD = Multiracial Discrimination (f = frequency, d = distress). Asian/White (n = 67), Remaining (n = 61); ** = p < .01; * = p < .05.

Summary

A few of the demographic variables seemed to influence how participants described their experiences. In terms of gender, women tended to report a lack of family acceptance more than men. Age only tended to matter in terms of multiracial pride. Younger participants tended to report more pride than older (>40 years old) participants. Conversely, location did not yield any significant effects even though participants reported being from 31 different U.S. states. Lastly, in terms of race, Asian-White participants yielded significant differences as compared to other participants with regard to how much multiracial discrimination they face, how much family support they perceive they have, and how much surprise they face regarding their racial heritage. These differences for Asian/White participants were also reflected in the strength of correlations among study variables. A more thorough discussion is provided in the following chapter.

Due to the high number of correlations, this researcher acknowledges that the probability of a type I error is high. With over 100 comparisons (22 variables, 5 sets of
demographic comparisons), with alpha set at .05, there are expected to be at least 5 significant results by chance as opposed to a real difference.

**Descriptive Findings**

This section provides a detailed description of findings for the final sample ($N = 128$), organized in two major subsections in accordance with the performed analysis. First the sample is described by reporting the mean and standard deviation for each scale and subscale. Given that multiracial Americans are an under-studied group, the descriptive information pertaining to their lived experiences, their self-concepts, and ethnic identity will contribute valuable information about multiracial people in general. The second section addresses the study’s hypotheses and includes results from bivariate correlations as a way to describe the relationships between scales yielded by the three instruments utilized in this study; the TSCS-2, the MEIM-R, and the MCRS. Statistical significance tests were set at .05.

**Means and Standard Deviations**

Means and standard deviations are presented for each of the three instruments and their subscales. Self-Concept was assessed by using the TSCS-2. Raw scores were used to calculate means and stand deviations of Total Self-Concept (i.e., TOT), the six subscales (i.e. ACA, SOC, FAM, PER, MOR, and PHY), and the three supplementary scales (i.e., BHV, SAT, and IDN) (Table 7). Scores ranged from 1 to 5 with higher scores being indicative of higher self-concept. The mean score for the current sample of overall self-concept was ($M = 3.69, SD = .45$).
Table 7

*TSCS-2 Raw Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. TOT</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. PHY</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.85</td>
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<td>3. PER</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. MOR</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. FAM</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. SOC</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. ACA</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. IDN</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. SAT</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. BHV</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. TSCS = Tennessee Self-Concept Scale – 2; TOT = overall self-concept; PHY = Physical Self-Concept; PER = Personal Self-Concept; MOR = Moral Self-Concept; FAM = Family Self-Concept; SOC = Social Self-Concept; ACA = Academic Self-Concept; IDN = Identity (supplementary score); SAT = Satisfaction (supplementary score); BHV = Behavior (supplementary score). 1 = Always false to 5 = Always true. N = 128.

Total self-concept was calculated by summing every raw score, less the eight “self-critical” (SC) items, for each participant (Fitz & Warren, 1996). The summed scores each corresponded with a T-score found on the TSCS-2 profile sheet. Similarly, each TSCS-2 subscale (e.g., PHY) also required a summation of specific raw scores which corresponded with a T-score found on the TSCS-2 profile sheet. Means and standard deviations were calculated for overall self-concept, the subscales, and supplementary scales (Table 8). T-scores were included as a way to help describe where the sample as a whole in terms of self-concept, relative to the general population. “T-scores are standard scores with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. Scores below a 40 on any scale fall at least one standard deviation below the mean and a T-score above 60 falls at least one standard deviation above the mean” (p. 13). T-scores range from a low of 20 to a high of 80 with a normal range of 40-60.
Table 8

*TSCS-2 T-Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T-score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. TOT</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>273.14</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>2. PHY</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>48.81</td>
<td>8.54</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PER</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>44.55</td>
<td>7.26</td>
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<td>4. MOR</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>47.33</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. FAM</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>42.28</td>
<td>8.56</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. SOC</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>6.05</td>
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<td>7. ACA</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>45.75</td>
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<td>8. IDN</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>83.54</td>
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<td>9. SAT</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>72.85</td>
<td>11.96</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. BHV</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>9.05</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* TSCS = Tennessee Self-Concept Scale – 2; TOT = overall self-concept; PHY = Physical Self-Concept; PER = Personal Self-Concept; MOR = Moral Self-Concept; FAM = Family Self-Concept; SOC = Social Self-Concept; ACA = Academic Self-Concept; IDN = Identity (supplementary score); SAT = Satisfaction (supplementary score); BHV = Behavior (supplementary score).

Participants tended to score within the normal range for each scale. Academic self-concept (ACA) was the single highest scale with an average score of 49T. Conversely, the lowest average T-score was for Family Self-Concept (FAM) with an average T-score slightly below the normal range at 39T. Another T-score which was borderline (40T) was that of the supplementary scale Identity (IDN). Although it is technically not under 40T, Fitz and Warren (1996) noted that “when the IDN score is below 40T, it is an indication of an actively negative self-view.” Correlations discussed later will also address IDN.

The MCRS was used to describe and measure racial ambiguity as well as four other constructs (Table 9). OSDRRH and CRID were the specific scales used to estimate a multiracial individual’s racial ambiguity. Both frequency and distress for part I were based on a 0 to 5 Likert scale. Higher scores indicated higher frequency of the given
construct and higher levels of distress. Similarly, part 2 was also based on a 0 to 5 Likert scale. Higher scores indicated greater levels of distress pertaining to the given construct.

Participants tended to score highest on two of the resilience subscales, AHD ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.56$) and MRP ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.99$). More specifically, participants reported high levels of appreciation for human difference as well as multiracial pride. Conversely, participants scored lowest on LFA (frequency and distress). This suggests that participants generally see themselves as having supportive families. Similarly, participants generally did not report feeling distressed at having other people act surprised at their racial heritage (OSDRRHd) ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 1.30$). As a whole however, participants reported experiencing others’ surprise and disbelief relatively frequently (OSDRRHf) ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.25$). Overall, participants tended to score higher on the two resiliency scales (AHD and MRP) than the challenge scales.

Table 9

### MCRS Raw Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. CRID</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. AHD</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. MRP</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. OSDRRHf</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. OSDRRHd</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. LFAf</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. LFAAd</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. MDf</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. MDd</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* MCRS = Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale; CRID = Challenges with Racial Identity; AHD = Appreciation of Human Differences; MRP = Multiracial Pride; OSDRRH = Other’s surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage (f = frequency, d = distress); LFA = Lack of Family Acceptance (f = frequency, d = distress); MD = Multiracial Discrimination (f = frequency, d = distress). Frequency: 0 = Never happened to me to 5 = Happened to me more than 10 times. Distress: 0 = Not at all distressed to 5 = Extremely distressed. Part II: 0 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. $N = 128$. 

The MEIM-R was used to measure ethnic identity (Table 10). The MEIM-R yields two subscales, which were developed to describe a person’s level of exploration and commitment towards his or her ethnic identity. Scores are based on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) Likert scale. A score of 3 was meant to be a neutral position. Higher scores are indicative of higher levels of ethnic identity. The mean score for the current sample for overall ethnic identity (TOT) was \( M = 3.78, SD = .75 \).

Participants tended to answer slightly above neutral on average, indicating somewhat of an agreement with the ideas emphasized in the questions. The EXPL subscale yielded a slightly higher average \( M = 4.08, SD = 0.80 \) than for TOT \( M = 3.78, SD = .75 \) and COMM \( M = 3.47, SD = 0.87 \) for participants. This may be particularly indicative of multiracial individuals as it can be assumed that they are especially cognizant of their ethnic backgrounds while at the same time not necessarily having a solid ethnic identity or commitment to understanding it.

