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Racial Malleability and Authenticity in Multiracial Well-Being

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After relatively stable rates of interracial marriage, the numbers of unions across

race markedly increased over the past decade, with the number of mixed race babies also

increasing. This growing shift in our population is known as the "Biracial Baby Boom"

(Bratter, 2007), however, research is lagging with regard to the lived experience and its

relationship to psychological well-being of this significant part of our population.

Previous research found that greater malleability of one's racial identity is related to

decreased psychological well-being (Sanchez, Shih & Garcia, 2009). However, other

research, related to self-concept, suggested that authentic self-complexity, more complex

cognitive representations of the self, can serve as a buffer against daily stress (Ryan,

LaGuardia & Rawsthorne, 2005). The construct of racial malleability, shifting

expressions of racial identity in a given context, has been grounded in self-concept

literature supporting the importance of stability in how one sees oneself. Though similar,

research on self-complexity reinforces the protective quality of organizing self-

knowledge in terms of a greater number of authentic self-aspects. Differences in

outcomes for these similar yet related concepts may be due to the representations of racial

self-aspects based on the kinds of contextual experiences. Specifically, one's ability to

incorporate multiple aspects of identity may be compromised in the face of questioning

by others or one's sense of authenticity. Thus, the association between malleable identity

and outcomes is dependent on contextual experiences. This study explored the ways in which identity experiences and authenticity influence the relationship between racial malleability and psychological well-being for 149 multiracial adults surveyed via the internet. Psychological well-being was defined by measures of perceived stress and life satisfaction. Findings suggest that racial malleability positively relates to life satisfaction. Additionally, the relationship between racial malleability and perceived stress is moderated by experiences of identity questioning. Regarding authenticity, self-alienation as a measure of authenticity played a significant role in multiracial well-being. Implications for these relationships are discussed regarding therapy and research with multiracial individuals.

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FOREWORD

This research rests on the interdependent nature of the researcher and participants, given the match between the researchers' identity and experiences and the research questions. Therefore, it is critical that the researcher's stance be addressed as it underlies the assumptions and interpretations made by the primary investigator. Ahluwalia and Mattis (2012) highlighted the importance of addressing the researcher's stance when conducting research with populations from one's own cultural background. The researcher's stance allows the researcher to examine her social location explicitly as well as her research perspective, and the validity of the research by enhancing trustworthiness. Additionally, the reader may construct his or her own understanding of the study having explicit insight into the researcher's perspective.

I am a biracial individual of Black and White parentage. My cohort is part of the recent "Biracial Baby Boom." My father is Black American and Christian; my mother is White American and Jewish. My ethnocultural identity is frequently questioned and I am often mistaken for Dominican, Puerto Rican, Greek, Italian, Brazilian ethnic heritages. I have experienced identity questioning frequently. My experiences range from a variety of approaches in garnering my racial identity as well as differing contexts and types of people who are asking for various reasons. Across all school and work settings my social group has always been diverse ethnically, racially, culturally and religiously. Having lived in different regions of the United States, I have experienced identity questioning in each of the regions.

I have experienced inclusion and exclusion with family members and friends based on my race. Aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, siblings, and my parents have

always commented on my appearance and whether I get certain features from my "Black side" or my "Jewish side." I have also been privy to conversations where one of my racial groups is discussed negatively either because my identity has been mistaken or due to assumptions about my "being different" from the group being criticized. As a researcher, I have given presentations at professional conferences about multiracial identity where my racial identity and authenticity have been questioned. Other audience members have connected with me by sharing personal stories with me about their multiracial identity or a family member who is multiracial. I have been exposed to media portrayals supporting the myth of the tragic mulatto and am motivated as a multiracial person and a researcher to dispel the notion that multiracial people are confused. I share this stance as it may contribute to my understanding of the present study and contributes to my motivation to study these experiences. The present study is a sample of individuals with whom I share one aspect of socio-demographic background, as a self-identified multiracial person.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

After decades of research, our understanding of the complexity of an individual's

identity and the process of socially constructing one's identity is limited for particular

groups of individuals who do not fit standard socially constructed identity groups.

Specifically, traditional dichotomies of understanding racial identity have been applied to

multiracial individuals (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009; Shih & Sanchez,

2005). Researchers exploring the process of multiracial racial identification noted that

the complexity of a multiracial individual's experience may not be captured by existing

ecological or linear multiracial identity models (Hitlin, Brown, & Elder, 2006; Lou,

Lalonde, & Wilson, 2011; Miville, Constantine, Baysden, & So-Lloyd, 2005;

Rockquemore, Brunsma & Delgado, 2009; Shih & Sanchez, 2009). The complexity of a

multiracial person's identity lies in the dynamic of having their identity questioned

through the common experience of being asked, *what are you?* and the individual's own

sense of belongingness to the group or groups they avow. In this dissertation study, the

term multiracial is utilized to encompass: 1.) biracial individuals, those individuals

identifying with heritage and/or direct parentage of 2 races, as well as 2.) multiracial or

mixed-race individuals identifying with heritage of 3 or more races (Miville et al., 2005).

There is a major shift in our population, labeled a "Biracial Baby Boom," and

research is lagging with regard to the lived experience and identification of this

significant part of our population (Bratter, 2007). One impetus for understanding this

dynamic lies within the sheer growth of the multiracial population in the United States by

32% in 10 years (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). With the recent increase in

awareness of the ability to choose one's racial identity, as evident by the first opportunity to check more than one racial category on the 2000 U.S. Census (Jones & Symens Smith, 2001), basic research about the complexity of external and internal mechanisms of identity should be explored. Investigating identities that encompass multiple categories furthers our understanding of basic developmental and social processes associated with the psychology of self-concept including the integration of self and others' perceptions. Multiracial research further clarifies differences between racial identity (i.e., the individual's self-understanding), racial identification (i.e., others' perceptions of the individual), and racial category (i.e., the available racial identities and how they may be chosen in a specific context) (Rockquemore, Brunsma, and Delgado, 2009).

It is critical to note that the 2000 United States Census was the first attempt to assess the size of the multiracial population. It was found that 42 percent, of the 6.8 million Americans self-identifying as multiracial, were under the age of 18 (Jones & Symens Smith, 2001). Multiracial individuals are a young, but growing segment of the population and their identity concerns are becoming a research focus as this population may have unique concerns from monoracial groups (Sue & Sue, 2008). An emerging literature has begun to identify differences in the racial identity development process for multiracial individuals; however, this literature yielded mixed findings regarding the relationship with psychological well-being and overall mental health (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). This dissertation study investigated alternative explanations for the relationship between multiracial identity and psychological well-being.

Research Questions. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the relationship between multiracial individuals' identifying process and their psychological well-being.

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the variance in psychological well-being among multiracial adults as explained by racial malleability. Further, this study investigated moderators of the relationship between racial malleability and psychological well-being. This study examined whether these associations were moderated by experiences of others' disbelief and surprise about racial identification through the experience of identity questioning as well as other experiences of identity challenges and identity resilience. Additionally, this study explored the construct of authenticity and whether it was a valid measure of how individuals' feel true to themselves though they may identify differently over developmental periods and social contexts. In exploring the concept of authenticity an exploratory research question was whether authenticity is related to racial malleability and psychological well-being. This research sought to deepen what is currently a literature of mixed findings in terms of the association between multiracial identity endorsement and psychological well-being (Binning, Unzueta, Huo, & Molina, 2009; Cooney & Radina, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

The population and research questions for this dissertation required the marrying of multiple theoretical frameworks rather than drawing on the traditional racial identity theory which currently focuses on monoracial development. Therefore, this study drew from multiracial identity theory as well as self-concept theory in order to understand the context dependent nature of multiracial identity. Investigating these constructs has implications for applied science with regard to multiracial identity models and therapy with multiracial clients. However, it might also address the self-concept literature by illuminating these constructs in real-world experiences of having multiple self-aspects

and managing the experience in varying contexts. Given the cognitive demand of integrating self and others' perceptions, it is essential to understand the multiracial experience of additionally coming to understand one's racial identity through a potentially similar process of understanding one's own identity as well as what other people may tell an individual about their identity.

For a multiracial person, the changing of contexts, such as relocating for work, provides a new opportunity to self-identify with new contextual factors (Renn, 2003). In order to make sense of new surroundings and locate oneself within psychosocial niches, individuals incorporate their own perceptions along with others' perceptions in order to construct their identity (Erikson, 1968). Kelly (1966) described identity construction as a psychological process, which is impacted by the way an individual anticipates events. Therefore, people are *personal scientists* making meaning from their social context and their mental representations of themselves, which is constantly unfolding based on their anticipation of their environment.

Multiracial Identity

This dissertation study drew upon theories of multiracial identity development, which recognize the role of ecological factors being uniquely important in the malleable identity of this population. Multiracial identity is an emerging literature and is in a pivotal phase of integrating empirical research and previous theory (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). Typically the process of developing an identity involves a self-understanding that locates oneself in psychosocial niches that are constructed on the basis of future choices, the integration of experiences and the meaning one makes from the perception of other people (Markus & Kunda, 1986; McAdams, 2001). Therefore,

methodology must capture the complexity of how people integrate their diverse experiences into their identity.

Racial identity development is a process by which multiracial individuals come to understand their racial identity and declare a racial category; this affirmed identity is how the individual sees him or herself as a racial being. As multiracial individuals, the process for identifying racially is neither straightforward nor automatically determined (Herman, 2004; Hitlin, Brown & Elder, 2006). Root (2003) associated the experience of self-identifying with one race to feeling cognitive dissonance. For example, their White friends might ask Black-White multiracial individuals why they do not try to *pass* for White. However, when they are with their Black friends, they may ask why the Black-White multiracial person does not *admit* to being Black (Herman, 2004). This cognitive dissonance might impact how an individual identifies within varying contexts.

Multiracial identity theory evolved through many approaches, which have been consistently tied to the larger racial discourse within society (Gilbert, 2005). The most recent focus of multiracial identity theory has been an ecological approach, which acknowledges the impact of the contextual factors on the individual (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). Though ecological models have improved upon traditional approaches to multiracial identity, there is still a lag in connecting the existing empirical literature on multiracial individuals to existing theory. Rockquemore and colleagues (2009) highlight this dilemma, noting that in "race to theory" scholars have ignored patterns in empirical evidence. Overall, empirical research with multiracial individuals has four patterns: (1) racial identity varies by individual, (2) racial identity tends to change over the course of life, (3) the development of racial identity is not a linear

process with a single outcome, and (4) the sociocultural context is vital (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). It is therefore acknowledged that multiracial identity theory is limited, however, ecological approaches may allow for more flexibility in understanding multiracial identity.

A major barrier to integrating theory and empirical research has been research methodology (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). Initial research was based on case study analysis, though more recently national datasets have been utilized to explore larger groups of multiracial individuals. The research methodology, however, lacked the integration of lived experience and quantifiable measures of identity until the recent development of multiracial identity experiences measure (Salahuddin & O'Brian, 2011). This dissertation study is innovative in exploring multiracial identity experiences and factors associated with the racial identity development process based on empirical research with multiracial individuals as well as exploring the relationship between factors posited in ecological frameworks and examining the role of authenticity.

Self-Concept

Though scholars acknowledged the malleability and context dependent nature of how individuals shape their personal and social identities (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994), racial identity literature lacks the complexity to address these fluid characteristics of self-categorization. Social identity has been defined as the social categorizations of self and others, such that self-categories "define the individual in terms of shared similarities with members" of a particular social group (Turner et al., 1994; p. 454). Drawing together the unique experiences of multiracial individuals, as shared similarities, may be further understood by exploring the complexity of racial malleability.

In order to understand individuals' self-understanding of their social identities, one must understand how they construct their self-concept and self-views. K. Gergen and M. Gergen (1983) asserted that self-concept theory neglects individuals' ability to actively shape their view of their self. Further, they emphasized that individuals reflect on their self-understanding historically to construct their self-concept in a given moment. The authors suggested that one's self-understanding is a constantly unfolding narrative based on one's life experiences.

