

ATTITUDES OF MULTIRACIAL YOUNG ADULTS REGARDING RACIAL
IDENTITY: A Q METHODOLOGY STUDY

by

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(Under the Direction of Jolie Ziomek-Daigle)

ABSTRACT

This study explores subjective attitudes, beliefs, and lived experiences of racial identity among Multiracial young adults. As the Multiracial population in the United States continues to grow, so too does the need for nuanced understandings of how these individuals make meaning of their identities in complex and often racialized contexts. Guided by Critical Multiracial Theory (MultiCrit; Harris, 2016) and ecological frameworks of Multiracial identity (Root, 2002; Wijesinghe, 2012), this research aimed to center the voices of Multiracial individuals through a mixed methods approach rooted in Q methodology. Eighteen Multiracial young adult participants (P=18) engaged in a Q sort using a set of 34 statements (Q-set=34) derived from the literature and preliminary stakeholder input. Participants then completed post-sort qualitative questionnaires to elaborate on the meanings behind their rankings, and four of the participants also completed an optional post-sort interview. A by-person factor analysis was conducted to identify shared viewpoints across participants; further interpretation resulted in three distinct factors: Factor 1- *The Mirror Within*, Factor 2- *Reflections Among Us*, and Factor 3- *The Collective Mirror*. These factors offer a complex, layered portrait of how

Multiracial young adults experience racial identity. The findings underscore the importance of moving beyond monoracial paradigms in counseling, research, and education to better serve and affirm Multiracial populations. The study offers implications for researchers, counselor educators, practitioners, and supervisors, as well as future research directions to deepen understanding of the complexity and richness of Multiracial identity across diverse ecological and sociocultural contexts.

INDEX WORDS: Multiracial, Young Adult, Racial Identity, Q Methodology, Q Sort, Research, Counselor Education, Counseling, Supervision, Creative Artifact

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BS, Georgia Gwinnett College, 2015

MS, Columbus State University, 2018

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2025

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August 2025

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my grandfather, Pops, the biggest Bulldog fan I have ever known. I have felt your presence with me through every challenge and every victory, ever-present like a guardian angel. Look at me now, your granddaughter is a UGA graduate!

To my parents, I could not have done this without your unconditional love and support. You have both been my foundation, and I am endlessly grateful and love you to the moon and back.

To my mom, thank you for being my unwavering source of strength and support throughout this journey. This dissertation is as much yours as it is mine, as together we embarked on earning *our* degree. Your endless dedication to Tyson, keeping him day and night, helping to shuttle him around while I completed classes and program requirements, and your encouragement made this achievement possible. The apple truly did not fall far from the tree. I am proud to follow in your footsteps as an educator and carry forward your passion by inspiring the next generation of scholars.

To my dad, your belief in me has never wavered, even when mine did. I hope this work is a reflection of the perseverance, integrity, and work ethic that you have exemplified and instilled in me throughout my life. Thank you for always being a sounding board and for lifting me up when I needed it most. Your steady guidance has been a cornerstone of this accomplishment. Thank you also for being an incredible role model for Tyson and trading in your umpire blues to become the best Grandpa Blue he could ask for. The way you love, guide, and show up for him with your whole heart, just as you did for me, has moved me in ways I cannot fully put into words. You have shaped the person I have become and the parent I strive to be.

To my son, Tyson, this is all for you. I began this journey with you in mind, to build a better life for us. Your snuggles, your laughter, and your insatiable curiosity about the world were my greatest motivations. You reminded me daily of what truly matters. As you begin your academic adventures, know that I will always be by your side, your biggest cheerleader, just as you have been mine in your own beautiful way. My love for you knows no bounds, and I will be here, every step of the way, championing your dreams as fiercely as I have pursued my own.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I acknowledge my own strength, resilience, and perseverance in conquering the most challenging venture of my academic career. This journey demanded everything I had, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, and I am proud of the growth and determination that carried me through. I would not have reached this milestone without my family and friends' patience, encouragement, and unwavering support.

To Ken, thank you for your continuous uplifting words, for being my sounding board, and for being an extraordinary father and role model to our son. Your belief in me never wavered, which made all the difference in my success.

To Andy, you are a shining star. Thank you for your unconditional support and bringing levity and authentic laughter into my life, offering a much-needed reprieve from the seriousness and challenges we have both encountered over the past three years.

I am deeply grateful to the extraordinary faculty at the University of Georgia for their leadership, wisdom, and commitment to advancing the counseling field. Your guidance and passion inspired me to think critically and act purposefully. I was fortunate to walk this path alongside a fearless, brilliant cohort of women; your innovation and solidarity were a constant source of strength.

Finally, I recognize and give thanks for the grace of God, which sustained me during moments of doubt and reminded me that I am never alone. This achievement is not mine alone, but a testament to faith and the unwavering support of my family and friends in my support network. I carry forward this accomplishment with deep gratitude, pride, and an open heart for what comes next.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces a research study focused on exploring the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults regarding racial identity, emphasizing a mixed methods approach. The increasing number of Multiracial young adults in the United States has accentuated the limitations of traditional racial identity development models, which primarily focus on monoracial experiences (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The researcher has synthesized current literature, which highlights the need for a more inclusive and nuanced approach to studying Multiracial identity, highlighting gaps in existing research and the significance of addressing these within the context of young adulthood. While several models address Multiracial identity, existing literature often presents a narrow view of how Multiracial individuals navigate their racial identity, with limited research on their lived experiences (McDonald et al., 2020). This study seeks to bridge this gap by centering the voices of Multiracial young adults, exploring their unique perspectives on racial identity, and providing insights into their identity development processes, which are often overlooked in mainstream models (Kenney et al., 2015; Ratts et al., 2016a).

To achieve this, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data through Q methodology, capturing the diversity of perspectives within this population (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Given the study's social justice focus, a mixed methods design is the optimal approach to capture the richness of individual experiences and the broader patterns of meaning-making within this population. A

comprehensive theoretical framework, grounded in Critical Multiracial Theory (MultiCrit), is presented to guide the research, alongside a clear purpose statement outlining the study's goals of amplifying marginalized voices and challenging traditional racial paradigms. The researcher also emphasizes research design, sample, data collection, and analysis strategies for a mixed-methods study. This methodological approach ensures a holistic view of Multiracial young adults' racial identity. It contributes to a deeper understanding of their needs and beliefs while challenging the traditional, monoracial-focused models that dominate current discourse.

By addressing these gaps, this research offers significant implications for research, counselor education, counseling practice, and supervision, promoting culturally competent and socially just practices that respond to the nuanced needs of Multiracial young adults.

Understanding their unique identity formation process enhances counselor competency and contributes to developing inclusive, client-centered practices that affirm the racial diversity of the Multiracial population. Ultimately, this study provides a foundational step toward more inclusive research and practice that accurately reflects the evolving racial landscape in the United States.

Statement of the Problem

Multiracial young adults make up approximately 25% of the United States population and, in the next two decades, will overturn current monoracial constructs as the majority racial construct in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Several racial identity development models focus on Multiracial individuals (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Poston, 1990; Root, 1990; Root, 2002; Wijeyesinghe, 2001; Wijesyesinghe, 2012). Due to this abundance of developmental models, there are multiple definitions or understandings of how one's racial identity is formed (Grilo et al., 2023b). Counseling literature has made many proclamations as to best practice when working

with Multiracial young adults through competencies and standards (Kenney et al., 2015; Ratts et al., 2016a; Sue et al., 1992), and other studies focused on this population (Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Charmaraman et al., 2014; Ream, 2023). There is an abundance of literature that implies how this population should perceive their racial identity, based on research that likely excludes this population from academic studies (McDonald et al., 2020), resulting in little research on racial identity from a Multiracial young adult's perspective.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

This study aims to amplify voices often overlooked in discussions of racial identity, specifically those of Multiracial young adults. The research explores a broader and more nuanced understanding of racial identity by focusing on the first-hand, subjective experiences of individuals with Multiracial backgrounds. Traditional racial constructs have predominantly focused on monoracial categories, leaving a significant gap in the academic exploration of the infinite combinations of racial identities that exist but are rarely studied or acknowledged. This study proposes to fill that gap by focusing on the lived experiences of Multiracial individuals, aiming to gain insight into their unique perspectives on racial identity. Guided by a Critical Multiracial Theoretical (MultiCrit) framework, the research will not only highlight the diverse ways in which Multiracial individuals navigate their identities but also prioritize their needs, wants, beliefs, and attitudes about racial categorization. This study challenges traditional racial paradigms, offering a platform for voices often silenced or marginalized in broader conversations about race.

This approach is particularly timely, as research has identified notable gaps in exploring key developmental transition points, such as young adulthood, within the Multiracial population (Fisher et al., 2014). Furthermore, there is a recognized need for more varied and inclusive

methodological approaches when studying Multiracial young adults. For instance, Fisher et al. (2014) underscore the underrepresentation of these populations in studies on identity development, while Charmaraman et al. (2014) noted that mixed methodologies that are capable of yielding richer and more nuanced data are among the least utilized methodologies in research involving this demographic. Mixed methods research involves simultaneous or sequential collection, analysis, and integration of qualitative and quantitative data within a single study or across multiple studies (Battista & Torre, 2023; Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007; Johnson et al., 2027). This approach leverages the strengths of both data types to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions. Consequently, there is a critical need for studies that use a mixed methods approach to focus specifically on Multiracial young adults in order to address these gaps in the existing literature.

Using Q methodology, a mixed methods approach, this study adopts a methodological perspective on mixed methods research, focusing on the processes and outcomes that emerge from combining qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007). This study also uses characteristics of mixed methodology, such as triangulation, which involves employing multiple methods to cross-check and validate results, thereby enhancing the credibility of the findings (Battista & Torre, 2023). A Q study takes an entangled approach to achieve a holistic perspective shared by a specific population on an identified topic (Rieber, 2020b). Therefore, this study aims to identify Multiracial young adults' shared subjective opinions in the form of factors or themes regarding racial identity.

RQ1: *“What are the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults regarding racial identity?”*

Brief Overview of the Study

This study is designed to explore the racial identity experiences of Multiracial young adults, using a methodology that respects the unique perspectives of this population while avoiding objectification or othering. The design centers around the tenets of the MultiCrit framework, which emphasizes the importance of situating Multiracial individuals' narratives at the forefront of the research, ensuring their voices are not reduced to mere data points (Harris, 2016). To achieve this, the study employs a Q-methodology approach. This convergent parallel mixed methods design allows for the simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data, which are then analyzed separately before being integrated to interpret the findings (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017).

A concourse of statements was developed to represent a wide range of viewpoints regarding Multiracial identity, and a Q-set was derived from this concourse to facilitate the sorting process. Participants engaged in a Q-sort procedure, ranking statements according to their subjective opinions to reveal underlying patterns in attitudes toward racial identity. The study's quantitative data includes demographic information and output from the Q-sort, which was analyzed using statistical methods such as correlation and factor analysis. Correlation analysis helps identify strong agreements or disagreements between participants, while factor analysis reduces the data to identify patterns of association between the ranked statements, ultimately uncovering distinct perspectives or "factors" that reflect shared viewpoints (Rieber, 2020; Watts & Stenner, 2012).

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative information was gathered through the demographic survey, a post-sort questionnaire, and optional post-sort interviews. These qualitative elements provided deeper insight into the meanings participants attached to the sorted

statements, especially those at the extreme ends of the distribution. Interviews allowed for the exploration of items placed in the middle of the distribution, misunderstood items, or potential gaps in the Q-set (Watts & Stenner, 2012). During the data comparison and integration phase, the individual Q-sorts were combined into a single data matrix for factor analysis, and a thorough interpretation was conducted using the crib sheet system. This method employs abduction to generate hypotheses and uncover meaningful patterns (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Integrating the quantitative and qualitative data produces a comprehensive narrative interpretation further explored in the findings and implications, offering a nuanced understanding of the Multiracial experience in young adulthood.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks are essential for guiding research and framing how complex phenomena, particularly in the context of Multiracial identity, are understood. This study is grounded in Critical Multiracial Theory (MultiCrit), developed by Harris (2016), which aims to enhance the theoretical understanding of the racialized experiences of Multiracial individuals and promote equity within this population. MultiCrit offers a comprehensive and nuanced perspective, challenging the traditional monoracial paradigm of race and highlighting the unique lived experiences of Multiracial individuals in a society where racial identities are often confined to singular categories (Gabriel et al., 2023; Harris, 2016).

This study takes a critical approach by hearing directly from this population rather than what has been established by Westernized, white-centric practices. The researcher's inquiry worldview integrates the critical perspective that combines a commitment to challenging power dynamics and social inequalities and the constructivist-interpretive approach to understanding lived experiences (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). From a critical perspective, the researcher

actively examines and critiques societal structures of power, aiming to uncover and address systemic injustices while promoting social change by amplifying the voices of marginalized groups (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). Simultaneously, the constructivist-interpretive stance recognizes that reality is subjective and socially constructed, emphasizing the importance of understanding the meanings and interpretations individuals form based on their lived experiences (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). These two perspectives work together by positioning the researcher to critically examine the broader societal forces that shape individual realities and explore how individuals make sense of their own experiences within these social contexts. This integrated approach allows a deeper understanding of identity and the complexities of oppression while promoting an ethical commitment to social justice and change. While this framework provides a robust and inclusive lens for the research, the study's limitations must be acknowledged, particularly in how these frameworks intersect with challenges in participant recruitment, data collection, and interpretation.

Limitations

Given the intrinsic challenges of conducting research involving human subjects, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Significant limitations of this study include the researcher's identity and positionality, the generalizability of Q study results, online recruitment challenges, the inclusion and exclusion criteria used for recruitment, and the self-reported nature of all demographic data, including race, age, gender, and English proficiency. Despite these limitations, the study offers important insights into the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults by contributing to a deeper understanding of the key concepts central to this research.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to fill a substantial gap in research and increase self-competence when working with Multiracial young adult clients. Despite the growing presence of Multiracial individuals, racial identity development models often do not fully capture the breadth of racial combinations and experiences within this population (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Poston, 1990; Root, 1990; Root, 2002; Wijeyesinghe, 2001; Wijeyesinghe, 2012). This study aims to provide a deeper, first-hand understanding of how Multiracial young adults define racial identity, moving beyond the one-size-fits-most models that dominate the existing literature. By centering the voices of Multiracial individuals, the study contributes to a richer understanding of their identity development. It emphasizes the importance of researching the full spectrum of Multiracial experiences, particularly those beyond the frequently studied Black-White Biracial population. Counselors, counselor educators, supervisors, and researchers must ensure that all variations of racial constructs identifying as Multiracial receive equal attention to better address the varied needs of this growing population (Charmaraman et al., 2014; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). This study holds significant implications for research, counselor education, counseling, and supervision by offering insights into the unique needs, attitudes, and beliefs of Multiracial young adults regarding their understanding of racial identity.

Research

This study fills a gap in research by providing insight into the complex and fluid nature of racial self-conception in a demographic that is often improperly categorized due to systemic oppression found in many levels of the ecological system in which research is conducted. It also uses a critical framework and mixed methodological design to juxtapose traditional research methods with this neoteric population. The study challenges the dominant paradigms that often

exclude or marginalize the Multiracial perspective, providing counselor educators and practitioners with a more inclusive understanding of the Multiracial experience.

Counselor Education

Counselor educators benefit significantly from identifying themes related to the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults regarding racial identity, as it directly supports the preparation of future counselors to work effectively with this growing population. Given the steady increase in the Multiracial demographic, it is essential that counselor educators intentionally teach counselors-in-training how to address racial identity development and the unique experiences of Multiracial individuals. This approach will not only enhance the competency of Graduate students but will also contribute to fostering a more inclusive and culturally responsive counseling environment for Multiracial clients. By prioritizing the voices of Multiracial young adults, this study informs the development of more culturally competent training programs and counseling practices.

Counseling

Counselors benefit from the findings of this study because, despite the existence of literature and competencies outlining best practices for counseling this population, this study captures their lived experiences and perspectives on racial identity. This knowledge gap limits counselors' ability to provide truly client-centered support. Multiracial young adults face the dual challenge of navigating multiple cultural and racial affiliations while simultaneously confronting the developmental tasks of young adulthood, including life transitions related to housing, education, romantic relationships, and overall identity formation (Grilo et al., 2023a). By understanding how these individuals perceive their racial identity, counselors can better address the unique complexities of their experiences and provide more nuanced support. This knowledge

can also enhance the application of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts et al., 2016a) and the Competencies for Counseling the Multiracial Population (Kenney et al., 2015) by adding a layer of specificity regarding the lived experiences of Multiracial young adults. These competencies emphasize the importance of cultural awareness and social justice, and incorporating insights from this population ensures counselors are equipped with a deeper understanding of the intersectional challenges Multiracial individuals face, thus promoting more inclusive and responsive counseling practices.

Supervision

This study is significant for clinical supervisors as it can ensure they are well-prepared to supervise counselors who work with this increasingly prominent population. To close the loop in the counseling trifecta, supervisors must be aware of the unique challenges these clients face in their racial identity development and young adulthood. This awareness is crucial for providing effective, culturally responsive supervision that empowers counselors to navigate these complexities in their own practice. Ultimately, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse in research, counselor education, counseling, and supervision, ensuring that counselors are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to support a diverse and evolving client population.

Definition of Terms

To stay consistent with recent literature such as Zamora and Padilla's (2024) systematic review of literature, Atkin and Minniear's (2023) census exploration, and Franco and O'Brien's (2018) instrument development study, the term Multiracial will be capitalized throughout this study. In addition to aligning with the current literature on the topic, this decision upholds the 2020 American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual's standard in section 5.7

(APA, 2020). Although the APA manual does not specify Multiracial people, it indicates that “racial and ethnic groups are designated by proper nouns and are capitalized” (APA, 2020, p. 142), thus supporting the decision to advocate for the capitalization of the term Multiracial and the affiliated term Biracial henceforth (Atkin et al., 2022). The operational definitions of terms associated with this study are provided below.

Multiracial

Multiracial is defined as an individual who identifies with two or more racial categories (Atkin et al., 2022). Terminology for this population has been highly debated over time as scholars have scrutinized the semantics of generic terms frequently used for this population, such as ‘mixed race,’ ‘mixed origins,’ ‘mixed parentage,’ ‘mixed heritage,’ ‘dual heritage,’ and ‘Biracial’ (Aspinall, 2007). Currently, the terms Multiracial and mixed race are identified as acceptable and synonymous language to describe this population (Atkin et al., 2022).

Young Adult

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, young adulthood encompasses two core developmental age ranges: 18-24 and 25-34 (Anderson et al., 2023). Other sources indicate young adulthood as ages 18-24 while referring to the stage of mid-20s and older as later adulthood (Higley, 2019; Walker-Harding et al., 2017). Even still, some scholars argue that this age span has an indefinite cut-off age between the ages of 22 and 29. The lack of formal international consensus on what ages constitute young adulthood has resulted in multiple terms that are used to describe this life stage, such as young adulthood, early adulthood, millennials (depending on the birth year), early career professionals, or young adulthood (Anderson et al., 2023; Arnett, 2024; Kiersz, 2015; Lally & Valentine-French, 2023; Walker-Harding et al., 2017). Regardless of its title, this life stage is characterized by key transitional events such as identity

exploration, pursuing higher education, starting employment, leaving home, romantic relationships, and self-development (Anderson et al., 2023; Arnett, 2024). Many studies follow this age range when referring to young adults when specifically looking at developmental milestones such as identity exploration, which can occur at any point within this age range (Guldager et al., 2023; Petry, 2002; Rumbaut, 2004). As a result, this study will use the ages 18-34 to denote the young adult age group.

Race

Race is commonly characterized as a biological or social construct. The American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual defines race as “physical differences that groups and cultures consider socially significant” (APA, 2020, p. 142); other scholars highlight characteristics such as hereditary traits, facial features, hair texture, and skin color to specify this definition (Cokley, 2007; Atkin et al., 2022). However, race is more than “skin deep” and, for this study, will be defined as “a socially constructed political system and product of racism that categorizes people into different groups based on perceived physical differences and/or recent ancestry in order to create and maintain a power hierarchy that privileges whiteness” (Atkin et al., 2022, p. 4).

Racial Identity

Racial identity is a dynamic and nonlinear process that differs from one individual to another. Racial identity can be simultaneously externally imposed and internally constructed (Grilo et al., 2023a). This study’s definition of racial identity is a collective identity of a group of individuals who socialized to perceive themselves as part of a racial group (Helms & Cook, 1999), with a particular focus on how these individuals construct their identities in response to the dynamics of an oppressive and highly racialized society (Cokley, 2007).

Racial Identification

How someone labels their race and ethnicity by claiming membership in one or more racial groups (Murchison, 2024).

Racial Identity Development Models

Racial identity development models provide conceptual frameworks that aid individuals in understanding the evolution of their racial identity over time (*Race and Racial Identity*). Throughout this process, individuals may oscillate between a desire to conform to dominant societal norms and a period of questioning their own identity and the identities of others. There is a known acknowledgment of the incorporated effects of racism, oppression, and other sociopolitical influences in the creation of these identity models, especially for minority individuals (Sue et al., 2016). This journey often involves feelings of confusion, introspection, and moments of self-celebration and affirmation of others (*Race and Racial Identity*). These models can also serve as valuable tools for professionals to gain insight into their clients' attitudes and behaviors (*Race and Racial Identity*).

Racialization

The social phenomenon is one in which specific groups of people are categorized, marginalized, or regarded according to race or perceived or actual physical characteristics (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Racialization). Additionally, it is understood as attributing racial meaning to people's identity (Schaefer, 2008).

Attitudes and Beliefs

The *Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies* (MSJCC) define "attitudes and beliefs" as a counselor's awareness of their own and their client's worldviews, values, biases, and social identities (Ratts et al., 2016a). This includes understanding how power,

privilege, and oppression shape the counseling relationship (Ratts et al., 2016a). Ultimately, this entails a strong commitment to acknowledging and addressing the role of identity in the counseling process (Ratts et al., 2016a). Attitudes and Beliefs can be found in three of four developmental domains of the MSJCC: Counselor Self-Awareness, Client Worldview, and Counseling Relationship (Ratts et al., 2016a).

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the focus of the research study, which explores the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults regarding racial identity. It presented the central research question and outlined the structure of the study, including an introduction to the theoretical framework guiding the investigation. Additionally, the chapter addressed potential limitations that arose throughout the research process. The study's significance and potential impact within the counselor education field were highlighted, emphasizing its relevance across various professional domains. Lastly, key terms central to the study were introduced and defined to clarify the subsequent chapters.

Chapter two will present a comprehensive literature review on the history of Multiracial individuals, including an analysis of foundational and modern identity development models. It will explore the impact of racial identity on Multiracial young adults and examine current Multicultural counseling competencies essential for effectively and ethically serving this population. The review will be framed through a MultiCrit lens, which shifts the narrative to focus specifically on the experiences of Multiracial individuals. This synthesis of information will underscore the importance of understanding the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adult clients within a counseling context, highlighting why it is critical to prioritize their perspectives on racial identity, particularly as this population continues to grow.

Through this discussion, the chapter aims to illustrate the complexities of Multiracial identity and the necessity of this study to fill a current gap in the literature.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter aims to establish an understanding of the symbiotic relationship between Multiracial young adults and racial identity. A review of the literature on the historical context of Multiracial Individuals, the developmental significance of Multiracial individuals ages 18-34, a look at the history of monoracial and Multiracial identity models, and a review of the influence racial identity has on Counseling Multiracial young adults will be explored. Various multicultural counseling competencies will be reviewed, and a review of the attitudes and beliefs domains will result in a proposed study to understand young adults' Multiracial attitudes, beliefs, and experiences related to racial identity to conclude this chapter.

Historical Context of Multiracial Individuals

Several historical events have established the foundation for this study. The term hypodescent, or the one-drop rule, came about in the 1600s to ostracize individuals of non-White origins to protect 'White' status via racial ascription (Bratter & O'Connell, 2017). The one-drop rule indicated that mixed-race offspring should be racially categorized and included with the minority race of their racial construct as a way for the White majority to sustain their dominant status and power within society (Atkin et al., 2022; Bratter & O'Connell, 2007; Zamora & Padilla, 2024). This was overtly implemented as an act of blatant racism towards Black people during the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s-1970s (Gabriel et al., 2023). Hypodescent is often still used to assign Multiracial individuals to "their lowest status minoritized racial group"

(Atkin et al., 2022, p. 408) based on the historical and legal precedent for racial classification (Bratter & O'Connell, 2007).

The U.S. Supreme Court made a historic ruling in 1967 in the case of *Loving v. Virginia*, which declared the legalization of interracial marriages, allowing individuals to marry across racial boundaries and live and travel freely (Deters, 1997). This ruling was the catalyst for a rapid increase in Black-White interracial marriages documented by the U.S Census Bureau from 1970-1989, resulting in a significant rise in the Biracial birth rate record in the 1992 U.S. Census (Deters, 1997). During this period, the term Multiracial was first introduced by Christine Iijma Hall in their 1979 dissertation investigating the lived experiences of people with blended ancestries, specifically Black and Japanese individuals (Donnella, 2016). The 2000 U.S. Census was the first to provide an option for people to declare a 'mixed' identity in response to the question of race and ethnic group identification by providing space for individuals to check one or more races (Aspinall, 2009).

This ever-growing population continued to increase from 2010 to the 2020 U.S. Census by a margin of over 24 million individuals (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020b). However, this increase is not solely representative of the number in this population but also in the quality of the question design and data coding procedures that improved for the 2020 Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020b). Racialization in the U.S. was emphasized in 2010 as "some other race" was indicated as the third largest racial category on the census (Atkin et al., 2022). This was a result of populations of Latinx/Hispanic origin not endorsing any of the preexisting racial groups or checking multiple racial categories when given the option in 2000. However, they significantly endorsed "some other race," suggesting they perceive themselves as a distinct racial group rather than inherently Multiracial (Atkin et al., 2022). The addition of racial groups such as Latinx and

Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) in future U.S. Census has been considered due to data such as this and their history of miscategorization (Atkin et al., 2022).

From 2010 to 2020, the Multiracial population measured nearly a 300% increase due to improvements in categorization measures for this population. Including the shift to eight total racial/ ethnicity categories: Black or African American, White, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and People who belong to two or more racial categories (Atkin et al., 2022). According to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau, Multiracial individuals have experienced the most significant spike in population increase from 9 million in 2010 to 33.8 million, or 10.2% of the total U.S. population in 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020a). Of this total, approximately eight point four million or 24.8% of the total U.S. population identified as being of two or more racial categories between the ages of 18 and 34, with a median age of 29.5 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020a). These calculations do not account for individuals in this category who do not identify as male or female due to the limitations of the census, which only included these two sexual constructs, or individuals who did not complete the 2020 census.

Multiracial Young Adults

Literature on Multiracial young adults is currently being found in fields such as sociology, counseling, education, public health and medical literature, and developmental and counseling psychology (Cokley, 2007; Miller-Cotto & Byrnes, 2016; Pattman, 2007; Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007; Quintana, 2007; Rockquemore et al., 2009; Verkuyten, 2016). As these fields represent a spectrum of public and private institutions, researchers commonly operate in silos. They are not known to amalgamate for the overall benefit of expanding the depth of knowledge on a singular topic (Grilo et al., 2023a). The variety of specialized perspectives offers

broad themes of Multiracial young adults experiences, racial categorization, and identity that can be narrowed into more specific topics such as Multiracial or ethnic identity development (Deters, 1997; Fisher et al., 2014; Grilo et al., 2023b; Ream, 2023; Renn, 2008; Zamora & Padilla, 2024), Multiracial identity integration (Cheng & Lee, 2009), racial self-categorization (Hitlin et al., 2006), socialization and well-being (Villegas-Gold & Tran, 2018), social and structural influence on Multiracial identification (Grilo et al., 2023a; Shih et al., 2007), race choices on the 2020 census (Akin & Minniear, 2023; Minniear & Akin, 2023), and discrimination (McDonald et al., 2019) to provide a few examples.

Multiracial identity has been explored with numerous configurations of racial constructs (Collins, 2000; Grilo et al., 2023b; Romo, 2011; Shih et al., 2007; Strmic-Pawl et al., 2022). Research featuring Multiracial young adults, ages 18-34, and racial identity has begun to emerge, but it is overwhelmingly overshadowed by studies of different racial, age, and theme constructs. It is essential to acknowledge society's influence on the development of this population. Erik Erikson's theory of identity development emphasizes the influence of the social context of development when describing identity formation (Erikson, 1959). The theory of identity development is a cornerstone model from which an understanding of human development is commonly derived from psychology, social work, and educational fields (Polezhayev, 2021). As a leading scholar in human development, Erikson proposed eight stages of development that correlate important psychosocial life tasks with an individual's age or life stage (Erikson, 1959). Young adults ages 18-34 may find themselves fluctuating between Erikson's stages of Identity vs. Confusion, Intimacy vs. Isolation, and Generativity vs. Stagnation (Erikson, 1959; Erikson, 1963).