Table 10

**MEIM-R Raw Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>( M )</th>
<th>( SD )</th>
<th>( \alpha )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMM</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPL</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. MEIM-R = Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (revised); TOT = overall ethnic identity; COMM = Commitment; EXPL = Exploration. Responses were based on a 1-5 scale, higher scores indicating higher levels of each construct. \( N = 128 \).*

**Race Experience Questionnaire**

Participants were asked as part of the demographics questionnaire to rate on a Likert-style set of questions their experiences with race. Scores ranged from 1 (never) to
5 (frequently). Means of participant responses are reported in Table 11. Several of the questions (i.e., 1, 3, 5 and 9) stood out in terms of how participants answered. For question 1, “People ask me about my race”, 95% of participants responded with at least “sometimes”, with almost half (47%) of participants indicating that they “frequently” get asked about their race. Similarly, 93% of participant’s reported that they at least sometimes get asked the question “what are you?” with 44% reporting that the question is posed “frequently”. Thirty-four percent of the participants in the sample indicated that they think about race frequently. Lastly, 85% of the participants report that at least sometimes “people inaccurately believe” they are a member of a certain racial group, with 40% of participants indicating that it happens frequently.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. People ask me about my race</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. People stare at me because of my race</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am asked the question, &quot;what are you?&quot;</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel self-conscious about my race.</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I think about my race.</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I receive unwanted attention regarding my race</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I wonder if people are confused by my race.</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. People assume that I am monoracial.</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. People inaccurately believe I am a member of a certain racial group.</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Participants rated each question on a 1 (never) to 5 (frequently) Likert-type scale. N = 128.*

**Correlation Hypotheses and Results**

A correlation matrix was created (Table 12) to examine the relationships between each of the variables described in the hypotheses and included in Tables 4-6. Bivariate
correlations among study variables are Pearson correlation coefficients. The following is a brief description of the hypotheses as well as results based on the observed data.

**Hypothesis 1**

MCRS – Others’ Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage (OSDRRH) (frequency and distress) will negatively correlate with TSCS-2 – Total Self-Concept (TOT). TOT correlated negatively with OSDRRH distress \( r = -.28, p = .00 \). This indicates that there is a small negative association between self-concept and the distress with other’s surprise and disbelief regarding racial heritage. The correlation between TOT and OSDRRH frequency was not statistically significant.

**Hypothesis 2**

MCRS – Challenges With Racial Identity (CRID) will negatively correlate with TSCS-2 – Total Self-Concept (TOT). TOT correlated negatively with CRID \( r = -.47, p = .00 \). This indicates a moderate negative association between self-concept and challenges with racial identity.

**Additional Questions Regarding Other Relationships**

In addition to the two primary hypotheses focusing on the relationship between racial ambiguity and self-concept, a number of other questions and relationships were explored as a way to help describe the sample.

It was predicted that Others’ Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage (OSDRRH) and Challenges with Racial Identity (CRID) would correlate negatively with the TSCS: 2 – Identity (IDN) and the MEIM – R Total Ethnic Identity (TOT), Exploration of Ethnic Identity (EXPL) and Commitment to Ethnic Identity (COMM). Correlations between IDN and OSDRRH-frequency were not statistically significant.
However, correlations between IDN and OSDRRH-distress were significantly negative \((r = -.35, p = .00)\). This indicates a moderate negative association between Identity and others’ surprise with one’s racial heritage. Correlations between IDN and CRID were significantly negative \((r = -.40, p = .00)\) as well. This indicates a moderate negative association between Identity and challenges with racial identity. Correlations between the MEIM-R (TOT, EXPL, and COMM) and OSDRRH (frequency and distress) were not statistically significant. However, correlations between the MEIM-R (TOT) and CRID were significantly negative \((r = -.21, p = .00)\). This indicates a small negative association between ethnic identity and challenges with racial identity. Correlations between the MEIM-R (COMM) and CRID were also significantly negative \((r = -.31, p = .00)\). This indicates a small negative association between ethnic identity commitment and challenges with racial identity. Correlations between the MEIM-R (EXPL) and CRID were not statistically significant. Overall, there was some evidence to suggest a negative relationship between racial ambiguity and ethnic identity and identity development.

OSDHRH (frequency and distress) and CRID were predicted to correlate negatively with TSCS-2 (PHY). Correlations between OSDRRH frequency and PHY were not statistically significant. However, correlations between OSDRRH distress and PHY were significantly negative \((r = -.22, p = .01)\). This indicates a small negative association between OSDRRH distress and physical self-concept. Correlations between CRID and PHY were significantly negative \((r = -.37, p = .00)\). This indicates a moderate negative association between challenges with racial identity and physical self-concept. Overall, these results indicate a small negative relationship between racial ambiguity and physical self-concept.
Lack of Family Acceptance (LFA) (frequency and distress) were predicted to negatively correlate with Family Self-Concept (FAM) and Social Self-Concept (SOC). Correlations between LFA frequency and FAM were significantly negative ($r = -.36, p = .00$). This indicates a moderate negative association between the reported frequency of the lack of family acceptance and family self-concept. LFA distress and FAM was also significantly negatively correlated ($r = -.34, p = .00$). This indicates a moderate negative association between the distress associated with a lack of family acceptance and family self-concept. Correlations between LFA (frequency and distress) and SOC were not statistically significant. Overall, these results indicate a moderately negative relationship between a lack of family acceptance and family self-concept.

Multiracial Pride (MRP) was predicted to correlate positively with the MEIM-R (TOT, EXPL, and COMM). MRP significantly correlated with MEIM –R (TOT) ($r = .32, p = .00$). This indicates a moderate positive association between overall ethnic identity and multiracial pride. MRP significantly correlated with MEIM-R (EXPL) ($r = .19, p = .03$). This indicates a small positive association between the exploration of ethnic identity and multiracial pride. MRP also significantly correlated with MEIM-R (COMM) ($r = .36, p = .00$). This indicates a moderate positive association between the commitment of understanding one’s ethnic identity and multiracial pride. Overall, these results indicate a small positive relationship between ethnic identity and multiracial pride.

Finally, CRID was predicted to correlate negatively with SOC. CRID significantly correlated with SOC ($r = -.50, p = .00$). This indicates a moderate negative association between challenges with racial identity and social self-concept.

Overall, a number of predictions were made about the relationships between
several of the MCRS subscales and various levels of self-concept and ethnic identity. The frequency variable was included in seven predictions as was the distress variable. The frequency variable yielded only one statistically significant correlation (LFA and FAM) whereas the distress variable yielded four. Additionally, 16 predictions were made with 14 yielding the anticipated result.
Table 12

**Pearson Correlation Matrix**

<table>
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<th>Scale</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
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<th>18</th>
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<tr>
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*Note.* TSCS = Tennessee Self-Concept Scale – 2; TOT = overall self-concept; PHY = Physical Self-Concept; PER = Personal Self-Concept; MOR = Moral Self-Concept; FAM = Family Self-Concept; SOC = Social Self-Concept; ACA = Academic Self-Concept; IDN = Identity (supplementary score); SAT = Satisfaction (supplementary score); BHV = Behavior (supplementary score); MEIM-TOT = Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure overall ethnic identity; EXPLOR = Exploration; MEIM - COMM = Commitment; MCRS = Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale; CRID = Challenges with Racial Identity; AHD = Appreciation of Human Differences; MRP = Multiracial Pride; OSDRRH = Other’s surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage (f=frequency, d=distress); LFA = Lack of Family Acceptance (f=frequency, d=distress); MD = Multiracial Discrimination (f=frequency, d=distress) **p < .01; *p < .05
CHAPTER IV
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to gain additional information about the experiences of multiracial individuals, and specifically to examine the relationship between racial ambiguity and self-concept in multiracial individuals. As physical appearance represents an important aspect of racial identity, the goal of this research was to better understand the cost of not having an easily identifiable racial identity. This was accomplished by determining the degree to which the two primary variables (i.e. racial ambiguity and self-concept) were related by calculating correlation coefficients. The research question was, what is the relationship between racial ambiguity and self-concept? A number of other relationships were also explored to further describe the sample as well as to better understand to what degree varying aspects of self-concept are related to multiracial challenges and resiliency as well as ethnic identity. These additional relationship explorations are important as they provide different, more nuanced information that ultimately contributes to the broader picture of the multiracial experience.