Many multiracial individuals are constantly confronted with the *what are you* question when someone is unable to easily racially identify them (Chen & Hamilton, 2011). Given the nature of an individual's identity and how he or she forms this identity based on messages he or she receives and then the experience of having that identity questioned, there is the potential for self and other doubt to affect the way the person self-identifies. When another person through identity questioning doubts an individual's avowed identity, many processes may occur for that individual to prevent the experience of dissonance.

It is evident that self-understanding is complex and consists of multiple factors. Research referred to the way in which we understand ourselves as self-concept and there is extensive literature exploring the implications for the development of a self-concept (Markus & Kunda, 1986). Integrating various mental representations of one's self has been described in terms of having multiple self-aspects, which correspond to a variety of roles, relationships, contexts, or activities (McConnell, 2011). Specifically, McConnell (2011) put forth a framework of multiple self-aspects describes the self-concept as a collection of multiple, context dependent selves. This research investigated the ways

people understand their multiple self-aspects and the impact this has on mental health. This dissertation study focused upon the impact of multiple racial identities and how that may relate to one's psychological well-being.

Variables

In order to shed light on the relationship between multiracial identity and psychological well-being, the following variables were explored in this dissertation.

Racial Malleability. Multiracial individuals often describe shifting expression of their identity depending upon contextual factors (Miville et al., 2005). Sanchez and colleagues (2009) identified this concept as racial malleability whereby multiracial individuals differ in their self-identification based on context. Little is known about the context cues associated with how one might identify, but the experience of being malleable in one's identity has been linked to lower psychological well-being, especially in people who have lower tolerance for self-inconsistency. Racial malleability has been posited on theory supporting the stability of self-concept. It was the purpose of this dissertation study to clarify the relationship of racial malleability and psychological well-being with regard to multiracial individuals.

Identity Experiences. A multiracial individual may feel in a constant state of flux and not able to anticipate how others will perceive them in social interactions. Salahuddin and O'Brian (2011) operationalized the experiences of external perceptions and internal understanding as multiracial challenges and resilience experiences. Some examples of challenges and resilience experiences have been linked to external messages from family and larger society, as well as internal perceptions of one's identity or human appreciation overall. For multiracial individuals, who have families of varying racial

backgrounds and a variety of experiences that communicate messages about racial identification, experiences where they are perceived differently based on the context may be particularly stressful (Herman, 2004). This ongoing stress of whether one will be accepted or rejected for whom they believe themselves to be and identify with racially might lead to mental health and physical health issues similarly to how perceived every day racism and discrimination continually wear down on monoracial individuals. Therefore, it is important to gather information on the experiences of multiracial individuals and their unique experiences of racial identification and/or being confronted with situations where their identity may be regarded positively or negatively. Understanding more about the salient challenges and strengths for this population will aid in developing future interventions and preventative care for managing mental health and physical health issues that may decrease quality of life for these individuals. Additionally, this research will further existing theoretical models about the complexity of one's identity and self-concept.

Identity Questioning. Many multiracial individuals are confronted with the question, *what are you?* Typically this occurs when someone is unable to easily racially categorize (Chen & Hamilton, 2011). When faced with this identity questioning experience, multiracial individuals must self-identify, where many implications are linked to their response (Renn, 2003; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). This experience is called identity questioning, identity denial or invalidated identity, and has been asserted to be a common experience among multiracial individuals where other people ascribe a racial identity based on the individual's appearance or other contextual factors (Terry & Winston, 2010). In varying contexts an individual may be ascribed a different racial

identity based on a number of factors. The ambiguity of this process and the potential consequences of being perceived by others lead to a constant preparation for rejection or inclusion based on others' assumptions (Miville et al., 2005). Similar to the process of preparing for perceived racism and discrimination, multiracial individuals have daily interactions that leave them wondering how they were perceived racially and what are the consequences of the potential misattribution of race (Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009). In all venues, there is an ongoing effort to interpret people's behavior and a concern of whether one will be accepted by others for who he or she declares to be racially. This is similar to a concept described by Essed (1990), who noted that "to live with the threat of racism means planning, almost every day of one's life, how to avoid or defend oneself against discrimination" (as cited in Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996). Salahuddin and O'Brian (2011) described this experience as *others' surprise and disbelief at one's racial identity* as a subscale of their measure on multiracial identity experiences. There is a need to investigate how frequently this happens individuals and how distressing the experience might be as it may contribute to how one expresses their identity in a given context.

Authenticity. Authenticity has been defined as being true to oneself with regard to behaviors and self-expression (Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997). Sheldon and colleagues (1997) highlighted the relationship between authenticity and well-being such that psychological authenticity has been shown to be vital to one's psychological and physical well-being. Additionally, many counseling psychology perspectives (i.e., Person-Centered, Existential, Object Relations) have shown that authenticity is the foundation of well-being (Rogers, 1961; Yalom, 1980). This study seeks to explore how

authenticity is empirically related to psychological well-being and examine the ability to validly measure one's sense of authenticity.

Authenticity has been highlighted in the experience of multiracial individuals (Romo, 2011), such that multiracial individuals may feel that their authenticity or belongingness to a particular group may be questioned. However, it is not clear whether the multiracial individual feels authentic in their expression of their identity. This study explored the construct of authenticity and whether individuals feel or view themselves to be authentic and true to whom they believe themselves to be.

Authenticity may be related to the variation in how multiracial individuals express their identities across contexts; however, there is paucity in existing theory to account for the complexity of context and identity interaction. One attempt at clarifying the complexity of individuals' self-understanding is Linville's (1987) model for self-complexity whereby people understand their self-aspects as inter-related and accept that they have multiple self-aspects. Further, individuals who demonstrate self-complexity may be able to compartmentalize stressful events to one of their self-aspects. Research suggested that having self-complexity by holding multiple cognitive representations of one's self-aspects, might serve as a buffer against depression and other stress-related illnesses (Linville, 1987). Despite Linville's (1987) findings, a meta-analysis (Rafaeli-Mor & Steinberg, 2002) suggested that the benefits of self-complexity remain unclear. Therefore, Ryan, LaGuardia and Rawsthorne (2005) investigated the relationship between self-complexity and authenticity as a way of clarifying the relationship between self-complexity and psychological well-being. Specifically, they found that self-aspects might be authentic or inauthentic, which may impact one's ability to manage stress in the

way that Linville originally theorized. Given the relationship between authenticity within self-aspects and well-being, it is essential to observe this relationship with regard to one's racial identity. Since multiracial individuals might be seen as having multiple self-aspects with regard to their racial identity, it must be explored as to whether individuals feel authentic when asserting a particular identity in a given context.

Psychological Well-Being. Authenticity, racial malleability, identity questioning, challenges and resilience, as well as demographic variables and context have implications for how individuals manage the process of racially identifying. Some research suggested that there are less optimal ways that one may identify linked with psychological well-being (Binning et al., 2009; Sanchez, Shih, & Garcia, 2009). In studies with multiracial individuals, psychological well-being has been defined as increased life satisfaction, positive affect, decreased stress, high global self-esteem, and decreased scores on measures of depressive symptoms (Binning et al., 2009; Sanchez, Shih & Garcia, 2009). Sanchez and colleagues (2009) attempted to understand the relationship between multiracial identity and psychological well-being, yet called for future studies that examine the relationship of racial malleability and psychological well-being with other factors and contextualizing variables.

Though the extant literature examines the difference between subjective well-being and psychological well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), most studies have that focused on multiracial individuals have used these constructs as a way of assessing psychological well-being. Instead, this study focused upon measures of global stress and life satisfaction. Scholars raised concern about using measures of individual self-esteem as a way of examining psychological well-being with people of color as there is a tendency

for restriction of range in self-reporting high self-esteem (Verkuyten, 2005). Therefore this dissertation focused on measures of satisfaction with life and perceived stress as a way examining of variation in psychological well-being.

Methodological Approach

This study addressed the racial malleability of multiracial individuals and the overall impact on psychological well-being. Given existing mixed evidence for the relationship between psychological well-being and multiracial identity, this study first examined the relationship between racial malleability and psychological well-being. The study involved collecting quantitative measures of multiracial individuals' avowed identity, malleability, experiences, and sense of authenticity. Data from quantitative measures was collected from multiracial self-identifying participants to test multiracial identity theory, and explain how racial malleability, authenticity, identity questioning, identity challenges, and identity resilience relate to psychological well-being.

Examining the complexity of multiracial identity and the factors associated with identifying such as others' perceptions and multiracial experiences might add to existing multiracial identity theory and self-concept theory. In the media, there have been portrayals of multiracial children as confused. In contrast, this study is not in support of this portrayal, rather this research acknowledges the unique experience of being multiracial and the potential implications for how individuals negotiate the emerging racial category. This study investigated how multiracial experiences, such as being having one's identity questioned, may impact the relationship between racial malleability and psychological well-being. Exploring these experiences and the relationship between these variables helped to identify the gaps and limitations of existing multiracial theory.

Addressing the complexity of the lived multiracial experience contributes to the ongoing need for more complex methodology to capture lived experiences of diverse groups. This study provided more information about processes that might aid in the development of identity programs and awareness in a growing segment of the population. Further, findings may implicate helpful therapeutic approaches for working with multiracial clients. Understanding a range of clients' experiences may guide a strengths based approach to the treatment of multiracial individuals. Additionally, the application of such insight will assist with culturally appropriate interventions. Therapists in the United States are projected to see a vast increase in the number of clients identifying as multiracial given the "biracial baby boom" that occurred in the 1970's and 1980's (Bratter, 2007). Findings from the present study may also provide more insight into the experiences of multiracial individuals and dispel lingering myths about the "tragic mulatto" often portrayed as confused in historical popular culture (Bogle, 2001).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Extant multiracial identity literature has been troubled with mixed findings regarding multiracial identity endorsement and mental health, social adjustment, and academic achievement (Shih & Sanchez, 2009). A possible reason for this is that multiracial individuals are a heterogeneous population with multiple racial combinations as well as living in different geographic locations and generations, which may have implications for the construction of racial identity. This chapter reviews the existing literature regarding models of multiracial identity and factors associated with the identity development process such as experiences of identity questioning, identity challenges and resilience, and racial malleability. Finally, previous research on multiracial identity and psychological well-being is described as well as theoretical frameworks of self-concept and multiracial identity in order to identify the gaps that may be filled by this study.

Overall, the field of racial identity has only recently begun to focus upon multiracial individuals, there are some theories and research, but more understanding is necessary. One concern with existing literature on multiracial identity is that monoracial models of racial identity have been applied to the process of racially identifying for multiracial people (Gillem, Cohn, & Throne, 2001; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). A contributing factor to the monoracial approach to multiracial individuals has been the conceptualization of race in the United States as dichotomous, with an either/or approach to racial identification (Daniel, 1992). This approach to racial identity underlays the line of research applying traditional models of multiracial identity, which have been linear and suggest there are less optimal ways of identifying similar to monoracial models (Kerwin, 1993; Kich, 1992; Poston, 1990). Parallel conceptualizations of identity

processes and outcomes are problematic as recent research highlighted a variety context factors that play a role in multiracial identity (Herman, 2004; Lou, Lalonde, & Wilson, 2011; Renn, 2003; Root, 2000). In this chapter, the current state of multiracial identity is discussed.

Knowing the history of multiracial identity in the United States is essential to understanding the existing research as well as the lived experience of multiracial individuals. Though the United States is a multiracial society, monoracial constructions of race are still the predominant viewpoint and tend to be how people racially categorize other people (Chen & Hamilton, 2012). Thompson (2012) provided a detailed account of the debate between the multiracial social movement and the United States Congress to prove the importance of multiracial individuals having the right to self-identify with more than one race on the US Census. Given the existing view of distinct racial categories in the United States, a multiracial individual might be viewed negatively for crossing racial borders rather than having his malleable identity viewed as a creative strategy in coping with artificial boundaries (Daniel, 1992; Giamo, Schmitt, & Outten, 2012). Therefore, this chapter begins by understanding the historical context of multiracial identity in the United States and the ways that history may impact the current discourse as well as the existing research on multiracial identity.