For those who identify as Multiracial, it is vital to recognize the importance of identity formation, particularly recognizing the development of a distinct personal identity as a critical task of adolescence. This process occurs across all eight stages of human development: trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, identity vs. role confusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and integrity vs. despair, with heightened significance during the identity vs. role confusion stage. This stage is uniquely identified by the thin line between identity crisis and identity formation (Grilo et al., 2023a). Reflection and observation designate the complex cycle of identity crisis and how others perceive them, all impacting identity formation (Grilo et al., 2023a). Identity formation is not an isolated occurrence but rather a bustling intersection of various social identities, “including race or ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, politics, socioeconomic status among other systems of categorization.” (Grilo et al., 2023a, p. 431). Additionally, Erikson (1993) described young adults as moving beyond the task of identity and into forming intimate relationships. Within this developmental stage and particular age range, Arnett (2000) posits the critical task of identity exploration as being housed and frequently accompanied by feelings of being in-between and having untapped potential. A closer look at one of an individual's many social identities, such as racial identity, can clarify how their overall identity is to be understood.

History and Context for Racial Identity Development Models

Models or frameworks have been used since the 1970s to explore racial identity development for different populations. The earliest of these models was initially reported as the Nigrescence Model of African American Identity in 1971 but was later renamed Black American Racial Identity by its creator, William Cross, during his 1991 and 2001 revisions (Cross, 1991). Black identity was also researched by Thomas in 1969 and Jackson in 1976 (Jackson, 1976;

Thomas, 1969). The exploration of racial identity continued in 1981 with Kim's Asian American Identity Development Model, which was also revised in 2001 (Kim, 1981). The introduction of identity development models for White individuals began in 1982 with Hardiman's White Identity Development and was bolstered by Helms's White Racial Identity Development Model in 1995 (Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1995). At the turn of the 21st century, several models were added to the existing literature, including Latino Identity Orientations (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001), Filipino American Identity Development (Nadal, 2004), Ethnic Minority Identity Development (Berry, 2005), and Perspective on American Indian Identity Development (Horse, 2005). In 2006, John and Joy Hoffman proposed an Integrated Model that concurrently indicates stages of racial development for People of Color and White people with a shared first and last stage and distinct processing stages based on racial identification (Hoffman & Hoffman, 2006). While this progression of models shows a vested interest in the research of multiple populations, all these models are based on monoracial groups, thus leaving a need for racial identity development models that capture the experiences of people who identify with two or more racial constructs.

Multiracial Identity Development Models

An effort to address the lack of Biracial or Multiracial Identity Development models began in 1990 with the introduction of Biracial Identity Development (Poston, 1990) and Resolutions of Biracial Identity Tensions (Root, 1990). Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model outlines a five-stage process that reflects the unique challenges Biracial individuals face in forming their racial identities (Poston, 1990). This model fills a significant gap in the existing literature by explicitly addressing the complexities of Biracial identity development, which had been largely overlooked in early research focused on monoracial individuals (Poston, 1990). The

five stages, Personal Identity, Choice of Group Categorization, Enmeshment/Denial, Appreciation, and Integration, provide a framework for understanding how Biracial individuals navigate the complexities of belonging to multiple racial groups (Poston, 1990).

According to Poston (1990), in the initial stage, Personal Identity, family dynamics play a critical role in shaping self-esteem and a sense of belonging. As individuals move to the second stage, Choice of Group Categorization, they often face pressure to choose an ethnic identity, which can lead to a crisis as they feel compelled to align with one racial group over the other. The Enmeshment/Denial stage is marked by confusion and guilt, especially during adolescence when group belonging is paramount. The fourth stage, Appreciation, involves a more mature exploration and appreciation of multiple ethnic heritages, while the final stage, Integration, reflects a holistic acceptance and integration of all racial aspects, contributing to a positive self-concept. Poston's model enhances the understanding of Biracial identity development and has significant clinical implications (Benedetto & Olisky, 2001). Overall, Poston's model provides valuable insights for clinicians and educators in supporting the healthy development of biracial individuals, emphasizing prevention and culturally sensitive interventions (Benedetto & Olisky, 2001; Gibbs, 1987; Poston, 1990; Sebring, 1985).

Just as Poston and Root used the foundational research of monoracial frameworks of the time to ground their work (Poston, 1990; Root, 1990), many academics continue to uphold this trend by using Poston and Root as the guiding works for present-day Multiracial identity development models. For example, Kich (1992) proposed a Biracial model from two specific racial perspectives: Japanese and White. As more than one racial construct is being considered within these development models, academics have expanded their approaches to capture the multifaceted nuance of Multiracial individuals. Recent models, such as the Multiple Dimensions

of Identity model (Jones & McEwen, 2000), the Factor Model of Identity (Wijeyesinghe, 2001), and the Continuum of Biracial Identity model (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005) have done just that through an ecological perspective.

Ecological Framework

An ecological framework has been used in current literature to address the topic of Multiracial identity development (Grilo et al., 2023b; Renn, 2008; Root, 2002). Wijesyesinghe's (2001) theory aligns with an ecological framework based on a Multiracial identity categorization of self by "physical appearance, racial ancestry, and social context" (Atkin & Minniear, 2023, p. 415). Similarly, social and historical context is cited throughout literature as intersectional components to be examined across a lifetime that must be understood based on its foundation in a monoracial classification system (Grilo et al., 2023a; Renn, 2008; Tran et al., 2016). Interlocking systems of privilege and oppression, such as race, gender, class, or sexual orientation, manifest across the different ecological levels of influence, thus converging intersectional and ecological frameworks as a means of producing identity or, more specifically, racial identity.

In recent literature, the Ecological Framework for Understanding Multiracial Identity Development (Root, 2002) and the Intersectional Model of Multiracial Identity (Wijesyesinghe, 2012) are referenced as cornerstones of ecological development models (Grilo et al., 2023b; Renn, 2008). Root's (2002) framework asserts that "not only is the ecological fabric in which individuals are mired influential, but that the life course itself proves to be significant in the identity formation process" (Grilo et al., 2023b, p. 16). This sentiment is shared by the Critical Multiracial Theory (MultiCrit) proposed by Harris (2016), highlighting the intersectionality of race and other held social identities. Patricia Hill Collins defines intersectionality as "the critical

insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities” (Collins, 2015, p. 2). MultiCrit takes Root’s (2002) Ecological Framework one step further by focusing on the influence White supremacy has on a Multiracial individual's lived experience. Thus, the shift to a critical and ecological framework is prevalent in relation to this population. This shift indicates the significance of recognizing the fluid nature of racial identity and the intersectionality of social categories or other identities held at a given point in time, such as a specific developmental stage (Grilo et al., 2023a).

Influence of Racial Identity on Multiracial Young Adults

Research on Multiracial young adults suggests that racial identity can be associated with challenges, such as marginalization, colorism, discrimination, lowered self-esteem, reduced social acceptance, or maladaptive emotions such as anxiety, depression, guilt, mistrust, disloyalty, and less Multiracial pride (Christophe et al., 2021; Csizmadia & Atkin, 2022; Fisher et al., 2014; Gibbs, 1987; Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008; Poston, 1990; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Such challenges have been associated with sleep problems, negative mood (Goodhines et al., 2020), forced identity classification (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008), difficulty maturing and successfully adjusting to society, and Parent-Child conflict (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). However, literature has also provided evidence supporting positive Multiracial identity can be linked to lower stereotype vulnerability (Shih & Sanchez, 2005; Shih et al., 2007), positive psychological health (Renn, 2008), higher sense of efficacy and higher self-esteem (Bracey et al., 2004). A strong racial identity can act as a protective factor against relational and societal pressure, resulting in conformity or othering in a community setting (Fisher et al., 2014; Kenney & Kenney, 2012; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Grilo et al. (2023b) identified multiple themes

impacting identity formation for Multiracial young adults, including changing geography, discovering community, strategic disclosure of racial categorization, and identity formation continuity. Conversations about racial identity formation, challenges, and protective factors are commonly explored in therapeutic settings, emphasizing a need to address best practices for counseling Multiracial young adults.

Counseling Multiracial Young Adults

In professional counseling, preparing counselors to work with Multiracial young adults begins in graduate programs and continues while obtaining licensure and certification status by pursuing continued education hours. Master's level counselor training programs that are accredited by a standardized council, such as the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2015), prepare future counselors for working with this population by infusing “language that supports Multiracial knowledge, skills, and understanding” (McDonald et al., 2019, p. 82) across coursework and program experience.

When working with clients, counselors are expected to comply with several ethical codes and competencies, such as the ACA Code of Ethics (ACA, 2014), the ASCA Code of Ethics (ASCA, 2022), Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts et al., 2016a), Competencies for Counseling the Multiracial Population (Kenney et al., 2015) or any other relevant competencies suggested by the American Counseling Association. These standards provide best practices and implications for clinical work done with Multiracial young adults. They should be referenced frequently to ensure compliance with the licensure board and ethical standards by engaging in ethical decision-making processes and consulting with necessary resources and personnel to avoid doing harm to clients (ACA, 2014; Kenney et al., 2015).

Racial and ethnic minorities such as Multiracial young adults have been reported to encounter many barriers to mental health services such as societal stigma (Beers & Joshi, 2020; Satcher, 2001; Sickel et al., 2019), cost of care (Hodgkinson et al., 2017; Kataoka et al., 2002; Satcher, 2001), disorganized structure of services (Satcher, 2001), and inadequate clinician competency (Satcher, 2001). The barriers are built upon the historical context in which minority individuals experience(d) racism and discrimination, which ultimately continues to perpetuate these barriers and impact mental health and socioeconomic status (Satcher, 2001). As these barriers are so intertwined, it is difficult to distinguish one as being single-handedly responsible for the mental health disparities of minority individuals, but rather the interplay of all these guidelines, rules, and expectations implemented across an oppressive ecological system (Satcher, 2001).

Current literature has provided best practices to implement when working with Multiracial young adults, such as continuously engaging in broaching, being self-reflexive, working to employ anti-discriminatory practices within the therapeutic alliance, and using more contemporary theoretical and ecological approaches to enhance the possibility of identity integration across social contexts and time (Day-Vines et al., 2007; McDonald et al., 2020; Rockquemore et al., 2009). Additionally, counselors are encouraged to intentionally create a safe space where conflicting concepts such as identity, race, and discrimination can be explored and discussed rather than being avoided or further perpetuated (Day-Vines et al., 2007; McDonald et al., 2020; Rockquemore et al., 2009).

Best Practices

When working with this population, multiple recommendations have been made for counselors, such as embodying a nonjudgemental perspective, avoiding offensive or biased

language, and appraising one's attitudes, feelings, or perspectives of interracial relationships, Multiracial persons, or any person who presents as different from themselves (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008; Poston, 1990). Counselors working with Biracial or Multiracial clients must be attuned to the complexities of identity formation and be mindful of their own biases and language (Benedetto & Olisky, 2001; Poston, 1990). Counselors have used a variety of intervention styles and techniques when working with Multiracial young adults, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), motivational interviewing, group or community-based interventions, and evidence-based programs (Berg et al., 2009; Burns et al., 2000; Cotton et al., 2011; D'Amico, 2008; Mason et al., 2011; Ngo et al., 2008; Nishimura, 1995; White & Grimes, 2015). A core factor of intervention selection is being mindful of the context in which the Multiracial young adults are presently living to match appropriate interventions to meet their needs, as interventions are not one-size-fits-all (Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Intentionally infusing clinical practice with Multiculturally competent care provides an opportunity for clients to appropriately navigate identity development stages associated with their racial or ethnic experiences and circumvents a clinician's ability to impose an identity on a client (Rockquemore et al., 2009; Kenney et al., 2015). The counseling profession must enhance its efforts to work outside the racial identification box by embracing race's fluidity and social and developmental characteristics (McDonald et al., 2020). This can occur by not reinforcing societal racial norms across the therapeutic process and not forcing clients into a perceived or suggested racial construct. Instead, counselors can provide a safe and validated space for clients to define their own lived experiences, which may include no prescribed label or definition of racial existence (McDonald et al., 2020).

While the implication of these best practices is ideal, there is little research from the perspective of the client, more specifically, a Multiracial young adult client, on whether these best practices surrounding identity are helpful. By hearing a Multiracial young adult client's perspective, awareness can occur of what they value and prioritize regarding their identity in a clinical setting. Additionally, insight can be gained into how best practices are translated into practical applications and are intentionally implemented. This knowledge can advance clinical practice by identifying what young Multiracial adults value regarding racial identity and making a concerted effort to integrate that knowledge into what is currently practiced through the implementation of counseling competencies.

Multiracial Client Experiences

The experiences of Multiracial individuals in accessing and receiving mental health care reflect a complex interplay of challenges related to cultural competence, systemic gaps in care, and provider understanding of racial dynamics (Meyer & Zane, 2014; Shaff et al., 2024). In a study by Shaff et al. (2024), approximately 1,300 participants who identified as Multiracial shared their experiences with mental health, including recalling growing up in environments where mental health was often stigmatized or dismissed by family and community members. This lack of support and messages of denial, avoidance, and criticism created significant barriers to seeking help. For some participants, mental health issues were downplayed or ignored, and seeking professional care was explicitly discouraged, leading to a delayed recognition of their mental health struggles. Once they sought care, participants frequently found the process of finding culturally competent providers frustrating, particularly in less urban areas, where accessible and affordable mental health care was scarce. In many cases, locating a suitable provider took months or even years, which only exacerbated the difficulties in receiving

appropriate support. Adverse experiences with mental health providers were a significant concern for these participants, with many describing providers applying inappropriate attitudes toward Multiracial individuals, norms, or mishandling crises. These experiences were often compounded by microaggressions, bias, and discrimination, with some participants feeling that providers viewed them with fascination or misunderstanding due to their Multiracial identity. As a result, individuals frequently felt invalidated, dehumanized, or feared their experiences would be minimized or misinterpreted, leading to feelings of gaslighting in a mental health care setting. Despite these challenges, participants also reported positive experiences, particularly when providers took the time to engage them in care planning and acknowledged past harm. However, participants noted the emotional labor required to educate providers about their cultural backgrounds and the specific challenges Multiracial individuals face. The emotional toll was particularly significant for those with intersectional identities, such as queer Multiracial individuals, who expressed concerns about finding providers from their cultural communities who were accepting of their sexual identity. As a result, participants made recommendations for counselors of Multiracial individuals seeking mental health care by emphasizing the importance of reducing barriers to care, suggesting that mental health professionals include more detailed information on their online profiles, such as their racial and ethnic background, gender identity, languages spoken, and experiences working with diverse populations (Shaff et al., 2024).

The importance of cultural competence in mental health care was echoed in a study by Meyer and Zane (2014), which emphasized that Multiracial individuals often place significant value on culture-specific elements in their care, such as racial match, provider knowledge of discrimination, and the ability to engage in open discussions about race and ethnicity. Racial match, or concordance, between a counselor and client, where both share the same race or

ethnicity, was identified as an important factor in reducing mental health disparities, as it can enhance the therapeutic relationship by fostering shared cultural values and experiences (Meyer & Zane, 2014). When providers fail to acknowledge the realities of living in a racialized society, clients report poorer quality of care, underscoring the need for cultural competence in treatment (Meyer & Zane, 2014). Open dialogues about race, especially early in treatment, were beneficial, as they helped foster trust and improve the therapeutic process (Cardemil & Battle, 2003; Fuentres et al., 2002; Meyer & Zane, 2014).

The experiences of Multiracial individuals in accessing mental health care underscore the importance of cultural competence and the need for providers to understand the unique challenges faced by this population (Meyer & Zane, 2014; Shaff et al., 2024). Both studies highlight the detrimental impact of systemic barriers, including stigmatization, lack of culturally sensitive care, and provider bias, which hinder the ability of Multiracial individuals to receive appropriate support. Given the shortage of providers equipped to meet the needs of Multiracial and Multiethnic populations, urgent efforts are needed to expand the mental health workforce and reduce barriers to care to better support this growing demographic (Shaff et al., 2024). These findings emphasize the critical need for increased proficiency in Multicultural Counseling Competencies, which can guide providers in navigating the cultural complexities of their Multiracial clients' identities and ensuring more effective and inclusive mental health care.

Multicultural Counseling Competencies

In response to a gap in multiculturally responsive competencies and standards in the counseling profession, Sue et al. (1992) developed Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC) to highlight the necessity of prioritizing multicultural perspectives, standardizing what is required to be a culturally competent counselor, and promoting the implementation of these

standards. MCC includes minorities beyond race and ethnicity, including gender, sexuality, and other minoritized special populations (Sue et al., 1992). Multiculturalism is considered the fourth of five counseling forces, succeeding three foundational theoretical approaches and preceding Social Justice as a key approach to the counseling profession (Singh et al., 2020; Sue et al., 1992). Sue et al. (1992) proposed that MCC includes three characteristics assessed through three dimensions. These dimensions, “attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills,” are commonly found to be how cross-cultural elements of competency are divided (Sue et al., 1992, p. 481). Through these dimensions, the characteristics of “counselor awareness of own assumptions, values, and biases, understanding the worldview of the culturally different client, and developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques” are analyzed (Sue et al., 1992, p. 481). By these standards, emphasizing and implementing multiculturalism is bestowed upon counselors and psychotherapists through a call to action to prioritize these efforts to benefit the counseling field (Sue et al., 1992). Additionally, it is by these standards that other competencies have been founded.

Competencies for Counseling the Multiracial Population

The “Competencies for Counseling the Multiracial Population” emphasizes the importance of working with Multiracial individuals from an ecological perspective. This approach allows counselors to capture the nuanced context of the individual and their lived experience as both directly impact Multiracial identity development (Kenney et al., 2015). Section two of this document focuses on “interracial couples, Multiracial families, and individuals” (Kenney et al., 2015, p. 5). The competencies are organized based on the eight core areas identified by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP): Human Growth and Development, Social and Cultural Diversity, Helping

Relationships, Group Work, Career Development, Research and Program Evaluation, and Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice (CACREP, 2015). Social justice and efforts to promote positive racial identity for Multiracial young adults are identified in the competencies of social and cultural diversity, helping relationships, professional orientation, and ethical practice (Kenney et al., 2015). These sections emphasize that counselors or other helping professionals should employ empowerment interventions for clients to develop a positive racial identity (Kenney et al., 2015). Additionally, counselors must be willing to advocate against barriers across the micro, meso, and macro levels of the ecological systems, including local or state institutions, to increase public awareness of Multiracial young adults' history, resilience, and strengths (Kenney et al., 2015).

Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies

Ratts et al. (2016a) proposed the “Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies” (MSJCC) as a revision to Sue et al.'s (1992) MCC, which provides a socioecological model that emphasizes the importance of understanding an individual within the context of their environment (Ratts et al., 2016b). The MSJCC highlights the importance of balancing individual and social justice work and advocating at a higher level. Should a counselor not manage how to balance these tasks effectively, they could face burnout and no longer be effective at any level (Ratts et al., 2016b; Roysircar, 2009). The MSJCC embodies cultural responsiveness by focusing on how topics such as awareness, decolonized language, knowledge, microaggressions, microinterventions, antiracisms, skills, and broaching can enhance the therapeutic relationship and ultimately improve the likelihood of social change (McDonald & Chang, 2022). The MSJCC is not proposed as an alternative to the ACA counseling competencies but rather as a supportive resource to use in tandem to enhance client welfare

(Ratts et al., 2016b). Successful implementation of these competencies relies on the counselor's ability to reflect on their attitudes, biases, and values concerning multicultural and social justice approaches (Ratts et al., 2016b).

Attitudes and Beliefs

The Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies focus on attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and action (AKSA) of the developmental domains in this framework (Ratts et al., 2016a). In this context, counselors must have and uphold multicultural and social-justice informed attitudes and beliefs that can be operationalized while clinically practicing culturally informed skill-based interventions and engaging in advocacy from a multicultural and social justice framework (Ratts et al., 2016a). To emphasize the importance of this practice, Attitudes and Beliefs are found in three of four developmental domains of the MSJCC: Counselor Self-Awareness, Client Worldview, and Counseling Relationship (Ratts et al., 2016a).

Counselor Self-Awareness

The MSJCC framework proposes two statuses that a client or counselor can hold: privileged and marginalized (Ratts et al., 2016b). Both privileged and marginalized counselors are responsible for adopting an awareness of self to identify and explore the AKSA concerning their worldview (Ratts et al., 2016a). This requires counselors to have an attuned level of consciousness to the status of privilege they may hold and actively seek opportunities that can advance their self-awareness (Ratts et al., 2016b). Ratts et al. (2016b) also state that “becoming aware of one’s attitudes and beliefs is an important precursor to understanding social group identities, marginalized and privileged group statuses, power and privilege, limitations, strengths, assumptions, values, and biases” (p. 38).

Client Worldview

Counselors are encouraged to understand their clients' worldviews to attune to their lived experiences (Ratts et al., 2016b). Curiosity is a crucial element in discovering the experiences of privileged and marginalized clients and is a lifelong endeavor (Ratts et al., 2016b). A client's identity development can significantly influence their worldview and how they experience their surroundings (Ratts et al., 2016b). It is a counselor's job to be aware of this influence and the potential for these experiences to be unfamiliar or uncomfortable (Ratts et al., 2016b). Being mindful of the counselor's attitudes and beliefs about within-group and between-group differences of privileged and marginalized clients can enhance a counselor's understanding of any limitations or growth potential for different client populations (Ratts et al., 2016b).

Counseling Relationship

Counselors who follow the process of integrating an increased awareness of self and the client's worldview will have increased success in understanding how a client's privileged or marginalized status can impact the counseling relationship (Ratts et al., 2016b). They will develop greater insight into how power, privilege, and oppression can pulsate throughout the counseling relationship (Ratts et al., 2016b). The attitudes and beliefs of counselors concerning how their identity development and the identity development of clients can influence the counseling relationship are held in high regard due to the significant influence that the counseling relationship has on the potential for therapeutic success (Ratts et al., 2016b). Counselors are responsible for recognizing their privileged or marginalized status and how it shows up in a therapeutic space and within their relationships with privileged and marginalized clients (Ratts et al., 2016b).

With these competencies as a foundation, the importance of attitudes and beliefs is reiterated to advance a social justice-led approach to counseling for Multiracial young adults. The focus on attitudes and beliefs of Multiracial young adults grounds this study in the aspirational competencies of the MSJCC (Ratts et al., 2016a). Counselors should use these competencies to guide therapeutic efforts with young Multiracial adults.

Study Purpose and Research Question

In current literature, the way in which Multiracial young adults form, express, and perceive their racial identity has been minimally studied or recorded despite the ever-growing nature of this population (Grilo et al., 2023b; Renn, 2008). Atkin and Yoo (2019) and Charmaraman et al. (2014) agree that there needs to be an increased intentionality of conducting research that focuses on all varieties of Multiracial constructs, especially minority-minority Multiracial groups, to explore the experiences of individuals outside of those with White heritage. Other Multiracial constructs are growing as rapidly as Black-White constructed individuals, emphasizing a needed shift in population focus (Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Charmaraman et al., 2014). Commonly, Multiracial young adults are excluded, inappropriately categorized, or swept into a broader category of “other” if included in academic research (McDonald et al., 2020). To avoid this inequitable representation of this population in academic research, this study aligns with Grilo et al.’s (2023a) proposition to “disaggregate Multiracial individuals whenever possible, especially when looking at health consequences and outcomes, which may vary greatly across individuals depending on the specific groups with which they identify” (p. 428). Additionally, by using a critical lens through a MultiCrit framework and clearly operationalizing how Multiracial populations are defined, measured, and accounted for alongside their monoracial counterparts, this study will ensure that Multiracial individuals, or young adults,

specifically, are a distinct group rather than being “othered” (Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Harris, 2016; McDonald et al., 2020; Nishina & Witkow, 2020).

Research has indicated gaps in developmental transition points, such as from young adults to young adulthood, and in the prevalence of methodological approaches found across research on Multiracial young adults (Fisher et al., 2014). Developmentally, highlighting Multiracial identity in young adulthood is necessary due to the “critical implications for the socioemotional and physical health of individuals” (Grilo et al., 2023b, p.3). Charmaraman et al. (2014) reported mixed methodology as the most infrequent methodology used in research studies at a 7% frequency rate compared to a 93% frequency rate of traditional quantitative and qualitative studies (Charmaraman et al., 2014). Thus, identifying a contribution of a mixed methodological approach focused on Multiracial young adults is a necessity to fill this current gap in the literature.

Therefore, the focus of this study is on the primary research question: What are the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults regarding racial identity? The design of this study emphasizes the notion of disaggregation by prioritizing the voices of Multiracial young adults and celebrating the diverse representation of the participants by specifying their Multiracial background to address the gap in current literature surrounding this developmental stage and racial construct (Zamora & Padilla, 2024). Tran et al. (2016) discuss a prospective negative perception of racial identification inquiries that the researcher used as a guide for what to avoid when developing, conducting, and analyzing the outcomes of this study, which aims to be inclusive, unitive, affable, and equitable. The design of this study centers around the tenets of the MultiCrit framework to center the narrative on Multiracial individuals

and avoid objectifying participants, which could lead to an anomalous or othering effect (Harris, 2016).

Q methodology captures the diverse perspectives of racial identity held by Multiracial young adults. A Q study takes an entangled approach to achieve a holistic perspective shared by a specific population on an identified topic (Rieber, 2020). Q is considered a unique mixed methods approach because the subjective decisions made during the sorting process reflect qualitative characteristics found in collection and interpretation practices and factor analysis, which are identified as quantitative characteristics (Rieber, 2020).

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide background information on racial identity and racial identity development models. It identified an ecological model, framework, or approach as the most appropriate racial identity development model for Multiracial young adults to capture the influence of all contextual factors in an individual's life. Additionally, this chapter focused on the area of counseling in which Multiracial identity needs to be considered. While counseling literature focuses on what is currently being done to support Multiracial young adults through interventions, competencies, and inclusion, gaps in the literature have been found in each area that highlight a lack of focus on this population. Professionals in this field work in a convoluted pool of models based on the various monoracial and Multiracial identity development models introduced in this chapter. It is imperative to shift the focus from the professionals serving this population to the Multiracial young adults to discover their perspective on the topic. The current study was designed to capture the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences that Multiracial young adults hold about racial identity.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe Multiracial young adults' subjective attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of racial identity. This chapter summarizes the need for this study. The research design will be discussed with a brief review of Q methodology (Q), data collection procedures, limitations, and data analysis and interpretation process. Q methodology is known for its mixed approach, integrating elements of quantitative and qualitative practices (Watts & Stenner, 2012). As a result, this chapter also features a statement of researcher subjectivity that aligns with a Critical Multiracial Theory (MultiCrit) perspective that highlights the significance of understanding Multiracial experiences in the context of historical legacies of oppression.

Critical Multiracial Theory (MultiCrit), developed by Harris (2016), aims to enhance the theoretical understanding of the racialized experiences of Multiracial individuals, systematically promoting equity for this population (Harris, 2016). MultiCrit was forged by the foundational underpinnings of critical race theory (CRT) and intersectionality to provide a more holistic understanding of Multiracial individuals' lived experiences within a society built on a monoracial paradigm of race (Gabriel et al., 2023; Harris, 2016). Monoracism acts as a force that erases interracial mixing and multiraciality, while the mere existence and recognition of Multiracial individuals challenge the rigid boundaries of monoracial identity that shape society's understanding of race (Gabriel et al., 2023; Harris, 2016; Root, 1992). This study is designed to decolonize how research is conducted with this population by centering Indigenous knowledge,

identifying Indigenous or marginalized populations as knowers of their experience (Taylor & Tremblay, 2022), and exposing multiple identities by acknowledging how people can experience privilege and oppression simultaneously (Singh et al., 2020). This approach offers an affirming alternative by prioritizing the voices of Multiracial young adults to gain a deeper insight into their attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of racial identity. Consequently, MultiCrit serves as this study's most effective theoretical framework, as it represents a strong antiracist perspective that will enrich every stage of Q-methodology application.