In this chapter, the study’s findings are summarized and more thoroughly examined. More specifically, the chapter begins with a review of the preliminary analyses, race experience questionnaire, hypotheses, and the additional relationships that were explored. Next is a discussion regarding the open-ended questions and feedback. The next section includes implications for counseling, future research, as well as the significance of the study. The chapter ends with closing remarks.
Preliminary Analyses Review

Several interesting findings were taken from the preliminary analyses including significant group differences according to gender, age, and race. Starting with gender, women were almost twice as likely to endorse items that suggested a lack of family acceptance both in terms of frequency and distress. A possible explanation for this could simply be an underlying level of sexism. Women may be given less choice to express who they are and face a different kind of expectation from family as compared to their male counterparts.

In terms of age, younger participants (i.e., 23-28) reported significantly more multiracial pride than the oldest age group of participants (i.e., 40-61). For younger participants, highly visible, popular, and important contemporary figures like Tiger Woods and President Barack Obama have likely done more than they know in easing this country’s attitudes about multiracial individuals. In considering this country’s history with race and particularly the racial climate over the last 50 years, it is clear that older participants will likely have a different developmental trajectory based on lived experience and thus a vastly different perspective on race as compared to their younger counterparts. The Loving vs Virginia (1967) Supreme Court decision occurred 47 years ago. Although only two participants were alive during that time, most participants in groups four and five likely had parents who were products of an era that disallowed interracial marrying. More importantly, older participants were alive during times (e.g., 70s and 80s) when interracial dating was not nearly as common as it is today and there simply were not as many multiracial individuals alive. These factors will likely shape how an individual feels about the idea of being multiracial. Additionally, identity
development models in general suggest that pride is often a characteristic that emerges in young adulthood as an individual is claiming one’s initial adult roots.

Although location was not a significant variable in terms of participant survey responses, it is important to note that the majority of participants (71%) hailed from either the west coast or the northeast. States that yielded the highest number of participants were California ($n = 37$), New York ($n = 10$), Massachusetts ($n = 11$), Hawaii ($n = 7$) and Washington ($n = 7$). 2010 U.S. Census data indicates that California has the highest number of multiracial individuals living in the U.S. (i.e. 1.8 million). Furthermore, U.S. Census data also indicates that sixty percent of multiracial individuals live in one of 10 states including California, New York, Hawaii, and Washington. Thus, the sample somewhat reflects geographically some of the national trends as to where multiracial people tend to live. These numbers could also be indicative of how race is experienced or conceptualized according to geographic region in the United States. In other words, participants living in coastal cities may have a different race experience (e.g., receiving differing messages about their racial identities) as compared to participants living in the South or Midwest. For example, a Black/White American living in Birmingham, Alabama may choose to self-identify differently than a Black/White American living in Seattle, Washington because of the differing racial climates of each city. This simply provides more evidence of the importance of social context as impacting racial identity development.

In terms of racial group differences, one group was large enough to generate some general conclusions: Asian/White participants ($n = 67$). The Asian/White imbalance of the sample was not a complete surprise given where participants were reportedly coming
from. The highest represented states (i.e. California, New York, Hawaii, and Washington) also tend to be in regions of the country with the highest national representations of Asian/White individuals as reported by the U.S. Census. For example, Asian/White individuals represent 47% of the multiracial population in the Western United States (U.S. Census, 2010). Additionally, one of the larger recruitment vehicles that was utilized for this study, Hapa, tends to be frequented in large part by half Asians. Thus, the large number of Asian/White participants does not appear to be unusual or surprising.

Asian/White participants reported significantly less confusion from others regarding their races as well as more acceptance from family. Additionally, as a group, Asian/White participants reported experiencing significantly less multiracial discrimination. Lighter skin tone is potentially a primary factor impacting each of the aforementioned differences. In general, possessing a lighter skin tone is helpful in “passing” (i.e., appearing White) and perhaps less confusing. The same idea applies to multiracial discrimination. Being light skinned is likely to yield less multiracial discrimination from any number of sources. Additionally, Asians can potentially represent the model minority image and thus garner less negative attention from the dominant White cultural mainstream. Family acceptance may be more complicated. For example, one explanation for the acceptance from family could be due to internalized racism and the subsequent belief that being half White is better or more acceptable than being part any other race.

Asian/White participants compared to the rest of the sample yielded some statistically significant results. Although they reported experiencing multiracial
discrimination with less frequency, when they did, Asian/White participants experienced multiracial discrimination with a heightened connection to their self-concepts. Reported distress from feeling discriminated against had a direct negative relationship to a participant’s overall self-concept, physical self-concept, personal self-concept, and social self-concept. In other words, the more multiracial discrimination an Asian/White participant perceived, the lower self-concept tended to be overall and particularly in physical, persona and social domains. Additionally, each of the supplementary scales, which were theoretically based on internal frames of reference (identity, satisfaction, and behavior) yielded the same negative correlational result. Correlational data also showed that Asian/White participants who reported high amounts of distress associated with a lack of family acceptance yielded lower social self-concepts. This aligns with at least two developmental challenges that multiracial people could potentially face: (a) double rejection and (b) feeling forced to justify an identity choice (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Double rejection refers to rejection from both race backgrounds (e.g., Asian side and White side). A possible reason for familial rejection could stem from racially identifying a certain way that went against a racial identity emphasized or promoted by family.

Interestingly, the one positive correlation that was distinct for Asian/White participants was the experience of multiracial discrimination being positively connected to exploration of ethnic identity. In other words, the more multiracial discrimination a participant experienced, the more one desired to explore one’s ethnic identity. Miville et al. (2005) described a distinct kind of multiracial discrimination or “multiracial racism” and linked it to the “What are you?” question. The current observation may suggest that
for Asian/White participants in particular, there is significant need to define or explore one’s ethnic identity after being met with questions or racist attitudes.

Overall, the preliminary findings were important to report and to help describe the sample. Three of the demographic variables were associated with important differences in dependent variables and the relationships among them. Women were more likely to report lower levels of family acceptance. Location was not a significant factor in terms of how participants responded. However, a few general inferences were made based on participant frequency and geographic location. Asian/White participants reported higher levels of family acceptance and lower levels of multiracial discrimination and confusion from others. However, Asian/White participants also reported a distinct negative association between multiracial discrimination and a number of facets of self-concept that the remainder of the sample did not. Finally, younger participants reported experiencing more multiracial pride.

**Review of Race Experience Questionnaire**

The race experience questionnaire is another tool that was helpful in understanding participant thoughts and attitudes toward their experiences with race. In this case, it was helpful to gain a general sense of participant experiences. Almost half of the sample (44%) reported that they get the question “What are you?” frequently. Although this is not the most precise measure of a construct, it gives this researcher an idea of what the participants as a group are experiencing and what they are experiencing in terms of their race. Even more participants (47%) reported that they frequently get asked about their race. A future study could include collecting qualitative data regarding
the “What are you?” question. It would be interesting to understand better how that question impacts Multiracial Pride as well as Challenges with Racial Identity.

As was previously mentioned, the idea of having race experience questions was employed as a way to ask questions that were not asked in the other three scales. They are not psychometrically powerful, but can potentially fill in gaps. For the current study, it would be interesting to take the four questions with the highest means and turn it into another study. The four questions were specifically about how other people either ask questions or hold beliefs or opinions about the participant’s race. Because such a large percentage of participants reported experiencing these interactions with others, it would be interesting to ask more in depth questions about those types of experiences.