Multiracial Identity Theory

A framework proposed by Thornton and Wasson (1995) incorporated historical context to conceptualize shifts in approaches to multiracial identity research. They indicated three ways scholars have approached multiracial identity theory: the problem approach, the equivalent approach, and the variant approach. Further, they posit that

multiracial research must be considered within the sociopolitical era in which it was conducted in order to make meaning of the contribution to current studies of multiracial identity.

The Problem Approach

One of the original theories of multiracial identity is based on the narrative of the multiracial people as the "tragic mulatto" or describing them as "the marginal man." Stonequist (1937) theorized that multiracial individuals were more susceptible to psychological issues, hypersensitivity, an inferiority complex, and moodiness. The concept of the marginal man focused upon the isolation, issues of rejection and belongingness within their multiple racial groups. Stonequist's theory was developed during segregation of Blacks and Whites and period of overt racial tension (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Films have characterized the experience of multiracial people during this time period by highlighting the forced choice dilemma inherent in this segregated era whereby multiracial individuals had to identify as their minority status or attempt to *pass* as White (Bogle, 2001; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). The climate of this time period motivated the approach to theory, which focused on the deficits of identifying as multiracial (Thornton & Wasson, 1995).

Several recent research studies appeared to utilize the *problem approach* in their assumption of deficits. Specifically, one study examined adjustment problems (Cooney & Radina, 2000) where multiracial children were considered to be at-risk due to their multiple-identity heritage. Another study examined evidence for increased vulnerability of multiracial youth for self-reported delinquency, school problems, internalizing symptoms, and issues with self-regard (Milan & Keiley; 2000). Also, researchers noted

that multiracial adolescents are more at-risk for substance use, violent behaviors and other problem behaviors when compared to their monoracial peers (Choi, Harachi, Gilmore, & Catalano; 2006). This body of work that compares youth with multiple heritages to monoracial backgrounds employed methodology and theory, to test the costs of having a multiracial identity.

Criticism of recent studies suggested that the method for assessing multiracial identity might have confounded the findings. Specifically, Binning and colleagues (2009) noted that previous research lacked ways of measuring a psychological connection to identifying as multiracial, which may explain the equivocal outcomes of previous research. In their study, multiracial adolescents reported equal or higher psychological well-being and social engagement compared to their monoracial peers. Given the inconsistent mental health findings for multiracial individuals, more research is needed regarding how individuals identify and the impact on psychological well-being.

The Equivalent Approach

Another historical shift in race relations in the United States ushered some recognition of the need for racial identity models and the inclusion of multiracial individuals within these models (Shih & Sanchez, 2009). This historical period followed the civil rights era, and was ushered in by a significant historical event. The Loving v. Virginia case in 1967 challenged anti-miscegenation statutes prohibiting interracial couples to marry in the United States, which led to a shift in the racial climate (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). The *equivalent approach* assumed that monoracial models of identity are parallel to the experience of the multiracial individual (Thornton & Wasson, 1995).

Therefore, this conceptualization ignored the unique processes associated with multiple determinants of a socially constructed identity.

During this time period, research on multiracial identity lumped multiracial individuals with other people of color or conducted research to highlight similarities between the groups. One example is Morten and Atkinson's (1983) study, which proposed a *Minority Identity Development* model. An inherent assumption of this model is that mixed race individuals would have similar experiences in their identity development as other minority groups. Empirical research supported the equivalence of multiracial individuals and monoracial counterparts, Cauce and colleagues' (1992) study showed that there were no differences between the two groups on self-reports and maternal reports of family and peer relations, life stress, behavior problems, psychological distress, competence or self-worth. The design of the Cauce and colleagues' (1992) study represented an equivalent approach, in that a small sample of participants were matched to other people of color and found to be equivalent.

A critique of the equivalent approach comes from recent research that has highlighted the ways in which multiracial individuals have unique concerns. For example, equivalent models of racial identity lacked a multiracial perspective and therefore could not capture the choices multiracial individuals had to make given multiple backgrounds (Poston, 1990). Though equivalent approaches moved away from a focus on problems, equivalent models were inadequate for addressing specific factors that are unique to multiracial identity (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Thus, theory has recently shifted toward recognizing the unique differences of being multiracial.

The Variant Approach

As the biracial baby boom of the United States occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, there was a shift in the awareness of more biracial children and the potential unique needs of this population. The *variant approach* is exemplified by responding to the unique needs of this population and attempted to modify existing monoracial models of identity for multiracial individuals (Shih & Sanchez, 2009). An example of this modification process is Poston's (1990) *Biracial Identity Development Model*. Poston (1990) noted that equivalent models and problem approach models reflected "society's bias by postulating that individuals with biracial heritage do not establish firm identities, but that they have marginal identities" (p. 152). In identifying the shortcomings of the existing models, the author proposed a new model that was specifically for biracial individuals.

Similarly, several models of multiracial identity that exemplify the variant model conceptualize based on monoracial trajectories of identity such as Collins (2000), Jacobs (1992; *The Identity Development Model of Biracial Children*) as well as Kerwin & Ponterotto (1995) and Kich (1992). The common theme of these models is a stage process by which multiracial individuals explored and valued their various racial heritages in order to integrate their identities into one accepted, appreciated, multiracial identity. Another similarity of the linear models is the concept of identity occurring in stages. Comparable to stage models of monoracial identity such as Cross (1971) and Morten and Atkinson (1983), linear models of multiracial identity proposed that there is a stage characterized by multiracial individuals feeling conflict and tension surrounding their racial identity.

Critics of linear models noted that the models are founded on monoracial views of identity development where the ecological factors that impact development were ignored (Jackson, 2012). Further, linear models have focused on *healthy* ways of identifying as valuing all racial backgrounds and integrating them into one multiracial identity (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Given research on the ecological factors that may impact differing ways individuals may identify, there is a clear need for a more comprehensive and complex model that incorporates the lived experiences of multiracial individuals.

The Ecological Approach

Rockquemore, Brunsma, and Delgado (2009) proposed a fourth approach to multiracial identity development: *the ecological approach*. The previous decade of research highlighted the many factors in the environment or specific contextual experiences that effect an individual's identity development (Renn, 2003). Rockquemore and colleagues (2009) characterized the ecological approach as having certain assumptions. First, context-specific logic is involved in the various ways that multiracial people construct their different racial identities. Second, identity development does not follow predictable stages as was suggested by linear stage models since there is no optimal resolution of multiracial identity. Third, "privileging any one type of racial identity over another (i.e., multiracial over single-race identity) only replicates the essentialist flaws of previous models with a different outcome" (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009, p. 19). An ecological approach, therefore, incorporates unique aspects of multiracial identity development in ways that the previous three approaches, problem, equivalent and variant have not.

Initial examination of multiracial identity utilizing an ecological approach has been compelling. Stephan (1992) sought to understand specific factors and debunk linear approaches to understanding multiracial identity. The study highlighted the importance of cultural exposure in ethnic identification as well as physical appearance, surname, and whether the individual felt accepted by his heritage group. Further, Stephan (1992) found that individuals who identified as multiracial benefited from increased contact with members of their heritage groups, cultural enjoyment and diversity of experiences as well as intergroup tolerance. In contrast to previous approaches, there has been a shift to acknowledging the unique lived experiences that may contribute to the identity development of multiracial individuals and an attempt to understand the ecology of multiracial identity as it pertains to positive implications for multiracial individuals.

Several studies have reinforced the concept that multiracial individuals may declare different identities in various situations and contexts (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). In order to identify this complex phenomenon, various researchers employed different methodologies to understand these experiences from longitudinal data (Hitlin, Brown, & Elder, 2006) to multi-phase studies including qualitative interviews and survey data (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Hitlin, Brown and Elder (2006) reviewed the findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescence Health in order to assess how identity development changes throughout social interactions during adolescence. Findings from this study suggested that racial identity was malleable and certain multiracial combinations were more likely to have malleability than others (e.g., Native American multiracial individuals). Higher self-esteem and socioeconomic status, as assessed by mother's educational background and neighborhood racial composition,

were associated with a more stable racial identity. In contrast, higher cognitive ability was associated with a more malleable racial identity over time. These findings match Rockquemore and Brunsma's (2008) study, which acknowledged the role of appearance, social group racial and ethnic composition, and racial experiences. Given findings on the nature of shifting identities for multiracial individuals, it is essential to explore the factors that contribute to the context-specific logic when a multiracial individual asserts an identity.

Multidimensional Model of Biracial Identity. In an effort to address the complexity of multiracial lived experience in identifying, Rockquemore (1999) posited a multidimensional framework of biracial identity. In the current model, Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) proposed four dimensions: a singular identity, a border identity, a protean identity, and a transcendent identity. Rockquemore's construction of identity is based on her research with Black/White biracial individuals. Based on interviews, Rockquemore (2002) identified four themes that biracial individuals may identify: (1) a border identity such as a blending of both races, (2) a singular identity with only one parent's race, (3) a protean identity which varies based on the races of other people in the group, and (4) a transcendent identity where one avoids racial labels and describing one's self through other personal attributes. The four identity dimensions accounted for some of the context-specific interactions that may affect an individual's identity development.

Unique to the *Multidimensional Model of Biracial Identity* is the highlighted difference between validated and invalidated border identities, which depend on whether other people attempt to disagree with individual's identity. Also, the protean identity included the concept of social context and how that might impact an individual's identity

description. Therefore, when a multiracial person anticipated that his appearance may be questioned such as a comment like "you don't look Black," his identity disclosure might be different than when he believed his Black identity might be more accepted. Furthermore, Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) factored in the socially perceived appearance of individuals and skin color. Both concepts might affect a biracial individual's racial identity development.

The *Multidimensional Model of Biracial Identity* has been utilized in recent studies with this population and has provided some insight into the ways that multiracial individuals might racially identify differently from monoracial individuals. Recently, Lou and colleagues (2011) have expanded the framework to evaluate how it may work with Asian and White multiracial individuals. In their study, gaps in Rockquemore's model are highlighted and a call is put forth for further insight into the variables that might affect multiracial individuals when they are racially identifying. Specifically, Lou and colleagues (2011) pointed out that the relationship between the multiracial individual and the person who is externally evaluating the multiracial person's identity might be of significance. Additionally, they highlighted the relationship between validation and the individual's perception of whether the identity put forth is validated by the other person. Though *Multidimensional Model of Biracial Identity* is a comprehensive approach to understanding the varying ways individuals identify, there is a gap in understanding the individuals' internal experience of their own identity as authentic and how this impacts their psychological well-being.

Multiracial Identity Development

In the current ecological approach to understanding multiracial identity, there have been studies investigating the relationship between the environment and the factors contributing to how multiracial individuals develop their identity (Miville et al., 2005; Renn, 2003). For people of color, racial identification can be an important part of their overall personal identity (Charmaraman & Grossman, 2010). In forced choice situations, a monoracial person of color might not have to consider how one will identify in the specific context. However, for a multiracial person, this opportunity to self-identify (e.g., in applications or the Census) might present an opportunity to consider how one represents oneself to the world. In other words, the process of racial identifying as a multiracial person consists of personal views and societal views of self (Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

A seminal study investigated the identity development of multiracial college students. Renn (2003) applied an ecological framework, which described dynamic systems of the individual person, their interaction with the environment, the context, and sociopolitical factors. At the person level, Renn (2003) determined that family background, parents' heritage, cultural knowledge, prior experiences with members of their own and other groups, and physical appearance impacted the way the individuals identify. Simultaneously while interacting with the environment, the person might experience high cognitive demand making sense of how they are perceived in that environment and their own sense of who they are. Further, Renn suggested looking at the larger context such as: where the individual fits in on the college campus, the campus culture, whether the university forms allow for *check all that apply*, and the larger

discussion of multiracial identity on college campuses. Additionally, all of these systems are set within the sociopolitical climate that affects the overall societal norms of the generation. Renn's work recognized the complexity of racial identity development of multiracial individuals who do not exist in a vacuum, but rather interact with various systems to develop their sense of identity. Complexity is significant in the design of this dissertation study, which acknowledged that these factors contribute to the overall sense of malleability in the individual stating their identity in a context-specific moment.