Harris (2016) offers eight tenets shifting towards a MultiCrit framework: (1) challenge to ahistoricism; (2) interest convergence; (3) experiential knowledge; (4) challenge to dominant ideology; (5) racism, monoracism, and colorism; (6) a monoracial paradigm of race; (7) differential micro-racialization; and (8) intersections of multiple racial identities. Tenet (1) challenge to ahistoricism, analyzes historical issues to gain a better understanding of the experiences of Multiracial individuals (Harris, 2016). Tenet (2) interest convergence describes how racial policies or progress are acknowledged or made only when they benefit or serve the purpose of advancing the majority white population (Harris, 2016). Tenet (3) experiential knowledge highlights Multiracial individuals' experiences by making their voices central to the narrative as well as by challenging existing popular ideologies regarding race and multiraciality (Harris, 2016). Tenet (4) challenge to dominant ideology, explicitly takes any ideological themes presented in tenet (3) and directly challenges these dominant narratives by emphasizing the Multiracial individual's experience in spaces such as research, academia, and systemic policy (Harris, 2016). The first four tenets of CRT are also applicable to Multiracial individuals. They are, therefore, used as the first four tenets of MultiCrit because they are central to understanding race or racial equity among marginalized or oppressed individuals (Gabriel et al., 2023; Harris,

2016). Tenet (5) racism, monoracism, and colorism, recognizes how a Multiracial individual may encounter behavioral manifestations of bias that reinforce these elements of inequities and oppression in society (Harris, 2016). Tenet (6) a monoracial paradigm of race, aims to decolonize the fixed nature of racial categorization that is currently constructed in a way in which Multiracial truths are not recognized (Harris, 2016). Tenet (7) differential micro-racialization recognizes how a group is racialized to uphold the structures of white supremacy by offering a portrayal of a group that fits within the given historical context and can be altered to offer a positive or negative depiction of Multiracial individuals to serve the needs of the larger majority population (Harris, 2016). Tenet (8) intersections of multiple racial identities propel the conversation beyond single social identities to explore how an individual's unique mixture of multiple social and racial identities is taken into consideration when analyzing the intersectionality of Multiracial individuals. A MultiCrit lens was employed, and its eight tenets were applied in this study's design, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation phases.

Institutional Review Board

This research project was submitted to the University of Georgia's Office of Research for review and approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Approval was confirmed on February 12, 2025. This study abides by all policies and procedures associated with the university's Human Research Protection Program (HRPP). The Primary Investigator also upholds standards set by the HRPP, IRB, and associated ethical boards.

Research Question

The research question guiding this study is:

RQ1: *“What are the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults regarding racial identity?”*

Stickl et al. (2019) provide an elegant explanation as to why Q methodology is the best fit for counseling-related research by proclaiming that “Q Methodology has the potential to contribute to a better understanding of the strengths and challenges in best clinical practice as we identify viewpoints and attitudes of specific client populations, counselors, or counselors-in-training” (p. 116). This methodology is fruitful in gathering information that can influence program evaluation, model development, and overall client welfare (Stickl et al., 2019). Q methodology has been used in the counseling profession to examine a variety of issues, including children’s experiences and emotions (Ellingsen et al., 2014), the use of a marginalized methodology to study marginalized populations (Brown, 2006), clinicians and researchers perceptions of the application of attachment theory (Beckwith et al., 2022), school counselors beliefs of reporting suspected child sexual abuse (Waalkes et al., 2022) or Graduate students preferences for Counselor Educator dispositions (Hurt, 2015).

Q methodology is the best fit for this study because of the population being studied. Multiracial individuals have historically been marginalized, not considered, or ignored in society, education, research, power, or moral development (Brown, 2006). By integrating a critical lens through a MultiCrit orientation, fresh perspectives can be derived from “the themes, meanings, silences, and inconsistencies” (Sneegas, 2020, p. 83) discovered during the Q process. Brown (2006) bolsters this opinion by stating that “one of the advantages of Q methodology is that it has built-in features that, while not providing guarantees, certainly load the dice in favor of seeing things from the native’s or any other point of view, marginalized or otherwise” (p. 365). The intensive analysis process associated with Q is also valuable to marginalized populations such as Multiracial individuals because it can reveal connections or dynamic themes that participants completing the Q sorts are unaware of themselves (Brown, 2006).

As a research methodology, Q methodology has been marginalized within the research community as a futile way of studying human behavior (Brown, 2006). However, it has returned as a methodological “procedure and conceptual framework for the study of subjectivity in social context, and even more recently as a method for the study of social problems and as a facilitating device for finding solutions” (Brown, 2006, p. 378). As such, Q methodology is the best fit for this study based on its potential to offer an act of empowerment by allowing Multiracial young adults to voice their subjective opinions about racial identity (Brown, 2006).

Q- Methodology

William Stephenson developed Q methodology in 1935 as an adaptation of R-methodology to emphasize correlations among people (Rieber, 2020; Stephenson, 1953). Q is considered a unique mixed methods approach because the collection and interpretation practices reflect qualitative characteristics, the subjective decisions made during the sorting process, and quantitative characteristics such as factor analysis (Rieber, 2020). Q is simultaneously a methodology, per its statistical and psychological principles; a method, per factor analysis; and a technique, per the data collection procedure (Rieber, 2020; Stephenson, 1953). Stephenson highlights how this form of data collection is holistic or Gestalt in nature across all phases of the research process (Stephenson, 1953; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Sneegas (2020) emphasizes “how Q, when used creatively to ‘move beyond’ its standard use, yields results difficult to produce with qualitative or quantitative methods alone” (p. 81). Two distinguished features mark a Q study: a) data collected via the Q-sort technique and b) the Q-sorts undergoing statistical analysis via by-person factor analysis and intercorrelation (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Watts and Stenner (2012) have described two general rationales for why the Q methodology should be used rather than other research methods, “people’s viewpoints are

established as being of considerable importance relative to a particular subject matter” (p. 175) and that this methodology “shifts the focus from the participant group toward the study’s subject matter” (p. 176). Additional benefits of this approach include its ability to sift out the understanding of a subject matter versus other methods, where the understanding or meaning is prescribed and a holistic data set is produced (Watts & Stenner, 2012). In this spirit, the Q methodology is the best fit for this study as it captures Multiracial young adults' attitudes and beliefs and contributes to clinical literature by targeting the experiences of an under-researched population; further justification for why this approach is the best fit will be divulged by exploring Q methodology elements.

Concourse

Watts and Stenner (2012) identified a concourse as “the overall population of statements from which a final Q-set is sampled” (p. 34). In earlier works, Stephenson (1988/1989) stated that it is defined as “a collection of self-referable statements spoken by the participants” (Stephenson, 1988/1989, p.7). This is comparable to having a closet full of individual clothing items, *concourse*, from which the researcher selects particular outfits, *Q-set*, to organize in a suitcase for daily options during a vacation, *Q-sort*. A concourse could feature systemic or institutional standards or a glimpse of a cultural microcosm to answer the research question being studied (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Concourse development occurred over the duration of six months. Multiple sources were explored to elicit statements integrated into the concourse, including current literature, online blogs or discussion forums, Pew research trends, YouTube video interviews or discussions, and statements solicited from approximately 32 individuals of varying demographics, socioeconomic status, and professional backgrounds. This resulted in a final concourse of 110 statements.

During concourse curation, broad representation and balance were considered to ensure the statements accurately portray possible opinions and perspectives concerning the research question (Watts & Stener, 2012). Saturation was achieved when the collected statements began to be repetitive, with no new themes emerging, and the inclusion of additional statements failing to introduce diversity or new viewpoints (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Consequently, a comprehensive representation of the various perspectives on the subject had been captured, indicating that further data collection would not significantly expand the range of opinions in the concourse.

Once the concourse reached saturation, a structured Q-set technique was used to reduce the Q-sample (Watts & Stenner, 2012). To obtain structure, themes were identified based on established research on the subject via a balanced-block approach (Watts & Stenner, 2012). A structured approach uses predetermined statements that the researcher carefully crafts. In contrast, an unstructured approach relies on the researcher's knowledge and experience with the subject matter to construct original statements for the concourse (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The balanced-block approach is an element of the Q-technique initially introduced in Stevenson's (1953) first proposal of Q-methodology and will be upheld in this study to preserve the tradition of this methodology (Stephenson, 1953). The goal of concourse development is to create a comprehensive list capturing a wide range of perspectives, which can result in an undefined number of themes represented. There were thirty-four themes in the initial concourse. Themes that had similar meanings were merged into a singular theme (e.g., protective factor and privilege became protective factor/privilege). Themes that were closely related to similar topics were merged into one comprehensive theme (e.g. Community Influence, Family Influence, Genealogical influence, Genealogical/Heritage influence, and Sociological influence became

External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)) Upon further review, certain themes were found to be closely related to others, and therefore, the statements were absorbed by then broader theme (e.g. statements themed Racial Inclusion were rethemed as External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)). After these modifications, thirty-four themes were reduced to ten, as shown in Table 1. Based on these parameters, the final Q-set was a robust representation of statements for participants to sort.

Q-Sample

A Q-sample, or a Q-set, is a collection of items or statements that are reviewed and placed in a rank order based on a “new unit of quantification”, the subjective assignment of the significance level a participant gives to each item, known as psychological significance (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 15). Q methodology is a versatile procedure that allows statements or other stimulus items, such as pictures, scents, or sounds, to be used in a Q-set (Watts & Stenner, 2012; Rieber, 2020). The flexibility for item type opens the door to infusing creativity into this Q-studies component. In an effort to elicit active engagement from participants, a Q-set can include provocative items to encourage authentic and diverse reactions from sorters (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

For this study, the concourse underwent five interactive coding cycles. For phases one and two, I followed the precedent set by Baltrinic et al. (2021) and Lee (2014) to use a research team to assist in concourse revision. This team consisted of five members identified as African American, Black, or Caucasian. Phase one focused on assigning themes and subthemes to all 110 statements, removing unclear statements, and identifying statements needing editing. The reference for the statements was removed from this version of the Q-set but was stored in a secondary document to remove the bias of the statement source. For comprehension and

clarification, some statements had to be rewritten. Phase two aimed to consolidate the remaining 95 statements by removing duplicate, redundant, or confusing statements and identifying statements that needed to be edited for understanding, tense, and anti-items (Watts & Stenner, 2012; Stephenson, 1953). This was done by color-coding each theme to represent the balance-block distribution of statements visually and comparing items within each theme. Rewording the statements was also necessary to avoid double negative language that could be confusing to the reader or lead to an inaccurately sorted statement (e.g., “I did not) (Watts & Stenner, 2012; Stephenson, 1953). Phase three focused on further consolidation of the remaining 72 statements by removing items not centered on the research question and keeping racial identity in focus. Phase four reordered the remaining 55 statements alphabetically in an additional effort to review duplicity, repetitiveness, and redundancy. Phase five placed the remaining 46 statements in three columns, removed the color coding of themes, and randomized the order of statements to view them objectively for any remaining outlier items. Atkin et al. (2022) were referenced when editing the statements to ensure appropriate terminology was used. Statements are written in first-person and third-person perspectives to capture a range of subjective opinions. The final Q-set was reduced to 34 statements (see Appendix H).

Participants assign their own meaning to the items while engaging in the sorting process known as the Q-sort (Watts & Stenner, 2012). As a result, emphasis is not placed directly on the Q-set items but instead on the meaning participants ascribe to the items while sorting (Watts & Stenner, 2012). With this in mind, a completed Q-sort captures the impressions of a participant's viewpoints (Watts & Stenner, 2012), much like a memory foam mattress captures a handprint upon release.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with the five original research team members and expanded to include one doctoral student who was not a part of the research team and one community member to provide an objective, unbiased review of the study. The pilot ran for eleven days to accommodate the pilot participant's schedule. The pilot participants provided predominantly positive feedback with minor constructive criticisms. Of the critiques received, one linguistic change was applied to improve the overall comprehension and experience when completing the pre-screening demographic survey (see Appendix B). No other changes were made to the Q-study.

Participant Sampling and Recruitment

For this study, a purposeful sample approach was used to gather the participants, also indicated as P-set (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Purposeful sampling requires the Primary Investigator to select individuals strategically and intentionally with a unique point of view regarding the topic at hand. As a result, the P-set will be composed of Multiracial young adults, the target population for this study. Inclusion criteria for participants include 1) identifying as Multiracial, or identifying with two or more racial constructs, 2) being a young adult (ages 18-34), and 3) being fluent in English. Exclusion criteria include 1) individuals identifying as one racial construct, 2) anyone outside the young adult age range, and 3) non-English speaking individuals.

Initial objective data, such as demographic information, was collected through a Qualtrics survey at the onset of data collection to gather basic information about the participants' identities. The demographic survey captured screening criteria, including age, race, and English proficiency; optional criteria included gender. Demographic criteria such as age and racial

construct were required from the participants to confirm participation eligibility and to address gaps in the literature related to Multiracial young adults being excluded, inappropriately categorized, or othered (McDonald et al., 2020). Disaggregating racial constructs per participant provided demographic data to consider with other narrative information collected for interpretation purposes (Grilo et al., 2023a; Lam-Hine et al., 2024).

Once the demographic survey is completed, the responses are stored in the Google Workspace at the University of Georgia. Google Workspace provides a secure platform to access Google Suite tools with the protection of the university's dual login password protocol. By sending out a screening survey, the Primary Investigator was able to screen participants to ensure all eligibility criteria were met and provide personalized assistance in the navigation of the next steps of the study, such as sending an orientation or demonstration of the Q-Sort Application software and the conditions of instruction.

Due to the required intentionality behind participant identification, the recruitment strategy targeted web pages or platforms where Multiracial young adults can be found. To recruit for this study, a flier was circulated across social media pages, and list serves affiliated with the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development, an ACA division, Association for Creativity in Counseling, an ACA division, The University of Georgia's Counselor Education and Supervision Ph.D. program at Gwinnett Campus, professional networks and associations, including the American Counseling Association Connect webpage, the Multiracial/Multiethnic Counseling Concerns interest network, the Multiethnic, Multiracial, and Transracial Adoptee Concerns Facebook group, and individual professional networking connections.

Q-Sort

The Q-sort is considered a technique within the broader functionality of Q methodology and should not be isolated as a stand-alone technique but rather as a tool within the methodological application of Q (Rieber, 2020). Participants were asked to engage in the Q-sort process to express their subjective opinions via an organized sorting procedure. This process is commonly done in person but can be completed online (Watts & Stenner, 2012). For this study, Q-Method Software, a web-based software tool, was used to collect consent, complete the Q-sort, post-sort questionnaire, opt in to the post-sort interview, and perform data analysis (Lutfallah & Buchanan, 2019).

Clear directions were shared by providing participants with the conditions of instruction, agreed-upon terms of participation, and any materials needed to complete the task, such as the forced choice distribution scale (Watts & Stenner, 2012) (see Appendix D). A ranking distribution is suggested to be visible within the sorting space; a distribution range is commonly structured in the following order: -5, -4, -3, -2, -1, 0, +1, +2, +3, +4, +5 (Watts & Stenner, 2012). To begin with, the participant reviews each item and provisionally ranks them in one of three categories: positive, agree, most relevant; negative, disagree, least relevant; and neutral or indifferent (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Once the initial sort was completed, participants took each category pile individually, starting with positive, followed by negative, and finally neutral items, and situated the items along the distribution scale in accordance with their relation to the collection of items as a whole (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

It is important to remind participants that the distribution scale has limited sorting spaces due to the forced-choice design required to maintain the curved distribution shape (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Once the sort is complete, participants are recommended to review the Q-sort to

ensure the appropriate number of items are in each distribution column, ensure participants are satisfied with their item placement, and submit their distribution chart (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Statistical Analysis Overview

The data collected from the Q Method Software was analyzed by the internal analysis engine (Lutfallah & Buchanan, 2019). Next, the project information was reviewed for accuracy to ensure the software has accurately captured all necessary data components. Once confirmed, the initial analysis can be run. This produced multiple tables and figures of statistical output to be used for analysis and interpretation.

Correlation

Stephenson took Spearman's R methodological tradition of factor analysis for Q methodology and inverted it to shift its analytical focus to a by-person factor analysis (Watts & Stenner, 2012). This shift makes the person the variable rather than the data they report and marks Q as a credible statistical analysis method (Watts & Stenner, 2012). In both statistical traditions, factor analysis aims to reduce data to reveal patterns of association between the variables in a data set, whether those variables are people or measurements (Rieber, 2020; Watts & Stenner, 2012). During this process, the Q-sort is broken down into factors (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Factors are bundles of shared viewpoints (Watts & Stenner, 2012). When different Q-sorts load to a particular factor, it is "because they exhibit a very similar sorting pattern or configuration" (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 181).

Factor Analysis

The Primary Investigator ran principal components analysis and varimax rotation using Q-method software when analyzing the factors. It is standard to evaluate eigenvalues and look for values of 1.0 to guide which factors to select. Ultimately, it is up to the researcher to

determine whether this is the best solution in accordance with the data. Tools like the scree plot were also used to guide the factor selection processes.

Once the number of factors had been identified, they were entered into a varimax factor rotation. This rotation clarifies any relationships among factors by adjusting the data coordinates and producing a factor loadings table. The table visually represents factor-exemplification or grouping sorts that exemplify or define a particular factor (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Once the researcher's preferences had been set on the factor loadings table, the table data was sent to output for analysis. The analysis output allowed the Primary Investigator to visualize the results by producing composite factor displays that were downloaded and further analyzed. At the end of the factor analysis process, the researcher was left with any identified factors or clusters of aligned Q-sorts (Rieber, 2020), known as a factor array. This occurs when "factor exemplars are merged to form a single ideal-typical Q-sort for each factor" (Stenner et al., 2003, p. 2164). The factor array is to be used during the data interpretation process.

Additional Data Collection

In addition to the Q-sort process, additional data were collected via the pre-screening demographic survey, an open-ended post-sort questionnaire, and an optional post-sorting interview (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The goal of a post-sort questionnaire is to gain a more robust understanding of the view shared by the participant and inquire about the significance they have assigned each item, especially at the extreme ends of the forced choice distribution, which is depicted by the order in which items were sorted (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The post-sort questionnaire can also explore items that fall in the middle of the distribution, misunderstood items, or any items they feel the Q-set is missing (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

An option to participate in the post-sorting interview was offered as an opportunity for participants to opt in or out by answering a yes or no question at the end of the post-sort questionnaire. Post-sorting interviews can enhance the quality of the data by generating a deeper understanding of the expressed viewpoints through predetermined questions asked in a semi-structured interview approach (Watts & Stenner, 2012) (see Appendix F). Participants who opted into the post-sort interview were given an opportunity to create an additional piece of qualitative data through an AI-generated image Artifact (see Appendix F). The creation of this artifact provided an alternative way to access subjectivity through a creative visual representation that can evoke emotions beyond verbal descriptions and will bolster the triangulation process central to mixed methods research (Lundberg et al., 2020; Turner et al., 2017; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Adding qualitative components, such as interviews and artifacts, exemplifies the mixed-method modality of a Q-study (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Organization and understanding of the information collected in the Q-sort are essential for an enriching interview process (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Based on a preliminary data analysis, factors can be identified, and an informal assessment of the sorts can be used during the post-sort interview as a way for members to check the data collected. To enhance the likelihood of a robust interpretation, the Primary Investigator aims to have a minimum of one representative from each factor complete a post-sort interview to explore why they loaded to that factor and extract any additional themes or nuanced information associated with each factor. An overall statement reflecting their viewpoint about the topic can also be collected as a form of narrative data that can assist in the interpretation phase of the study (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Once this phase of a Q study was completed, the researcher then proceeded to analyze and interpret the collected data. A thorough understanding of how results are conceived enforces the methodological traditions of this study.

Interpretation

Integrating Critical Multiracial Theory (MultiCrit) and the researcher's hybrid critical constructivist inquiry worldview plays a pivotal role in shaping the data analysis process and the interpretation of findings. MultiCrit, with its emphasis on challenging traditional racial paradigms and centering the voices of Multiracial individuals, informs the study's methodology by ensuring that participants' experiences are understood within the broader social context of racial power dynamics and systemic inequalities (Harris, 2016). This dual framework and worldview integration enables the researcher to interpret the data holistically, seeking to understand how individuals make meaning of their experiences while addressing the structural inequalities they face.

The factor arrays govern the interpretation process because the interpretation centers around the researcher's desire to understand the participant's viewpoints (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Interpretation “re-establishes the gestalt nature of the data and shouts loudly that the whole viewpoint is, and has always been, our primary concern” (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 148). Holistic interpretation must be practiced in a good-faith effort to capture the entirety of a particular shared viewpoint (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Q methodology uses abduction when interpreting factors, taking facts or clues to explain the newly generated insights (Watts & Stenner, 2012). These clues can include the data found in the demographic information, factor array, and information provided in the post-sort interview to provide an enriched explanation of the viewpoint (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The goal of factor interpretation is to “uncover, understand and fully explain the viewpoint captured by the factor and shared by the significantly loading participants” (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 181).

This study used a recommended system for factor interpretation called the crib sheet system, which is effective, rigorous, and thorough (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The crib sheet system exemplifies its thorough nature through a multistep system, which includes two drafts to aid in the final interpretation (Watts & Stenner, 2012). For this study, the first crib sheet draft was created to identify the highest-ranked, middle-ranked, and lowest-ranked items for each factor (see Appendix J). This provided a side-by-side distribution of all thirty-four statements for each of the 3 factors. From this draft, a second crib sheet draft was developed to add distinguishing statements, participant comments, and to begin to develop a narrative for each factor.

In practice, the researcher uses the logic of abduction by interacting with all sorted items in an effort “to generate a hunch or preliminary hypothesis” (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 155) based on the implications of that item within that particular factor. When interpreting a factor, the researcher names the factor and then provides an explanation in a narrative format for the reader to understand the presented shared viewpoint (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Ultimately, the critical-constructivist approach empowers the researcher to interpret the data with sensitivity to individual subjectivity and the broader sociopolitical context, fostering a deeper understanding of Multiracial identity and its implications for counseling and social justice.

Reliability, Validity, and Trustworthiness

Reliability and validity are critical components in ensuring the rigor and robustness of this study. Reliability will be supported through an interrater approach across the participants' responses, including the Q-sort, post-sort questionnaire, and optional post-sort interview. This approach ensures consistency across data sources, enhancing the reliability of the findings. The credibility of the study, or the degree to which the findings can be considered accurate and

trustworthy, was upheld through triangulation of these various data points, allowing for cross-validation of responses and strengthening the overall interpretation (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). The validity of this study, which refers to the degree to which it accurately measures what it intends to measure, was reviewed using a unified approach that addresses construct, content, and criterion-related validity, ensuring that the study is measuring the intended constructs of racial identity within the Multiracial young adult population (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). Finally, trustworthiness, which refers to the confidence that can be placed in the findings, was established through rich descriptions and member checking. This process involves seeking participant feedback to confirm that the interpretations of their experiences are accurate and reflective of their perspectives, further enhancing the trustworthiness of the study (DeCuir Gunby & Schutz, 2017).

Limitations

Due to the imperfect nature of human subject research, the limitations of this study must be addressed. One significant limitation is the researcher's identity and positionality as a White female investigator, which inevitably influences the implementation of the Q-sort technique via the development of the concourse, the Q-set, and the interpretation of data. Although the researcher created the concourse and Q-statements rather than the participants, they can be seen as tools hand-crafted by the researcher to set the stage, allowing participants to craft their narratives or paint a picture from their perspective. While participants have the freedom to assign their subjective meanings to the statements, the inherent subjectivity of the researcher in developing these tools inevitably influences the process (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

Additionally, the results from a Q study cannot be generalized to the broader population of Multiracial young adults, as the method does not allow for the assignment of percentages or

statistical representation (Brown, 1980). Instead, the factors derived from the analysis reflect shared viewpoints among the study's participants, not the entire demographic (Brown, 1980; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Therefore, the findings of this study reflect the perspectives and experiences of this unique participant group, which underscores the importance of addressing subjectivity in the interpretation of these results.

Subjectivity

Subjectivity is present in research and non-research components of life as it informs how we intrinsically navigate choices daily (Peshkin, 1988). A research participant's subjectivity is their unique point of view on the topic at hand. Watts and Stenner (2012) describe operant subjectivity as acting out that point of view by prescribing meaning in the form of significance to items during the Q-sort process. Participants are given a chance to impact their environment by expressing their viewpoint, emphasizing how "Q sorting is a means of capturing subjectivity - reliability, scientifically and experimentally - in the very act of being operant" (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 26).

Q researchers can also use their subjective lens throughout the research process, where their personal opinions, beliefs, emotions, and biases can be injected (Peshkin, 1994). Researchers must acknowledge their subjectivity concerning the research at hand due to its ability to influence or potentially dictate choices made throughout the research process (Peshkin, 1994). A forthcoming acknowledgment of a researcher's subjectivity can be declared in an ever-evolving proclamation known as a subjectivity statement.

Subjectivity Statement

My proposed research examines the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults toward racial identity, and my subjectivity within this study must be addressed.

This research will be conducted from a dialectic approach, using a constructivist-interpretivist and critical perspective, which could sometimes be considered contradictory or opposing views (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017; English, 2023). An integrated approach will allow for understanding how particular contexts influence epistemological truths through a close and collaborative nature of inquiry while employing a critique of existing power structures and disparities (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). From a critical Q perspective, my positionality is valued and infused into the study's development and analysis stages as an organic data source (Sneegas, 2020).

Privileged and oppressed intersecting social identities influence my worldview as a White heterosexual female young adult who is the mother of a Multiracial child and a Doctoral Candidate conducting this research project. After being in an interracial relationship with an African American male and effectively transitioning into a collaborative co-parenting dynamic, I have gained a unique perspective on parenting a child of a Black-White Biracial construct. His father and I have engaged in many conversations on integrating our, at times, contrasting beliefs on family values, traditions, involvement, extended families, discipline, education, and mental health. We consciously curate opportunities for engagement that highlight our son's cultural background and diverse representation in the form of exposure to other racially diverse children and adults, individuals with various ability statuses, and toys, books, or other entertainment sources that do the same. It is with my son's best interest in heart and mind that I have elected to pursue research on Multiracial individuals to gain more knowledge and insight into the lived experiences of this population.

From a social justice perspective, I elect to use my monoracial White privilege to advance current literature on this under-researched population by providing a platform to

prioritize the voices of Multiracial young adults. While I am not inherently a member of this racial category, I am an ally who intends to broadcast the findings of this study to stop the cycle of perpetuating Westernized beliefs of racial identity, advocate for the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of this population, and advance the current trend of underrepresentation of minority-minority racial constructs in scholarly research. As a parent and counselor educator, I continuously acquire and apply new knowledge. I will approach the following study from this lived experience as the mother of a Biracial son with a passion for advocating for marginalized individuals.

I anticipate that Multiracial young adults' subjective opinions of racial identity will differ from what has traditionally been taught or understood in topics of Counseling and Research. By focusing on subjectivity through a MultiCrit lens, I was mindful of how Multiracial young adults' experiences are contextualized within an oppressive historical past and present in hopes of bringing light to a narrative that is centered on Multiracial young adults, challenges dominant ideology, and recognizes the influence of intersectionality in their lived experience (Jones & Rogers, 2023). My expectations of Q include utilizing the provided structured approaches and protocol associated with this methodology to unveil a new understanding of this topic. As a Q researcher, I remained curious and open to surprises throughout the process (Watts & Stenner, 2012). I was interested in seeing what types of factors would be produced from this study and being able to capture a holistic representation of this population's viewpoints on the topic of racial identity. Based on these assumptions, I believe this study will add to the current literature and influence counseling practices with this population by adding their voice and opinions to the conversation.

Ethical considerations

This study aligns with ACA's (2014) ethical research principles, APA's (2017) ethical code of conduct, and policies set by the university and the university's institutional review board. The use of affirming and bias-free language throughout this study's development, collection, and interpretation phases is one way I addressed the APA (2017) principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence, fidelity and responsibility, and respect for people's rights and dignity (APA, 2017). Approval from the university institutional review board was obtained before commencing, and participants were provided opportunities to inquire about the research process via a protocol outlined through a thorough informed consent process. Individuals can elect to decline participation in this study, and those who do participate may withdraw consent and leave the study at any time. To maintain confidentiality, participant identities are masked during all study phases, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting to the extent possible per ethical protocol (ACA, 2014; APA, 2017; Call et al., 2023). I have no known conflicts of interest or sponsors associated with this study.

Potential Implications of Findings

The findings of this study emphasize the importance of preparing counselors to effectively work with Multiracial young adults, starting from graduate programs and continuing through licensure and ongoing education. Accredited programs should integrate knowledge and skills related to Multiracial experiences throughout their curricula to promote antiracist ideology and equity for these marginalized populations. Doing so can prepare counselors in training to work with the most significantly increased population in over a decade. The spike of Multiracial young adults punctuates that it is not a matter of if but of when current and future counselors will

be working with this population. This demographic shift highlights the urgent need for targeted support and services for Multiracial young adults

Current literature outlines best practices for counselors working with Multiracial individuals, such as engaging in open discussions about identity, employing anti-discriminatory practices, and using contemporary theoretical approaches. While counselors must adhere to various ethical codes and competencies to ensure best practices in clinical work with this population, the findings of this study will provide direct insight from this population about what works best for them and their understanding of racial identity. Counselors are encouraged to create safe spaces for exploring complex issues related to identity and race, and these findings could provide additional guidance toward this goal.