Review of the Hypotheses

The primary hypotheses centered on the idea that possessing racially ambiguous physical features would predict a multiracial person’s level of self-concept. Others’ surprise and disbelief regarding race as well as racial identity challenges were thought to best represent the construct of racial ambiguity. Each scale was thought to contain questions consistent with an individual who has racially ambiguous physical features. Based on literature reviewed for this study, an individual who has ambiguous physical features would yield a lower self-concept.

Hypothesis 1 was partially supported. The negative correlation between racial ambiguity and self-concept was significant. However, the frequency with which a participant is met with surprise regarding their race was not significantly correlated with self-concept. In this instance, it may be safe to assume that the sheer number of instances that a person acts surprised or is in a state of disbelief regarding another person’s racial
background could be meaningless in terms of how it informs self-concept. In other words, it may not be the number of times one experiences surprise or disbelief, but the way in which he or she experiences it. This is likely what the “distress” aspect of OSDRRH is describing – the way one experiences surprise or disbelief. Lou et al. (2011) referred to this and emphasized the power of social context and how it shapes racial identity. In other words, surprises or questions about one’s race may be impacted by the sociopolitical climate (i.e., overall attitudes about race). A context can vary greatly in terms of racial composition and can influence the extent to which a person feels a particular racial identity. For example, one’s racial identity may be shaped differently in San Francisco, California as compared to Grand Rapids, Michigan. What matters is how socially validated one’s racial identity is. A socially unvalidated racial identity could negatively impact the self-concept.

Hypothesis 2 was supported. Racial ambiguity as described by challenges with racial identity, or challenges with racial ambiguity, correlated negatively with self-concept. Each question of the CRID subscale paints a picture of a person who struggles regarding self-definition. Question 30 is in some ways the most direct question relating to self-concept in the entire survey; “Because I am multiracial, I do NOT have a strong sense of who I am”. Similarly, “I feel as if I do NOT belong to any racial group” similarly captures, not only the sense of internal confusion, but also a strong sense of non-belonging. Thus, the moderate correlation between challenges with racial identity and self-concept seems appropriate. Lou et al. (2011) described a multiracial person’s specific view on race, whether it is biological or socially constructed, as a determining factor as to the degree racial identity is connected to self-concept. Hypothesis 2
underscores this idea in that if a multiracial individual is challenged or feels racially separate or isolated, the self-concept is impacted. Usborne and Taylor (2010) described similar findings in their research regarding multiracial individuals; a clear definition of self is directly related to a clear connection to one’s cultural and or racial group.

In conclusion, it is stressful for a multiracial person to not be acknowledged. Seemingly innocuous questions, stares, or subliminal cues each are forms of the othering that is occurring by monoracial people. Each contributes to a multiracial person’s views of oneself.

**Additional Relationships**

A number of additional relationships were explored as a way to better or more fully understand the experiences of participants of the sample. As racial ambiguity (i.e., others’ surprise) was negatively correlated with self-concept, it was expected to also be negatively correlated with ethnic identity (MEIM-R) and self-concept identity (IDN). Racial ambiguity was not significantly correlated with ethnic identity in this case. In considering why, through a review of the questions of each subscale, it was clear that the questions represent constructs that are not related to each other as strongly as was theorized. Questions representing racial ambiguity (i.e., others’ surprise) seemed to underscore the significance of phenotype (i.e., physical appearance); while the MEIM-R seemed more associated with meaning and group membership (e.g., “I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group”). The MEIM-R questions also seemed to represent more of the internal frame of reference as opposed to the external frame of reference signified by racial ambiguity (i.e., OSDRRH).
Self-concept identity (IDN) was significantly correlated with racial ambiguity in a negative direction. This contributes to the idea that identity in general, or the “Who am I” question, is inversely related to the challenges and surprises regarding racial identity. On the surface, the relationship between racial ambiguity and self-concept identity seems to be simple. If an individual is struggling to belong or fit in from a racial group standpoint (e.g., “I feel the need to prove my racial identity to others”), one’s IDN score would be lower. Closely related is the idea that IDN could potentially be describing what Sanchez et al. (2009) concluded in their research regarding racial malleability. Racial malleability is the changing or shifting of one’s racial identity and is associated with negative psychological outcomes. A more stable racial identity yielded a stronger self-concept identity. Thus if IDN represents the strength with which an individual can answer the “Who am I” question, racial malleability may exist in contrast.

Similarly, if a person feels as though others are frequently “not getting it” by either acting surprised or making false assumptions, lower ethnic identity scores seem appropriate. Significant negative correlations between the challenges of racial ambiguity and ethnic identity were observed. As was previously mentioned in Hypothesis 2, challenges of racial ambiguity seem to represent the opposite of what the MEIM-R is meant to capture. Despite this, there was not a significant correlation between the challenges of racial ambiguity and the exploration of ethnic identity. There are a number of reasons that can explain this as one could be exploring their ethnic identity both for positive and negative reasons irrespective of challenges. In other words, the two ideas are not necessarily linearly related.
The correlation between the frequency with which a participant experiences racial ambiguity and physical self-concept was not statistically significant. Similar to conclusions drawn from Hypothesis 1, the frequency with which a multiracial individual experiences others’ surprise and disbelief regarding racial heritage may not be an important factor in comparison to the distress caused by racial ambiguity.

Correlations between the distress of racial ambiguity and the challenges of racial ambiguity and physical self-concept were significantly negative. These correlations were expected as they appeared to target the same ideas. For example, OSDRRHd question 7: “When I disclosed my racial background, someone acted surprised” seems to be negatively and directly related to the PHY question; “I am an attractive person”.

One of the simpler relationships to predict was that of the negative association between a lack of family acceptance and family self-concept. It is logical to assume that a multiracial individual who experiences a lack of family acceptance would yield a lowered family self-concept. High family self-concept scores are indicative of individuals who have a sense of satisfaction with their family relationships as well as a feeling of worth or value as a family member. A finding that was less discernible was the lack of a significant association between a lack of family acceptance and social self-concept. As Fitz and Warren (1996) indicated, social self-concept is “a measure of how the self is perceived in relation to others” (p. 24). It was assumed that this idea would be negatively associated with a lack of family acceptance. However, this could also simply be illustrating the difference or distinction between family relationships and other non-familial relationships. Multiracial pride was significantly associated with ethnic identity. This relationship was conceptually simple as a number of items on each scale tended to
overlap with each other. For example, the MEIM question “I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group”, is very much in line with the MRP statement “I love being multiracial”. Applying what Sanchez et al. (2009) concluded in their research provides a possible explanation as to the significance of multiracial pride and its origins. If a multiracial individual possessed a disdain for one’s multiracial background, one possible explanation could be racial malleability or a shifting racial identity. In other words, multiracial pride manifests from a multiracial individual’s ability to establish a well-defined racial identity.

Social self-concept and challenges with racial ambiguity correlated strongly. In examining some of the questions of the CRID, it is clear that although for this study it represents racial ambiguity, it also provides poignant social questions. For example, “I feel as if I do NOT belong to any racial group” is representative both in terms of race as well as social status. In other words, the idea of belonging can be multifaceted.

The hypotheses for the study were mostly supported. There was evidence to suggest an association between self-concept and racial ambiguity in multiracial individuals. The current research generally supports prior research (e.g., Lou et al., 2011; Sanchez et al., 2009; Usborne & Taylor, 2010) emphasizing the relationship between racial identity and self-concept in multiracial individuals. Social context (e.g., CRID, OSDRRH, LFA) plays a role in shaping how one feels (e.g., TOT, IDN) and to what extent (e.g., MRP) one feels good about oneself.

A number of other relationships were also explored and reported. Altogether, the correlational data combined with the self-concept group data and race experience questionnaire information provide evidence to suggest that there is a relationship between
racial ambiguity (or at the very least, physical appearance) and self-concept in multiracial individuals. Experiences of racial ambiguity, particularly the more distress an individual experiences, the less connected that individual feels toward an ethnic group, and the less clear the individual feels about their racial identity.