Identity Questioning

Scholars highlighted the role of other people's perceptions in an individual's racial identity (Lou, Lalonde, & Wilson, 2011). Given the role of other people's perceptions and the larger societal discourse about multiracial identity, the historical views of multiracial identity as well as the current discourse must be acknowledged. Though the United States is a multiracial society, our society operates on monoracial constructions of identity (Daniel, 1992). A potential byproduct of monoracial assumptions about race being dichotomous is the *what are you* question whereby a racially ambiguous multiracial person might be asked to identify because they are not easily categorized. This experience highlighted the complexity of a multiracial people's identities: having their identities questioned and their own sense of belongingness to the group or groups they declare. This is a common experience for multiracial individuals (Chen & Hamilton, 2012) and has been described in different ways: identity denial or invalidation. Shih and Sanchez (2005) described the identity questioning experience as one of the earliest conflicts where a multiracial person must navigate their own-self definition, and the definition that has been imposed upon them by the outside world.

Increased awareness of the potential differences between multiracial individuals and monoracial people of color resulted in case study methodologies in order to address the potential nuances in this understudied population. In a case study by Gillem and colleagues (2001), Adolphus, a 19 year old, Black-White multiracial male, described his experience of growing up in a predominately Black neighborhood and having his identity questioned. He described the experience of being called White by his peers, even by close friends who were there for him, he felt bothered by being called White because:

> "not a lot of Black people like White people, so you're around Black people all the time and they're calling you White, which you know is something despised. You don't want to be something despised, you know?" (Gillem, Cohn, & Throne, 2001, p. 190).

Adolphus described an aspect of identity questioning where one's identity is projected upon in a way that makes the individual feel negatively about who they are. Similar to Cheng and Lee's (2009) model of *Multiracial Identity Integration*, Adolphus portrayed feeling like there is racial distance and perceived racial conflict, which might contribute to feeling like his identity is less integrated. In moments of identity questioning, such as Adolphus experienced, it is essential to understand how authentic a person may feel about how their identity is being expressed.

In the same case study, Jacqueline, a 17 year old, Black-White multiracial female described being told by peers that she was "acting White" and she stated that her response was "well I can't help that, I am" (p. 188). However, at the time of the interview, Jacqueline identified as Black, but described her multiracial heritage if asked for more detail and then explained that she was biracial, but felt more comfortable and

connected around Black people (Gillem, Cohn, & Thorne, 2001). It is important to note that if Jacqueline had not been asked for more detail about her identity the researchers might not have known she identified as biracial. The fact that she provided more detail highlighted the desire to express her whole background as a biracial person, which she described as her biracial pride later in the interview. According to the *Multidimensional Model of Biracial Identity,* Jacqueline would be termed as having a singular identity, however throughout the interview, it is apparent that Jacqueline's identity changed as she aged and that in varying contexts she verbalized different identities based on the implications of her choice. However, what is not clear is her context-specific logic in deciding how to avow her identity and whether she felt authentic in her expression.

Both quantitative research (Townsend, Markus, &, Bergsieker, 2009) and qualitative studies (Jackson, 2012; Miville et al., 2005) attempted to capture the experience of multiracial individuals when having their identity questioned. In a quantitative study, Townsend and colleagues (2009) identified contexts where multiracial people may feel that their multiracial identity has been threatened also described as identity denial. Specifically, they found that when people have their identity questioned by others, they are more likely to feel like they have been denied their identity and thereby perform more poorly on tasks and have lower self-esteem. Similar findings were revealed in a qualitative study of 10 self-identified multiracial individuals (Miville et al., 2005). They found that individuals tended to regard their multiracial identity positively, but due to negative interactions with other people regarding their multiracial identity such as in experiences of having their identity questioned, they tended to affirm a more monoracial identity. In another qualitative study with 10 multiracial individuals, Jackson

(2012) found similar themes and noted that participants described shifting expressions of racial identity based on perceived environmental pressure to be more monoracial.

The findings of Jackson's (2012) qualitative study highlighted common themes of multiracial participants speaking about their life experiences. First, participants described shifting racial/ethnic expressions, which was portrayed as shifting avowed identity during certain developmental periods or environmental contexts. This was exemplified in dressing or talking in a stereotypical way in order to feel more aligned with the other person and was also associated with environmental pressure to be more monoracial. A second theme was racial/ethnic ambiguity, which is the experience of having one's identity questioned through the *what are you* experience and having people misattribute their race, which led to feelings of strangeness. A third theme, unique to Jackson's (2012) study, was racial resistance, which was the awareness of the pressure to conform and a desire to resist the system of race by educating themselves about race relations. A fourth theme was that participants all described feeling like an outsider, marginalized from own groups. In particular, one participant said: "I knew I couldn't assimilate into the Black world. I knew I couldn't fit in. I was more and more uncomfortable about it" (Jackson, 2012, p. 52). Finally, participants asserted their desire for community and their plan to seek out other multiracial individuals through the Internet or community organizations. A desire for community highlighted a need for more information that multiracial individuals share common experiences by virtue of being multiracial. Continued research must investigate how these themes, such as shifting expressions of race/ethnicity, are expressed across multiracial people of different ethnic and racial

heritages and the role of identity questioning, identity challenges, identity resilience, and authenticity.

Shifting Factors in Identity. Given the changes in sociopolitical climate regarding multiracial identity, it is important to understand the various factors that may impact identity. Critical findings by Brunsma and Rockqumore (2001) highlighted that identity choices are made in circumscribed cultural contexts, which were not always influenced by skin color, rather assumptions of the other person's perceptions of the multiracial individual's appearance. Specifically, Black-White biracials identified using the dimensions described in the *Multidimensional Model of Biracial Identity* and also described their phenotypic appearance based on whether other people were able to identify them as Black. Appearance was also important in a study of Asian-White biracials where perceived phenotype by others and cultural exposure were significant factors in racial identification (Khanna, 2004).

In addition to the role of perceived phenotype by others, Brunsma and Rockquemore (2001) explored the impact of social context during pre-adult years as well as experiences of negative treatment from Black and White monoracial individuals. Findings indicated that the racial composition of the context the individual was socialized within has a significant relationship to the way an individual perceives their phenotype. Though skin color was not associated with identity in pre-adult contexts, skin color was significant in experiences of negative treatment from Whites and Blacks (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001). Additionally, Herman (2004) found that racial composition of one's neighborhood, peer group, cohabitating family members and school were all significant factors in a multiracial individual's racial identification. These studies

highlighted the importance of an ecological approach to understanding identity given the relationship between social context and identity.

When considering social context, the region of the United States must be considered given historical race related events that may have influenced the culture of the region. Brunsma (2006) noted that existing multiracial research has been limited by selectivity and the regionalism of the respondents. One of the first attempts to understand the national multiracial experience is Harris and Sim's (2002) secondary analysis of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. They acknowledged patterns of identifying, which laid the groundwork for understanding the malleability of race (Harris & Sim, 2002). One significant finding was that adolescents in the sample identified differently depending upon whether their parent was present (Harris & Sim, 2002), which demonstrates the malleability of one's identity and the context-specific logic to identifying. Given the change in allowing individuals to *check all that apply* on the 2000 U.S. Census, Brunsma (2006) was able to analyze regional patterns in how Black-White multiracial individuals self-identify and manage the monoracially-constructed public classification system. Findings contributed to the understanding of contextual differences in multiracial identity. First, data suggested that there might be a discrepancy between how Black-White participants in this study see themselves racially and how they present themselves in varying contexts. Further, regional differences accounted for variance in the strength or weakness of this discrepancy. In other words, public categories varied by context and multiracial individuals might experience invalidation in varying contexts, therefore their private identity might not always be conveyed. Based on his findings, Brunsma (2006) suggested that future research should explore this phenomenon in other

multiracial groups (e.g., Black-Asian, White-Native American, etc.), which he theorized would have a similar pattern. Regions in the United States vary based on cultural norms and construction of race, racial malleability may be related to adapting to some of these differences in environment.

Malleability in identifying across contexts was also demonstrated in Terry and Winston's (2010) study where 73% of adolescent participants changed their racial identity over time, and the 27% of the sample who did not change their identity had affirmed a border identity of Black & White. Given the results of the study, Terry and Winston (2010) call for more complex methodology that allows for the participant to describe their own racial category as well as their parents' racial categories.

Identity Experiences

In addition to exploring the context factors associated in the malleability of multiracial identity, it is also essential to understand the experiences of multiracial individuals regarding potential challenges and resilience. It is apparent that multiracial identity has been a controversy in the United States as evidenced by the public debate about whether individuals should be able to check more than one box on the US Census (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). The public discourse on multiracial identity has been fraught with monoracial conceptualizations of race and multiracial discrimination (Campbell & Herman, 2010).

Multiracial Discrimination. Messages about one's racial identity have been demonstrated to impact how individuals understand their identity. Miville and colleagues (2005) refer to the experience of being asked *what are you* as a form of multiracial racism. Given the history of race relations and racism in the United States, multiracial

individuals have been described as a group that bridge racial divides (Cheng & Lee, 2009), however there is little acknowledgement of multiracial racism. Based on multiracial research and literature, Johnston and Nadal (2010) outline categories of multiracial microaggressions, which are everyday denigrating messages multiracial people receive about their identity: (1) inclusion or exclusion based on multiracial identity, (2) exoticization or objectification, (3) assumption of monoracial identity or mistaken for another group identity, (4) denial of multiracial identity, and (5) pathologizing of identity and experiences. These messages are conveyed indirectly through experiences where multiracial people have their identity questioned or assumed. Given the role of other peoples' perceptions in how multiracial people identify, it is essential to explore the multiracial experiences of discrimination. Findings from a recent study suggested that the integrated multiracial identity buffered the effects of perceived discrimination on psychological well-being (Jackson, Yoo, Guevarra, & Harrington, 2012). Furthermore, multiracial individuals experience microaggressions within their family, which is a common theme across multiracial people and unique to this population (Nadal et al., 2013). Recent research has shown that group identification with multiracial people may buffer the effects of discrimination on psychological well-being (Giamo, Schmitt, & Outten, 2012). Therefore, multiracial discrimination as an identity challenge experience may be related to one's malleability and overall psychological well-being.

Family & Societal Messages. The experiences of multiracial individuals and the messages they receive implicitly through these experiences contribute to one's views about their racial identity. Experiences with family members and their messages about multiracial identity have been identified as an important factor in multiracial identity

(Lorenzo-Blanco, Bares, & Delva, 2013; Jacobs, 1992). Other studies have shown the impact of social interactions and others' messages about race on multiracial children's identity and understanding of their heritage (Newsome, 2001). Positive messages through family socialization about the individuals' multiple heritages, and social context have been linked to positive identity development in multiracial college students (Brittian, Umana-Taylor, & Derlan, 2012). Greater exploration of the experiences of multiracial individuals through social interactions and messages about their identity is warranted.