While these best practices are essential, there is also a notable gap in research focused on the perspectives of Multiracial young adults themselves. Understanding their values and priorities in a clinical setting can inform and enhance counseling practices, ensuring that interventions are relevant and effective in supporting their unique experiences with racial identity. Furthermore, this study addresses the current research gap by contributing new statistical and narrative findings about a commonly forgotten or ignored population.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter explores the intricacies of the methodological approach I will use to identify and describe the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults regarding their racial identity. This chapter underscores the necessity of this research and outlines the research design, including a brief overview of Q methodology, data collection procedures, and the data analysis and interpretation process, along with potential limitations and implications of the study. The rationale for employing MultiCrit as the theoretical framework for

this study has been established, and the importance of contextualizing Multiracial experiences across ecological systems has been emphasized. Additionally, there is a rationale for using Q methodology due to its inherent characteristics that, while not guaranteeing specific outcomes, significantly enhance the likelihood of celebrating perspectives from marginalized viewpoints. The next chapter will thoroughly examine the results of this research study, detailing the number of factors extracted and offering a narrative interpretation of the findings.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the findings of the study, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to offer a comprehensive interpretation of the study's mixed methods outcomes. The chapter begins by outlining the demographic characteristics of the participants. Following this, a detailed overview of the factor analysis process is provided, including the Q methodological steps undertaken and the statistical outcomes that informed the generation of distinct factors.

Next, the interpretation of the factors marks a critical point of integration between the quantitative and qualitative components of the study. During this stage, three distinct factors are introduced and examined in depth. To enrich and contextualize the interpretation of these factors, qualitative elements are incorporated, most notably, the post-sort interviews and the creative artifacts produced by participants. This qualitative data serves not only to support the statistical findings but also to offer a nuanced, visually grounded representation of the themes emerging from the factor analysis. Together, these elements contribute to answering the research question: RQ1: *“What are the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults regarding racial identity?”*

RESULTS

This study aimed to explore the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults regarding their racial identity. Q methodology was central to this investigation, allowing for a nuanced examination of subjective experiences through its mixed methods approach. This

methodological framework facilitated the exploration of diverse perspectives, capturing the complexity of racial identity among Multiracial individuals. Participants were recruited using targeted strategies, including outreach through social media groups, professional organizations, listservs, and personal and professional networks. Recruitment materials, such as an introductory email and flyer, were distributed across platforms accessible throughout the United States (see Appendix A), ensuring a broad reach within the eligible demographic. To participate in the study, individuals had to meet three inclusion criteria: 1) identifying as Multiracial or belonging to two or more racial categories; 2) being between the ages of 18 and 34; and 3) possessing fluency in English.

The recruitment process commenced after obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the UGA Office of Research. Potential eligible participants were invited to complete a demographic screening survey through Qualtrics (see Appendix B). This survey was monitored daily to track new submissions and ensure all eligible participants met the inclusion criteria. Once eligibility was confirmed, participants received a welcome email containing their unique participant identification code, instructions for completing the web-based Q sort through Q Method Software (see Appendix D), and a copy of the informed consent (see Appendix C) (Lutfallah & Buchanan, 2019). The Q sort involved 34 statements (see Appendix H) and a post-sort questionnaire (see Appendix E) designed to explore participants' subjective experiences further.

Participants were also given the option to opt in for a virtual post-sort interview, offering additional opportunities for in-depth exploration of their perspectives (see Appendix F). Individuals who completed the interview were entered into a drawing for one of three \$20 Amazon gift cards to incentivize participation. The data gathered from the Q sort was analyzed

using Q Method Software (Lutfallah & Buchanan, 2019). Additionally, the crib-sheet method was employed to review the quantitative output in a structured way through the identified distinguished statements. As Watts and Stenner (2012) outlined, this approach provides a comprehensive framework for interpreting the factors that emerged from the study, ensuring a robust understanding of the diverse subjective perspectives on Multiracial identity. The research question that guided the study was:

RQ1: *“What are the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults regarding racial identity?”*

Description of Participants

Individuals interested in participating in the study completed a demographic pre-screening survey via Qualtrics. There were 47 screening survey attempts, of which 32 were deemed eligible and consented to participate. Screening surveys were deemed ineligible due to not meeting the inclusion criteria, being a duplicate entry, the entry being indicated as a bot or automated response, or incomplete/ inaccurate information being provided. Thirty-two unique individuals met the study criteria and were invited to participate via email, including instructions on completing the online Q-sort and a custom participant identification code. The targeted number of participants was 17, based on Watts and Stenner’s (2012) recommended ratio of half the number of Q statements, 34. The study was open to participants for two months, and three rounds of emails were sent, including the original welcome email and two reminders. Participants who completed the sort and opted in to an interview were invited to schedule an interview using a Doodle poll within 48 hours of completing the Q sort. Once scheduled, a follow-up email with the UGA Zoom link and confirmation of the interview date and time was sent.

Twenty participants started the Q-sort, and 19 completed the Q-sort. One participant began the Q-sort but did not complete the activity. Another participant completed the Q-sort activity but later provided an age that conflicted with what was initially submitted in the demographic survey, ultimately making them ineligible due to not meeting the inclusion criteria, resulting in 18 completed Q-sorts from eligible participants. As Q-methodology does not have a rigid rule of participant-to-statement ratio, this study aligned with guidelines set forth by Q scholars such as Stephenson (1953), Brown (1996), and Watts and Stenner (2012), making this number of participants appropriate for this study. Eleven of the 18 participants opted in to the virtual interview, eight scheduled an interview, and four completed the interview. Participants who opted-in were included in a three tier email communication system to send a reminder after five minutes of their interview time had passed, again at the end of the interview time slot to encourage rescheduling, and a final email went to all who either scheduled and did not attend or who never scheduled in an attempt to capture more qualitative data in the interview process. Four interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Demographics

A disaggregated approach was taken when collecting participant demographic information, in alignment with research by Grilo et al. (2023a), to identify unique racial construct pairings or sets rather than inappropriately grouping or othering participants based on race. Participants self-selected the racial constructs that make them Multiracial by typing which racial or ethnic groups they identify with. This fill-in-the-blank entry allowed them to name their racial construct as they know it and, as such, dictate how they understand their own racial makeup. As the racial combinations are unique, presenting the participants' racial constructs would be too identifying for this population. However, within the participant group the following

racial or ethnic groups were self-prescribed in a variety of two or three constructs per participant: African, African American, Asian, Black, Caucasian, Haitian, Haitian American, Hispanic, Indigenous, Indigenous peoples, Irish, Latina, Latino, Latino American, Middle Eastern, and White.

As per the eligibility criteria, participants had to be between the ages of 18 and 34 to be eligible. Of the 18 participants, ages ranged from 20 to 34 years old, with the mean age of $M=25$, $SD=4.7$. Participants also provided their gender identification. This was a self-report option, similar to racial or ethnic group identification, to allow participants to identify their gender as they know it. Of the 18 participants, three identified as Male, 14 as Female, and one as Non-binary (see Table 2).

Participants also disclosed state residency. This was captured to determine if regionality had space in racial identification. However, due to the small sample size and how the factors emerged, regionality did not emerge as an identifying marker. Although the relevance of residency was not proven, this data does indicate the diversity of the locality of my population across the United States.

Participants answered yes or no questions about their experiences related to racial and Multiracial identity (see Table 3). These responses will be looked at in more depth as they relate to each factor.

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was conducted using the Q-Sort Application software, following a six-step process: (1) selection of a correlation matrix, (2) factor extraction, (3) factor rotation, (4) interpretation of factor loadings, (5) output generation, and (6) summary and interpretation of results. Initially, all submitted Q-sorts were reviewed, and only those meeting the predetermined

inclusion criteria were retained for analysis. Three Q-sorts were excluded: two pilot submissions and one additional sort that no longer met eligibility standards at the time of analysis. This resulted in a final dataset of 18 qualified Q-sorts.

The first step involved selecting the correlation matrix, for which Pearson correlation was chosen to assess the relationships among Q-sorts. In the second step, factor extraction was conducted using principal component analysis (PCA). The initial output suggested the presence of eight potential factors, and a corresponding table displaying eigenvalues was generated. Each sort was accounted for, and factor loadings of $+0.30$ or -0.30 or higher were identified as statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level, a research standard. The factor correlation matrix, as shown in Table 5, shows the correlation coefficients.

In accordance with the Kaiser criterion, which considers factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 as significant, six factors met this threshold (see Table 6). A scree plot was examined to evaluate factor significance further and identify the most meaningful break points in eigenvalues (see Figure 6). Based on this combined analysis, three factors were determined to be of primary significance for this study.

In the third step, factor rotation was applied to enhance interpretability. A varimax rotation was performed, specifying a three-factor solution. This process produced additional quantitative outputs, including tables illustrating the covariances, communalities, and inter-factor correlations. Each factor was then characterized based on the number of defining Q-sorts, significantly loading on a single factor. Of the 18 qualified Q-sorts, eight loaded onto Factor 1, seven onto Factor 2, and three onto Factor 3.

Factor z-scores were calculated for each item within the factors, along with the standard error of the differences between z-scores. In the final step, the summary, several key outputs

were generated: a descending array of factor score differences, composite Q-sorts for each factor, and a classification of statements as distinguishing, consensus, most characteristic, most uncharacteristic, quite characteristic, and quite uncharacteristic. These data were used to interpret and describe the unique viewpoints represented by each factor.

Factor Arrays

After the factor analysis process, the researcher is left with identified factors, or clusters of aligned Q-sorts, known as factor arrays (Rieber, 2020). The factor array is formed by merging individual factor patterns into a single, idealized Q-sort for each factor (Watts & Stenner, 2012). It illustrates how each Q statement is ranked within that factor and is calculated using weighted averages, with higher-loading participants contributing more heavily to the final ranking because they more accurately represent the viewpoint captured by the factor (Watts & Stenner, 2012). For example, Statement 2 (I find comfort and community in others who share my racial identity) was highly ranked on Factor 2. However, Factor 1 and Factor 3 participants placed less importance on the statement by assigning it a more neutral ranking. Table 8 contains the factor arrays for Factors 1, 2, and 3.

As a result, factor arrays provide a straightforward yet powerful means of identifying key differences between perspectives. The factor arrays also serve a central role in the interpretation process, guiding the researcher's understanding of each factor. The crib sheet system further supports this stage by emphasizing engagement with each item in the factor array, reinforcing Q methodology's holistic and interpretive nature (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Factor arrays allow the researcher to note differences in ranking; for example, Factor 3 participants sorted Statement 18 (My physical appearance dictates how I identify or categorize myself Multiracially) in the +4 column, whereas Factor 1 and Factor 2 participants ranked this statement negatively (Factor 1: -

1; Factor 2: -3). Factor arrays also allow the researcher to observe similarities in ranking. For instance, all participants ranked Statement 5 (I feel ashamed because of my Multiracial identity) negatively, resulting in a consistent -5 ranking across all three factor arrays. In addition to analyzing the sorts by participant, the researcher incorporated responses from the post-sort questionnaire and post-sort interviews to support and deepen the interpretation of each factor. Participants were asked questions such as, “Were there any statements that you found to be confusing or out of place? What did you do with these statements?”, “As you were sorting, did you feel like there was a statement missing from this collection of statements? If so, please share that statement, and where you would have placed it in your Q-sort.”; and “Describe your process in sorting the statements you placed on the far right/middle/far left”. For discussion regarding the three factors, they will henceforth be referred to by their assigned factor name; Factor 1 will be known as *The Mirror Within*, Factor 2 will be known as *Reflections Among Us*, and Factor 3 will be known as *The Collective Mirror*.

Factor Interpretation

In the post-sort questionnaire, participants provided feedback on their Q-sort experience and Q-set content. Participants were asked if they found any statements confusing and how they deciphered these types of statements. Multiple statements were identified as confusing or out of place: Statement 7 (My racial identity is a protective factor for my mental health). Statement 15 (I have attempted to look a certain way in order to influence the way others perceive my race.), Statement 26 (Racial identity is unchanging) and Statement 32 (People in my community perceive me as "Other"). Participants from all three factors reported that any confusing items were assigned a neutral ranking. One participant from Factor 1 indicated they sought help from a

parental figure to provide clarification of confusing statements. This ascription of ranking due to confusion or outside perspectives could influence the composite output of each factor.

Participants also provided suggestions for statements they felt were missing from this Q-set. Participant 2 made two suggestions by responding:

People tiptoe around this discussion, and when I share my racial identity, I am not questioned about it. A question about that would have been nice. Also, a question about the conflicting feelings about choosing a racial identity to ascribe to, or the racism experienced for "not being fully" playing a part in my process of claiming my racial identity, would have been very realistic for me. I would have put it on the strongly agree side.

Participant 3 suggested, "Do I feel like I would go back to the part that I have accepted. I would put that as a 4 on agree." Participant 13 responded. "Have you ever felt like you needed to dress a certain way at any point in your life to prove your race to people"? Participant 28 provided two suggestions: "Did you feel isolated growing up because of your identity? Most agree 2; Were you bullied by your community? Most agree 1". The unintentional omission of these types of statements failed to capture the subjective perspective of these experiences. Should these statements have been represented in the Q-set, per the participants' suggested ranking, alternative composite sorts, distinguished perspectives, and factor identification would be concluded.

Factor 1: The Mirror Within

Factor 1 has an EV of 5.12, explaining 28% of the study variance. Eight of the 18 participants, named *The Mirror Within*, were significantly associated with this factor.

Participants on Factor 1 identified as two or more of the following racial or ethnic constructs:

African American, Black, Haitian, Hispanic, Indigenous, Irish, Latina, Latino, Latino American,

Middle Eastern, or White. Of the eight participants, seven identified as female and one as male, and they all ranged in age from 21 to 30 years old, with an average age of $M=23.3$ years. Six of the eight participants reported being excluded due to being Multiracial. Two of the eight participants reported not being exposed to the concept of racial identity until it was first presented to them in a college setting (Undergraduate or Graduate).

Key themes were identified from the quantitative data and explained with *The Mirror Within* qualitative data. Quantitative data for this factor is included in Table 9. This data includes distinguishing statements for the factor and statements ranked higher and lower in this factor than in other factors, based on the factor array shown in Table 8. Special consideration was given to distinguishing factors for *The Mirror Within*. Statements referenced in narratives are denoted by the statement number and composite score, which ranges from -5 to +5. For example, Statement 29 ranked at +5 is denoted as (29: +5). A visual representation of the factor is in Figure 7.

Participants who loaded on *The Mirror Within* are proud of their Multiracial identity (29: +5; 1: +2). Statement 29 (I am proud of my Multiracial identity) was identified as a distinguishing statement for this factor ($P<0.05$). In a post-sort interview, Participant 8 shared, “My multiracial identity has been something I am proud of as I come to really understand all of its facets. It continues to be something that I am happier, prouder of, and love about myself”. This aligns with participant 8’s response to a post-sort question (Please describe what message you believe your Q-sort conveys about racial identity, what is the story you are trying to tell?) where she responded, “I am proud of my multiracial identity, although others can isolate or discriminate against me for it. I believe being multiracial makes me grow into a better person each day. Multiracial is its own racial group”. This sense of pride was echoed by Participant 31

about Statement 29 during her post-sort interview when she stated, “I think everybody should be proud of their identity. Coming from more than one, I take pride in that...I am very proud of where I come from as far as that multicultural identity”. Similarly, Participant 6 shared in her post-sort questionnaire that “everyone should be proud of themselves and their identity. Do not diminish your light because other people cannot see past skin”.

Participants who loaded on this factor agreed that their families played an important role in their knowledge and understanding of their identity through intentional early introduction of Multiracial identity (30: +4; 21: +4). Participant 31 shared in her post-sort interview about statement 21(My immediate family provided the blueprint for forming my racial identity):

I feel like my immediate family has provided me with that blueprint. My dad's white, my mom is black. Mom, especially, really wanted to teach me and my sister at a really young age. You are both and you do not have to choose because you are both.

Participant 8 provided a different perspective about how, while her parents introduced racial identity, her sibling was a greater influence in her understanding of Multiracial identity when she stated:

My parents are both monoracial. I think they just did not know how to introduce mixed culture. They definitely introduced their racial things, constructs, and traditions, but for mixed multiracial stuff, they did not know how to guide us for that- I am really thankful for my sibling because we were able to sort that out together.

Additionally, Participant 14 described the story her Q-sort told when saying:

I want to convey the idea that there is no need to divide your mixed heritage into a category. I am grateful that I was able to experience an environment where both my identities were able to coexist, where I learned to appreciate both heritages, the different

traditions and customs, and become immersed once I was at an age where I understood more.

The messages received early on debunked the idea that racial identity was an immutable construct (26: -2; 13: -1) but rather a construct that can ebb and flow over time (23: +1).

Participant 8 spoke on balancing multiple identities when she stated, “my whole life, it was pretty dichotomous between the two opposite languages, foods, religions, culture regions”. Due to information about Multiracial identity being readily available from childhood, these participants did not need to unlearn biases picked up at an early age (25: -2).

The fact that people in society make assumptions due to their phenotype (9: +3) and attempt to fit them into traditions and behaviors of a racial identification that is not their own (10: +1) aligned with the influence social context has on identity in terms of self-categorization (33: +2) at times resulting in these participants feeling pressured to identify with one identity over another (17: +1). Participant 31 shared that people in society mistake her racial identity frequently due to her phenotype. In reference to Statement 9 (My physical features (e.g., skin color, hair texture, eye shape, eye color) lead people to assume that I am not the race(s) that I identify with.) Participant 31 stated, “People always assume that I am a different race. I think it is actually quite funny to know other people's assumptions. I get Hispanic a lot”.

Participants ranked statement 27, “the pressure to identify as a single race is a significant part of the Multiracial experience,” at (-1), indicating a shared perspective that this phenomenon is a less significant part of their experience. Participant 31 shared how she has experienced this amongst peers and in community settings:

When it comes to people expecting me to behave a certain way, I think it is because I am both. They want me to act more like the other one. I will hear my black friends saying,

you act so white. Like, I am also white. I have had people ask me if I had to identify as a certain race, which one would I choose? I said, I am not doing that.

Participant 8 spoke about how this pressure to identity manifests externally in systems and policy settings by sharing, “I feel this with questionnaires. When I got my license renewed recently, they asked me what my race was, and I said, I am two. She looked confused at me and said, you can only pick one”.

Despite skin color, hair texture, eye shape, and eye color being used by society to categorize people, such as in instances of hypodescent, participants loaded on *The Mirror Within* have not attempted to look a certain way in order to influence the way others perceive them (15: -4) or lied about their racial identity to make other people happy (34: -4). Additionally, they do not use their physical appearance as the sole criterion to identify or categorize themselves Multiracially (18: -1).

Participants on the factor do not feel isolated or like an outsider due to their Multiracial identity (8: -2; 6: -3). *The Mirror Within* tends to find comfort and community in others who share their Multiracial identity (24: +2). Participant 8 spoke to the complexity of community when discussing her reasoning for ranking Statement 24 at -1:

In some ways, I relate more to someone who is mixed Asian and Black than a monoracial White person or a monoracial Latino person, just because of the internal mixed experience. It is slightly neutral as well, because we do have different racial makeups and different histories, with culture as a part of it, and stereotypes. Generally, there is some comfort and community in that. That one is still in movement for me.

By embedding themselves in a community of shared identities, their community is less likely to perceive them as “other” (32: -3) and more likely to perceive them as the norm. Participant 31

shared how her experience filling out a job application made her feel other when recalling, “When I am filling out a job application and cannot put down two, I would have to put down “other”. I do not like the idea of having to choose one. I put “other”. She further expressed how she felt by self-identifying as “other,” and she was permitting her colleagues to do the same. This sentiment is aligned with Participant 8's experience with pressure to identify as one race. Showing a pattern of how Multiracial individuals are commonly confronted with systemic racism through racial identification on legal paperwork or documentation. In response to a post-sort question, Participant 11 stated:

Regardless of how we look or act or the culture that we share with the world, it does not give you the right to discriminate against me and make me feel small and different than anyone else. It is not about having an advantage for speaking two languages, but more proof of the lengths I am willing to go to survive and thrive in an environment.

This factor is not ashamed because of their Multiracial identity (5: -5) but instead views it as an advantage (14: +3). Participant 31 viewed her ranking of these statements as causal; therefore, by ranking “feeling proud” as most agree, she felt it would be most appropriate to rank “feeling ashamed” as most disagree. Participant 8 shared her experience balancing the shame and pride associated with Multiracial identity by saying:

I am proud to be mixed and be able to have that view. I think it has more advantages, and I am more proud than ashamed. I also think growing up, there is less and less shame as you come into your own.

Although racial identity is considered a general advantage (14: +3), when asked to rank Statement 7 (My racial identity is a protective factor for my mental health.), this factor indicated a neutral to lower negative ranking of -1. When reflecting on how she ranked this statement,

Participant 31 stated, “I think I ran out of space for the least agreed because I do not (see it as protective). My racial identity is just me”. This belief, in context with her other shared experiences, indicates that Participant 31 has not had significant instances where racial identity negatively impacted her mental health. On the contrary, Participant 8 provided a differing perspective by stating that racial identity is not a protective factor but instead can be a risk factor for mental health due to how others treat you. Through navigating the complexities of racial identity, Participant 8 concluded that racial identity can serve as a protective factor by fostering greater self-awareness and self-esteem, thereby contributing positively to overall mental health when one’s self-perception is internally grounded. However, racial identity can also function as a risk factor when external influences, such as societal treatment and discrimination, negatively impact self-esteem and self-efficacy, potentially leading to declines in mental health.

These participants describe race as becoming more central to their identity as they have aged, as a neutral experience (12: +1; 28: -3). Participant 31 clarified that she ranked Statement 12 neutrally at 0 by saying, “My parents, especially my mom, made sure to engrave, you are both, and be proud of that. It has always been like that for me”. Participant 8 also recognized how racial identity has been deeply embedded into her experiences from a young child through a recognition of differences among phenotype, food, religion, language, and other cultural practices:

Some of my earliest memories were noticing how my skin color was different than my mom's. I remember looking at her skin and understanding that, especially mixed kids, know that they are racially different from a young age. I have dark features, but have freckles on my face. That made me look different than monoracial Latino kids. I also knew that my dad's family eats different food than my mom's. They have different

religions. We speak Spanish there and English here. Some of my earliest memories were that- understanding racial identity.

Having these experiences and then growing up to understand the significance of what they meant is a part of why Participant 8 ranked Statement 12 at +2 and Statement 28 at -5, emphasizing that racial identity was always embedded in her worldview. Participant 12 also spoke to how age played a role in understanding the significance society places on race when explaining what her sort represented by stating:

My identity was created through the race I was born with. As I grew older, I realized how much my race would dictate how I would be treated in society and how my identity sometimes will be guessed through the race I was born in, whether I was seen as hard working or not, privileged or not, all dictated by the community I live around.

This factor's pride in their Multiracial identity is evident as they like to educate others (22: +3) and feel the need to advocate for their community (2: +1). Participant 8 shared that educating and advocating for Multiracial individuals was salient for her personally and professionally as she is a Counselor Educator and finds this to be a key element in her work. She provided the following insight into her reasoning for her rankings (2: +4; 22: +3):

We are a minority group, and while there is racism, there is monoracism, which a lot of people do not know about. And the advocating and educating is important because this is a group that's not talked about or researched as much as other groups, and so that also stems from my love and appreciation and my personal experiences, but also just being an advocate for minority groups.

Participant 31 also shared that one of the main reasons she enjoys educating others is to debunk gender stereotypes often associated with mixed-race relationships. She stated, "I like letting

people know what I am, and it is a shock when it comes to Multiracial. Being specifically black and white, there is more of a surprise when the dad is white, instead of the mom”. As a graduate student, Participant 31 also felt it was important for her voice to be represented in this study due to the general underrepresentation of Multiracial young adults in her program. She indicated that pressure may be experienced when you are the only or one of a few to represent a particular population, identity, or race. Factor 1 accounts for 28% of the study variance.

The Mirror Within reflects a deeply rooted, self-directed Multiracial identity grounded in personal agency, early awareness, and strong familial connections. Participants reject imposed racial labels and assert their right to define their identity on their own terms, often identifying as “both,” “mixed,” or beyond monoracial constructs. They view their Multiracial background as an advantage rather than a hindrance, highlighting how it fosters resilience, cultural fluency, and empathy. Identity development was shaped by a mix of intentional family socialization and individual exploration. Although the salience of racial identity was noted as evolving over time, a strong and enduring pride in Multiracial identity consistently fueled a commitment to advocacy and education as core values for this factor. This self-directed factor, referred to as *The Mirror Within*, emphasizes introspection and internalized understanding of racial identity.

Factor 2: Reflections Among Us

Factor 2 has an EV of 2.19, explaining 12% of the study variance. Seven of the 18 participants were significantly associated with this factor, named *Reflections Among Us*. Participants on Factor 2 identified as two or more of the following racial or ethnic constructs: African, African American, Black, Caucasian, Haitian American, Hispanic, Indigenous peoples, Latina, Middle Eastern, or White. Of the seven participants, five identified as female, one as male, and one as non-binary. All participants ranged in age from 21 to 34, with an average age of

27.8 years. Six of the seven participants reported being excluded due to being Multiracial. Three of the seven participants reported not being exposed to the concept of racial identity until it was first presented to them in a college setting (Undergraduate or Graduate).

Key themes were identified from the quantitative data and explained with *Reflections Among Us* qualitative data. Table 10 includes quantitative data for this factor. This data includes distinguishing statements for the factor and statements ranked higher and lower in this factor than in other factors, based on the factor array shown in Table 8. Special consideration was given to distinguishing factors for *Reflections Among Us*. A visual representation of the factor is in Figure 8.

A distinguishing element of *Reflections Among Us* is their sense of comfort and community with others who share their racial identity (24: +5). This community could include biological families, those related by blood, our chosen family, or a group of people deliberately selected for mutual support and love. This sentiment can be found in their composite Q-sort as they ranked statements about their family intentionally introducing racial identity at an early age (30: -2) and their immediate family providing a blueprint for forming racial identity (21: -2), moderately low. Participant 2 stated:

Racial identity was not taught to me. My experiences of being an outsider caused me to go inward to figure out what parts of the cultures I identified my values with. Once I stepped into my racial identity and began to enter into spaces with others who shared the same identity, I finally began to feel safe. Being around others who not only identify as I do but also have shared similar experiences is important for me to feel alive, understood, and heard.

Participant 3's perspective of family influence was more positive and was most closely aligned with one other participant in this factor (Participant 25). Participant 3 said:

And you learn how to adapt when your parents are coming to the United States, but they already have that knowledge of what discrimination looks like. They are able to teach you not only from a United States perspective. But from a Haitian culture.

Due to misinformation or no information offered at an early age regarding Multiracial identity, these participants have had to unlearn biases about racial identity that were taught or learned when they were younger by family, caregivers, or other immediate influences (25: +3). However, they indicated a neutral ranking of racial ancestry's role in their self-identification (16: -1).

Participants in this factor have indicated an increased awareness of their racial identity due to the current political landscape (20: +4), consequently of all three factors they ranked Statement 11 (My racial identity causes me to wonder, "Am I safe?") the highest at +4 in comparison to the other two factors who ranked it at a 0, which also indicates they are more likely to think about racial identity (28: -3). This sense of safety is significant because the participants find that their racial identity is a protective factor for their mental health (7: +4) and view it as an advantage (14: +1). Participant 28 describes this experience in her post-sort questionnaire when she says, "Certain ones, like "Is my political standing affected by multicultural identity?" I would agree that, yes, as I have experienced having an immigrant parent. The way I see things in life and what I am taught differs from others". Additionally, Participant 3 described the direct backlash felt from a political campaign when he shared this story in his post-sort interview:

I am Haitian. As a Haitian, there was something implied about eating cats and dogs. That was a stigma that has been placed on the culture that I had come from, a Multiracial

background. We do not do that. It has gotten to the point where it has affected individuals I have known, but also myself, to the point where they have asked those questions without doing their research, due diligence, or inquiring from others.

This factor also indicates that social context is less likely to play a role in identifying or categorizing themselves (33: -1), which is consistent due to how intertwined political climate and social context can be. Participant 28 indicated that this can be conflicting or difficult to navigate as a Multiracial individual, “because of the experiences you have (and) seeing two cultures get treated differently makes you think differently and view the world differently”.

Participants loaded on *Reflections Among Us* share a sense of pride for their Multiracial identity (29: +2; 5: -5) and for sharing that identity in spaces predominantly occupied by identities other than their own (1: +2). This theme came up in Participant 3’s post-sort interview when he stated:

It is a monument of pride to know that you come from two different worlds. And you have an understanding of what it is like from not only your perspective here in the United States, but also understand how it is in the other country, which kind of assimilates your identity.