Theoretical ideas describing racial ambiguity were observed throughout the data. Participants largely reported receiving the question “What are you?” with a fair amount of frequency. Although location was not a significant demographic variable, it was noted that participants tended to be from particular parts of the country which provided some information both as to the significance of real geographic diversity and as well as an inference of the significance of the sociopolitical influence (i.e., social context) on racial identity development. The “what” of racial ambiguity also seemed to be present in the data. Most participants (n = 109) reported being part White. This may simply be a reflection of the raw numbers of multiracial individuals in existence but may also infer information as to the significance of racial combination. A multiracial individual with two minority component race parts (e.g., Asian/Black) may be less likely to claim a multiracial identity and more likely to claim a singular minority (e.g., “I am Black”) race identity (Khanna, 2010).

**Open-Ended Questions and Feedback**

Based on the racial self-report area of the survey, it was clear that the participants were clamoring to be able to self-identify as they saw fit. Participants were open and willing to express how they see their identities to a high degree. Nearly seventy different labels were recorded. Participants used both similar and new terms alike. Some participants used more than one term to describe themselves. Participants, perhaps like
most people, desired an openness when it came to self-definition. Pigeonholing or funneling a person into a singular box or boxes, seemed to elicit particular emotions for participants – invisibility and frustration. For example, a number of participants noted that even the standardized race categorizes were offensive or overly-simplistic. Some participants reported that some of the options for race were either outdated (i.e., obsolete) or simply not applicable.

There were two questions included as part of the open-ended feedback, which was optional and available to participants at the end of the survey. Sixty participants chose to leave feedback, whether it was a single word or several paragraphs. The first open ended feedback question was regarding the current study, what a participant would have changed about it. The second question was in regards to what the participant was anticipating and if there were questions that that individual was hoping to answer or address.

The first open-ended question yielded a lot of comments and suggestions. A number of participants took issue with the religiously oriented questions of the TSCS-2. At least nine participants specifically mentioned not having a connection to a religion, thus making the questions about “God” difficult to answer. A number of participants also wanted further clarification as to the difference between race and ethnicity as the MEIM-R specifically used the term ethnicity as opposed to race. Closely related were comments about the racial designations that were offered to choose from in the survey. A few participants were confused or put off with some of the terms that were listed including “Negro” (of the “Black, African American, or Negro” category). Additionally, despite having the option of having the ability to fill in whatever races they wanted to claim,
several participants wanted more racial categories to choose from. Lastly, several participants simply wrote in “thank you” or “good study” or “no feedback”.

The second open-ended feedback question also yielded a lot of comments, mostly from the same participants who answered the first open-ended question. The answers in this section tended to be longer and more detailed. A few participants wrote several paragraphs with specific ideas and interesting viewpoints regarding their own racial identities. For example, one participant described in detail how his racial identity had changed over time and how his experiences with people had subsequently changed as well. He was able to articulate how his appearance was more of a factor during certain periods of his life and less so during others. This ebb and flow of physical appearance being important was actually a theme for several participants. Another participant explicitly remarked that the only way to truly understand the experiences of multiracial people is through open-ended questions. It was explained that this is the only way to get the “real story”. A few participants mentioned the idea of “passing” and how their experience tended to be informed by their skin color. Lastly, as with the first open-ended question, a number of participants simply wanted to voice their appreciation of the existence of the survey.

**Implications for Counseling**

Once a symbol of novelty, multiracial individuals have slowly been gathering attention in the developmental, social, and mental health domains (Root, 1996). As the population in the United States continues to diversify and the multiracial population continues to grow, the need to understand or at least possess a perspective in regards to multiracial individuals is becoming more and more important. Clinicians working in any
number of settings will benefit from learning about the unique needs and challenges a multiracial person faces.

Based on the current study’s findings, there is evidence that there is a relationship between racial ambiguity and self-concept in multiracial people. Some counseling implications can be derived from such a finding. For example, a lowered self-concept would suggest that an individual may possess some identity-related issues. A therapist could support a client in this case by working with the client to build a stronger sense of self. It is likely that for many multiracial clients there is a heightened awareness of race, while at the same time, also a heightened amount of confusion as to how exactly this awareness fits into one’s life. Therefore, a psychoeducational piece is both relevant and necessary to the counseling process. This would come in the form of recommending certain resources to the multiracial client (e.g., social organizations) and or educating the client as to the normal developmental challenges that a multiracial person faces. Ultimately, a multiracial client’s self-concept will be based on the degree to which he or she feels a connection to a community. A therapist’s job will simply be to help facilitate a way to gain access. Furthermore, like with any counseling relationship, a therapist’s job in work with a multiracial client would be to provide empathy and understanding. Though a therapist need not be multiracial, it would be important to acknowledge whatever confusion or questioning a multiracial person may be potentially facing regarding race.

From a social justice perspective, a therapist’s job would be first and foremost, to acknowledge the racist attitudes that exist, exclude, and pervade a multiracial person’s lived experience. The racism that a multiracial person experiences may often be subtle
and difficult to identify. The confusion or questions that a multiracial person faces may seem normal in a given context and thus “okay”. Carefully listening to a multiracial person’s experience may provide just enough room for a therapist to acknowledge a client’s feelings of isolation, of not feeling understood, or frustrations with answering the same questions over and over (e.g. “what are you?”). Furthermore, simply acknowledging and or pointing out the realities of being a racial minority in the United States could speak worlds to an individual who may or may not have an idea of why one feels a certain way about oneself.

**Implications for Future Research**

The objective of this study was to understand the relationship between racial ambiguity and self-concept in multiracial individuals. Research pertaining to the multiracial population is in its relative infancy and the increasing multiracial population in the United States make research pertaining to the multiracial population important and necessary.

The primary research question was generally supported. Racial ambiguity was negatively correlated with self-concept. More specifically, the two subscales of the Multiracial Challenges and Resiliency Scale (MCRS), Others’ Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage (OSDRRH - distress) and Challenges With Racial Identity (CRID) were negatively correlated with the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale: 2, total self-concept (TOT). Though racial ambiguity was fairly simple to describe conceptually, no instruments specifically describe racial ambiguity or address it in the way that this researcher intended. Future research could involve developing an instrument that could more precisely describe the construct of racial ambiguity. Additionally, although the
TSCS-2 was thought to be the best fit for the current study, a number of different self-concept scales (e.g., Self-Description Questionnaire III) exist which could yield different results.

In considering demographic variables to control for, the sample size as well as the way in which participants responded (i.e., claiming numerous racial labels) did not allow for much group comparisons to be made. Future studies, with a larger sample size and subsequently larger subgroups, could explore more group differences. For the current study, race was a significant demographic variable to investigate, but only one racial subgroup was large enough to draw any meaningful conclusions from (Asian/White). Future studies could include both a larger and more diverse sample, which includes enough participants to yield the ability to make meaningful subgroup comparisons. Group comparisons could yield information as to the significance of racial combination and ascribed race status (e.g., dominant vs non-dominant, majority vs minority) and their impact on self-concept. This information could also be helpful in supporting or disproving theoretical models purporting to describe identity outcomes (e.g., Root, 2003) for multiracial individuals.

Generational differences may prove to be important to investigate in the future. As older generations of multiracial individuals have been the most difficult to survey (Chararaman et al., 2014), they may provide meaningful historical perspectives of race and a more extreme sense of what it is like to live as a multiracial individual in a monoracial identified world. As younger generations have less and less awareness of the more volatile racial climates of the past, the older generation of multiracial individuals could provide interesting data to compare and contrast. They, along with subsequent
generations, would likely carry perspectives that would help to describe the evolution of racial attitudes. As racial borders have slowly blurred over time, each incremental increase in the presence of multiracial individuals (e.g. in families) has perhaps allowed for or has given more “permission” to self-identify as multiracial. This sort of permission was more of a risk for older generations to explore.