Many monoracial people are also racially ambiguous, however, their racial identity development may be an explicit process with socialization by a family of one race including consistent messages about identifying with a specific racial group. These consistent messages may be linked to positive private and public regard, which have been explored as protective factors in racial identity for Black individuals (Sellers et al., 1998). Racial regard is described as how an individual makes meaning of the messages about his or her collective group, which has been separated into two categories: public regard (i.e., larger societal views of the group) and private regard (i.e., the individuals own value of their group). Racial regard is similar to other constructs such as racial pride or the concept of psychological closeness with this racial identity or group (Sellers et al., 1998) and refers to the extent to which the individual feels other people view their racial group positively or negatively. Given the impact of messages for monoracial groups of color, it is important to address the impact for multiracial people and the link to their psychological well-being.

Research on the importance of positive views of one's group has also been described as collective self-esteem, which has been positively associated with psychological well-being particularly monoracial people of color (Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine & Broadnax, 1994). Specifically, Crocker and colleagues (1994) conducted a study with Black, Asian, and White college students by administering surveys of collective self-esteem, personal self-esteem and psychological well-being. After controlling for personal self-esteem, private collective self-esteem (similar to private racial regard) was associated with increased life satisfaction and decreased hopelessness. Public collective self-esteem (similar to public racial regard) was related to decreased depression and hopelessness. It is important to note that similar associations have been studied in monoracial people of color. For multiracial individuals there is theoretical speculation about the relationship, yet there is a dearth of empirical research on public or private regard of multiracial identity and the association with psychological well-being.

Future research could ascertain the unique experiences of multiracial individuals with regard to societal messages about their racial identity and the impact on psychological well-being. Existing studies identified the *forced choice dilemma* as an example of an experience where a societal message may be conveyed that multiracial identity is not valued (Aspinall, 2003). Sanchez (2010) used the term *identity autonomy* to describe the degree to which multiracial individuals feel they may identify however they choose. Findings suggested that forced choice dilemmas were significantly related to increased depressive symptoms and that this relationship was impacted by perceptions of public regard for multiracial identity and identity autonomy. In other words, when individuals felt forced to choose, they perceived negative public regard for multiracial

identity and lower identity autonomy (Sanchez, 2010). Multiracial individuals were also more likely to perceive racial bias in varying contexts on college campuses compared to their monoracial counterparts (Brackett et al., 2006). Though multiracial individuals might experience discrimination at similar rates as monoracial individuals, Campbell and Herman (2010) found that there was significant resistance on the part of Whites and monoracial people of color to include multiracial people in anti-discrimination policy. There is limited evidence for negative societal messages about multiracial identity and the impact on psychological well-being, however, more must be known about the experiences of multiracial individuals regarding potential challenges and ways that multiracial identity may have positive impacts on psychological well-being.

Racial Heritages. Research highlighted the common themes, messages, and experiences of multiracial individuals (Johnston & Nadal, 2010); however, a large portion of the research has been limited to identifying factors and experiences of Black-White multiracial identity (Jackson, 2012). Shih, Sanchez, Bonam and Peck (2007) noted that lack of multiracial diversity is a major limitation of their study on stereotype activation comparing multiracial individuals with their monoracial counterparts. Qualitative studies have also attempted to highlight common themes of the multiracial experience across multiracial heritages (Jackson, 2012; Miville et al., 2005, Schlabach, 2013). Therefore, the current study was inclusive of all individuals who identified as multiracial in order to explore the common themes of multiracial individuals.

There is a recent body of literature that has begun to examine the experiences of Asian-White multiracial individuals and how their identity construction may be different from models that have been based on Black-White people. For example, Lou and

colleagues (2011) found that Asian-White individuals showed greater variability in their identity as more of the participants in this study tended to assert a protean identity whereby identifying differently in varying contexts. In another study using national survey data, Bratter and Heard (2009) found that Asian-White multiracial individuals tended to identify with their mothers' race in contrast to Black-White participants who tended to identify with their fathers' race, especially if he is White. However, if given the opportunity to integrate their identities, respondents were more likely to identify with an integrated identity. There is also evidence that the perceived social status of multiple racial heritages and family socioeconomic background might impact chosen identities as well (Townsend, Fryberg, Wilkins, & Markus, 2012). This dissertation study will investigate the common experiences of multiracial individuals rather than focusing on the differences within this population.

Gender. Also of importance is the impact of gender on multiracial identity. Research has shown that women have a tendency to emphasize negative interactions with same gender, monoracial counterparts (Rockquemore, 2002). One potential reason for this is the emphasis on appearance for women compared to men. Female participants in Rockquemore's (2002) study felt they were disliked based upon assumptions because of Eurocentric conceptions of beauty and assumptions about their vanity. Further, male participants tended to identify with the same-gender parent when they lived in the same household as the same-gender parent. Overall, Rockquemore suggested that gender interacted with racial identity depending upon the social interaction as appearance is emphasized with women and their phenotypes may be more likely to be scrutinized by others. Root (1998) found similar experiences in her sample where female multiracial

participants experienced an exoticization and sexualization that was not reported by men in the sample. Therefore, multiracial females may have particular contextual experiences that impact their identity.

Racial Malleability

Context and lived experiences might each play a role in the context-specific logic of an individual who is choosing how to identify in a specific experience of identity questioning. It is evident that multiracial identity is malleable given all of these context specific and individual specific factors when identifying (Jackson, Wolven, & Aguilera, 2013). A recent experimental study demonstrated the malleability of participants based on having their White or Black racial identities primed (Gaither, Sommers, & Ambady, 2013). The findings of Gaither and colleagues (2013) study highlighted the relationship between multiple racial identities and social interactions, such that participants' behavioral changes based on the salience of a particular identity. However, existing multiracial theory and methodology have lacked the complexity for incorporating these factors in addressing the real-world lived experiences of this population.

Studies have attempted to address the malleability of multiracial identity and it's relationship to psychological well-being (Sanchez, Shih, & Garcia, 2009). Sanchez and colleagues (2009) noted that multiracial individuals might identify differently in varying contexts. The concept of avowing a different racial identity in varying situations, time-points, and activities has been termed racial malleability, which has been linked with lower psychological well-being (Sanchez, Shih & Garcia, 2009). In particular, individuals who had a lower tolerance for self-inconsistencies tended to have lower psychological well-being when they were racially malleable. Further, racial malleability

was related to unstable multiracial regard (Sanchez, Shih & Garcia, 2009). Racial malleability is based on literature on the stability of self-concept; however, alternative conceptualizations of self-concept will be presented later in this literature review. One issue in this study is that unstable multiracial regard was measured with an adapted measure of self-concept stability, which is contrary to the empirical literature about the importance of malleability in identity for multiracial individuals.

It is important to note that identifying differently in varying contexts may be a way of coping with negative public regard for multiracial identity. In an experimental study, Sanchez and Bonam (2009) found that when multiracial individuals disclosed their identity, people perceived them as colder, less competent and more vulnerable to negative feedback. Therefore, evidence shows that there may be disclosure costs given the current racial discourse. In a qualitative study, Jackson and colleagues (2013) found that shifting expressions of racial identity was used as a way to cope with ethnic discrimination and acculturative stress. Some existing beliefs about multiracial identity are that choosing to identify as multiracial means individuals think they are better than their minority monoracial identity status (Vasquez, 2010). Additionally, multiracial identity has been described as a passing phase in our society where people feel that it is *in style* to identify as multiracial (Campbell & Herman, 2010). Given the public discourse on multiracial identity, it is possible that multiracial individuals might feel there is a negative public regard for their multiracial identity, which may contribute to malleable racial identity and certain understandings of self.

Self-Concept and Identity

Psychological theory posited that our identity is constructed based on individual aspects of our self as well as collective aspects of the groups with which we identify (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Some aspects of self may be derived from knowledge, experiences, and value of one's group membership (Tajfel, 1981). Research has shed light on the ways that social aspects of self may inform our self-understanding through defining ourselves in relation to others and our social groups (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore, one's multiracial group identity and the views of this group may be integrated into one's self-understanding. Specifically for multiracial individuals who may be in environments where their group identity is not viewed positively, a complex self-understanding might help buffer the psychological effects of having a devalued identity.

Though identity literature has been limited in allowing for the complexity of the multiracial individual's lived experiences, self-concept literature has acknowledged the importance of complexity and malleability in self-understanding. Empirical literature on multiracial individuals highlights the malleability and complexity of choices in the lived experience of racial identification (Brown, Hitlin, & Elder, 2006). Recent research described identity as an "internalized and evolving narrative of self" thus asserting one's racial identity in a specific situation may be informed by the self-narrative while not one in the same (Terry & Winston, 2010, p. 437).

Further, these self-definitions are developed while individuals must negotiate various social realities, which may impact the saliency of different self-concept schemas (Brewer and Gardner, 1996). For example, in certain situations where a collective self-

concept may be salient, one may categorize self and others with the motivation of inclusion. While in other situations one may feel their relational self-concept as salient, which might mean one is integrating others' perceptions of his self and feels excluded (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Inclusion or exclusion has implications for one's racial identity, which may be adapted in varying times, situations, and roles in different social realities.

Given the shifting social realities and contexts where individuals various aspects of self are salient, one's self-concept might be malleable in certain situations where the individual is receiving information about the self (Markus and Kunda, 1986). An example of this for multiracial individuals is the experience of identity questioning when they declare a Black-White identity and receive the response, "but you don't look Black." Such social denials may lead to malleability in self-concept in order to reorient one's self-understanding after receiving contradictory perceptions from others.

Therefore, one's identity contains collective aspects of self and individual aspects of self, which are context-dependent, and malleable, which has implications for psychological well-being. A flexible self-concept is considered to "reflect the expression of stable, meaningful, and authentic context-specific self-views (English & Chen, 2007, p. 487). Further, it is posited that context-dependent understanding one's self may remain consistent, however, between contexts there may be variability (McConnell, 2010). This may be particularly true for cultures that value the ability to adapt, as research has shown that self-concept may be more flexible in individuals of Asian descent such that the conception of self is stable within each context but is flexible between contexts (English & Chen, 2007). Though previous research suggested that

stability in self-concept is vital to positive psychological well-being, it may be that context-specific stability is more vital than global understanding of self. This has implications for multiracial individuals, as there is evidence that various aspects of self may be salient in varying contexts. This is of particular importance for this dissertation study as it examined the relationship between authenticity and racial malleability.

Authenticity

Research on multiracial individuals must move away from viewing a malleable racial identity as less optimal and recognize the potential complexity in authentically identifying however one chooses in varying contexts. In their description of the dimensions of the *Multidimensional Model of Biracial Identity*, Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) noted that a person with a protean identity: "requires a complex mastery of various cultural norms and values and an ongoing awareness and monitoring of the presentation of the self" (p. 69). This complex mastery is similar to the concept of self-complexity, which is described as "cognitively organizing self-knowledge in terms of a greater number of self-aspects and maintaining greater distinctions among self-aspects" (Linville, 1987, p. 663). Research on self-complexity suggested that a more complex self-understanding might help one manage stress related issues (Linville, 1987). Roccas and Brewer (2002) described a similar concept of social identity complexity, which refers to the distinctiveness in one's understanding and integration of multiple social ingroups. Social identity complexity has been associated with decreased stress response to experiences of negative views of one's social group. In other words, the more complex an individual has fewer associations among self-aspects compared to a less complex individual who would associate the stressful event with all of their aspects of self. The

relationship between self-complexity and well-being has been examined in other studies (Ryan, LaGuardia, & Rawsthorne, 2005). A meta-analysis of the effect of self-complexity on buffering stress-related illness found that mixed results for the impact of self-complexity and other findings suggest that it was either unrelated or mildly negatively related adjustment (Rafaeli-Mor & Steinberg, 2002). Thus, research on individual attributes recognized that a complex self-understanding may relate to well-being, but the relationship is unclear.