While they would not lie about their racial identity to make others happy (34: -4), their physical features can lead others to make inaccurate assumptions about their identity (9: +1). These participants are less likely to use physical appearance or phenotype to inform how they perceive their own racial identity or categorization (18: -3) and shared a neutral attitude toward Statement 15 (I have attempted to look a certain way in order to influence the way others perceive my race) with a ranking of +1. This supports their -1 ranking of Statement 27 (The pressure to identify as

a single race is a significant part of the Multiracial experience), indicating this is not an experience that they identify with in a significantly positive or negative manner.

This factor perceives racial identity as a construct that can change over time due to the fluidity of its nature (26: -3). It is not assigned at birth (13: -4). Racial identity has become more central as these participants have traversed the developmental stages (12: +3). Participant 26 shared her experience of this when she shared her Q-sort's message: "I feel it conveys that my racial identity is important, and it has been something I have learned more about as I have grown. The things I have learned growing up has taught me how I can help my kids navigate through life". Racial identity is less of a standard moral practice (31: -1) but has many meanings (3: +2) per the composite Q-sort. Participant 13 spoke to this in her post-sort questionnaire when she said, "racial identity is complex and should not be perceived as a single thing, rather multiple". Participant 25 echoed this sentiment by saying, "being multiracial is different for everyone. Even though the concept is similar, the experiences everyone who is multiracial has gone through is unique to them and will affect how they answer this Q-sort". This factor is more likely to feel the need to advocate for their Multiracial identity (2: +1), whereas they are less likely to educate others on their racial identity (22: -1) by providing unnecessary personal background information. This sentiment was described by Participant 3 in his post-sort questionnaire as he said, "It is important to advocate for your race, because of the time that we are living in, we have to have people understand the truth narrative of our race then false accusations". He also provided a more positive perspective on educating others about his Multiracial identity when he said:

How are people going to understand you as a multicultural person? You have to be able to educate them. Let me teach you about who I am instead of what other people are

telling you. At least in the environment around you, people will understand you a little bit more, so you can adjust a little bit better.

Reflections Among Us explores a narrative where Multiracial identity is rooted in community connection and shaped by ongoing self-discovery and sociopolitical awareness. Identified by seven participants, it emphasizes a fluid and evolving sense of racial identity that becomes more central with age. Early familial influence on racial identity was minimal, and many participants noted a process of unlearning internalized biases stemming from misinformation or limited exposure. Participants crafted their own support networks, fostering a collective identity shaped by those they surround themselves with. These individuals included biological and chosen family, who created a community system that plays a critical role, offering a sense of safety, understanding, and shared experience. Within the community system, it was found that the political climate significantly heightened Factor 2's racial identity awareness and concern for personal and communal safety. While advocacy holds value, there is ambivalence in educating others, with some participants choosing to protect themselves over sharing personal narratives. *Reflections Among Us* views identity as layered and ever-developing, grounded in lifelong learning and dynamic interpersonal relationships. Factor 2 accounts for 12% of the study variance.

Factor 3: The Collective Mirror

Factor 3 has an EV of 1.69, explaining 9% of the study variance. Three of the 18 participants, named *The Collective Mirror*, were significantly associated with this factor. Participants on Factor 3 identified as two or more of the following racial or ethnic constructs: African, African American, Asian, or Black. Of the three participants, two identified as female and one as male, and they all ranged in age from 25 to 26 years old, with an average age of 25.3

years. All three participants reported being excluded due to being Multiracial as well as not being exposed to the concept of racial identity until it was first presented to them in a college setting (Undergraduate or Graduate).

Key themes were identified from the quantitative data and explained with *The Collective Mirror* qualitative data. Table 11 includes quantitative data for this factor. This data includes distinguishing statements for the factor and statements ranked higher and lower in this factor than in other factors, based on the factor array shown in Table 8. Special consideration was given to distinguishing factors for *The Collective Mirror*. A visual representation of the factor is in Figure 9.

The three participants who are loaded on this factor have experienced a significant amount of pressure to choose to identify with one side of their racial identity over others (17: +5). They are more likely to allow their physical characteristics or phenotype to dictate how they identify (18: +4) over the less preferred role of social context (33: -2). *The Collective Mirror* believes racial identity to be a fixed construct assigned at birth (13: +4), yet they do not believe racial ancestry plays a role in self-identification (16: -3). They also do not believe racial identity is learned over time (23: -4); as such, they neutrally ranked Statement 26 (Racial identity is unchanging) at 0. While it is still a neutral ranking, of all three factors, this factor is most likely to view racial identity as a sense of standard moral practice (31: +1).

These participants share a sense of pride for their Multiracial identity (29: +3; 5: -5) and enjoy showcasing their racial identity in spaces with people who identify differently (1: +3). Participant 16 stated that the story he believed his Q-sort conveyed is that “everyone should be proud to own whatever race you find yourself, at the end of the day, we are all humans”. The current political landscape has moderately increased awareness of racial identity (20: +2) and, on

average, participants indicated a felt need to advocate for their Multiracial identity (2: +1). However, this factor indicated a distinction between advocating for and the education of racial identity, by ranking Statement 22 (I like educating others on my racial identity) negatively (22: -4). Although they believe racial identity has many meanings (3: +3), they are less likely to explain themselves or share how they make meaning of their own Multiracial identity through educating others.

The influence of the family on racial identity produced a conflicting narrative. The composite Q-sort for *The Collective Mirror* indicated that Statement 21 (My immediate family provided the blueprint for forming my racial identity) was ranked at a +2. However, participants 16 and 19 ranked this statement at a more neutral +1; conversely, participant 21 ranked this statement more positively at a +4. Additionally, Statement 30 (My parent(s) or caregiver was intentional about introducing racial identity at an early age) was ranked at a -3 on the composite Q-sort. Whereas Participant 16 ranked it at -1, Participant 19 ranked it at -3, and Participant 21 ranked it the most negatively at -5. This indicates that the perspective held by this factor is that while immediate family did provide guidance for racial identity formation, it was less likely to be intentional or offered at an early age. Due to the positive influence of family on racial identity, this factor indicated that they did not learn any biases early on that they needed to unlearn as a young adult (25: -3).

These three participants provided neutral rankings for making adaptations based on racial identity such as attempting to look a certain way to be perceived by others in a specific manner (15: -2), lying about their identity to make others happy (34: -2), or changing how they describe their race due to fluidity over the years (4: -1). This aligns with their perspective of racial identity being an unchanging and stagnant construct. Additionally, the composite Q-sort indicates a

neutral belief that having pressure associated with identifying as a single race is a significant part of the Multiracial experience (27: -1) and similarly ranked Statement 10 (Other people expect me to ascribe to traditions or behaviors that are representative of a racial identity other than my own) as a -1 due this belief. Due to societal perceptions of Multiracial identity, this factor is more likely to feel like an outsider (6: +1) but less likely to feel isolated due to their racial identity (8: -1).

The Collective Mirror naturally identified that although race has become more central to their identity as they age (12: +1), they are more likely not to think about racial identity (28: +2). Similarly, Participant 21 stated, “I do not care what people think or say about my racial identity,” showing that racial identity is not a typical focus of conversation or thought. As such, they are also less likely to view racial identity as a protective factor for their mental health (7: -1). This is supported by the neutral ranking of Statement 19 (The importance of racial identity varies depending on the combination of race constructs) at +1, indicating that this factor believes different Multiracial constructs may view racial identity as being of more importance than others and therefore have a differing impact on mental health. Factor 3 accounts for 9% of the study variance.

The Collective Mirror reflects a perspective in which Multiracial identity is seen as fixed and primarily defined by visible, phenotypic traits. Participants identifying with this viewpoint tend to reject the notion that racial identity is developed over time, instead anchoring their understanding in physical appearance and the messages and opinions that exist at the macrosystem level, within broader cultural and societal contexts. There is a strong sense of societal pressure to choose one racial side of the two or more they may identify with, contributing to a feeling of being an outsider without experiencing complete isolation. Family

influence is acknowledged but seen as ambivalent and largely unintentional, with little early engagement in shaping racial identity. Participants report that racial identity is becoming more central with age, yet their relationship with identity remains relatively static and unexamined. While they express pride in their Multiracial identity and enjoy sharing it in diverse spaces, their approach emphasizes advocacy rather than education. Ultimately, *The Collective Mirror* represents a racial identity shaped more by external societal definitions than by an integrated, internalized sense of self. A synopsis of all three factors can be found in Table 12.

Consensus Perspectives

In analyzing the unique perspectives associated with each factor, eight statements were identified as consensus statements: Statement 1, Statement 2, Statement 5, Statement 8, Statement 10, Statement 19, Statement 27, and Statement 31 (see Table 12). These statements do not differentiate between any pair of factors, indicating that the perspectives they reflect are shared by all participants, regardless of factor grouping.

Four statements were recognized as perspectives shared consistently across all three factors. Statement 19 (The importance of racial identity varied depending on the combination of race constructs) was universally interpreted as a neutral experience, suggesting that the specific Multiracial combination of an individual neither significantly contributes to nor detracts from their sense of Multiracial identity. Similarly, Statement 10 (Other people expect me to ascribe to traditions or behaviors that are representative of a racial identity other than my own) was also interpreted as neutral. Both statements' rankings varied slightly, Statement 10 (F1: 1; F2: 0; F3: -1) and Statement 19 (F1: 0; F2: 0; F3: +1), supporting a neutral interpretation across all factors.

The other two statements demonstrated consistent rankings across all three factors, further confirming the shared agreement among participants. Statement 27 (The pressure to

identify as a single race is a significant part of the Multiracial experience) received a consistent ranking of -1, indicating that this pressure is a moderately less significant aspect of participants' Multiracial experiences. In contrast, Statement 2 (I feel a need to advocate for my Multiracial identity) was consistently ranked at +1, suggesting a moderately significant importance placed on advocacy within their lived experiences.

Furthermore, Statement 5 (I feel ashamed because of my Multiracial identity) warrants specific attention as the only other statement ranked identically across all three factors, based on the composite Q-sort. Notably, this statement was placed at the -5 position, representing a firm rejection of shame as part of the Multiracial identity. This finding underscores a collective dissociation from negative self-perception among participants. Overall, these consensus statements contribute valuable insight to the analysis by highlighting shared experiences of Multiracial young adults, irrespective of whether they align with *The Mirror Within, Reflections Among Us*, or *The Collective Mirror*.

Post-Sort Interview Artifact

After responding to open-ended questions, participants who completed the post-sort interview were invited to participate in a creative activity to create an AI-Generated Image Artifact (see Appendix F). This activity aimed to capture a visual representation of the essence of the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of racial identity as it was conveyed via the Q-sort. This aligned with the post-sort questionnaire question, "Please describe what message you believe your Q-sort conveys about racial identity, what is the story you are trying to tell?" by developing imagery to expand this response.

Arts-based imagery has been known to facilitate creativity and discovery by illuminating multiple ways of knowing (Bagley & Castro Salazar, 2012; Nardon et al., 2024). Images have

been known to broaden the dimensions of emotion, creativity, and meaning-making beyond words with relatively fixed meanings (Page et al., 2022). Walker (1993) has described pictures or photography as “a silent voice, another language to communicate with and understand others, and a way of accessing complexities which may not be captured by text or oral language” (Cleland & MacLeod, p. 231, 2021). Generative art systems are used as creative agents in research as a modality of expression for participants (Arikan & Aram, 2022). AI has been explored as a tool for data analysis across diverse research contexts (Chubb, 2023; Nardon et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2022). Photo-elicitation via AI-image generation can provide an enriching analysis experience that can bolster traditional interview methodologies by combining visual and verbal data (Collier & Collier, 1986; Pain, 2012). This study used web-based software, Adobe Firefly, to generate the AI image. Once an image was generated to the participant’s liking, they were asked to title it to add perspective or voice to the quantitative and qualitative data collected in this study.

Artifact Analysis

Visual artifacts were created by all four participants who participated in the post-sort interview. The prompts used to generate the AI-Images reveal recurring and divergent thematic elements that offer insight into identity, community, resilience, and emotional expression. Across the images, a consistent emphasis is placed on belonging, whether that belonging is found within family, a close-knit community, or internal harmony with the self. Each artifact conveys a narrative of resilience and identity nuanced by context, emotional tone, and symbolic imagery. Three participants from *The Mirror Within* and one from *Reflections Among Us* completed the post-sort interview and elected to do the artifact activity.

Factor 1 Artifacts

Participant 8. Participant 8 provided setting, tone, characteristics, and other descriptive words that represented her view of her racial identity. After submitting the initial prompt, the photos were reviewed, but did not match what the participant envisioned. The prompt was adjusted three more times. On the fourth generation using the prompt “Create an image of a small group of people in a mountain landscape with the following characteristics: smaller group, is often confined to a specific category, a feeling of pride for identity, being alert or apprehensive of treatment from others, colorful and a depth of connection, isolated from a larger population, but a community with each other/ common people. A realistic image of a community and nature,” an image was generated that Participant 8 connected with and titled “The Undervalued and Rarely Experienced Beauty” (see Figure 2). Participant 8 offered the following reflection on their chosen image:

Confined to a category...but also feeling pride, like happy and proud of identity... there is also being a little alert. Apprehensive of how we will be treated...Great in that actual experience of being mixed, it is very colorful... and there is depth to it.

The image created by Participant 8 depicts a small, traditional village nestled within a lush, mountainous valley. The village comprises several thatched-roof huts arranged in a circular pattern around a central open space. In the middle of this clearing, a group of individuals dressed in coordinated red garments stands together, suggesting a communal gathering. The surrounding mountains are steep, rugged, and heavily forested, creating a sense of enclosure and protection while golden sunlight breaks through scattered clouds. The ruggedness of the surrounding mountains serves not only as a natural barrier but also as a symbol of the challenges the community has endured and adapted to over time. The deliberate arrangement of homes around a

shared central space reflects the community's collective values, where survival and identity are tied as much to mutual support as to the environment. In this way, the landscape is not merely a backdrop but an active participant in shaping the community's social and cultural fabric.



Figure 2

The Undervalued and Rarely Experienced Beauty

Note: Image generated using the prompt "Create an image of a small group of people in a mountain landscape with the following characteristics: smaller group, is often confined to a specific category, a feeling of pride for identity, being alert or apprehensive of treatment from others, colorful and a depth of connection, isolated from a larger population, but a community with each other/ common people. realistic image of a community and nature," by Adobe, Adobe Firefly, 2025 (<https://firefly.adobe.com/>).

Participant 18. This participant took a literal approach to this activity and wanted to create an image representing their family's racial construction. After submitting the initial prompt, the photos were reviewed, but did not match what the participant envisioned. We encountered multiple instances of the generator switching the sex or race of the family members, as indicated in the prompt, resulting in multiple revisions. The prompt was adjusted three more

times. On the fourth generation, using the prompt “show a family with a 26-year-old mixed-race man (black and white) and a white father and a black mom,” an image was generated that the participant indicated as “the closest to the description,” even though there were some things identified as inaccurate. They then titled the image “Multiracial identity” (see Figure 3).

Participant 18 reflected on their chosen image, “It shows Multiracial identity... the entire family, the entire picture is actually a mixture of White and Black”.

Participant 18 created an image representing his family with a mother, father, and son standing closely together, smiling warmly at the camera. The father, a White man wearing a light gray sweater, stands to the left with his arm resting on his son's shoulder. The mother, a Black woman in a mustard yellow sweater, stands to the right, her arm wrapped around her son. The son, positioned in the center and wearing a dark navy sweater, identifies as Biracial, reflecting the blending of his parents' racial backgrounds. The family's easy closeness and physical connection reflect deep feelings of love and unity. With the neutral background minimizing distractions, the image centers the family's relationship, emphasizing the strength of their bond and the significance of belonging, support, and togetherness from the lens of the Biracial son.



Figure 3

Multiracial Identity

Note: Image generated using the prompt "show a family with 26 a 26-year-old mixed-race man (black and white) and a white father and a black mom," by Adobe, Adobe Firefly, 2025 (<https://firefly.adobe.com/>).

Participant 31. This participant had a vision of how they wanted to depict racial identity and provided descriptive language to reach that goal. Due to the specific nature of the initial prompt, the photos were reviewed, and one was selected. Using the prompt “Create an image of a 23-year-old biracial girl with curly hair flowing in the wind riding a zebra who is running free outside in the sunshine, in a field of pink flowers, running from a dark shadow” an image was generated that Participant 31 titled, “What’s Black and White and free all over? Biracial Freedom” (see Figure 4). Participant 31 offered the following reflection on their chosen image:

I wanted to have my image represent the freedom and proudness of being biracial, it is a sunny day and the zebra and I are riding in a field with pink flowers (pink being my

favorite color). The shadow behind us represents the negative biases and remakes people may have and have said, I am leaving it behind and enjoying just being me.

Participant 31 created a highly symbolic image depicting herself, a Biracial female, riding atop a zebra as it gallops freely through a field of pink flowers. Her curly hair streams behind her, animated by the motion and the wind, emphasizing a sense of vitality and liberation. The zebra, itself a striking symbol of duality and blended identity through its black and white stripes, mirrors the participant's Multiracial background. Together, they move decisively away from a looming shadow of darkness in the background, signifying past struggles, societal barriers, or experiences of marginalization. Their movement is directed toward a sunlight-filled landscape, representing hope, freedom, and self-actualization. The composition conveys a sense of resilience, self-discovery, and hope, as the participant moves toward a space of light, freedom, and the full embrace of her Multiracial identity.



Figure 4

What's Black and White and free all over? Biracial Freedom

Note: Image generated using the prompt "Create an image of a 23 year old biracial girl with curly hair flowing in the wind riding a zebra who is running free outside in the sunshine, in a field of pink flowers, running from a dark shadow," by Adobe, Adobe Firefly, 2025 (<https://firefly.adobe.com/>).

Factor 2 Artifact

One participant from *Reflections Among Us* completed the post-sort interview and elected to do the artifact activity. Participant 3 provided multiple descriptive words that represented their view of their racial identity. After submitting the initial prompt, the photos were reviewed, but did not match what the participant envisioned. The prompt was adjusted a second and third time. After the third adjustment the prompt “Depict the following qualities without a person: make it uplifting, laidback, informative, charismatic, intuned, resilient, kind, teachable, accountable, responsible, family-oriented, peacemaker” was used to create an image that Participant 3 connected with and titled “The Welcoming Embrace” (see Figure 5). Participant 3 commented on his chosen image, “It speaks of home and peace. Without race, there is no picture. You can identify as anything that you want and still be acceptable with who you are. It is about the view, not who you are as a person”.

With its abstract composition and interplay of natural and constructed elements, this image is a compelling metaphor for the lived experiences of Multiracial young adults navigating racial identity. The sharp angles and varied wooden textures can be interpreted as symbolic of the layered and often complex nature of Multiracial identity; each representing different cultural lineages, histories, and social narratives that intersect within the individual. The porch, suspended between earth and sky, functions as both a site of grounding and a point of departure, reflecting the dual desires for rootedness and exploration that frequently characterize the identity formation process among Multiracial individuals.

A single, unoccupied chair evokes the notion of the self as an evolving entity; an “empty vessel” open to experiences, reflection, and self-authorship. This imagery aligns with qualitative accounts in the literature that emphasize the fluid and context-dependent nature of Multiracial identity construction (Grilo et al., 2023a; Renn, 2008; Zamora & Padilla, 2024). Moreover, the convergence of forest and sky in the background suggests an expansive and inclusive landscape, mirroring the broader cultural and internal negotiations that Multiracial individuals often engage in as they forge a sense of belonging outside traditional, monoracial categories. The image becomes a metaphor for the journey of Multiracial identity, a balancing act between heritage and individuality, community and solitude, rootedness and flight.



Figure 5

The Welcoming Embrace

Note: Image generated using the prompt "Depict the following qualities without a person: make it uplifting, laidback, informative, charismatic, intuned, resilient, kind, teachable, accountable, responsible, family-oriented, peacemaker," by Adobe, Adobe Firefly, 2025

(<https://firefly.adobe.com/>).

Factor Analysis Summary

Three distinct factors were extracted and rotated through the factor analysis process: *The Mirror Within*, *Reflections Among Us*, and *The Collective Mirror*. These three factors accounted for 49% of the unrotated factor variance. This percentage and the number of participants loaded on each factor cannot be generalized to all Multiracial young adults. This percentage does not speak to the importance of the factor, but rather, the higher the percentage of explained variance, the more meaningful and interpretable each factor is in representing its specific viewpoint (Brown, 1996; Stephenson, 1953). There is also a chance these factors could have additional viewpoints. The analysis and interpretation of these viewpoints provide insight into Multiracial young adults' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences regarding racial identity.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings of a Q-methodological investigation into the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults relating to racial identity. All participants identified as Multiracial (or with two or more racial constructs) and were between 18 and 34, categorizing them as young adults. Nineteen participants completed the study, and 18 loaded onto three factors: *The Mirror Within*, *Reflections Among Us*, and *The Collective Mirror*. These factors illuminate the diverse and nuanced ways Multiracial individuals understand and engage with their racial identity.

Quantitative data were analyzed rigorously and systematically to understand participant perspectives. Data interpretation occurred in a two-part series. The first part used quantitative data such as differentiated statements, distinguishing statements ranked highest and lowest, other statements ranked highest and lowest, and consensus statements. A visual representation of each factor was presented through a composite Q-sort. Qualitative data, such as participants' post-sort

questionnaires, interviews, and artifacts, were then analyzed as the final round of interpretation. Adding this qualitative information produced a richer, more nuanced understanding of the qualitative findings. The findings from this study open the door to broader conversations about identity, belonging, and representation by exploring Multiracial young adults' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of racial identity. The implications of these findings will be further explored in the next chapter.

Tables and Figures

Table 2
Participant Demographics

Variable	Respondents
Age (P=18)	
20	1
21	4
22	1
23	2
24	1
25	2
26	2
28	1
30	1
34	3
Gender (P=18)	
Male	3
Female	14
Non-binary	1

Table 3
Experiences of Identity

(P=18)	% per answer
I have been excluded due to being Multiracial.	Yes 83.3% No 16.6%
I have experienced racial discrimination because of my Multiracial identity.	Yes 83.3% No 16.6%
I have experienced unfair treatment based on my perceived racial identity.	Yes 94.4% No 5.5%
I was exposed to the concept of racial identity for the first time in a college setting (Undergrad or Graduate).	Yes 44.4% No 55.5%

Table 4
Correlations Between Factors

Participant	PAR02	PAR03	PAR06	PAR07	PAR08	PAR11	PAR12	PAR13	PAR14	PAR16	PAR18	PAR19	PAR20	PAR21	PAR25	PAR26	PAR28	PAR31
PAR02	1	0.44	-0.05	0.3	0.1	-0.1	-0.03	0.49	0.02	-0.04	-0.12	0.04	0.13	-0.1	0.26	0.5	0.26	-0.06
PAR03	0.44	1	0.38	0.21	0.33	0.27	0.11	0.45	0.29	0.03	0.19	0.07	0.38	-0.07	0.45	0.25	0.56	0.29
PAR06	-0.05	0.38	1	0.12	0.16	0.5	0.21	0.29	0.36	0.16	0.32	-0.08	0.13	0.03	0.41	0.12	0.44	0.37
PAR07	0.3	0.21	0.12	1	0.18	0.29	0.1	0.53	0.14	0.05	0.08	0.18	0.16	0.04	0.41	0.13	0.54	0.41
PAR08	0.1	0.33	0.16	0.18	1	0.44	0.38	0.44	0.21	0.09	0.32	0.28	0.07	-0.19	0.36	0.27	0.41	0.38
PAR11	-0.1	0.27	0.5	0.29	0.44	1	0.48	0.45	0.36	0.39	0.38	0.38	0.29	-0.06	0.43	0.08	0.52	0.6
PAR12	-0.03	0.11	0.21	0.1	0.38	0.48	1	0.24	0.25	0.3	0.29	0.35	0.1	-0.04	0.22	0.11	0.23	0.21
PAR13	0.49	0.45	0.29	0.53	0.44	0.45	0.24	1	0.15	0.16	0.12	0.17	0.23	-0.1	0.36	0.4	0.56	0.15
PAR14	0.02	0.29	0.36	0.14	0.21	0.36	0.25	0.15	1	-0.04	0.1	0.18	0.22	0.07	0.25	0.08	0.15	0.4
PAR16	-0.04	0.03	0.16	0.05	0.09	0.39	0.3	0.16	-0.04	1	0.08	0.27	-0.06	0.3	0.15	0.37	0.25	0.02
PAR18	-0.12	0.19	0.32	0.08	0.32	0.38	0.29	0.12	0.1	0.08	1	0.33	0.25	-0.01	0.16	-0.04	0.25	0.45
PAR19	0.04	0.07	-0.08	0.18	0.28	0.38	0.35	0.17	0.18	0.27	0.33	1	0.27	0.31	0.2	-0.01	0.19	0.24
PAR20	0.13	0.38	0.13	0.16	0.07	0.29	0.1	0.23	0.22	-0.06	0.25	0.27	1	-0.18	0.12	-0.15	0.21	0.21
PAR21	-0.1	-0.07	0.03	0.04	-0.19	-0.06	-0.04	-0.1	0.07	0.3	-0.01	0.31	-0.18	1	0.01	-0.02	-0.2	0.07
PAR25	0.26	0.45	0.41	0.41	0.36	0.43	0.22	0.36	0.25	0.15	0.16	0.2	0.12	0.01	1	0.26	0.4	0.48
PAR26	0.5	0.25	0.12	0.13	0.27	0.08	0.11	0.4	0.08	0.37	-0.04	-0.01	-0.15	-0.02	0.26	1	0.2	-0.1
PAR28	0.26	0.56	0.44	0.54	0.41	0.52	0.23	0.56	0.15	0.25	0.25	0.19	0.21	-0.2	0.4	0.2	1	0.31
PAR31	-0.06	0.29	0.37	0.41	0.38	0.6	0.21	0.15	0.4	0.02	0.45	0.24	0.21	0.07	0.48	-0.1	0.31	1

Table 5
Factor Correlation Matrix

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 1	1	0.35669	0.23041
Factor 2	0.35669	1	0.14802
Factor 3	0.23041	0.14802	1

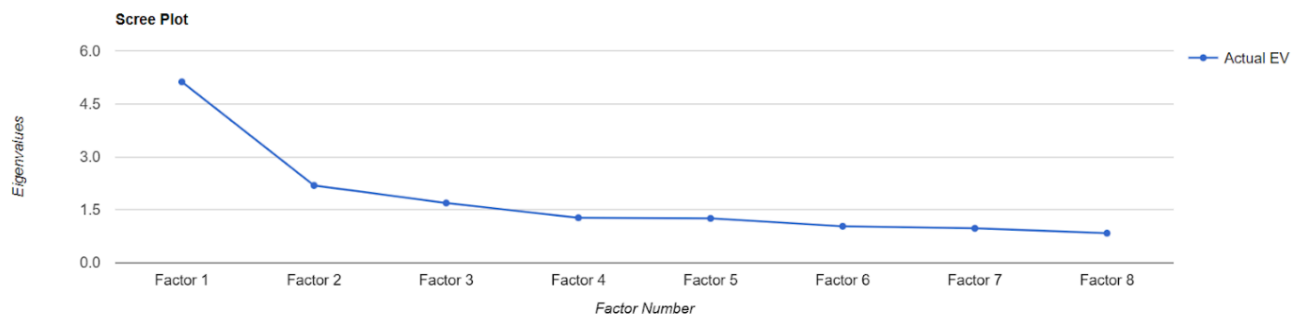
Table 6
Factor Loadings

Q sort	Factor	Grc	Factor 1	F1	Factor 2	F2	Factor 3	F3
P31	F1-1		0.7827	Flagged	0.0654		-0.0006	
P11	F1-2		0.7667	Flagged	0.232		0.3012	
P18	F1-3		0.6406	Flagged	-0.063		0.0976	
P6	F1-4		0.5531	Flagged	0.2286		0.0217	
P14	F1-5		0.5155	Flagged	0.1042		-0.0256	
P20	F1-6		0.4772	Flagged	0.1204		-0.3333	
P8	F1-7		0.4546	Flagged	0.3962		0.131	
P12	F1-8		0.4506	Flagged	0.1164		0.4269	
P13	F2-1		0.2404		0.7784	Flagged	0.0543	
P2	F2-2		-0.2343		0.7761	Flagged	-0.1525	
P26	F2-3		-0.2403		0.6959	Flagged	0.3366	
P28	F2-4		0.4622		0.6275	Flagged	0.0049	
P3	F2-5		0.3696		0.6194	Flagged	-0.2223	
P7	F2-6		0.2892		0.5244	Flagged	-0.0047	
P25	F2-7		0.4399		0.5071	Flagged	0.0891	
P16	F3-1		0.0491		0.2039		0.8007	Flagged
P21	F3-2		-0.0522		-0.1761		0.5817	Flagged
P19	F3-3		0.408		0.0307		0.4926	Flagged