Limitations

The following sections address some of the limitations of this study. They are included as a way to acknowledge ideas that were not taken into consideration, things that could have been done differently. Limitations are also meant to provide information as to the applicability of the findings as well as ideas for future research. This section ends with the significance of the study and followed by closing remarks.

Geography

An issue that was encountered early on was recognizing an element that was overlooked in the planning phase of the survey launch. As the Internet and websites such as Facebook and Yahoo are internationally recognized and utilized, posting an ad asking for multiracial participants included interested people from outside of the United States. Several Facebook messages were received from people living in the United Kingdom, Germany, and Canada asking if they could take the survey. There were two participants who indicated in the open-ended feedback that although they were American, they were currently living abroad and picked the state they most recently resided in. This issue could have been easily avoided if the flier was more specific in the attempt to attract an American sample. Conversely, it was interesting to see and understand that the concept of being “multiracial” was not a uniquely American idea and that interest was global.
The other option is to include people from around the globe. This makes it even more difficult to generalize the research to a specific population, but perhaps there are universal factors that can emerge with a large enough global sample.

**Race Experience Questionnaire**

The race experience questionnaire could have been more purposeful. Participants could have been asked how they felt about racial ambiguity more directly. In other words, several of the questions were meant to indirectly ask about racial ambiguity but none of them directly asked about it. In hindsight, a question such as “I feel racially ambiguous”, preceded by a brief definition or explanation as to what “racially ambiguous” meant, would provide direct information regarding racial ambiguity. At the very least, it would have been information that could have been reported in terms of frequency.

**Forced Choice**

Another question that surfaced early on was whether or not to require participants to answer every question on the survey in order to participate. At first it was thought that it would be better to not force participants to answer each question and to leave certain questions out if they so choose. The problem was thought to be that because there were financial incentives (i.e., Amazon.com giftcards) in combination with the survey being advertised solely on the Internet while the data were collected anonymously, participants would participate solely for the incentive. More specifically, it was assumed that if there were no requirement for a participant to answer each question, it would be too simple for a participant to skip questions and quickly jump to the page where one could enter an email address to be considered for the giftcards. Additionally, Psychdata.com was limited
in what it permitted this researcher to make responses mandatory or not for the item set as a whole.

At least two participants commented on this fact with one participant mentioning that the “income” question is typically an optional question. Several participants commented on the fact that there were two questions pertaining to religion or a “God”. One participant claimed that it was offensive that the questions were not inclusive of atheists while other participants mentioned that they were not clear as to why there were questions pertaining to faith in a study about race. For these participants in particular, it would seem reasonable for them to have skipped those questions in particular.

Overall, forcing participants to answer questions may have been a “turn-off” in general. It is difficult to say how this may have impacted both participants and potential participants alike. Forced participation may have hurried participants subsequently impacting how they endorsed questions. Forced choice may have discouraged potential participants from participating altogether.

**Participant Pool**

The current study aimed to look at a segment of the multiracial population that reported an awareness or interest in race. Therefore this study was limited as far as to whom the data collected could be generalized. The current study yielded participants who are in a particular place in their racial identity development. In revisiting Root’s (2003) multiracial identity development model, a multiracial individual can potentially be traversing through any one of the identity development outcomes which would impact how that individual determines whether or not to complete the survey and if so, in what manner he or she would complete the survey. For example, a multiracial individual who
identifies with a single race group may choose to not participate because identifying as a “multiracial” person may be a foreign concept to that individual. Another example could be a multiracial individual who does not ascribe to any race label and holds a “symbolic race” racial identity. That individual may also opt out of participating in this survey as being “multiracial” holds no personal value or relevance. Additionally, there could be reasons outside of the current understanding that would cause a potential participant to either avoid or not notice the survey. An individual’s connection to his or her race can be dependent on, for example, Root’s invisible factors impacting racial identity development (e.g., family socialization). Therefore, the likelihood of a multiracial individual to participate can be impacted by any number of factors such as where the participants are located in the country, their ages, and their connections to their communities.

Furthermore, as recruitment was solely focused on Internet based social networking sites and subgroups, membership in a racially-oriented organization that promoted racial awareness implied that a participant has at least considered what it means to be multiracial or at the very least a racial being. Participation in the current study implied an explicit awareness of the multiracial definition and label. Awareness of one’s own racial background can develop and vary according to age, sex, SES, community, etc. (Bracey et al. 2004; Ramsey, 1991; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Future research is necessary to explore self-concept in multiracial individuals who do not necessarily report a saliency with race. Recruitment for such a future study would likely need to be a different process with a specifically different method of advertising. The only amount of certainty in the recruitment process and subsequent survey participation is that the current study was most likely noticed by a group of multiracial individuals who (a) possessed a particular
race salience, interest, and investment (b) desired to offer or gain information regarding one’s race and (c) were a member of recruitment website organization (e.g. Hapa) that is dominated by a particular subgroup (e.g. Asians). Though Asian/White participants comprised the largest subgroup (i.e. 52%) in the current research, they are not the largest subgroup (i.e. 18%) of multiracial people in the general population (U.S. Census, 2010). These factors yielded a slice of the multiracial population, but certainly did not attract the people from the full breadth of the multiracial population.

Collecting data over the Internet has a number of advantages in this type of study that requires willing participants from a small part of the general population. Internet surveying can ensure a level of accessibility, privacy, and anonymity that in-person surveying cannot. However, this method of data collecting also comes with disadvantages; including collecting random or erroneous data (Schmidt, 1997). According to Eysenbach (2004), online surveys primarily suffer from two problems: (1) the non-representative nature of the Internet population and (2) the self-selection of participants (volunteer effect). In addition, online surveys are notorious for yielding low response rates.

Using any sort of online community for sampling purposes can pose potential sampling issues (Wright, 2005). Given the anonymous nature of Internet usage and browsing, membership to an online community or organization does not necessarily guarantee accurate member contact or demographic information or even actual member affiliation. In other words, with Internet based research it is particularly difficult to verify participant identities. For the current study however, falsely claiming a membership to a
multiracial group or organization yields no practical incentives or benefits and is thus not likely.

Another limitation of online survey research is self-selection bias (Stanton, 1998; Thompson, Surface, Martin & Sanders, 2003; Witmer, Colman, & Katzman, 1999). In any given Internet community, there are undoubtedly some individuals who are more likely than others to complete a survey.

Some research regarding online survey methods shows that response rates to email surveys are equal to or better than the more traditional, mailed, paper survey (Mehta & Sivadas, 1995; Stanton, 1998; Thompson et al., 2003). However, non-response rates are difficult to track over the Internet (Andrews, Nonnecke, & Preece, 2003). One relatively inexpensive technique that is commonly used for dissertation research as well as other online research is to offer a financial incentive. For the current study, participants were offered the chance to participate in a drawing to win one of three Amazon.com gift cards. Participants may have been participating for this incentive. Additionally, as with any anonymous self-report survey, the integrity of the data is based on the honesty of the respondents. There is no absolute assurance that every participant was answering honestly about him or herself.

**Significance of the Study**

The relationship between racial ambiguity and self-concept is not well understood and only theoretically linked. This study clarifies to a certain degree how the two constructs are related. Although causal inferences cannot be made in a correlational study, this research holds value in that it is among the first of its kind. For example, one of the prominent accomplishments of the study in general was to be able to collect a
fairly large and dynamic sample, racially speaking. A wide variety of racial combinations were reported from a wide range of locations throughout the United States.

A general aim of this study was to provide a better overall understanding of the multiracial population by providing information as to (a) some of the psychological challenges multiracial individuals who possess racially ambiguous features face as well as (b) the overall understanding of race as race is typically seen and conceptualized through a monoracial lens. More specifically, this research is meant to provide more evidence of the social construction of race. Racial ambiguity challenges the notion that race is biologically meaningful. By their sheer existence, multiracial individuals act as a wedge into conversations about race as their existence provides clear evidence of the overall meaninglessness of racial borders.