Authenticity was found to be the missing factor in the relationship between self-complexity and well-being (Ryan, LaGuardia, & Rawsthorne, 2005). Specifically, the authenticity of the self-aspect that individual utilized as the mental representation of self during a stressful event was able to buffer the stress of the event. Findings from Ryan and colleagues' (2005) studies showed that authentic self-complexity was associated with better mental health and lower perceived stress. Being authentically self-complex is described as the individual viewing the self-aspect he or she asserts as meaningful, valuable, and connected to how the individual feels at the time (Ryan, LaGuardia, & Rawsthorne, 2005). Thus, individuals described themselves as authentic when they feel they are being true to who they believe themselves to be. Given the lack of research on authenticity and identity, more must be understood about the link between authenticity, racial malleability and psychological well-being.

Counseling psychology theory highlighted the importance of authenticity for psychological well-being, but there is limited empirical research on the relationship between authenticity and psychological well-being (Rogers, 1961, Yalom, 1980). Though research is limited regarding authenticity and psychological well-being, there has

been some evidence regarding an empirical link. In a study assessing the relationship between well-being and authenticity, perceived stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, self-esteem, and physical symptoms were utilized to measure well-being and authenticity accounted for variance in all measures of well-being (Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthrone, & Illardi, 1997). In multiracial research, the ability to integrate one's identity and perceive less racial distance and conflict between identities has been linked with multiracial pride and has implications for the cognitive complexity of the individual and their overall sense of well-being (Cheng & Lee, 2009; Jackson et al., 2012). Furthermore, Nadal and colleagues (2013) found that a major theme of the experience of multiracial individuals within their families was the experience of having their authenticity questioned. The current dissertation study further explored the relationship between authenticity and multiracial psychological well-being.

Psychological Well-being and Multiracial Identity

Findings from extant literature of multiracial individuals' mental health have been equivocal (Shih and Sanchez, 2005). For example, monoracial comparison studies have shown that multiracial individuals have higher self-esteem (Bracey, Bamaca, & Umana-Taylor, 2004; Cauce et al., 1992), studies showing lower self-esteem (Field, 1996; Milan & Keiley, 2000), as well as studies with evidence of no differences in self-esteem (Herman, 2004). Also, empirical research noted that multiracial individuals report higher rates of depression (Cooney & Radina, 2000; Milan & Keiley, 2000). Contrarily, Binning and colleagues (2009) found that there were no group differences on psychological well-being between individuals who identified as multiracial or with a singular group identity. Suzuki-Crumly and Hyers (2004) explored the ways multiracial

individuals identified and the implications of that identity status on their psychological well-being. Specifically, individuals who identified as bicultural had higher scores on satisfaction with life than individuals who chose to be non-identified, bicultural-identified participants had lower depression scores than individuals who identified with their minority status, and no relationship was found between identity choice and self-esteem. Further, when examining multiracial well-being, many studies focus on Black-White or Asian-White biracial individuals. Schlabach (2013) suggested examining the multiracial group as an aggregate group as there appeared to be significant group differences when disaggregating into racial heritage combinations. Regardless evidence for multiracial individuals' psychological well-being is mixed in the existing literature.

A major issue is the methodological approach to measuring psychological well-being. Studies highlighted the differences between subjective well-being and psychological well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), however, multiracial research continues to use measures of depressive symptoms and self-esteem as measures of psychological well-being. There is also a lack of empirically validated measures for multiracial individuals (Salahuddin & O'Brian, 2011). Therefore, existing multiracial studies utilized selections on demographic forms as a ways of assessing multiracial identity and compared the psychological well-being outcomes for individuals who check more than one box or indicated their parents are of different races with monoracial participants. Binning and colleagues (2009) highlighted that demographic measures of multiracial identity may not assess for whether the participant feels psychologically multiracial. Given apparent methodological issues, there is a clear need for future studies to examine the relationship between multiracial identity and psychological well-being.

Complexity of Multiracial Identity

This chapter has enumerated the equivocal findings, historical shifts in the construction of multiracial identity, and key variables involved in the process of racial identity. It is crucial to note that the inherent flaw in all of the identity models, whether ecological or linear, is the assumption that racial identity may be static or that it is less optimal for the individual to have a malleable identity (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). However, qualitative studies, which have captured individual narratives, confirmed that multiracial individuals have complexly constructed their identity and feel that this multiracial identity may be negatively regarded in public domains (Jackson, 2012; Miville et al., 2005). Gilbert (2005) argued that identity has been constructed in a way that is theoretically rigid such that the theory lacked the complexity to capture individuals lived experiences. He suggests that "what must be understood is that identity may be strategic, uneven, unstable, fragmented, heterogeneous; always in the process of change, never static, always in the state of 'becoming'" (Gilbert, 2005, p. 65). Therefore, this dissertation study attempted to match the complexity of individuals' lived experience by exploring the role of authenticity, shifting multiracial experiences such as identity questioning, identity challenges, and identity resilience, and the overall malleability of people's expressed identity in a given social reality.

In order to capture the complexity of the lived experience of multiracial individuals, identity is understood as an unfolding narrative. The narrative has been defined by Polkinghorne (1991) as "the cognitive process that gives meaning to temporal events by identifying them as parts of a plot" (p. 136). Therefore, narratives are ways that individuals organize events into stories in order to construct public or private

meaning into an understandable sum of parts. Polkinghorne (1991) posited that narratives are the basis for self-understanding and constructing one's identity. Further, narratives are a complex weaving together of social contexts, others' perceptions and one's experiences. Polkinghorne (1991) acknowledged that narratives unfold overtime and continuously are reconstructed to make new meaning of one's life. Therefore, self-narratives, stories constructed to make meaning of one's aggregated self-understanding, are inextricably linked to self-concept. The narratives individuals are constructing, constantly inform the way one understands oneself, self-concept. Additionally, these narratives are context dependent whereby the individual integrates self-narratives, societal or collective narratives, and potential new information provided by the context.

Self-narratives are also informed by others' perceptions and implicitly agreed upon societal narratives, K. Gergen and M. Gergen (1983) point out that narratives help us to connect to one another, but may also have implications. As a society there may be agreed upon narratives about how identity is constructed and whether it should be stable. The traditional approach to racial identity has been founded upon this narrative of stability and monoracialism. Though self-concept literature espoused multiple aspects of oneself and how individuals may complexly construct their self-understanding, racial identity theory has viewed one's racial identification as a stable construct and inferred negative implications for multiple identities and avowing in a context dependent way.

Also, individuals categorize themselves based on the changes in their social reality. Turner and colleagues (1994) highlighted the context dependent nature of how one constructs self and noted that one's understanding of self is systematic in direct variation with social contexts. Given the tendency of individuals to perceive changes in

their social reality and adjust their own categorization and understanding of oneself, it is problematic that multiracial identity development models and methodology do not capture the fluid nature. Further, Good and colleagues (2010) employed this theory to assess the factors that impact multiracial self-categorization and found that social connectedness to the racial group as well as physical appearance were related to self-categorization. Thus not only is it likely that individuals would re-categorize themselves depending on their social reality, but it is expected (Vasquez, 2010). Since social realities have been shown to impact one's self-categorization, the relationship between racial malleability and lower psychological well-being may be impacted by other factors such as experiences within the family, having one's identity questioned and experiences of discrimination.

The Present Study

It is clear that multiracial identity literature has a history of various approaches based on the sociopolitical climate of racial discourse. This is a unique period in our history where popular awareness of multiracial identity as well as recent attempts to quantify and assess the needs of the population call for more understanding about the common themes of this group. The extant qualitative literature on multiracial identity has highlighted the following themes: multiracial identity is malleable, context-dependent, and involves other people's perceptions. However, quantitative research has yet to integrate these themes into conceptualizations in multiracial identity theory. Therefore this dissertation study employed quantitative methodology to understand the ways in which multiracial individuals understand their identity, incorporate others' perceptions of their identity given shifting experiences where they might need to declare their identity

and be malleable. Further, this dissertation study aimed to understand the overall impact of this process on psychological well-being. Specifically, psychological well-being, described as one's overall sense of positive psychological characteristics and the absence of negative characteristics, were measured by perceived stress and satisfaction with life. These aspects of psychological well-being were measured given the use of these measures in previous studies with multiracial individuals on psychological well-being. Therefore, this study examined variables that moderate the relationship between malleability and psychological well-being as experiences of identity questioning might impact the extent to which malleability will relate to psychological well-being. Additionally, this study explored whether the concept of authenticity is related to one's malleability and psychological well-being.

Aim 1: To examine the relationship between racial malleability and psychological well-being (perceived stress and life satisfaction) as moderated by identity questioning, identity challenges, identity resilience.

Hypothesis 1: The relationship between perceived stress and racial malleability will be moderated by identity questioning, resilience, and challenges.

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between racial malleability and life satisfaction will be moderated by identity questioning, resilience, and challenges.

Aim 2: To explore whether authenticity is related to racial malleability and psychological well-being.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

In order to address the multiple aims of the present study, this dissertation utilized a quantitative approach. This study was designed to fill in the gaps that exist in the current empirical literature on multiracial identity and psychological well-being. This study incorporated the role of others' perceptions as well as quantitative assessment of multiracial individuals' self-reported feelings, beliefs, experiences and challenges in order to develop insight into the lived experiences of multiracial individuals. The following section discusses the sample, measures, and procedure.

Participants

Based on inclusion criteria, 149 self-identifying multiracial individuals completed the web-based survey over a 4-month period (October 2012-January 2013). In order to be included in this study, individuals had to self-identify as multiracial, were aged 18 to 40 years of age, were native to or residing in the United States, and English-speaking. Regarding age, individuals ranged from 18 to 40 years old ($M = 27.40$, $SD = 5.78$). The majority of the sample identified as female ($n = 117$, 78.5%), with the remaining sample reporting that they were male ($n = 29$, 19.5%), or transgender ($n = 2$, 1.3%), and one individual did not report their gender. This sample was largely drawn from the United States with 97.3% of the sample indicating currently living in the U.S and 94.6% being born in the United States. Participants represented every region of the United States, however, the majority indicated that they lived in the Mid-Atlantic ($n = 24$, 16.1%), South Atlantic ($n = 43$, 28.9%), and the West Pacific ($n = 33$, 22.1%). A large portion of the sample identified as single ($n = 98$, 65.8%). Participants ranged regarding income and educational attainment. (See Table 1).

Racial Demographic Information. Given the changing social construction of race in the United States as evidenced by the evolving racial categories on the US Census, anyone who self-identified as multiracial was included in this study. According to the US Census, a multiracial person is someone who chooses to check multiple boxes of racial categories: 1) White, 2) Black or African American, 3) American Indian or Alaskan Native, 4) Asian, 5) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (Jones & Symen Smith, 2001). Furthermore, individuals who reported ethnic backgrounds that are of different racial groups were included in the study (i.e., Filipino and Hispanic). Currently, there is controversy over including Hispanic or Latino as a race on the next US Census as most of the individuals who reported *some other race* identified as Hispanic (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). Therefore, individuals who identified as Latino or Hispanic as one of their races were included in this study as they elected to participate in the study and considered themselves multiracial. Currently, the US Census describes race as, "a social definition of race recognized in this country and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. In addition, it is recognized that the categories of the race item include racial and national origin or sociocultural groups" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Participants indicated 25 different racial identity combinations. In this study, participants most commonly identified in the following ways: Black-White ($n = 65$, 43.6%), Asian-White ($n = 17$, 11.4%), Black-Asian ($n = 7$, 4.7%), Black-Latino ($n = 7$, 4.7%), Asian-Latino, ($n = 4$, 2.7%), Black-White-Native American ($n = 7$, 4.7 %), and Latino-White ($n = 8$, 5.4%). Eight participants checked only one racial designator box. It is important to note that these 8 individuals only checked one box, but in open-ended

questions identified multiple races. Given that some racial check-box queries only allow individuals to check one box, it is possible that checking multiple boxes may be unfamiliar to multiracial individuals and therefore they default to checking one box despite instructions to *check all that apply*. Additionally, some participants indicated that they identified three or racial heritages. (See Table 2). Regarding phenotype, the majority of participants ($n = 125$, 83.9%) described themselves as racially ambiguous. (See Table 1).