Table 7
Eigenvalues

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8
Eigenvalues	5.1229	2.19088	1.69225	1.2734	1.25496	1.03445	0.97569	0.83578
% Explained Variance	28	12	9	7	7	6	5	5
Cumulative % Expln Var	28	41	50	57	64	70	75	80

Figure 6
Scree Plot and Factor Rotations

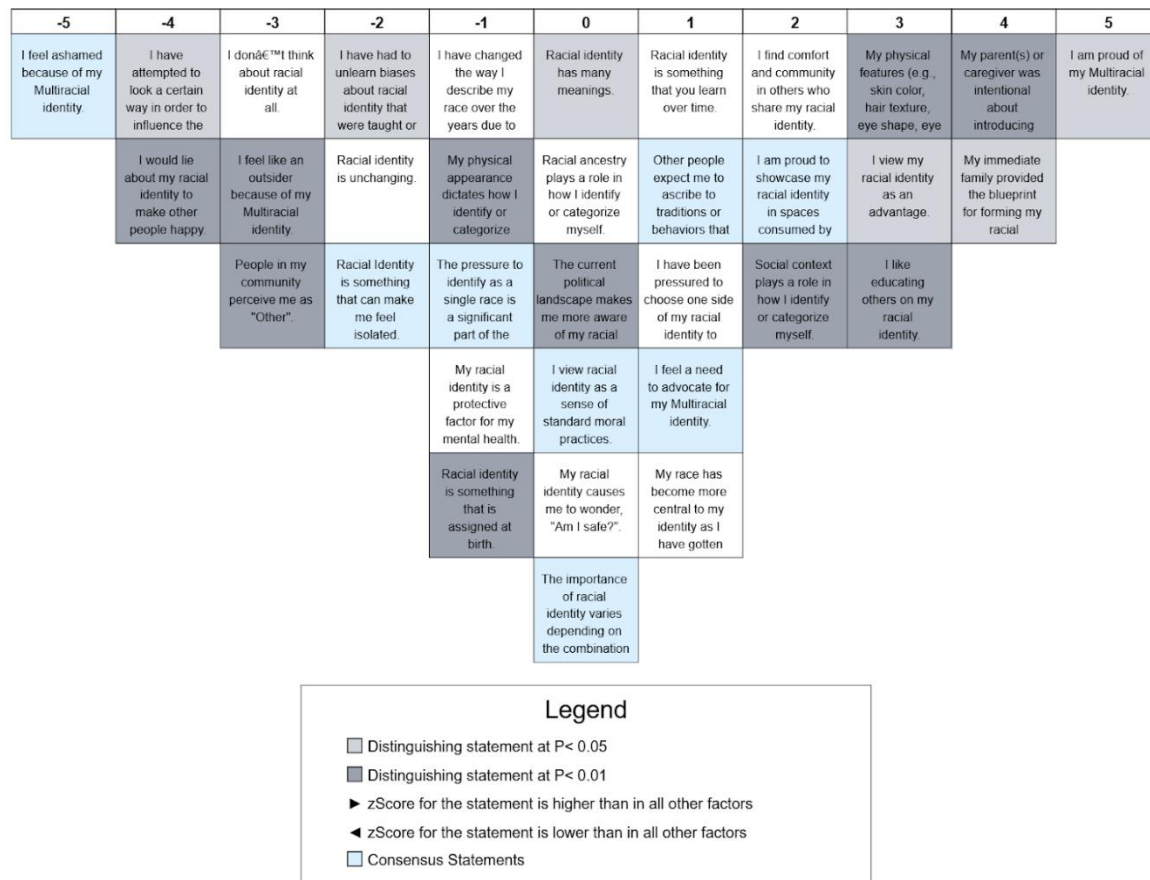


- Selected 3 factors for rotation
- Varimax rotation applied

Table 8
Factor Arrays

Statement no.	Statement	Factor 1 Rank	Factor 2 Rank	Factor 3 Rank
1	I am proud to showcase my racial identity in spaces consumed by individuals who identify differently than me.	2	2	3
2	I feel a need to advocate for my Multiracial identity.	1	1	1
3	Racial identity has many meanings.	0	2	3
4	I have changed the way I describe my race over the years due to the fluidity of my racial identity.	-1	-2	-1
5	I feel ashamed because of my Multiracial identity.	-5	-5	-5
6	I feel like an outsider because of my Multiracial identity.	-3	0	1
7	My racial identity is a protective factor for my mental health.	-1	4	-1
8	Racial Identity is something that can make me feel isolated.	-2	0	-1
9	My physical features (e.g., skin color, hair texture, eye shape, eye color) lead people to assume that I am not the race(s) that I identify with.	3	1	0
10	Other people expect me to ascribe to traditions or behaviors that are representative of a racial identity other than my own.	1	0	-1
11	My racial identity causes me to wonder, "Am I safe?".	0	3	0
12	My race has become more central to my identity as I have gotten older.	1	3	1
13	Racial identity is something that is assigned at birth.	-1	-4	4
14	I view my racial identity as an advantage.	3	1	0
15	I have attempted to look a certain way in order to influence the way others perceive my race.	-4	1	-2
16	Racial ancestry plays a role in how I identify or categorize myself.	0	-1	-3
17	I have been pressured to choose one side of my racial identity to align with over another identity(s).	1	1	5

18	My physical appearance dictates how I identify or categorize myself Multiracially.	-1	-3	4
19	The importance of racial identity varies depending on the combination of race constructs.	0	0	1
20	The current political landscape makes me more aware of my racial identity.	0	4	2
21	My immediate family provided the blueprint for forming my racial identity.	4	-2	2
22	I like educating others on my racial identity.	3	-1	-4
23	Racial identity is something that you learn over time.	1	0	-4
24	I find comfort and community in others who share my racial identity.	2	5	0
25	I have had to unlearn biases about racial identity that were taught or learned at an early age.	-2	3	-3
26	Racial identity is unchanging.	-2	-3	0
27	The pressure to identify as a single race is a significant part of the Multiracial experience.	-1	-1	-1
28	I don't think about racial identity at all.	-3	-3	2
29	I am proud of my Multiracial identity.	5	2	3
30	My parent(s) or caregiver was intentional about introducing racial identity at an early age.	4	-2	-3
31	I view racial identity as a sense of standard moral practices.	0	-1	1
32	People in my community perceive me as "Other".	-3	0	0
33	Social context plays a role in how I identify or categorize myself.	2	-1	-2
34	I would lie about my racial identity to make other people happy.	-4	-4	-2

Figure 7**Composite Q Sort for Factor 1****Table 9**

<i>Distinguishing Statements for Factor 1</i>		
Statement no.	Statement	Z score
29	I am proud of my Multiracial identity.	2.08
30	My parent(s) or caregiver was intentional about introducing racial identity at an early age.	1.87*
21	My immediate family provided the blueprint for forming my racial identity.	1.54
9	My physical features (e.g., skin color, hair texture, eye shape, eye color) lead people to assume that I am not the race(s) that I identify with.	1.33*
14	I view my racial identity as an advantage.	0.92
22	I like educating others on my racial identity.	0.69*
33	Social context plays a role in how I identify or categorize myself.	0.42*
3	Racial identity has many meanings.	0.12
20	The current political landscape makes me more aware of my racial identity.	0.09*

18	My physical appearance dictates how I identify or categorize myself Multiracially.	-0.07*
13	Racial identity is something that is assigned at birth.	-0.17*
25	I have had to unlearn biases about racial identity that were taught or learned at an early age.	-0.34
6	I feel like an outsider because of my Multiracial identity.	-0.98*
32	People in my community perceive me as "Other".	-1.19*
15	I have attempted to look a certain way in order to influence the way others perceive my race.	-1.55
34	I would lie about my racial identity to make other people happy.	-2.48*

Note: $P < 0.05$: Asterisk Indicates Significance at $P < 0.01$

Figure 8

Composite Q Sort for Factor 2

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel ashamed because of my Multiracial identity.	Racial identity is something that is assigned at birth.	My physical appearance dictates how I identify or categorize	My immediate family provided the blueprint for forming my racial	I like educating others on my racial identity.	People in my community perceive me as "Other".	I have attempted to look a certain way in order to influence the	I am proud to showcase my racial identity in spaces consumed by	My race has become more central to my identity as I have gotten	My racial identity is a protective factor for my mental health.	I find comfort and community in others who share my racial identity.
	I would lie about my racial identity to make other people happy.	I don't think about racial identity at all.	My parent(s) or caregiver was intentional about introducing	The pressure to identify as a single race is a significant part of the	Other people expect me to ascribe to traditions or behaviors that	I view my racial identity as an advantage.	I am proud of my Multiracial identity	I have had to unlearn biases about racial identity that were taught or	The current political landscape makes me more aware of my racial	
		Racial identity is unchanging.	I have changed the way I describe my race over the years due to	Racial ancestry plays a role in how I identify or categorize myself	Racial identity is something that you learn over time.	I feel a need to advocate for my Multiracial identity.	Racial identity has many meanings.	My racial identity causes me to wonder, "Am I safe?"		
				I view racial identity as a sense of standard moral practices.	Racial identity is something that can make me feel isolated.	My physical features (e.g., skin color, hair texture, eye shape, eye				
				Social context plays a role in how I identify or categorize myself	I feel like an outsider because of my Multiracial identity	I have been pressured to choose one side of my racial identity to				
					The importance of racial identity varies depending on the combination					

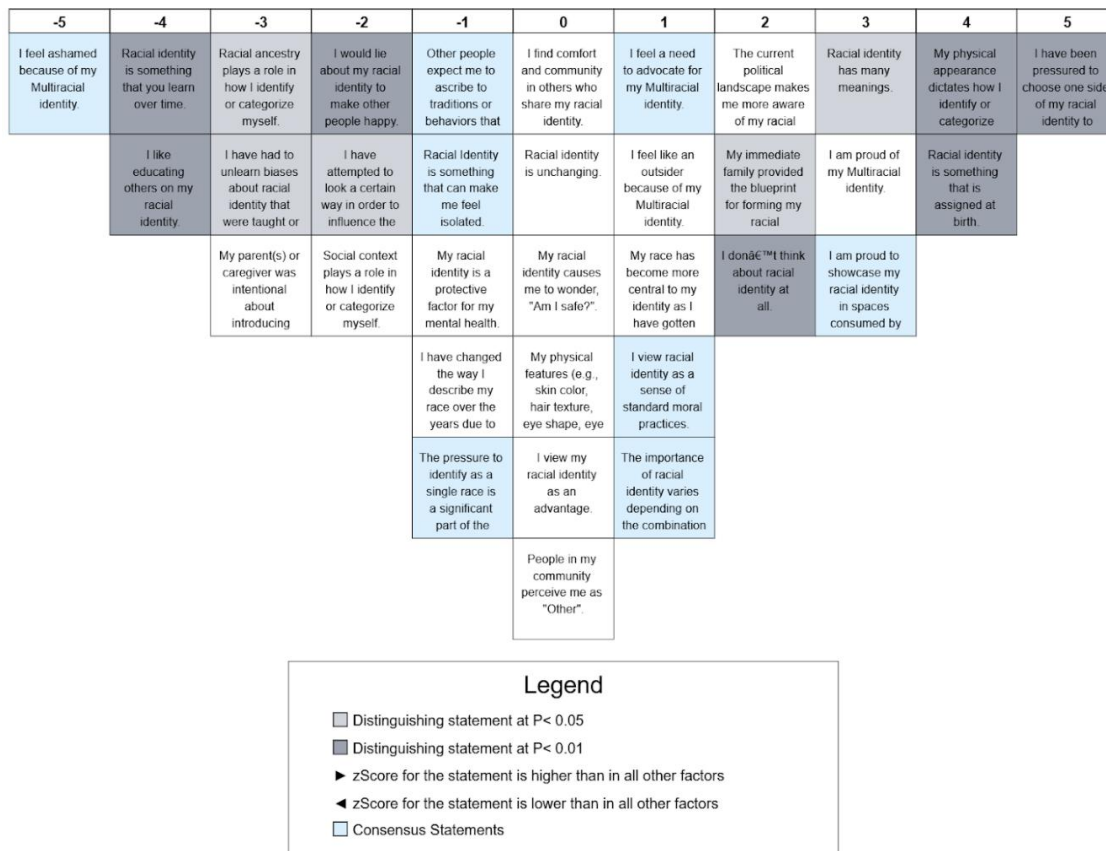
Legend

- Distinguishing statement at $P < 0.05$
- Distinguishing statement at $P < 0.01$
- zScore for the statement is higher than in all other factors
- ◄ zScore for the statement is lower than in all other factors
- Consensus Statements

Table 10

<i>Distinguishing Statements for Factor 2</i>		
Statement no.	Statement	Z score
24	I find comfort and community in others who share my racial identity.	1.97*
7	My racial identity is a protective factor for my mental health.	1.59*
12	My race has become more central to my identity as I have gotten older.	1.5*
25	I have had to unlearn biases about racial identity that were taught or learned at an early age.	1.19*
11	My racial identity causes me to wonder, "Am I safe?".	1.18*
3	Racial identity has many meanings.	0.63
15	I have attempted to look a certain way in order to influence the way others perceive my race.	0.49*
22	I like educating others on my racial identity.	-0.21*
31	I view racial identity as a sense of standard moral practices.	-0.45
21	My immediate family provided the blueprint for forming my racial identity.	-0.56*
18	My physical appearance dictates how I identify or categorize myself Multiracially.	-1.25*
26	Racial identity is unchanging.	-1.49*
13	Racial identity is something that is assigned at birth.	-1.6*
34	I would lie about my racial identity to make other people happy.	-1.69*

Note: $P < 0.05$: Asterisk Indicates Significance at $P < 0.01$

Figure 9**Composite Q Sort for Factor 3****Table 11**

<i>Distinguishing Statements for Factor 3</i>		
Statement no.	Statement	Z score
17	I have been pressured to choose one side of my racial identity to align with over another identity(s).	2.24*
18	My physical appearance dictates how I identify or categorize myself Multiracially.	1.47*
13	Racial identity is something that is assigned at birth.	1.29
3	Racial identity has many meanings.	1.29*
21	My immediate family provided the blueprint for forming my racial identity.	0.89
28	I don't think about racial identity at all.	0.79*
34	I would lie about my racial identity to make other people happy.	-0.57*
15	I have attempted to look a certain way in order to influence the way others perceive my race.	-0.79
16	Racial ancestry plays a role in how I identify or categorize myself.	-1.05
25	I have had to unlearn biases about racial identity that were taught or learned at an early age.	-1.14

23	Racial identity is something that you learn over time.	-1.51*
22	I like educating others on my racial identity.	-1.7*

Note: $P < 0.05$: Asterisk Indicates Significance at $P < 0.01$

Table 12

Factor Synopsis

Factor Name	Synopsis
The Mirror Within	"The Mirror Within" captures an introspective and self-guided process through which racial identity becomes a central, internalized aspect of the self, deeply influenced by family and essential to understanding one's Multiracial experience.
Reflections Among Us	"Reflections Among Us" represents a communal and relational journey of racial identity development, largely influenced by chosen family and a supportive Multiracial community, where early assumptions are reexamined and unlearned, and racial identity awareness deepens in response to an increasingly charged political environment.
The Collective Mirror	"The Collective Mirror" reflects a stable yet externally defined relationship with racial identity, shaped primarily by societal messages in which Multiracial identity is viewed as fixed and based on visible perception of others; while family provided some guidance, early intentional exploration was limited, resulting in a sense of self that is recognizable yet remains largely unexplored.

Table 13
Consensus Statements

Statement no.	Statement	Factor 1 Rank	Factor 1 Z-scores	Factor 2 Rank	Factor 2 Z-scores	Factor 3 Rank	Factor 3 Z-score
1	I am proud to showcase my racial identity in spaces consumed by individuals who identify differently than me.	2	0.45	2	0.899	3	1.11
2*	I feel a need to advocate for my Multiracial identity.	1	0.163	1	0.247	1	0.58
5	I feel ashamed because of my Multiracial identity.	-5	-2.49	-5	-1.98	-5	-1.964
8	Racial Identity is something that can make me feel isolated.	-2	-0.53	0	0	-1	-0.458
10*	Other people expect me to ascribe to traditions or behaviors that are representative of a racial identity other than my own.	1	0.325	0	0.092	-1	-0.277
19*	The importance of racial identity varies depending on the combination of race constructs.	0	0.012	0	-0.03	1	0.251
27*	The pressure to identify as a single race is a significant part of the Multiracial experience.	-1	-0.102	-1	-0.255	-1	-0.555
31	I view racial identity as a sense of standard moral practices.	0	0.08	-1	-0.45	1	0.33

Note: Statements flagged with an * are a shared consensus among all factors.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore Multiracial young adults' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of racial identity. Q-methodology was used for this analysis, and the results produced three factors that captured the perspectives of 18 participants. The increasing visibility and complexity of Multiracial identities in the United States reflect a significant shift in how race is understood socially and demographically. In 2020, changes in the U.S. Census data collection processes and evolving societal attitudes contributed to a 300% rise in the reported Multiracial population, with approximately 8.4 million or 24.8% of the U.S. population identifying as Multiracial young adults, and a median age of 29.5 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020a). This study investigates this rapidly growing demographic.

The results highlight that racial identity is a complex and dynamic construct, subject to internalization and negotiation through individual self-perception, proximal influences such as family and chosen communities, and further constructed within broader sociocultural frameworks. This complexity underscores the necessity for nuanced methodological approaches that capture subjective experience, making Q methodology especially well-suited for this study.

Q methodology was used to explore the subjective perceptions of this underexamined population by focusing on the research question: *“What are the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults regarding racial identity?”* This study produced three factors that were named based on interpreting the distinct perspectives of the Q-sorts: Factor 1- *The Mirror Within*, Factor 2- *Reflections Among Us*, and Factor 3- *The Collective Mirror*. Each

factor represents a unique narrative that reflects the interplay of personal, relational, and societal dimensions of racial identity. This chapter includes a discussion of the results, followed by implications for research, counselor education, counseling and supervision, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further study.

Purpose of Study

This study contributes to the counseling field by centering the voices of Multiracial individuals and providing a nuanced understanding of racial identity across interpersonal, institutional, and societal contexts. Anchored in MultiCrit (Harris, 2016), the findings challenge traditional, monoracial paradigms and affirm the importance of placing Multiracial narratives at the forefront of research and practice. This theoretical lens highlights the intersectionality of race with other social identities and underscores the influence of White supremacy on the lived realities of Multiracial individuals. This study centers the voices of Multiracial individuals and challenges monoracial norms by applying an intersectional, antiracist lens to both methodology and interpretation (Harris, 2016; Gabriel et al., 2023) while exploring racial identity. In doing so, using MultiCrit as a framework for this study advances research on applying earlier frameworks, such as Root's (2002) Ecological Framework, by explicitly addressing the systemic and ideological forces that shape identity.

Ecological approaches are increasingly used to capture the multilayered nature of Multiracial identity (Atkin & Minniear, 2023). These models recognize that identity development is not linear but shaped by interlocking structures of privilege and oppression. By situating these frameworks within a broader MultiCrit orientation, this research illuminates how Multiracial individuals navigate systemic pressures and racial ambiguity within social, familial, and internal domains. Ecological identity frameworks are essential in both research and

counseling, particularly when integrated with Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, which emphasize counselor self-awareness, culturally responsive care, and systemic advocacy (Sue et al., 1992; Ratts et al., 2016a; Kenney et al., 2015). This study reinforces the value of a contextualized, ecological approach to counseling that aligns with the Competencies for Counseling the Multiracial Population, which advocates for practices that are responsive to the multiple, intersecting systems shaping identity development.

Given the complexity of racial identity and the need for research methods that reflect this contextual variability, Q methodology was selected for its capacity to surface shared yet distinct perspectives. Q-sorts were analyzed using Q Method Software (Lutfallah & Buchanan, 2019), and principal component analysis guided factor extraction, yielding three distinct factors. These factors, named *The Mirror Within*, *Reflections Among Us*, and *The Collective Mirror*, offer a window into how Multiracial individuals make meaning of racial identity in context. By using a method that blends statistical rigor with narrative and visual expression, this study aligns with ecological and justice-oriented frameworks that emphasize the importance of honoring complexity, context, and voice in understanding identity.

Summary of Findings

The Mirror Within

Participants whose experiences aligned with *The Mirror Within* demonstrated a deeply rooted and self-directed sense of Multiracial identity. This internal orientation was grounded in early awareness, close familial relationships, and introspective exploration. For these individuals, Multiracial identity was not fragmented or transitional but consistently understood as a complete and consciously integrated whole. Rather than relying on external validation, participants emphasized a self-defined process of racial identity construction. This finding disrupts dominant

racial identity models that often position Multiracial identity as always being incomplete and repositions it as fluid or in flux.

A recurring theme was the rejection of imposed labels and the assertion of identity on one's own terms. Participants resisted reductive categorizations, asserting their right to identify as "both," "mixed," or otherwise outside monoracial constructs. This form of identity agency reflects an empowered stance, wherein racial identity is shaped through self-knowledge and resilience rather than societal expectations. Participants drew strength from introspection and cultural pride, fostering a grounded identity that served as a protective factor in the face of racial invalidation. Their reflections underscore the importance of internal work and self-acceptance in maintaining a positive and enduring Multiracial identity.

Reflections Among Us

While *The Mirror Within* emphasizes introspection, the theme of *Reflections Among Us* highlights the critical role of community in validating and affirming Multiracial identity.

Participants who experienced limited early racial socialization found clarity and empowerment through later encounters with others who shared similar identities. These communal spaces, whether organically formed or intentionally sought, served as mirrors that reflected and legitimized individual experiences. Through shared understanding, participants experienced affirmation, increased self-awareness, and greater confidence in navigating social contexts.

The influence of broader political and social climates also surfaced as a subjective perspective that fostered identity awareness and collective solidarity. Participants described heightened consciousness in response to sociopolitical events, which catalyzed deeper engagement with their racial identity and community. This illustrates the dynamic and evolving nature of Multiracial identity, which is shaped not only by individual experience but also by

shared cultural and historical contexts. For counseling professionals, these findings reinforce the need to support clients in connecting with communities of meaning, where identity can be affirmed and expanded through relational experience.

The Collective Mirror

In contrast to the internally grounded identity development described by participants who loaded on the other two factors, others represented within *The Collective Mirror* factor reported identity formation as shaped predominantly by external forces. For these individuals, racial identity was experienced as reactive and socially constructed, often dictated by phenotype, context, and prevailing societal expectations. Some examples of phenotypes would be skin tone, eye shape, hair texture, or other physical characteristics that one is categorized by based on an observation of their physical appearance. While many expressed pride in being Multiracial, this pride coexisted with exhaustion, frustration, or reluctance to explain their identity to others.

Participants described a pervasive sense of being externally defined, which often resulted in discomfort or selective disengagement from racial identity in daily life. In this way, detachment emerged as a self-preservation strategy in response to the societal demand for racial clarity and conformity. The belief in a fixed racial identity and a reluctance to alter self-presentation across contexts reflected the internalization of external racial scripts. These narratives highlight the emotional burden of navigating racial ambiguity in a society that often demands singularity and legibility. Counselors must recognize this tension between self-perception and societal interpretation, providing clients with space to explore their experiences without pressure to conform or explain.

This study affirms that Multiracial identity is not a marginal or transitional phenomenon but a multifaceted and significant aspect of selfhood. Through applying MultiCrit and ecological

frameworks, this research has illuminated the complex interplay of internal agency, community validation, and societal pressure in forming Multiracial identity. The findings call for a counseling paradigm that embraces intersectionality, honors complexity, and centers the voices of those too often overlooked. In doing so, the counseling field moves closer to offering truly inclusive, responsive, and affirming care for Multiracial individuals.

Discussion

Multiracial young adults are increasingly represented in scholarly literature, reflecting growing academic interest in their unique identity experiences. Researchers have examined a range of topics related to this population. The present study contributes to this growing body of work by offering an integrated perspective on Multiracial identity development, integration, self-categorization, and the impact of discrimination and societal factors on overall well-being.

Existing literature has explored Multiracial identity with various configurations of racial constructs, including Japanese American, Black-Mexicans, Latino/White, Black/White, Asian/White, Black/Asian, and Multiracial nonspecified construct (Collins, 2000; Romo, 2011; Shih et al., 2007). While it was too identifying to indicate the specific racial constructs of each participant, the racial constructs represented in this study align with what has already been researched and contribute additional racial construct variations that are underrepresented in research.

Current literature on this population has increasingly shifted towards an ecological framework for understanding Multiracial identity development. The Ecological Framework for Understanding Multiracial Identity Development (Root, 2002) and the Intersectional Model of Multiracial Identity (Wijesinghe, 2012) both underscore the importance of ecological context in shaping Multiracial identity, emphasizing that social, historical, and life course factors critically

influence how individuals construct and interpret their racial identities. This ecological perspective was evident in the findings of this study, as the three identified factors align with components of the broader Social Ecological Model, reinforcing the utility of an ecological framework as the preferred structure for examining Multiracial identity development. Central to this perspective is the understanding that identity formation is not an isolated occurrence, but a dynamic process situated at the intersection of multiple social identities and influenced by broader contextual forces.

Research has demonstrated that Multiracial young adults often associate their racial identity with adversities and benefits (Bracey et al., 2004; Christophe et al., 2021; Csizmadia & Atkin, 2022; Fisher et al., 2014; Gibbs, 1987; Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008; Kenney & Kenney, 2012; Poston, 1990; Renn, 2008; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). In the current study, participants revealed a range of experiences, including adversities such as marginalization, diminished self-esteem, reduced social acceptance, limited expressions of Multiracial pride, discomfort, selective disengagement from racial identity, emotional strain related to navigating racial ambiguity, and the emergence of maladaptive emotional responses. Simultaneously, participants also reported beneficial experiences, including enhanced psychological well-being, elevated self-efficacy and self-esteem, increased pride and self-acceptance, a sense of empowerment, greater confidence, and racial identity functioning as a potential protective factor against interpersonal and societal pressures. Significantly, these adversities and benefits were not associated exclusively with any one of the three factors. Additionally, the timing of experiencing these adversities and benefits was not confined to a specific developmental stage or age. Instead, the experiences varied contextually across individuals and could occur at any point in development. No clear evidence suggested that either type of experience, adverse or beneficial,

was uniquely tied to a particular factor. Evidence of these experiences was also depicted in the artifacts created during the post-sort interview.

Artifact Discussion

These visual artifacts significantly contribute to addressing the overarching research question, what are the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of Multiracial young adults regarding racial identity, by offering an additional, nuanced dimension of qualitative data that complements and deepens traditional narrative analysis. The artifacts serve as symbolic extensions of participants' internal experiences, making visible the often complex, layered, and emotionally charged processes of identity formation. Through self-directed imagery, participants externalized personal and relational meanings tied to being Multiracial, thereby providing insight into how they perceive, negotiate, and affirm their racial identities. Creating and interpreting these visual artifacts allows participants to engage in forms of meaning-making that enhance the researcher's overall understanding of participants' subjective perspective.

Artifact Interpretation

A shared theme across the artifacts is a sense of interconnectedness, often represented through natural landscapes, mountains, fields, and open skies. These are metaphors for emotional depth, introspection, and relational ties (Schroeder, 2007). The recurring presence of nature not only situates the subjects in organic and liberatory spaces but also reinforces themes of freedom, growth, and groundedness. Similarly, notions of resilience, self-awareness, and identity emerge prominently across all the depictions produced from all four prompts. For example, Figure 4, "What's Black and White and Free All Over? Biracial Freedom," depicts an image of a young Biracial woman riding a zebra away from a dark shadow symbolically capturing a journey of personal liberation and triumph over adversity. This motif of resistance and movement towards

light parallels the themes of cautious pride and community solidarity presented in Figure 2, “The Undervalued and Rarely Experienced Beauty”, which features a mountain landscape, where a small, colorful group remains bonded despite isolation and apprehension about the broader social context.

Contrasts between the artifacts offer further thematic richness. While one artifact, Figure 5 “The Welcoming Embrace”, depicts abstract qualities such as kindness, accountability, and charisma through environmental or atmospheric elements, another, such as Figure 3 “Multiracial Identity”, grounds these values in personal relationships and embodiment. Figure 3, depicting a Multiracial man and his Black and White parents, introduces the theme of heritage and identity as relational constructs, suggesting that family can serve as both a site of affirmation and complexity for Biracial individuals. In contrast, Figure 4 featuring the zebra and flowers leans into symbolism and emotion, illustrating a more internalized journey of identity formation and emancipation.