This research helped in providing further reliability information for the MCRS, a new tool designed specifically for the multiracial population. At the time of this writing, it had yet to be administered to samples outside of the ones used for initial scale development. The current sample yielded adequate internal consistency estimates (i.e., .74 to .89). Additionally, based on the results of this research, construct validity for the MCRS can be inferred as a number of correlations between the MCRS and the TSCS-2 align with core ideas of the MCRS. For example, each subscale of the TSCS-2 was positively correlated with the resilience factors of the MCRS. Conversely, each subscale of the TSCS-2 was negatively correlated with the challenge factors of the MCRS.

Lastly, the significance of this study lies in its underlying finding: multiracial people face a specific challenge that has up until now, not been discussed in the literature.
More specifically, the connection between a multiracial person’s physical appearance has not previously been explicitly connected to self-concept.

In general, a person’s physical appearance can be impactful in a number of different ways. How we dress, how we move, how much we weigh, and how often we smile are just a few examples. We have an amount of control over such things. However, despite race being a socially constructed phenomenon, what we see and interpret about others in terms of race is filtered through past experiences or a lack of experiences. Race is a first order identifying and grouping characteristic. Oppressed (i.e. racial minority) groups have been painfully aware of this fact for hundreds of years and have walked in solidarity with each other. This research would not have been possible without the civil rights work and the justice seeking that has been done before it and is still being done today. The challenge for some multiracial individuals, however, is not having an easily discernable group with whom to identify. As was previously mentioned, multiracial individuals are fewer in number, potentially less discernable, and carrying perspectives that vary according to geography. For multiracial people, solidarity is more of an elusive commodity that is not assigned, but can be developed over time through personal work, research and seeking out like-minded individuals through social groups or organizations (e.g. Mavin). If multiracial people’s identities (e.g. sense of self) are based in part on the reflections of others, many multiracial people face an uphill battle in the lifelong self-definition process.

The power in this work is in the attempt to join in the overall fight or cause for racial equality. In a racial world that at times seems predetermined, closed off, or fixed, the multiracial story provides yet another lens with which to view the human experience.
Multiracial people are increasingly recognizing and claiming the significance of their stories and could benefit from further research, like the current study, communicating these stories. This study offers a mere snapshot, but nonetheless an opportunity for all people to hear in solidarity, yet another aspect of the struggle for racial equality.

**Closing Remarks**

The study was conceived as both a way to provide information to the monoracial identified world about multiracial people as well as to lend a voice to the multiracial population in general. The current study took understandings from social psychology, psychology, counseling psychology, as well as anthropology to provide a theoretical framework to help understand how racial identity works for multiracial individuals. The current study also used conclusions from previous researchers (i.e., the Multiracial Challenges and Resiliency Scale (Salahuddin & O’Brien, 2011)) to develop new understandings about relevant constructs (e.g., racial ambiguity) for multiracial individuals.

The aim of the study was to understand better the relationship between racial ambiguity and self-concept in multiracial individuals. In general, the hypotheses for the current study were supported. As racial ambiguity goes up, self-concept goes down. Possessing racially ambiguous physical features represents a challenge both to how people racially perceive that individual as well as to how that person feels about that perception and subsequent racial identity process. In other words, how an individual comes to understand his or her own race is determined both internally as well as externally. An individual’s social context is crucial (Lou et al., 2011) to a person’s racial identity development and understanding.
From a broader perspective, it seems as though the racial world is an ever-evolving one. The generational differences with race are poignant. Each subsequent generation tells a different story about race. My parent’s stories about race were significantly different than my stories about race. My children’s stories about race will be exponentially different from my own. If by the year 2050, the number of multiracial individuals will exceed the number of monoracial people, as has been predicted, what is to become of race as we know it? As was mentioned earlier, multiracial people represent a direct challenge to traditional notions of race. This challenge will only grow stronger as notions of race continue to be diluted. At least in part on some level, the desire to preserve or maintain race is connected to the fear of losing the rich cultural values and meanings associated with race. To some this is already happening. The question thus becomes, how do we as people preserve such values and meanings while progressing forward and releasing ourselves from the shackles of race? Perhaps this is a question that future race scholars will embrace.
REFERENCES


*Psychological Science, 18*(9), 763-767.


*Psychology, Public Policy, & Law, 7*(1), 36-97.


*Personnel Psychology, 51*(3), 709-725.


Appendix A

Map of USA Regions
Retrieved from:
http://thomaslegion.net/uscensusbureauregionsthewestthemidwestthesouthandthenortheast.html
Appendix B

HSIRB Approval Documents
Date: May 6, 2014

To: Mary Z. Anderson, Principal Investigator
    James Jobe, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 14-04-09

This letter will serve as confirmation that the changes to your research project titled “The Relationship between Racial Ambiguity and Self-Concept in Multiracial Individuals” requested in your memo received May 6, 2014 (to affix a copyright infographic atop the survey; to require a participant to enter password to enter the site. Psychdata easily allows for me to do this, so I created the password requirement for access (participants are taken to informed consent page after entering the password “biracial”); to modify flyer to include password) have been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: April 10, 2014
Date: May 12, 2014

To: Mary Z. Anderson, Principal Investigator
   James Jobe, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 14-04-09

This letter will serve as confirmation that the change to your research project titled “The Relationship between Racial Ambiguity and Self-Concept in Multiracial Individuals” requested in your memo received May 8, 2014 (to edit typographical errors in the consent document and instrumentation) has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: April 10, 2014
Date: April 11, 2014

To: Mary Z. Anderson, Principal Investigator
   James Jobe, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 14-04-09

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “The Relationship between Racial Ambiguity and Self-Concept in Multiracial Individuals” has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under “Number of subjects you want to complete the study.”) Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: April 10, 2015
Appendix C

Survey Flier
Are you Multiracial? Are you 18 years of age or older? If you answered yes to these questions, I am interested in learning more about your experiences!

I am a Counseling Psychology doctoral student studying the relationship between physical appearance and what you think and feel about yourself. I created an online survey as a way to help gather information to addresses this relationship.

The survey should take 20-35 minutes and is anonymous. If you choose to participate and complete the entire survey, you will have the option of entering into a drawing where you have the chance to win one of three electronic Amazon.com giftcards valued at $50 each. I would need your email address for that, but it would be kept safe and separate from your survey responses. In other words, the information collected from the survey would not be connected to your email address and I would not use it for any other purpose.

If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please click on the link below and enter the password biracial. For additional questions, you can also email me at james.r.jobe@wmich.edu

Thank you for considering!

https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=159859

PASSWORD: biracial
Appendix D

Consent Document
Western Michigan University
Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology

Principal Investigator: Mary Z. Anderson, Ph.D.
Student Investigator: James R. Jobe, M.A.
Title of Study: The Relationship Between Racial Ambiguity and Self-Concept in Multiracial Individuals

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled “The Relationship Between Racial Ambiguity and Self-Concept in Multiracial Individuals.” This project will serve as James R. Jobe’s dissertation for the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
We are interested in finding out if there is a relationship between a multiracial person’s physical appearance and what he or she thinks and feels about him or herself.

Who can participate in this study?
To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older and claim a multiracial/biracial heritage (e.g. having biological parents of different racial backgrounds).

Where will this study take place?
This study will take place at your choosing on any computer with internet access and internet-browsing capabilities.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
Total time commitment will be approximately 20-35 minutes.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
You will be asked to anonymously complete three surveys. The questions in the surveys range from specific questions about your experiences as a multiracial individual, to more general questions about how you see and understand yourself. After the surveys, you will be asked to provide some descriptive information about yourself (e.g. age, location, gender). You will also be given the option to enter into an Amazon.com gift-card drawing.