According to research conducted on the US Census by Jones and Bullock (2013), this sample is representative of the general multiracial population in the United States. Similar to the US Census, the largest portion of this sample identified as Black-White, followed by Asian-White. The second largest population in the US Census was White and Some Other Race, which were mostly identified to be of Latino origin; in the current study Latino-White people were a smaller portion of this sample. Further, the regions of the United States most represented in this sample follow a similar pattern to the US Census whereby the majority of the individuals reported living in the West Pacific, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic regions of the United States.

Measures

In consideration of the effects of priming in measurement administration (Campbell & Stanley, 1963), the measures were given in the following order. Specifically, the demographic questionnaire was administered first as a way to orient participants to thinking about their multiracial identity. Following the measure of racial malleability was the measure of authenticity. Given the literature and the aims of the present study, the measure of authenticity was administered prior to the measure of

identity questioning in order to assess one's sense of overall authenticity prior to thinking about experiences of identity questioning or discrimination. Since this study was based on research demonstrating the role of context, it was decided to assess for contextual factors after assessing for one's overall authenticity and malleability and then explore experiences related to one's multiracial identity, which may have primed individuals to think about their racial identity and authenticity differently. The scales assessing identity questioning, identity challenges, and identity resilience followed the measure of authenticity. The outcome variables of interest related to psychological well-being assessed using measures of global stress and life satisfaction were administered after the assessment of multiracial experiences. Finally, the measure of general life experiences was administered, as a way of assessing the general stressors the participant was experiencing recently.

Demographic Questionnaire. The demographic measure consisted of questions to assess participants' age, sex, races, country of birth, preferred language, socioeconomic status (e.g., highest educational level attained, current income), as well as the racial composition of their neighborhood, work, and school. This measure was created for this study based on previous research with multiracial individuals and recommendations for the quantitative assessment of racial identity (Binning et al., 2009). To avoid reductionist approaches such as checkbox options for identity self-report, multiple response formats were utilized. First, a self-report *check all that apply* question was based on the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau's racial and ethnic identity options. Second, the *Survey of Multiracial Experience* (Lou, Lalonde, & Wilson, 2011; Rockquemore, 1999; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002) was utilized to assess for participants multiracial

identity. The *Survey of Multiracial Experience* instructed participants to select from 7 identity constructions based on which option best described their racial identity. A third way to identify multiracial heritage asked participants to *check all that apply* (checkbox question) for race of biological mother and biological father. Additionally, participants were asked to respond to the following open-ended question: *Categories like the above are inherently unable to capture the complexity of multiracial individuals' identity so in the following space please describe how you see yourself in terms of race and/or ethnicity*. (See Appendix C).

Racial Malleability. Participants' racial malleability was assessed utilizing Sanchez, Shih and Garcia's (2009) *Malleable Racial Identification* measure. The measure contained 5 items with responses ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) where higher scores reflected greater racial malleability in social situations (See Appendix D). Scores from this measure are based on the mean score of the items, for the current sample, scores ranged from 1 to 7 ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.49$). Items reflect the individual's tendency to adapt identity across situations, activities, and time-points. The mean suggests that this sample is slightly more malleable than other studies using this measure with multiracial samples. Measures of internal consistency for this scale have ranged from $\alpha = .78$ to $\alpha = .89$. Further, exploratory factor analyses demonstrated that all items loaded highly on one factor with components > .6 (Sanchez, Shih & Garcia, 2009). Internal consistency was demonstrated for the present study ($\alpha = .81$).

Identity Experiences. In order to assess the participants' experiences of identity questioning, identity challenges, and identity resilience, the *Multiracial Challenges and*

Resilience Scale (MCRS; Salahuddin & O'Brian, 2011) (See Appendix F) was utilized. Item development for the MRCS was based on relevant literature regarding race-related experiences of multiracial individuals. Additionally, focus groups with multiracial people were conducted exploring the challenges and strengths multiracial individuals developed based on their multiracial experiences. A confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated evidence for six factor loadings for the original 74-item measure. This measure has six subscales addressing different aspects of being multiracial: 1.) *Others' Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage,* 2.) *Lack of Family Acceptance,* 3.) *Multiracial Discrimination,* 4.) *Challenges with Racial Identity,* 5.) *Multiracial Pride,* and 6.) *Appreciation of Human Differences*. The 2-month test-retest reliability ranged from .67 to .84, with the exception of the *Lack of Family Acceptance* subscale, which was less stable over time ($r = .54$). Further, there was evidence for convergent and divergent validity (Salahuddin & O'Brian, 2011). The authors implore future researchers to investigate the facture structure of the 30-item measure with a diverse sample. Therefore, this study employed confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses to examine the facture structure of this measure with the present sample.

Based on existing literature on experiences of multiracial identity, it was expected that the following factors would be derived. With regard to identity questioning, the subscale addressing *Others' Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage* comprises five questions addressing experiences of having one's identity questioned. Individuals responded using a 6-point Likert-type scale to identify the frequency of the experience described in the item. There is evidence for the internal consistency of this subscale ($\alpha = .83$).

Based on results of the factor analyses, identity challenges will be assessed by summing the scores of three subscales of the MCRS: *Lack of Family Acceptance, Multiracial Discrimination,* and *Challenges with Racial Identity*. The *Lack of Family Acceptance* subscale has evidence for internal consistency *(*α = .82) and addresses family's perceptions of multiracial identity (e.g., *A family member said that I am NOT a "real" member of a racial group(s) with whom I identify*). The *Multiracial Discrimination* has evidence for internal consistency (α = .79) and addresses broader societal discrimination based on multiracial identity (e.g., *I was discriminated against because of one or more of my racial backgrounds*). Both subscales have five questions each, which are based on a 6-point Likert-type response scale to identify frequency. An additional challenge may be lacking a sense of belongingness and identity, which is assessed by *Challenges with Racial Identity* (e.g., *I feel the need to prove my racial identity to others*) and has moderate evidence for internal consistency (α = .68). This subscale contained five items and was based on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

To assess for identity resilience, the remaining two subscales of the MCRS will be utilized. The *Multiracial Pride* has evidence for internal consistency (α = .80) and focuses upon the individuals' pride for their heritage (e.g., *I love being multiracial*). The *Appreciation of Human Differences* has evidence for internal consistency (α = .89) and focuses upon and the extent to which experiences as a multiracial person aided in the development of overall human appreciation (e.g., *Being multiracial has taught me to understand multiple perspectives*). For this sample, *Appreciation of Human Differences* had evidence for internal consistency (α = .90). These subscales contained five items

each and were based on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to

5 (*strongly agree*).

   Authenticity. To assess the participants' sense of authenticity, the *Authenticity*

Scale was utilized (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008) (See Appendix E).

Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses demonstrated evidence for a three-factor

structure of authenticity with an ethnically and racially diverse sample, including

acceptance of external influence ($\alpha = .78$), authentic living ($\alpha = .69$), and self-alienation

($\alpha = .78$). For the current study, internal consistency was demonstrated for the three

subscales as follows: acceptance of external influence ($\alpha = .83$), authentic living ($\alpha =$

.72), and self-alienation ($\alpha = .89$). Wood and colleagues (2008) demonstrated convergent

and discriminant validity for the *Authenticity Scale*. Test-retest reliability was also

examined for a 2-week and a 4-week period, for each subscale responses from Time 1

correlated with responses from Time 2 ranging between $r = .78$ and $r = .91$. Further,

there is evidence for discriminant validity with measures of social desirability, which

suggests that responses to the *Authenticity Scale* are not influenced by social desirability.

There are a total of 12-items with a Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 (*does not*

describe me at all) to 7 (*describes me very well*). In this sample scores ranged from 4 to

28 ($M = 11.51$, $SD = 5.02$) for acceptance of external influence, from 10 to 28 ($M =$

23.86, $SD = 3.19$) for authentic living, and from 4 to 27 ($M = 8.83$, $SD = 5.63$) for self-

alienation. Items on this measure reflect individuals' incorporation others' perceptions (*I*

am strongly influenced by the opinions of others), beliefs (*I always stand by what I*

believe in), and sense of self (*I feel as if I don't know myself very well*). Scores on this

measure are similar to other diverse samples utilizing this measure.

Psychological Well-Being. Psychological well-being has been measured using various psychological constructs that assess positive aspects of psychological characteristics as well as the absence of negative aspects of psychological characteristics (Suzuki-Crumly & Hyers, 2004). Therefore, this dissertation study utilized measures of global stress and life satisfaction that have been employed in previous studies on psychological well-being in multiracial individuals.

Perceived Stress. To assess individuals' experience of global stress as a measure of psychological well-being, the *Perceived Stress Scale* (PSS; Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) was used. This measure is a widely used measure (Lavoie and Douglas, 2011) to assess how unpredictable, uncontrollable and overwhelmed individuals' assess their lives to be. Participants were asked to reflect on the last month when responding to general questions about their feelings of stress (e.g., *In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?)*. The PSS is a ten-item scale whereby respondents indicated their responses using a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). For the current sample, scores ranged from four to 38 ($M = 16.55$ $SD = 6.74$). The mean for this sample is slightly lower than other diverse community and student samples (Lavoie and Douglas, 2011) and therefore demonstrates a low level of perceived stress for this sample. The scale demonstrated convergent validity with health behavior and stress-related illness assessments (Cohen & Williamson, 1988). Additionally, this measure has been normed on a racially diverse sample (Cohen & Williamson, 1988). Previous studies provided evidence for internal consistency ($\alpha = .78$). For the current sample, internal consistency was demonstrated ($\alpha = .87$).

Life Satisfaction. The other measure of psychological well-being in this study was life satisfaction, measured using the *Satisfaction With Life Scale* (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin 1985). The SWLS is a five-item measure with a Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). There is evidence for convergent and divergent validity based on diverse normative samples as well as temporal stability (Pavot & Diener, 1993). For the current sample, scores ranged from six to 35 (*M* = 24.18, *SD* = 6.39). This mean score suggests that this sample has an average level of life satisfaction. Previous studies demonstrated evidence for internal consistency (α = .87); there is evidence for internal consistency of this measure with the current sample (α = .87). The SWLS measured positive characteristics of psychological well-being by assessing the agreement with statements (e.g., *The conditions of my life are excellent*).

General Life Experiences. In order to control for general life experiences that may be stressful and impact psychological well-being, the *Survey of Recent Life Experiences-Short Form* (SRLE; Kohn & Macdonald, 1992) was utilized. The SRLE consisted of 41 items regarding daily experiences such as *being taken advantage of*, *a lot of responsibilities*, and *financial burdens*. Participants were instructed to indicate the intensity of the experience over the past month ranging from 1 (*not at all part of my life*) to 4 (*very much part of my life*). Scores could range from 41 to 164. For the current sample, scores ranged from 49 to 127 (*M* = 75.07, *SD* = 17.03), which indicates an average degree of hassles in the last month. For the short form utilized in this study, there is evidence for internal consistency (α = .90); in the current sample there was evidence

for internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$). There is also evidence for content validity of this measure (Mayberry & Graham, 2001).

Procedures

Recruitment. Prior to any recruitment, University of Miami Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the present study. Following approval, multiracial agencies were contacted to request the distribution of this study and the study recruitment email was posted on social media groups focused on being multiracial, mixed race or biracial. Due to the convenience of forwarding the study through email, previous research suggested that Internet surveys are just as representative if not more representative than other recruitment methods (Gosling et al., 2004). The link to the present study was distributed through multiracial listservs and social media groups. Specifically, multiracial organizations such as Swirl, Inc., the MAVIN Foundation, and multiracial groups on Twitter, Facebook, Google Groups, LinkedIn, as well as the websites that highlight mixed race studies research were contacted in order to post the study or send the study to potential participants. Recruitment emails described the study's inclusion criteria and the purpose of the study to understand more about the multiracial experience (See Appendix A). Recruitment followed a snowball sample procedure, such that the recruitment email or post asked those who received the email share the study link with anyone they know who meets the inclusion criteria. Participants were instructed to follow the Survey Monkey web-link within the email to access the study.