Artifact Summary

These AI-generated image artifacts collectively evoke a tapestry of human experience marked by complexity, connection, and transformation. They offer a visual language through which themes of race, identity, community, and emotional resilience are expressed, through layered, affective imagery that invites interpretation and dialogue, and provides a richer understanding of the Q-sort and all data collected.

Implications

To translate the study’s findings into meaningful change, this section examines implications for improving how the counseling profession engages with Multiracial identity development in various realms of the counseling profession. Centered on the lived experiences

and identity development of Multiracial young adults, the study addresses the ongoing marginalization and invisibility of Multiracial populations within counseling discourse and training. By exploring how participants make meaning of their racial identities through personal, relational, and systemic lenses, this research offers valuable insights into how counseling professionals and educators can better support Multiracial persons. The following implications highlight how these findings can be applied to inform future research, enhance counselor education curricula, guide clinical practice, and strengthen supervisory relationships.

Research

The findings of this study underscore the importance of advancing research practices that center around the lived experiences of Multiracial individuals, particularly Multiracial young adults, as an important and deserving focus within scholarly research. Despite the increasing visibility of Multiracial populations, these individuals remain underrepresented, miscategorized, or “othered” in psychological and counseling research (Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Harris, 2016; McDonald et al., 2020; Nishina & Witkow, 2020). This study contributes to a growing body of scholarship that aims to rectify these exclusions by offering a foundation for more inclusive research frameworks and protocols that reflect the complexity and nuance of Multiracial identity.

Methodologically, this study also highlights the value of mixed methods research, which remains underutilized in studies of Multiracial populations. By incorporating quantitative and qualitative components, including a creative artifact to elicit narrative imagery, this study demonstrates the potential of mixed methods to provide richer, more layered understandings of identity, development, and lived experience among Multiracial young adults.

In giving voice to a population frequently overlooked in psychological and counseling research, this study contributes to the existing literature and calls for a broader paradigm shift in

how research with Multiracial individuals is conceptualized and conducted. Representation in research is essential to inform culturally competent clinical practices, policy decisions, and future inquiry. Continued efforts to expand the scope, depth, and methodological diversity of Multiracial research are critical to ensuring this growing population is understood, validated, and equitably reflected in the academic discourse.

Counselor Education

The findings of this study underscore the need for counselor education programs to more effectively prepare future counselors to competently and ethically serve Multiracial young adults. As Multiracial individuals represent a rapidly growing population, their experiences must be treated as central, not peripheral, within counselor training. Multiracial issues are often relegated to subsections within broader multicultural counseling curricula. This marginalization risks reinforcing monoracial normativity and leaves counselors ill-prepared for the realities of contemporary practice. Counselor educators should, therefore, intentionally integrate content focused on Multiracial clients, particularly Multiracial young adults, into core coursework through readings, case studies, and facilitated discussions.

Drawing on this study's key constructs, *The Mirror Within*, *Reflections Among Us*, and *The Collective Mirror*, educators can encourage reflective classroom dialogues on identity development, social context, and communal validation. These discussions serve not only to build cultural competence but also to deepen students' capacity for self-awareness and clinical empathy. Importantly, counselor educators must emphasize that racial identity is not always a presenting issue, even for Multiracial clients. Teaching future counselors to approach identity with curiosity and without assumptions encourages a client-centered, culturally responsive approach. Best practices such as intersectionality and cultural humility should be reinforced,

offering trainees a lens through which to explore how multiple identities, outside of race, intersect in shaping client experiences.

A striking finding from the demographic prescreener was that nearly half of the participants had not encountered the concept of racial identity until higher education (undergraduate or graduate level). This underscores the need to create curricular space for counselors-in-training, especially those who are Multiracial themselves, to explore and articulate their own identities. Such space promotes personal growth and professional insight, enhancing their ability to support clients by navigating similar developmental challenges. To meet these needs, counselor education programs must move beyond tokenistic inclusion and embed Multiracial content into the core of counselor training, affirming the complexity and legitimacy of Multiracial identities in both therapeutic and educational settings.

Counselors

The results of this study also hold practical relevance for counselors in direct practice. The use of MultiCrit and ecological frameworks highlights the need for a dynamic, systems-aware approach to identity development that moves beyond individualized or static models. Counselors are encouraged to honor the complexity of Multiracial identity by resisting monoracial frameworks and facilitating therapeutic environments that support self-definition. The narratives in this study highlight the agency, introspection, and pride that Multiracial individuals bring to their identity formation, primarily when these processes are supported by reflective counseling and affirming relationships.

Therapists can apply these perspectives by fostering client-driven meaning-making, validating clients' evolving understandings of identity, and holding space for ambiguity or nonlinearity. These strategies can be done via traditional talk therapy sessions where reflection of

the client's worldview and an understanding of which factor the client is likely to load on can enrich the counseling relationship and overall therapeutic conversation. Additionally, themes of Multiracial identity and identity development can also be explored creatively through music, art, dance, writing, and play therapy. This clinical approach is supported by Leung et al (2008), who stated that "exposure to multiple cultures in and of itself can enhance creativity" (p. 169), showing the intersectional therapeutic benefit of Multiracial identity and creativity in counseling.

Counselors should not assume racial identity is always a presenting issue for Multiracial clients but should remain open to its relevance as it emerges and broach any differences between the client and clinician. The study also underscores the importance of community and social affirmation for clients who are likely to load on Factor 2. Counselors should help clients access supportive networks through group therapy, peer support, or community programming. These spaces can buffer against the invalidation and isolation often experienced by Multiracial individuals, promoting resilience and a stronger sense of belonging.

Finally, this study points to the persistent invisibility of Multiracial populations in research and clinical frameworks. Counselors must stay attuned to this gap and engage in advocacy by amplifying Multiracial voices, challenging monoracial assumptions, intentionally seeking literature or continued education on various Multiracial construct combinations, and critically examining their positions of privilege in relation to race.

Supervision

The findings from this study offer important insights for clinical supervision, emphasizing the need for supervisors to engage in reflective, culturally responsive practices that support supervisees in working effectively with Multiracial young adult clients. Supervision provides a unique relational space where emerging counselors can examine their clinical skills,

cultural awareness, and biases, making it a critical site for fostering competence and ethical responsibility when conceptualizing and serving Multiracial clients.

One key intervention involves integrating the study's findings into existing supervision models, such as developmental, discrimination, or reflective models, to support nuanced case conceptualization. Supervisors can use the three factors found in this study to encourage supervisees to think critically about how racial identity, emerging adulthood, and broader sociocultural influences interact in their clients' lives. While the results of this study are not generalizable, the themes that emerged can serve as entry points for deeper inquiry into the lived experiences of Multiracial clients, similar to what was mentioned for Counselor Educators. Supervisors can facilitate this process by guiding supervisees in exploring whether and how these themes may resonate with their clients and their implications for identity development, treatment goals, and clinical rapport.

Supervisors are also uniquely positioned to model decolonizing approaches to clinical work, challenging traditional deficit-based frameworks and encouraging supervisees to consider strengths-based, holistic views of identity. This includes recognizing and validating the often-complex navigation of multiple racial and cultural heritages, especially during young adulthood. By emphasizing intersectionality and the socio-political contexts in which Multiracial clients exist, supervisors help counselors-in-training move beyond simplified or monolithic understandings of race, fostering more accurate and empathic client conceptualizations.

Ethical responsibility remains a cornerstone of clinical supervision. Supervisors must ensure that supervisees are familiar with and actively applying ethical standards and multicultural competencies in their work with Multiracial clients. These include principles outlined in the ACA Code of Ethics (ACA, 2014), ASCA Code of Ethics (ASCA, 2022), and

multicultural and social justice competencies (Sue et al., 1992; Ratts et al., 2016a; Kenney et al., 2015). Supervisors can support ethical development by reviewing documentation practices, exploring cultural transference and countertransference issues, and engaging supervisees in discussions about power, privilege, and systemic factors that influence client experiences and counselor responses.

Finally, supervisors must also attend to the developmental needs of the supervisee, recognizing that their own understanding of racial identity, particularly for those who identify as Multiracial themselves, may still be evolving. Encouraging supervisees to reflect on their identities and how they shape their clinical worldview can promote deeper empathy and cultural responsiveness. When supervisors approach supervision with cultural humility and curiosity, they foster a learning environment where supervisees feel supported in growing personally and professionally, enhancing their capacity to serve Multiracial young adult clients with insight and care.

Limitations of the Study

Given the inherent subjectivity of human research, this study is shaped by the researcher's identity and positionality, particularly in the design and interpretation of the Q-sort process. While participants brought their own meanings to the statements, the researcher constructed the tools provided, influencing and potentially limiting the range of expression. A known limitation of Q-methodology is that the findings reflect shared viewpoints within a specific participant group and are not generalizable to the broader population.

A significant limitation of this study is that all participants self-identified their demographic information, including race, age, gender, and English proficiency, without a way to confirm or legitimize their responses. Self-identification of demographic information can be

challenging because it is unknown if the information a participant selects reflects their self-identification or how society perceives their identity (Webber, 2018). Additionally, how demographic information is collected can lead to biased, stigmatized, or oppressive language being used and cause harm to participants and consumers of the research (Call et al., 2023). To combat this limitation, the *Ethical and Social Justice Framework for Working with Demographic Data*, proposed by Call et al. (2023), was used to ensure that, despite inaccuracies or inconsistencies in self-reported data, the demographic information collected will be reviewed through an ethical and social justice lens (Call et al., 2023).

Furthermore, based on how this study is being distributed, a limitation is the inability to calculate the response rate. Due to online recruitment's widespread and unpredictable nature, there is no way of accurately identifying how many people will be exposed to this study. Security features in Qualtrics were enabled to identify entry abnormalities.

A final limitation is the inclusion and exclusion criteria being used as a screening requirement for recruitment. By providing specific recruitment criteria, I did not capture the viewpoints of Multiracial individuals from birth to age 17 or 35+, and individuals who do not identify as Multiracial. Additionally, there is a likelihood that individuals who meet the race and age criteria will not speak English due to geographical influences and their cultural upbringing (Holmes, 2015). Despite their demographic information making them eligible for this study, the added inclusion criteria of being fluent in English will negate their eligibility.

Recommendations for Future Study

Several avenues for future research emerge from the limitations and findings of this study. First, it is recommended that subsequent studies broaden the recruitment criteria to include participants across a wider age range, particularly incorporating individuals in middle and late

adulthood. This expansion would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how perceptions may shift across the lifespan. In addition, while this study was conducted entirely online, future research would benefit from a predominantly in-person design. Conducting the study in person may facilitate greater accuracy in verifying demographic information and participant eligibility, thereby enhancing the validity of the sample. Based on participant feedback, it is also advisable to revise the concourse by clarifying statements that were ambiguous or difficult to interpret and incorporating suggested statements that were previously absent. A more refined and comprehensive Q-set could yield a richer factor structure and potentially reveal new dimensions of perception. Moreover, increasing the number of participants would allow for a wider array of perspectives and improve the robustness of the findings. Additionally, adopting a methodology with greater potential for generalizability would be beneficial in extending the implications of the results to a broader population.

Building on the approach taken in this study to disaggregate the racial constructs within the Multiracial participant group, future research should continue to prioritize the nuanced representation of racial identity. This study aimed to contribute to the growing body of literature recognizing Multiracial individuals as a distinct population while highlighting the diverse racial combinations that comprise Multiracial young adults. However, the limited sample size constrained the ability to present detailed demographic breakdowns for each participant without compromising anonymity. Future research must also adopt greater intentionality in defining, measuring, and analyzing Multiracial populations in ways that do not rely on comparisons to monoracial groups or subsume Multiracial individuals under broader racial categories. Researchers must broaden their sampling practices and conceptual frameworks to capture the diversity within Multiracial populations, ensuring that experiences across racial combinations are

adequately represented. Future studies with larger and more diverse samples would be well-positioned to take this work further by explicitly identifying and analyzing the specific racial compositions of Multiracial participants. Doing so would provide deeper insight into how different racial combinations may inform identity development, perception, and lived experience. Such detailed disaggregation could enhance the specificity and relevance of findings, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the diversity within the Multiracial population.

Based on the results of this study, particularly the perspectives represented by Factor 2, a valuable direction for future research would be to explore the potential correlation between perceived safety as a Multiracial young adult, the prevailing political climate, and mental health outcomes. Participants associated with this factor expressed heightened awareness of sociopolitical dynamics and their impact on feelings of safety and belonging. Expanding this line of inquiry could involve examining how fluctuations in political rhetoric, policy decisions, or media representation influence psychological well-being and perceived social support among Multiracial individuals. By integrating measures of mental health and sociopolitical context, future studies could offer a more holistic understanding of the unique stressors faced by Multiracial populations and inform culturally responsive interventions or policy approaches, particularly those that can be effectively implemented within counseling and mental health support settings.

Chapter Summary

In this study, Q methodology was utilized to investigate the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences that Multiracial young adults hold regarding racial identity. The findings revealed a three-factor solution, representing shared viewpoints among the 18 participants. These three factors highlighted distinct yet overlapping ways participants made meaning of racial identity:

one factor emphasized the fluid, evolving, and self-directed nature of identity; another underscored the influence of family, heritage, and cultural connection; and the third pointed to the impact of external validation, societal pressures, and a desire for belonging. Together, these factors illustrate the multidimensional and negotiated nature of Multiracial identity, which is shaped through personal reflection and social context.

Throughout the discussion, these perspectives were situated within existing research, extending conversations around the complexity and contextuality of Multiracial identity development. The study contributes to the counseling field by underscoring the importance of recognizing racial identity as an ongoing, relational, and often non-linear process. Implications were drawn for counselor educators, who are encouraged to integrate Multiracial identity into training and foster reflective learning; for counselors and supervisors, who are called to engage in culturally responsive practice and support the identity exploration of Multiracial clients with nuance and care; and for researchers, who are urged to continue exploring this population through diverse methods and broader sampling.

Despite limitations related to sample size, demographic representation, and the interpretive nature of the methodology, the study offers valuable insights into the lived experiences of Multiracial young adults. The results emphasize that racial identity cannot be approached with a one-size-fits-all framework and must instead be understood as fluid, multifaceted, and shaped by personal agency and systemic forces. Further research on Multiracial young adults is warranted to expand the generalizability of these findings, deepen understanding across intersecting identities, examine other developmental stages and age groups, continue to emphasize minority-minority racial constructs, and support their application in academic, clinical, and educational settings. This study ultimately adds to a growing body of

work advocating for more inclusive, context-sensitive approaches to Multiracial identity within the counseling profession.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Flyer



Doctoral Research
Are you a Multiracial young adult?

We want to hear your voice! This research study will look at Multiracial young adult's attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of racial identity.

Complete the post-sort interview and enter a chance to win one of three \$20 Amazon gift cards.



WHO IS ELIGIBLE?
Individuals who identify as Multiracial, or with two or more racial categories who are also between the ages of 18-34. Participants must also be fluent in the English language to engage in this research study.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY
Participants will use an online program to complete a card sorting activity and answer follow-up questions questions, all of which is estimated to take 25-30 minutes. Participants may also opt to schedule a one-on -one interview to discuss their responses. Risks may include feelings of stress or lowered self-esteem. Participants may exit the study at any time. Benefits include an opportunity to contribute to the knowledge that aids counselor educators, supervisors, and future counselors.

INTERESTED?
Please contact Lauren Hearn APC, NCC at lauren.hearn25@uga.edu or 470-866-0046. This study is being conducted under Dr. Jolie Daigle who can be contacted at jdaigle@uga.edu.

 **Mary Frances Early College of Education**
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Email Subject Line: Multiracial Young Adults Needed for an Online Research Study

Hi Everyone!

My name is Lauren Hearn, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia (UGA). To complete my doctoral research, I am looking for Multiracial young adults aged 18-34! Please

view the attached flyer for more information and access the screening questionnaire. You may also go to the screening questionnaire using the QR code below. Contact me with any questions at lauren.hearn25@uga.edu or by calling 470-866-0046. This study is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Jolie Ziomek-Daigle at the University of Georgia (jdaigle@uga.edu). Please also share the flyer with friends, family, or others in your personal or professional community who may fit the criteria.

Thank you all!

Sincerely,

Lauren Hearn, APC, NCC

Lauren.hearn25@uga.edu

470-866-0046



Appendix B

Pre-Screening Survey for Online Research Study in Qualtrics

Pre-Screening Survey for Online Research Study
ExpertReview score
Great

Interest in Participation

Q1

Skip to

End of Survey if No Is Selected

Are you interested in participating in this study?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Confidentiality

Q14

If yes, Thank you for your interest. Before enrolling you in the study, we need to ask you some questions to determine if you are eligible for the study. This should take less than 10 minutes of your time. There are no anticipated risks to answering these questions. All information received from this questionnaire, including your name and any other information that can possibly identify you will be strictly confidential and will be password protected. Remember, your participation is voluntary; you can refuse to answer any questions or stop completing the questionnaire at any time without penalty. Thank you. If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to email me at lauren.hearn25@uga.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Jolie Daigle at jdaigle@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706-542-3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Q2

Skip to

End of Survey if No Is Selected

Are you a Multiracial individual (an individual who identifies with two or more racial categories)?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Q3

Skip to

End of Survey if No Is Selected

Are you a young adult (age 18-34)?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Q4

 Skip to

End of Survey if No Is Selected

Are you fluent in the English language?

☐ Yes☐ No

Demographic Information: Part 1

Q5



Please insert the different race or ethnic groups you identify with.

-Per the definition of Multiracial individual, a minimum of two racial categories should be listed here separated by a comma (ie. Asian, White)

Examples of race or ethnic identification: African, African American, American Indian, Arab, Asian, Asian American, Asian or Asian British, Any other Asian background, Black Or Black British People, English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British, Han Chinese, Hispanic or Latino American, Indigenous peoples, Irish, Irish Travelers, Japanese, Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander, Roma, Vietnamese, White, or Other ethnic groups

Q6



Please indicate your age.

[Click here to edit choices](#)

18 yrs old

18 yrs old

19 yrs old

20 yrs old

21 yrs old

22 yrs old

23 yrs old

24 yrs old

25 yrs old

26 yrs old

27 yrs old

28 yrs old

29 yrs old

30 yrs old

31 yrs old

32 yrs old

33 yrs old

34 yrs old



Q7



Please insert your gender identification.

Q8



Please insert the state in which you currently reside.

▼ Demographic Information: Part 2



Q14

I have been excluded due to being Multiracial.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q15

I have experienced racial discrimination because of my Multiracial identity.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q16

I have experienced unfair treatment based on my perceived racial identity.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q17

I was exposed to the concept of racial identity for the first time in a college setting (Undergrad or Graduate).

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q9

Thank you for your responses. We will review the information provided and contact you regarding your eligibility. Please provide your name, email address, and phone number below so that we may contact you regarding the study. We will only contact you by phone if we are unable to reach you via email.

Q10



Name

Q11



Email

Q12



Phone Number

End of Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses have been recorded.

If you answered No to any of the first four questions your survey may have been terminated due to not meeting the participant inclusion criteria. I appreciate you for taking the time to provide your responses.

Appendix C

Participant Informed Consent Form

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: Attitudes of Multiracial Young Adults Regarding Racial Identity: A Q Methodology Study

Methodology: A Q-Methodological Investigation

Student Investigator: Lauren Hearn, a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia (UGA) Department of Counseling and Human Development Services.

Supervising Investigator: Dr. Jolie Ziomek-Daigle, a professor in the University of Georgia (UGA) Department of Counseling and Human Development Services.

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study that involves an investigation of your attitudes, beliefs, and experiences regarding racial identity. The information gathered through this study may be used to enhance counseling and supervision practices, contribute to research on this topic, and inform the training of future counselors.

Study Procedures: You will be asked to sort your attitudes, beliefs, and experiences regarding racial identity on a continuum of most agree to least agree. You will also be asked to answer follow-up questions about your experiences completing the sorting activity and your experiences with racial identity. This should take about 25-30 minutes of your time. After you complete the activity and follow-up questions, you will be given a chance to opt-in to a post-sort interview with Lauren Hearn via Zoom or in-person to provide more background and context to support your completed card sort and create a visual artifact through AI Image generation. If you choose

to complete the interview, it will be audio or video recorded with your permission. You may choose to remove your name from Zoom to complete the interview. This interview is not required to be part of the study, and you may still participate in the interview even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

Foreseeable Risks: There are no significant foreseeable risks to any participant, but the possibility exists that participants may experience discomfort due to the length of time that may be required for their participation. Moreover, feelings of stress or low self-esteem may result from reflecting on personal experiences associated with racial identity. Any instruments completed by you are considered confidential, meaning that the researchers will not reveal anything that is said or written during the administration process.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: Although this study may not be of any direct benefit to you, this study is expected to benefit others by providing information to assist the researcher in training future counselors and improving counseling and supervision best practices.

Compensation for Participants: Participants who complete the card sort activity and opt-in for the post-sort interview will be entered for a chance to win one of three \$20 Amazon gift cards. You do not have to be in the study to enter the drawing. Send an email to lauren.hearn25@uga.edu to enter the drawing if you do not want to be in the study.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: This research involves the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed. The research team will make every effort to protect your privacy. The researcher will take all necessary precautions to protect your confidentiality by coding your demographic information, card sort and post-sort questionnaire responses, and post-sort

interview recordings with participant IDs, maintaining them in separate password-protected locations. When the results of this study are presented, only general demographic information will be disclosed, and therefore, your confidentiality will be maintained. Additionally, the confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study. Finally, all data from your participation may be used for future unspecified research studies when appropriate. This means that the research team may conduct further analyses of your de-identified information to answer future research questions without obtaining your additional consent.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Lauren Hearn at 470-866-0046 or email lauren.hearn25@uga.edu or Dr. Jolie Ziomek-Daigle, UGA Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at jdaigle@uga.edu.

Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UGA Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the IRB at 706-542-3199 or by email at IRB@uga.edu.

Research Participants' Rights: Clicking "I Agree" below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- Ms. Hearn has explained the study to you and answered your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to participate in this study, and your refusal or decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
- You have received a copy of this form in your welcome email.

Appendix D

Conditions of Instruction

All materials needed to engage in this card sorting activity, known as a Q-sort distribution, have been provided. An explanation of instructions can be found in this document or in the help guide found at this link <https://app.qmethodsoftware.com/docs/articles/participants-guide/qsort.html> for consumption prior to beginning this activity. Please contact the researcher, Lauren Hearn at lauren.hearn25@uga.edu or 470-866-0046 for any questions about the sorting activity, Q-Method Software, or your participation in this study.

1. Follow this link (<https://app.qmethodsoftware.com/study/12907>) and insert your unique participant code to access the card sort activity.
2. First, you will review the informed consent form and give your consent by clicking the “I Agree” button. You can deny consent by clicking the “I Do Not Agree” button. A copy of the informed consent form was sent to you in the welcome email for your records.
3. Next, you will be directed to a Pre-Sort where you will do a fast “from the gut,” sort of the 34 statements into three general categories. Symbol Key: Thumbs up = Most Agree (of your attitudes and beliefs), Thumbs down = Least Agree (of your attitudes and beliefs), and the Question Mark in the Circle = Neutral (Neither agree nor disagree). In the Pre-sort, please read each statement and click the symbol to sort it based on your attitudes and beliefs about the statement. Don’t think too hard, and don’t worry about how many statements go into which pile. You will also be allowed to change your mind in the final sort based on your preferences.
4. You will then move to the Final-Sort page. Sort a set of statements related to different aspects of racial identity according to your attitudes, beliefs, and experiences as a Multiracial young adult using a ranking system where you will allocate each item a rank within the sorting distribution provided from Least Agree to Most Agree. The more you agree with an item the higher the ranking or further right it will be sorted. The more you disagree with an item the lower the ranking or further left it will be sorted. You will notice positive numbers are associated with Most Agree, the number 0 is associated with Neutral, and negative numbers are associated with Least Agree. Additionally, the program has color-coordinated statements into piles based on your pre-sort to help direct where they may fall in the distribution table.
5. Starting with the pile of statements you generally agree with, sort them more carefully using the grid. The statement you feel is most representative of your attitudes and beliefs of racial identity will be on the far right of this table, closest to Most Agree. Next, sort the statements from the pile you generally disagree with into the grid. The statement you feel is least representative of your attitudes and beliefs of racial identity will be on the far left of this table, closest to Least Agree. Finally, sort the remaining statements into the grid. These statements will fall somewhere in the middle in the remaining slots. You can expand your pile by clicking the double-ended arrow on the pile of your choice. This will allow you to scroll and view all the statements in the pile at once and sort from all statements sorted into this category. Otherwise, the cards can be viewed in a stacked perspective where a new statement will appear after you have sorted the statement on top.

Important Notes: There are only as many slots in the grid as there are statements, so you will likely have to make tough decisions resulting in you moving statements around as needed. There is a chance that you may have more statements pre-sorted for a specific area than the number of allotted slots in that area. In this case, you will need to prioritize the order of your statements, and some statements may bleed into a different rating area from where you originally pre-sorted them.

- Please be mindful that if you place a card from a pre-sort pile on top of a card you have already sorted into the chart, the new card will take its place. The original card will return to the Neutral pile to be resorted (despite an original ranking of Most or Least Agree).
 - You can re-organize the cards you have placed in the distribution table and sort them back into the pre-sort category by clicking on the statement and dragging it up to the pile you want to drop it in.
 - If you elect to move a statement to a new block that is occupied by a statement, you will notice the statement in the block you are going to will swap places to the spot of the statement you are moving.
6. Once all statements have been sorted, please review the Distribution chart to ensure you are satisfied with the placement of every statement. **Use this time to ensure that no statements have shifted or rearranged during the sorting process.** If you are happy with your card sort and believe it to be a strong representation of your attitudes and beliefs of racial identity, hit submit. You will receive one final chance to go back to making any changes or commit to your responses and submit the survey.
 7. After completing the sort, you will be directed to a post-sort questionnaire where you will answer four open-ended questions and have the opportunity to opt-in to a post-sort interview to discuss your card sort in more detail. There is a “View Q-Sort” button on the bottom of the page for you to reflect on your completed sort.

Lutfallah, S. & Buchanan, L. (2019). Quantifying subjective data using online Q-methodology software. *The Mental Lexicon*, 14(3), 415-423. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1075/ml.20002.lut>

Appendix E

Post-Sort Questionnaire

⋮ Post-sort Questionnaire

+ New Question



	Question	Question Type	Required	
⋮	Tell me about your experience completing this card sort activity? How was the process for you?	Multi-Line Textbox	☒	...
⋮	Were there any statements that you found to be confusing or out of place? What did you do with these statements?	Multi-Line Textbox	☒	...
⋮	As you were sorting, did you feel like there was a statement missing from this collection of statements? If so, please share that statement, and where you would have placed it in your Q-sort.	Multi-Line Textbox	☒	...
⋮	Please describe what message you believe your Q-sort conveys about racial identity, what is the story you are trying to tell?	Multi-Line Textbox	☒	...
⋮	Are you interested in participating in a post-sort interview? This interview can be in person or via Zoom and will last approximately 45 minutes.	Dropdown	☒	...
⋮	Please provide the best email address to contact for scheduling purposes.	Single Line Textbox	☒	...

A condition is set for the question, “Are you interested in participating in a post-sort interview?”.

If “yes” is selected, go to the question “Please provide the best email address to contact for scheduling purposes.” If “no” is selected, go to “End of the survey.”

Appendix F

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

1. Let's review your Q-sort. In the post-sort questionnaire, you mentioned that you felt _____ statement was missing; tell me more about this.
2. Describe your process in sorting the statements you placed on the far right.
3. Describe your process in sorting the statements you placed in the middle.
4. Describe your process in sorting the statements you placed on the far left.
5. What does it mean to have your Multiracial voice represented in this study?
6. (To be asked after the AI Artifact activity.) Now that you have completed these activities, please share any additional thoughts on racial identity or about this process. Is there anything else you would like to share?

AI-Generated Image Artifact Instructions

Participants who elect to participate in the optional post-sort interview will be given the opportunity to create a digital image through AI Image generation software, Adobe Firefly, that captures their attitudes and beliefs of racial identity in a single image.

After the interview protocol is complete, the researcher will open Adobe Firefly during the Zoom interview and share the screen for the participant to be able to collaborate in the image generation process. An open dialog box will be used to enter descriptive text provided by the participant.



Researcher Prompt 1: Now that you have completed the Q-sort and provided deeper context and meaning during today's interview, we will wrap up with a creative activity. We will use Adobe Firefly to capture your attitudes and beliefs about racial identity in a single AI-generated image. Using this dialog box, we will enter words or phrases that provide descriptive language, including the style of the image (ie. standard, anime, comic book, fantasy art, pixel art, photographic, line drawing, modeling compound, mosaic, etc.), any imagery you want to include such as people, animals, or settings, the feeling you want to evoke with the image, and any other

elements you believe are needed to capture the essence of your Q-sort and convey what racial identity looks like to you.