What information is being measured during the study?
The anonymous information gathered from this study are your thoughts and feelings pertaining to your race experiences and identity as well as how you see and understand yourself in general.
What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
There are no known risks. You may experience mild discomfort while completing the survey due to the nature of some of the questions regarding experiences with racism and or private feelings about yourself.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
You may potentially benefit from participating in this study by learning more about yourself and reflecting on experiences pertaining to your experiences with race. Additionally, you will be helping in contributing to research pertaining to the experiences of multiracial individuals living in the United States.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
The only cost for participating in this survey is your time. The total time commitment is expected to be 20-35 minutes.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
If you complete the study, you will have the opportunity to enter into a drawing to win one of three electronic Amazon.com giftcards valued at $50 each. The drawing will take place at the completion of the study (i.e. within one year) and the giftcards will be emailed to the winners. If you wish to participate in the drawing, you will be taken to a new page where you will be asked to enter your email address. Your email address will be stored separately from your survey information, thus ensuring anonymity.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
The data collected is anonymous. If you participate in the optional drawing and provide your email address, no identifying information is attached to that email address as it is stored separately. Furthermore, only the student and principal researcher will have access to the data while the study is being conducted. All survey results will be housed in a secure internet-based website. Upon completion of data collection and analysis, it is expected that results will be published as part of the student researcher’s dissertation. Upon completion of the study, the data is uploaded onto a flash drive which will be securely housed at Western Michigan University by the principal investigator, Mary Z. Anderson. This data is kept for a minimum of three years.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?
You can choose to stop participating in the study at anytime for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences if you choose to withdraw from this study. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent. Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the principal investigator, Dr. Mary Z. Anderson at (269) 387-5113 or mary.anderson@wmich.edu or the student investigator James Jobe at (269) 615-4144 or james.r.jobe@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.
This consent has been approved by the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) on xx/xx/xxx. This approval date expires in one year.

By clicking the “I agree” button, you accept the terms and conditions of participation.

O I Agree
O I do not wish to participate
Appendix E

Debriefing Statement
Thank you for participating in the study!

If you would like more information on my study or if you have other general questions, feel free to email me at: james.r.jobe@wmich.edu.

If you are interested in participating in the drawing for one of three Amazon.com giftcards, please submit your email address after you click "yes" below. Remember that your responses to the survey are stored separately from your email address to ensure your anonymity.

Thanks again,
James Jobe, M.A.
Western Michigan University

☐ Yes, I would like to enter the drawing  ☐ No, thanks, I'm finished
Appendix F

MCRS Usage Approval
Hi James,

Your project sounds very interesting. Of course you may use our measure--as long as it is properly cited, researchers are welcome to use it. I believe you can find the admin/scoring info in the issue of JCP in which it is published. The entire scale is printed in the appendix, and the scoring information should be available at the very bottom of the page. If you have trouble finding it, or have additional questions, please do not hesitate to email me again.

Best of luck. I look forward to hearing about your findings!

Naz
Appendix G

TSCS-2 Licensing Agreement
April 21, 2014

James Jobe  
Doctoral Student  
Western Michigan University  
3521 Sauganash Hall  
Kalamazoo, MI 49008

Re: Tennessee Self-Concept Scale: Second Edition (TSCS-2)

Dear James—

In follow-up to your email of 14April’14, supported by Dr. Mary Z. Anderson’s letter of support dated 16April’14, this serves to provide terms that will permit you to adapt the format of the TSCS:2 for administration and scoring a secure, password-protected online environment, for sole application within your registered scholarly study, examining the relationship between racial ambiguity and the self-concept in multiracial individuals.

Western Psychological Services will authorize you to adapt and arrange for delivery of TSCS:2 material as described – parallel with and consistent to the entire prevailing item set and using prevailing response categories – including your administering the scale a specific number of times within the project, and your creating a scoring-only computerized key for tabulation of item responses, as based on our proprietary hand-scoring key. Our authorization is for the sole purpose of conducting the above-described study, and not for continued or commercial use, and is subject to satisfaction of the following conditions:

1. You must purchase from WPS a non-exclusive license for the anticipated number of TSCS:2 administrations.

2. The license fee for this described use of the TSCS:2 will be based on prevailing prices for the hand-scored TSCS:2 AutoScore Form (W-320A), less 20% Research Discount. Note that we license this instrument in units of twenty-five (25) with one hundred (100) minimum licensed uses; shipping and handling fees are not applicable to licensing fees (e.g., 100 total adapted TSCS:2 administrations @ $56.00/25 = $224.00 x 80% = $179.20 total license fee).

3. The license fee must be prepaid in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank or by international money order (Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express are accepted and swiftest), and are non-refundable. To ensure proper handling of your licensing arrangements, and to guarantee the rate in condition 2 above, please send the payment to my attention with a signed copy of this letter, within the next sixty (60) days. Allow the emphasis that you must contact WPS Rights & Permissions to arrange payment of your license fees; please do not contact WPS Customer Service for this purpose.

4. Each reprint (or viewing) of the TSCS:2 material must bear—such as on each screen of TSCS:2 item presentation—the required copyright notice that will be provided to you by WPS. WPS maintains its proprietary rights to all material directly sourced from our copyrighted material as contained within TSCS:2 research adaptations.

5. With specific regard to the on-line administration, access to the TSCS:2 items must be granted only by a secured password that you provide solely to participants in the study.

6. You agree to provide WPS with one copy of all articles (including research reports, convention papers, journal submissions, theses, etc.) that report on the TSCS:2 use in your research. The articles should be marked to the attention of WPS Rights & Permissions. WPS reserves the right to cite or reference such reports; you will of course receive proper acknowledgment if we use your research results.
WPS acknowledges that you will need to adapt our copyrighted scoring key for the purpose of computerized evaluation of responses to your research instrument — and you have our authorization to do so provided you agree to destroy the adapted key following completion of your research. Also, documentation for your computerized adaptation of the TSCS:2 key must bear the required copyright notice that will be provided to you by WPS.

and

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NOTE: To source the administration instructions, item content, and scoring guidelines needed for your customized application, please refer to the TSCS:2 Manual. In case you do not have (or have direct access to) the TSCS:2 Manual (W-320C), this message serves for the next 60 days as your authorization to purchase one at 20% Research Discount (and note that discounted orders cannot be completed over our website); if you have questions about ordering the Manual, contact WPS Customer Service at 800/648-8857 or 424/201-8800, weekdays 7:30am to 4:00pm Pacific.

WPS appreciates your research interest in the TSCS:2, as well as your consideration for its copyright. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely yours,

Fred Dinkins
Rights & Permissions Specialist
WPS Rights & Permissions
e-mail: fdinkins@wpublish.com

FD:sc

I agree to the terms stated herein.

Date ________________

James Jobe
For: Western Michigan University
Appendix H

MEIM-R Usage Approval
Dear James,

You are welcome to use my scale. Please note that you might want to use the scale twice for two ethnicity, or else change the wording to refer to any multiracial ethnicity.

Sincerely, Jean Phinney
Appendix I

Demographics and Race Experiences Questionnaire
DEMOGRAPHICS

1. What state or US territory do you reside in?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your gender identity? (e.g. female)
4. What is your yearly income?
5. What is your highest level of education completed?
6. Using 2010 US Census race/ethnicity criteria, please describe your background (i.e. check as many boxes that apply to you)
7. What terms do you use to describe your racial identity and/or race background? (e.g. Asian, biracial, White/Black, multiracial, mixed, etc.)

RACE EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 (Never)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2 (Sometimes)</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4 (Frequently)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. People ask me about my race
2. People stare at me because of my race
3. I am asked the question, "what are you?"
4. I feel self-conscious about my race
5. I think about my race
6. I receive unwanted attention regarding my race
7. I wonder if people are confused by my race
8. People assume that I am monoracial
9. People inaccurately believe I am a member of a certain racial group
Appendix J

Open-Ended Questionnaire (Optional)
[OPTIONAL FEEDBACK QUESTION #1]
Are there aspects of this particular study that you feel were unjust, off-base, or worth changing or adjusting? I welcome any feedback!

[OPTIONAL FEEDBACK QUESTION #2]
What questions were you hoping to answer or address that were not covered in this survey?