-The participant will lead this process by providing the language, and the researcher will type the language into the prompt box. Additionally, the researcher will assist in the clarification of appropriate language to use in AI text-to-image generation as well as noting observations made during the text entry process.

Researcher Prompt 2: Once we have entered your descriptive language I will hit the generate button to see what is created. You will see four image options based on your text prompt. Please review these creations and identify one that you believe best represents your Q-sort and overall perception of racial identity. If you do not see an image that conveys what you are envisioning in the set, we can edit your descriptive text and regenerate the image until you find one that creatively captures your perception best.

Researcher Prompt 3: Now that you have selected an image, please describe how this image represents your beliefs about racial identity. Finally, please provide a title for this image.

-The researcher will download the selected image and save it as the title the participant gave. Additionally, the researcher will offer to send the participant their image via email or the Zoom chat feature.

Appendix G

Concourse

Statement	Source	Theme	Sub-theme
“multiracial students’ identity choices may be constrained by how others interpret their appearance. “	(Renn, 2008, p.18)	Phenotype	identity choices/ racial cast systems
physical appearance plays a role in how I identify or categorize myself	(Wijeyesinghe, 2001)	Phenotype	evolution of identity
racial ancestry plays a role in how I identify or categorize myself	(Wijeyesinghe, 2001)	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)	evolution of identity
social context plays a role in how I identify or categorize myself	(Wijeyesinghe, 2001)	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)	evolution of identity/ identity as a choice
people have made assumptions about my racial background.	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)	Other's Perspectives
I have changed the way I describe my race over the years	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Racial identity development (RID)	evolution of identity
I have experienced racial discrimination, from racist slurs to physical threats, because of my racial background	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Racism	Treatment
I have been unfairly stopped by the police because of	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Racism	Treatment

my racial background	multiracial-in-america/		
the pressure to identify as a single race is a significant part of the multiracial experience.	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Racial identity development (RID)	Racial Acceptance
I have attempted to look a certain way in order to influence the way others perceive my race	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Phenotype	Other's Perspectives
I have attempted to behave a certain way in order to influence the way others perceive my race	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)	Other's Perspectives
I am proud of my mixed racial background	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Racial Pride	core beliefs
I view my racial background as an advantage	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Core Beliefs	risk factor
I view my racial background as a disadvantage	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Core Beliefs	risk factor
I feel ashamed because of my mixed racial background	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Core Beliefs	Impure Bloodline
I feel like an outsider because of my mixed racial background	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Core Beliefs	Racial exclusion/Racial Acceptance

I feel privileged because of my mixed racial background	Researcher	Protective factor	Racial pride
a relative or member of my extended family has treated me badly because of my mixed race	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological, Political)	Treatment
race is not the most important element of my personal identity	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Racial identity development (RID)	Identity as a choice
My racial background is “essential” to my identity	https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/	Core Beliefs	Identity as a choice
I’ve found it easier to see opposing perspectives than many others.	https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1b04imw/what_is_it_like_being_mixed_race/	Racial acceptance	Core beliefs
Sometimes it feels as if there are no safe spaces	https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1b04imw/what_is_it_like_being_mixed_race/	Risk factor	Racism/Racial exclusion
I'm not going to lie about my identity to make other people happy.	https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1b04imw/what_is_it_like_being_mixed_race/	Racial pride	Other's Perspectives
I can connect with others on a deeper level because I see beyond their race	https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1b04imw/what_is_it_like_being_mixed_race/	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)	"I'm special"
“racial fluidity” can make it easier for multiracial individuals to avoid conflict or be accepted by the	https://anderson-review.ucla.edu/multiracial/	Protective factor	Racial acceptance

people they are with.			
I feel like I have to prove my Multiracial identity to people.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2WaNmhvEzo	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)	Other's Perspectives
Sometimes I get tired of explaining my racial identity (who I am)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2WaNmhvEzo	Phenotype	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)
Sometimes I don't care to explain my racial identity (who I am)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2WaNmhvEzo		
My racial identity is a protective factor for my mental health.	https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/multiracial-identities-and-resilience-to-racism-the-role-of-families#Racial-ethnic-identity-can-be-protective	Protective factor	self-awareness
I understand what it means to be a member of each monoracial group I am affiliated with.	https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/multiracial-identities-and-resilience-to-racism-the-role-of-families#Racial-ethnic-identity-can-be-protective		
People in my community perceive me as Other	https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/06/08/462395722/racial-impostor-syndrome-here-are-your-stories	Racial Exclusion	Other's Perspectives
I enjoy being asked "What are you?"	https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/06/08/462395722/racial-		

	<u>impostor-syndrome-here-are-your-stories</u>		
I feel safe in white spaces	<u>https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/06/08/462395722/racial-impostor-syndrome-here-are-your-stories</u>		
I have been excluded due to being Multiracial.	<u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnHosiKhqiw</u>	Racial Exclusion	Other's Perspectives
I am definitely proud of who I am	<u>https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1etf8ok/does_anyone_else_hate_being_obsessed_with_their/</u>	Racial Pride	Core Belief
what makes our relationship with being mixed unhealthy is other people projecting onto you,	<u>https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1etf8ok/does_anyone_else_hate_being_obsessed_with_their/</u>	Racial cast systems	Other's Perspectives
I'm always feeling like an impostor.	<u>https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1etf8ok/does_anyone_else_hate_being_obsessed_with_their/</u>	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)	racial exclusion/ Core Belief
I have been pressured to choose one side of my racial identity to align with over another identity(s)	<u>https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1d4ynl8/did_or_does_anyone_go_through_changes_in_their/</u>	Racial cast systems	identity as a choice
My racial identity is fluid.	<u>https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1d4ynl8/did_or_does_anyone_go_through_changes_in_their/</u>	evolution of identity	Core Belief
I am heavily mixed and choose to just identify with what	<u>https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1d4ynl8/did_or_does_anyone_go_through_changes_in_their/</u>	Phenotype	racial cast systems

I'm visually recognized as	d or does anyone go through changes in their/		
I feel no need to explain my genetic history to anyone outside my circle	https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1d4ynl8/did_or_does_anyone_go_through_changes_in_their/	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)	Other's Perspectives
I feel a need to advocate for my Multiracial identity.	https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1d4ynl8/did_or_does_anyone_go_through_changes_in_their/	Racial pride	Advocacy
I feel represented in media.	https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1d4ynl8/did_or_does_anyone_go_through_changes_in_their/	Racial Inclusion	Phenotype
Other people are confused by my appearance	https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1d4ynl8/did_or_does_anyone_go_through_changes_in_their/	Phenotype	Other's Perspectives
I really don't think about race at all.	https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1d4ynl8/did_or_does_anyone_go_through_changes_in_their/	Protective Factor	racial understanding
How people perceive me changes depending on who I'm around.	https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1d4ynl8/did_or_does_anyone_go_through_changes_in_their/	evolution of identity	Other's Perspectives
Because of the way I speak, others deny my racial group membership(s)	Franco, Marisa and O'Brien, Karen M., "Racial Identity Invalidation With Multiracial Individuals: An Instrument	Racial Exclusion	Behavior Invalidation/ Other's Perspectives

	Development Study" (2017). Counseling and Psychological Services Faculty Publications. 3. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3		
I am excluded from a racial group that I feel connected to because I do not "behave" like a typical member of that racial group(s)	Franco, Marisa and O'Brien, Karen M., "Racial Identity Invalidation With Multiracial Individuals: An Instrument Development Study" (2017). Counseling and Psychological Services Faculty Publications. 3. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3	Racial Exclusion	Behavior Invalidation/ Other's Perspectives/ racial expectations/ racial stereotypes
Others think that my interests are different than those of a typical member of my racial group(s)	Franco, Marisa and O'Brien, Karen M., "Racial Identity Invalidation With Multiracial Individuals: An Instrument Development Study" (2017). Counseling and Psychological Services Faculty Publications. 3. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)	Behavior Invalidation/ Other's Perspectives/ Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)

When people hear my opinions, they make me feel like I do not belong in my racial group(s)	Franco, Marisa and O'Brien, Karen M., "Racial Identity Invalidation With Multiracial Individuals: An Instrument Development Study" (2017). Counseling and Psychological Services Faculty Publications. 3. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3	Racial Exclusion	Behavior Invalidation/ Other's Perspectives
Others would not guess the race(s) that I identify with	Franco, Marisa and O'Brien, Karen M., "Racial Identity Invalidation With Multiracial Individuals: An Instrument Development Study" (2017). Counseling and Psychological Services Faculty Publications. 3. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)/ Identity as a choice/ Phenotype	Phenotype Invalidation/ Other's Perspectives
People have reacted with surprise when I tell them the race(s) that I identify with	Franco, Marisa and O'Brien, Karen M., "Racial Identity Invalidation With Multiracial Individuals: An Instrument Development Study" (2017). Counseling and Psychological Services Faculty Publications. 3. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3	Social Response	Phenotype Invalidation/ Other's Perspectives

	s.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3		
My physical features (e.g., skin color, hair texture, eye shape, eye color) lead people to assume that I am not the race(s) that I identify with	Franco, Marisa and O'Brien, Karen M., "Racial Identity Invalidation With Multiracial Individuals: An Instrument Development Study" (2017). Counseling and Psychological Services Faculty Publications. 3. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3	Phenotype	Phenotype Invalidation/ Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)
People assume I am not a member of the racial group(s) that I identify with	Franco, Marisa and O'Brien, Karen M., "Racial Identity Invalidation With Multiracial Individuals: An Instrument Development Study" (2017). Counseling and Psychological Services Faculty Publications. 3. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)	Phenotype Invalidation
Others call me racially-derogatory words that do not apply to the racial group(s) that I identify with	Franco, Marisa and O'Brien, Karen M., "Racial Identity Invalidation With Multiracial Individuals: An Instrument Development Study" (2017). Counseling and Psychological Services Faculty Publications. 3. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3	Racism	Identity Incongruent Discrimination

	Study" (2017). Counseling and Psychological Services Faculty Publications. 3. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3		
I am discriminated against based on a race that I do not identify with	Franco, Marisa and O'Brien, Karen M., "Racial Identity Invalidation With Multiracial Individuals: An Instrument Development Study" (2017). Counseling and Psychological Services Faculty Publications. 3. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3	Racism	Identity Incongruent Discrimination /Others' perspectives
Others apply racial stereotypes to me that do not apply to the racial group(s) that I identify with	Franco, Marisa and O'Brien, Karen M., "Racial Identity Invalidation With Multiracial Individuals: An Instrument Development Study" (2017). Counseling and Psychological Services Faculty Publications. 3. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)	Other's Perspectives
People expect me to associate with members of a racial group that I do not identify with	Franco, Marisa and O'Brien, Karen M., "Racial Identity Invalidation With Multiracial Individuals: An	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)	Identity Incongruent Discrimination/Others' perspectives

	Instrument Development Study" (2017). Counseling and Psychological Services Faculty Publications. 3. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cps_facpub/3		
I am surrounded by others who look like me.	Adrienne Graham	Phenotype	Racial Pride
I often do not think of my own racial identity.	Adrienne Graham	Racial identity development (RID)	Dissassociation
Racial identity did not come up for me as a child.	Ashton Keys	Racial identity development (RID)	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)
My parent(s) or caregiver was intentional about introducing racial identity at an early age.	Ashton Keys	Racial identity development (RID)	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)
I have had to unlearn biases that were taught or learned at an early age.	Ashton Keys	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)
I did not think about racial identity until I became an emerging adult.	Ashton Keys	Racial identity development (RID)	self-awareness
I have experienced microaggressions.	Ashton Keys	Racism	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)
I feel comfortable calling someone out for using microaggressions towards me.	Ashton Keys	Racial Pride	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)

There is still a long way to go to find harmony among different racial identities.	Ashton Keys		
Kids have been taught hatred in the form of racially offensive language.	Ashton Keys	Racism	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)
I found racial identity to be assigned rather than something I chose or even understood myself.	Vy Nguyen	Racial identity development (RID)	Racial evolution
I was often told through microaggressions of what I ought to be rather than what I was.	Vy Nguyen	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)	Others perspectives
Racial Identity is something that helps us develop.	Vy Nguyen	Racial identity development (RID)	multiracial progression
Racial Identity is something that helps us connect.	Vy Nguyen	Racial identity development (RID)	multiracial progression
Racial Identity is something that can make me feel isolated.	Vy Nguyen	Racial identity development (RID)	racial exclusion
Racial identity is a vague secondary identity rather than an objective or measurable identity.	Vy Nguyen	Racial identity development (RID)	core belief
Racial identity is the sum of many other forms of identity.	Vy Nguyen		
Racial identity is something that you learn along the way.	Vy Nguyen	Racial identity development (RID)	evolution of identity

Racial identity is something that is assigned at birth.	Vy Nguyen	Racial identity development (RID)	evolution of identity
Changing racial identity significantly causes discomfort for others	Vy Nguyen	Social Response	Other's Perspectives
Changing racial identity significantly causes fear from others	Vy Nguyen	Social Response	Other's Perspectives
Changing racial identity significantly causes anger in others	Vy Nguyen	Social Response	Other's Perspectives
Racial identity is complex.	Carey Crawford	Core Beliefs	self-awareness/ racial identity development
Racial identity is "thrust upon" us based on a social interpretation of certain physical features.	Carey Crawford	Phenotype	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)/ Social responses
I have little control over how others treat me based on my ascribed racial identity.	Carey Crawford	Social Response	Other's Perspectives
Racial identity is deeply meaningful.	Carey Crawford	Core Beliefs	racial pride/ racial acceptance
Racial identity adds dimension to our personal sense of self.	Carey Crawford		
I did not think about racial identity until I was exposed to the concept in a college setting (Undergrad or Graduate).	Daisy Zhou	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)	Racial identity development
Racial identity is different from the systemic oppression	Daisy Zhou		

related to race and ethnicity.			
Racial identity has many meanings.	Daisy Zhou	Core Beliefs	evolution of identity
Racial identity is a social construct.	Reagan Washington	Racial caste system	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)
I don't want to have to think about my racial identity but society requires me to.	Reagan Washington	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)
I find comfort and community in others who share my racial identity.	Reagan Washington	Racial inclusion	Racial pride
The history associated with my racial identity has shaped me into who I am.	Reagan Washington	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)	racial identity development
I have had opportunities afforded to me based on my racial identity	Reagan Washington	Protective factor/privilege	Social Response
It is helpful for me to be aware of my racial identity due to the current political landscape.	Reagan Washington	identity as a choice	self-awareness
My race has become more central to my identity as I have gotten older.	Reagan Washington	Racial acceptance	racial identity development/multiracial progression
The importance of racial identity varies depending on race.	Onteria Harris	Privilege	self-awareness/racial identity development
Racial identity is strongly influenced by gender identity.	Onteria Harris		

My racial identity caused me to wonder am I safe.	Onteria Harris	Risk Factor	Racial Exclusion
My racial identity causes me to wonder am I perceived as safe.	Onteria Harris	Risk Factor	Assumptions of Multiracial Individuals (Myths, Stereotypes, Expectations)
I am encouraged by my racial identity.	Onteria Harris	Racial Pride	Racial Acceptance
I am discouraged by my racial identity.	Onteria Harris	Dissonance	racial perspective
I am proud to showcase my racial identity in spaces consumed by individuals who identify differently than me.	Jackie Herrera	Advocacy	Racial Pride
I take my racial identity for granted.	Jackie Herrera	Protective factor/privilege	Core Belief
I like educating others on what I identify as.	Jackie Herrera	Racial Pride	Racial Acceptance
Racial identity is unchanging.	Summer Perry	Core Beliefs	Evolution of identity
Societal norms of majority populations can negatively impact racial identity.	Summer Perry	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)	Evolution of identity
My immediate family provided the blue print for forming my racial identity.	Summer Perry	External Influence (Community, Genealogical, Heritage, Family, Sociological)	racial perspective
I view racial identity as a sense of standard moral practices.	Derya Sari	Core Beliefs	racial perspective
more empathetic and more accepting of people the rest of the world only see as different or other	https://www.reddit.com/r/mixedrace/comments/1b04imw/what_is_it_like_being_mixed_race/		

Appendix H

Q-Set statements

1. I am proud to showcase my racial identity in spaces consumed by individuals who identify differently than me.
2. I feel a need to advocate for my Multiracial identity.
3. Racial identity has many meanings.
4. I have changed the way I describe my race over the years due to the fluidity of my racial identity.
5. I feel ashamed because of my Multiracial identity
6. I feel like an outsider because of my Multiracial identity
7. My racial identity is a protective factor for my mental health.
8. Racial Identity is something that can make me feel isolated.
9. My physical features (e.g., skin color, hair texture, eye shape, eye color) lead people to assume that I am not the race(s) that I identify with
10. Other people expect me to ascribe to traditions or behaviors that are representative of a racial identity other than my own.
11. My racial identity causes me to wonder, "Am I safe?"
12. My race has become more central to my identity as I have gotten older.
13. Racial identity is something that is assigned at birth.
14. I view my racial identity as an advantage
15. I have attempted to look a certain way in order to influence the way others perceive my race
16. Racial ancestry plays a role in how I identify or categorize myself
17. I have been pressured to choose one side of my racial identity to align with over another identity(s)

18. My physical appearance dictates how I identify or categorize myself Multiracially.
19. The importance of racial identity varies depending on the combination of race constructs.
20. The current political landscape makes me more aware of my racial identity.
21. My immediate family provided the blueprint for forming my racial identity.
22. I like educating others on my racial identity.
23. Racial identity is something that you learn over time.
24. I find comfort and community in others who share my racial identity.
25. I have had to unlearn biases about racial identity that were taught or learned at an early age.
26. Racial identity is unchanging.
27. The pressure to identify as a single race is a significant part of the Multiracial experience.
28. I don't think about racial identity at all.
29. I am proud of my Multiracial identity
30. My parent(s) or caregiver was intentional about introducing racial identity at an early age.
31. I view racial identity as a sense of standard moral practices.
32. People in my community perceive me as "Other"
33. Social context plays a role in how I identify or categorize myself
34. I would lie about my racial identity to make other people happy.

Appendix I

Welcome Email for Participants

Dear Eligible Participant,

Thank you for completing the demographic survey to qualify for this study. As the Primary Researcher, I would like to welcome you and provide you with some key information and next steps.

Your Participant ID is:

An explanation of instructions can be found in this email or in the help guide found at this link <https://app.qmethodsoftware.com/docs/articles/participants-guide/qsor.html>. I encourage you to watch the video tutorials prior to opening the Q-Method Software.

Please contact the researcher, Lauren Hearn at lauren.hearn25@uga.edu or 470-866-0046 for any questions about the sorting activity, Q-Method Software, or your participation in this study.

1. Follow this link (<https://app.qmethodsoftware.com/study/12907>) and insert your unique participant code to access the card sort activity.
2. First, you will review the informed consent form and give your consent by clicking the “I Agree” button. You can deny consent by clicking the “I Do Not Agree” button. A copy of the informed consent form is attached to this welcome email for your records.
3. Next, you will be directed to a Pre-Sort where you will do a fast “from the gut,” sort of the 34 statements into three general categories. Symbol Key: Thumbs up = Most Agree (of your attitudes and beliefs), Thumbs down = Least Agree (of your attitudes and beliefs), and the Question Mark in the Circle = Neutral (Neither agree nor disagree). In the Pre-sort, please read each statement and click the symbol to sort it based on your attitudes and beliefs about the statement. Don’t think too hard, and don’t worry about how many statements go into which pile. You will also be allowed to change your mind in the final sort based on your preferences.
4. You will then move to the Final-Sort page. Sort a set of statements related to different aspects of racial identity according to your attitudes, beliefs, and experiences as a Multiracial young adult using a ranking system where you will allocate each item a rank within the sorting distribution provided from Least Agree to Most Agree. The more you agree with an item the higher the ranking or further right it will be sorted. The more you disagree with an item the lower

the ranking or further left it will be sorted. You will notice positive numbers are associated with Most Agree, the number 0 is associated with Neutral, and negative numbers are associated with Least Agree. Additionally, the program has color-coordinated statements into piles based on your pre-sort to help direct where they may fall in the distribution table.

5. Starting with the pile of statements you generally agree with, sort them more carefully using the grid. The statement you feel is most representative of your attitudes and beliefs of racial identity will be on the far right of this table, closest to Most Agree. Next, sort the statements from the pile you generally disagree with into the grid. The statement you feel is least representative of your attitudes and beliefs of racial identity will be on the far left of this table, closest to Least Agree. Finally, sort the remaining statements into the grid. These statements will fall somewhere in the middle in the remaining slots. You can expand your pile by clicking the double-ended arrow on the pile of your choice. This will allow you to scroll and view all the statements in the pile at once and sort from all statements sorted into this category. Otherwise, the cards can be viewed in a stacked perspective where a new statement will appear after you have sorted the statement on top.

Important Notes: There are only as many slots in the grid as there are statements, so you will likely have to make tough decisions resulting in you moving statements around as needed. There is a chance that you may have more statements pre-sorted for a specific area than the number of allotted slots in that area. In this case, you will need to prioritize the order of your statements, and some statements may bleed into a different rating area from where you originally pre-sorted them.

- Please be mindful that if you place a card from a pre-sort pile on top of a card you have already sorted into the chart, the new card will take its place. The original card will return to the Neutral pile to be resorted (despite an original ranking of Most or Least Agree).
 - You can re-organize the cards you have placed in the distribution table and sort them back into the pre-sort category by clicking on the statement and dragging it up to the pile you want to drop it in.
 - If you elect to move a statement to a new block that is occupied by a statement, you will notice the statement in the block you are going to will swap places to the spot of the statement you are moving.
6. Once all statements have been sorted, please review the Distribution chart to ensure you are satisfied with the placement of every statement. **Use this time to ensure that no statements have shifted or rearranged during the sorting**

process. If you are happy with your card sort and believe it to be a strong representation of your attitudes and beliefs of racial identity, hit submit. You will receive one final chance to go back to making any changes or commit to your responses and submit the survey.

7. After completing the sort, you will be directed to a post-sort questionnaire where you will answer four open-ended questions and have the opportunity to opt-in to a post-sort interview to discuss your card sort in more detail. There is a “View Q-Sort” button on the bottom of the page for you to reflect on your completed sort.

Please contact the researcher, Lauren Hearn at lauren.hearn25@uga.edu or 470-866-0046 for any questions about the sorting activity, Q-Method Software, or your participation in this study.



Appendix J

Crib Sheet

Statement Number	Statement	Factor 1 Zscore	Factor 1 Rank	Statement Number	Statement	Factor 2 Zscore	Factor 2 Rank	Statement Number	Statement	Factor 3 Zscore	Factor 3 Rank
29	I am proud of my Multiracial identity.	2.07661	5	24	I find comfort and community in others who share...	1.97126	5	17	I have been pressured to choose one side of my...	2.2412	5
21	My immediate family provided the blueprint for...	1.53644	4	7	My racial identity is a protective factor for my...	1.59366	4	13	Racial identity is something that is assigned at birth.	1.29359	4
30	My parent(s) or caregiver was intentional about...	1.86646	4	20	The current political landscape makes me more...	1.50005	4	18	My physical appearance dictates how I identify or...	1.47393	4
9	My physical features (e.g., skin color, hair texture...	1.33295	3	11	My racial identity causes me to wonder, "Am I safe?"	1.17519	3	1	I am proud to showcase my racial identity in...	1.10615	3
14	I view my racial identity as an advantage	0.92006	3	12	My race has become more central to my identity as...	1.49604	3	3	Racial identity has many meanings.	1.28864	3
22	I like educating others on my racial identity.	0.69323	3	25	I have had to unlearn biases about racial identity...	1.18782	3	29	I am proud of my Multiracial identity.	1.28899	3
1	I am proud to showcase my racial identity in...	0.44967	2	1	I am proud to showcase my racial identity in...	0.89659	2	20	The current political landscape makes me more...	1.08369	2
24	I find comfort and community in others who share...	0.5191	2	3	Racial identity has many meanings.	0.63067	2	21	My immediate family provided the blueprint for...	0.887	2
33	Social context plays a role in how I identify or...	0.41443	2	29	I am proud of my Multiracial identity.	0.85216	2	28	I don't think about racial identity at all.	0.78872	2
2	I feel a need to advocate for my Multiracial identity	0.16264	1	2	I feel a need to advocate for my Multiracial identity	0.2473	1	2	I feel like an outsider because of my Multiracial...	0.57983	1
10	Other people expect me to ascribe to traditions or...	0.32448	1	9	My physical features (e.g., skin color, hair texture...	0.17465	1	6	I feel like an outsider because of my Multiracial...	0.57983	1
12	as...	0.15445	1	14	I view my racial identity as an advantage.	0.3626	1	12	My race has become more central to my identity as...	0.37489	1
17	I have been pressured to choose one side of my...	0.179	1	15	I have attempted to look a certain way in order to...	0.48631	1	19	The importance of racial identity varies depending...	0.25086	1
23	Racial identity is something that you learn over time	0.39167	1	17	I have been pressured to choose one side of my...	0.13102	1	31	I view racial identity as a sense of standard moral...	0.33392	1
3	Racial identity has many meanings.	0.12126	0	6	I feel like an outsider because of my Multiracial...	-0.01228	0	9	My physical features (e.g., skin color, hair texture...	-0.09512	0
11	My racial identity causes me to wonder, "Am I ...	0.02731	0	8	Racial identity is something that can make me feel...	0.00169	0	11	My racial identity causes me to wonder, "Am I ...	-0.04921	0
16	Racial ancestry plays a role in how I identify or...	0.08567	0	10	Other people expect me to ascribe to traditions or...	0.0921	0	14	I view my racial identity as an advantage.	-0.14648	0
19	The importance of racial identity varies depending...	0.01197	0	19	The importance of racial identity varies depending...	-0.03039	0	24	I find comfort and community in others who share...	0.23665	0
20	The current political landscape makes me more...	0.09036	0	23	Racial identity is something that you learn over time.	0.08104	0	26	Racial identity is unchanging.	0	0
31	I view racial identity as a sense of standard moral...	0.08375	0	32	People in my community perceive me as "Other".	0.09431	0	32	People in my community perceive me as "Other".	-0.27051	0
4	I have changed the way I describe my race over...	-0.01672	-1	16	Racial ancestry plays a role in how I identify or...	-0.2821	-1	4	I have changed the way I describe my race over...	-0.52847	-1
7	My racial identity is a protective factor for my...	-0.14421	-1	22	I like educating others on my racial identity	-0.20533	-1	7	My racial identity is a protective factor for my...	-0.49676	-1
13	Racial identity is something that is assigned at birth.	-0.17078	-1	27	The pressure to identify as a single race is a...	-0.25469	-1	8	Racial identity is something that can make me feel...	-0.45795	-1
18	My physical appearance dictates how I identify or...	-0.06845	-1	31	I view racial identity as a sense of standard moral...	-0.45222	-1	10	Other people expect me to ascribe to traditions...	-0.27761	-1
8	Racial identity is something that can make me feel...	-0.53405	-2	33	Social context plays a role in how I identify or...	-0.50305	-1	27	The pressure to identify as a single race is a...	-0.55522	-1
25	I have had to unlearn biases about racial identity...	-0.38895	-2	4	I have changed the way I describe my race over...	-0.74136	-2	15	I have attempted to look a certain way in order to...	-0.79187	-2
26	Racial identity is unchanging	-0.40746	-2	21	My immediate family provided the blueprint for...	-0.55934	-2	33	Social context plays a role in how I identify or...	-0.98948	-2
6	I feel like an outsider because of my Multiracial...	-0.97697	-3	30	My parent(s) or caregiver was intentional about...	-0.63352	-2	34	I would lie about my racial identity to make other...	-0.57272	-2
28	I don't think about racial identity at all.	-0.95929	-3	18	My physical appearance dictates how I identify or...	-1.25097	-3	16	Racial ancestry plays a role in how I identify or...	-1.04984	-3
32	People in my community perceive me as "Other".	-1.19445	-3	26	Racial identity is unchanging.	-1.49173	-3	25	I have had to unlearn biases about racial identity...	-1.14001	-3
15	I have attempted to look a certain way in order to...	-1.55406	-4	28	I don't think about racial identity at all.	-1.30812	-3	30	My parent(s) or caregiver was intentional about...	-1.18921	-3
34	I would lie about my racial identity to make other...	-2.48126	-4	13	Racial identity is something that is assigned at birth.	-1.59927	-4	22	I like educating others on my racial identity	-1.70018	-4
5	I feel ashamed because of my Multiracial identity.	-2.49243	-5	34	I would lie about my racial identity to make other...	-1.68841	-4	23	Racial identity is something that you learn over...	-1.50564	-4
				5	I feel ashamed because of my Multiracial identity.	-1.97835	-5	5	I feel ashamed because of my Multiracial identity	-1.96359	-5

Note: To view the full statement, refer to Appendix H