To reinforce the reliability of the results, empirical standards for Internet survey collection were utilized (Eysenbach, 2004). In order to participate in this study, individuals must self-identify as multiracial. Therefore, upon entering the web-based

survey, participants encountered a form asking them to confirm their eligibility by identifying that they were over the age of 18 and to respond how they identify racially whereby individuals could *check all that apply*. Participants were able to enter the survey regardless of number of boxes they checked as some individuals checked *other* and specified that they identified with multiple racial groups or as biracial. Since recruitment materials specified that in order to participate one must self-identify as multiracial, all individuals who completed the study were included. Participants who are 18 years of age or older and who identify with multiple races were then directed to view the informed consent page, which described the purpose and design of the study, a brief description of how to complete a web-based survey, as well as the potential benefits and risks associated with participating in the study (See Appendix B). Participants who did not meet inclusion criteria were redirected to a webpage thanking them for their interest in the study, but notifying them that they did not meet inclusion criteria for the study.

Participants who met inclusion criteria viewed the informed consent page whereby participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time as well as the contact information for the primary investigator and the IRB and Office of Human Subjects at the University of Miami. Participants were reminded that their information will be kept confidential and their name will not be associated with their responses to the survey items. Individuals agreeing to participate in the study after reading the informed consent entered into the web-based survey created in Survey Monkey. Individuals who did not agree to participate in the study were redirected to the webpage thanking them for their interest in the study, but since they did not consent to

participate they may not complete the survey. The survey included the measures outlined in Table 3.

   Study Materials. Participants required access to a computer that had Internet access. The survey was a web-based survey as the Internet provided a forum for multiracial individuals to connect across communities and serves as a resource as evidenced by the vast number of message boards and social groups dedicated to multiracial identity (Sanchez, Shih, & Garcia, 2009). Data was collected through web survey using Survey Monkey, which has security procedures to keep participant information confidential and transmit the unidentified information to the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

To address the study's aims, statistical analyses were conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Data was obtained from measures described in this study to address racial malleability, authenticity, identity experiences, and psychological well-being. This chapter describes analyses in two steps: preliminary analyses and hypothesis-testing analyses to address the aims of this study.

Statistical Power and Missing Data

An apriori power analysis was conducted to determine the minimum sample size (n_{min}) required to determine a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$) for the regression analyses needed for Aims 1 and 2 of the study. Preliminary power analysis for multiple regression analyses was performed using a free online statistics calculator (GPower 3.1; Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). In order to conduct the power analysis the following information was required: desired effect size, power anticipated ($1-\beta$), number of predictors, and alpha level ($\alpha = .05$). The power analysis was set to have a minimum of 80% power ($1-\beta$) (Faul et al., 2009) to detect the desired effect size, with nine independent variables (e.g., Malleable Racial Identification, the three subscales Authenticity Scale, the four subscales of the Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale, and Survey of Recent Life Experiences). The statistical calculator generated an $n_{min}=114$. In order to account for missing data due to individuals not completing the survey (Eysenbach, 2004; Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava & John, 2004) the population was oversampled such that 149 individuals participated in this study to ensure enough power to run the proposed analyses.

In order to conduct preliminary analyses the data was cleaned and checked for missing data. To address missing data, the procedures outlined by Baraldi and Enders (2009) were utilized as they take into account characteristics inherent in the population being studied and how those characteristics may impact how they respond to the outcome measures. A missing data analysis revealed that data was missing at random. Missing data ranged from 0% to 16.1%. Multiple imputation was used and 20 datasets with possible imputed values were generated based on the recommendations from Baraldi and Enders (2009). The pooled parameter estimates were used during hypothesis testing.

The Role of Identity Experiences in Multiracial Well-Being

The first aim of this study was to examine the relationship between racial malleability and psychological well-being, defined by perceived stress and life satisfaction, as moderated by identity experiences. The first hypothesis was that the relationship between racial malleability and perceived stress would be moderated by identity experiences. The second hypothesis was that the relationship between racial malleability and life satisfaction would be moderated by identity experiences. In order to assess these hypotheses hierarchical linear regression was conducted, as this is the first study to provide an initial exploration of these relationships. Prior to conducting the regression analyses to test the hypotheses, the factors of the *Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale* (*MCRS*; Salahuddin & O'Brian, 2011) needed to be confirmed in order to determine what identity experience moderators were appropriate for this sample.

Confirming Challenges and Resilience Factors

In order to assess the first aim of this study, confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses were utilized to assess the factor structure of the *MCRS*, which is utilized to

determine the identity experiences that may moderate the relationship between racial malleability and psychological well-being. A confirmatory factor analysis based on the proposed six-factor structure of the 30-item MCRS revealed a poor fit for the data (RMSEA = .108, 90% CI [.106, .110]; SRMR = .08; CFI = .67). Given the poor fit of the proposed factor structure, a principal component factor analysis using varimax rotation suggested a four-factor model using an eigenvalue cutoff of 1.00, which explained 60% of the variance. The retained items loaded on the factors with components > .5. One of the four factors that emerged mapped onto the items and factors identified by Salahuddin and O'Brian (2011): the *Appreciation of Human Differences* subscale (Items 19, 21, 23, 25, 27). A second factor retained three of the five items originally on the subscale of *Lack of Family Acceptance*, however, one item that was originally conceptualized as multiracial discrimination loaded onto this factor as well (Items 3, 4, 6, 8). Three items were retained from the *Others' Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage* subscale (Items 2, 7, and 15). A new factor emerged from this measure, which combined items from the scale of *Multiracial Pride* (Items 16, 22, 26) and having items reverse scored from the subscale of *Challenges with Racial Identity* (Items 17 and 30). Given the review of the literature presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, these items seem to be related to racial regard as they describe affective or evaluative views of being multiracial such as item 16, *I love being multiracial.* In light of the factor analysis of this sample and recent literature about the role of the family and racial regard, this study would be remiss not to include lack of family acceptance (Nadal et al., 2013) and racial regard (Sanchez, Shih, & Garcia, 2009) as identity experiences that may moderate the relationship between racial malleability and psychological well-being. Therefore, four moderators will be

included in this study as a measure of identity experiences: appreciation of human differences (*MCRS Appreciation of Human Differences*, α = .90), racial regard (*MCRS Racial Regard*, α =.76), lack of family acceptance (*MCRS Lack of Family Acceptance,* α = .73), and identity questioning (*MCRS Others' Surprise and Disbelief Regarding Racial Heritage,* α = .65).

Preliminary Analyses for Identity Experiences Moderators

Descriptive statistics of the demographics of this population and the reliability and psychometric properties of the measures were described in the previous chapter. In order to run the hierarchical regression analyses, the data was needed to fulfill the following assumptions: normality of the distribution, independence of observations, and homoscedasticity. Specifically, the data was analyzed for measures of central tendency, skewness, kurtosis, and Pearson correlations among the covariate, independent variable, moderator variables, and the outcome variables. The covariate, independent variable, and outcome variables were normally distributed based on heuristics for skewness. (See Table 3). Regarding the moderator variables, appreciation for human differences was slightly skewed, based on literature; the slight skewness seemed appropriate for this population (Salahuddin & O'Brian, 2011). It is important to note that racial malleability had a very low correlation with perceived stress ($r = .01$, $p = .929$), but was significantly correlated with life satisfaction ($r = .19$, $p = .024$). Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to proceed with hypothesis testing for moderators of the relationships because there could be enhancing effects of the interactions. Racial malleability was also significantly correlated with appreciation of human differences ($r = .18$, $p = .029$). The covariate, recent life experiences was correlated with racial regard ($r = -.22$, $p = .008$), lack of family

acceptance ($r = .31$, $p = .000$), perceived stress ($r = .56$, $p = .000$), and life satisfaction ($r = -.38$, $p = .000$). (See Table 4). The outcome variables significantly, negatively correlated with each other ($r = -.50$, $p = .000$). Tests for multicollinearity indicated that a very low level of multicollinearity was present for the study variables in relation to perceived stress ($VIF = 1.08$ for racial malleability, 1.12 for appreciation of human differences, 1.19 for racial regard, 1.19 for lack of family acceptance and 1.12 for identity questioning). Given the significant correlations between life satisfaction and study variables, it was essential to assess for multicollinearity, which indicated that a very low level of multicollinearity was present ($VIF = 1.10$ for racial malleability, 1.15 for appreciation of human differences, 1.16 for racial regard, 1.21 for lack of family acceptance and 1.11 for identity questioning).

Perceived Stress with Identity Experiences

Hierarchical regression analyses, using the steps outlined by Frazier, Tix, and Barron (2004), was used to test the first hypothesis of the relationship of study variables with perceived stress. Given that the relationship between racial malleability and perceived stress was not significant, moderation was analyzed to determine whether experiences related to identity had an enhancing interaction on perceived stress. The interaction terms were created between racial malleability and each of the moderators: appreciation of human differences, racial regard, lack of family acceptance, and identity questioning. The covariate, recent life experiences, was entered into the first step of the regression model. The second step included the independent variable, racial malleability, and the moderators. The interaction terms, created by utilizing the product of racial malleability with each of the moderators (appreciation of human differences, racial

regard, lack of family acceptance, and identity questioning) were entered into the third step.

Results of the regression analysis provided partial confirmation for the research hypothesis. The results of a hierarchical linear regression suggest that a significant proportion of total variation in perceived stress was predicted by recent life experiences, $R^2 = .36$, $F(1, 114) = 63.17$, $p = .000$. After controlling for recent life experiences, racial malleability, appreciation of human differences, racial regard, lack of family acceptance, and identity questioning did not account for a significant amount of the variance in perceived stress (R^2 change $= .03$, F change $= 1.22$, $p = .303$). Therefore, identity experiences did not directly effect the variance in perceived stress in the second model.

However, the addition of the interaction terms did account for a significant portion of the variance in perceived stress (R^2 change $= .06$, F change $= 2.788$, $p = .030$). (See Table 6). In the third model, racial malleability did not significantly predict perceived stress, $b = .06$, $t = .287$, $p = .775$. In this third model, lack of family acceptance did have a significant main effect on perceived stress, $b = .46$, $t = 2.310$, $p = .021$. Identity questioning also had a significant main effect on perceived stress, $b = -.60$, $t = -2.370$, $p = .018$. Further, identity questioning appeared to be a significant moderator between racial malleability and perceived stress $b = .03$, $t = 2.124$, $p = .034$. The third model supports the first hypothesis such that the relationship between racial malleability and perceived stress is moderated by experiences of identity questioning. The role of lack of family acceptance and identity questioning as directly impacting the variance in perceived stress must be explored further.

Life Satisfaction with Identity Experiences

To address the second hypothesis of the relationship between study variables with life satisfaction, the same steps for hierarchical linear regression were taken with life satisfaction as the outcome variable. Results of the regression analysis did not provide confirmation for the research hypothesis. The results of a hierarchical linear regression suggest that a significant proportion of total variation in life satisfaction was predicted by recent life experiences, $R^2 = .17$, $F(1, 117) = 24.517$, $p = .000$. After controlling for recent life experiences, racial malleability, appreciation of human differences, racial regard, lack of family acceptance, and identity questioning did not account for a significant amount of the variance in life satisfaction, (R^2 change $= .05$, F change $= 1.345$, $p = .251$). The addition of the interaction terms did not account for a significant portion of the variance in life satisfaction (R^2 change $= .04$, F change $= 1.322$, $p = .266$). (See Table 6). It is important to note that racial malleability did significantly predict life satisfaction, $b = .13$, $t = 2.026$, $p = .043$. This suggests that there is a relationship between being more racial malleable and having more life satisfaction.

The Role of Authenticity in Multiracial Well-Being

The second aim of this study was to explore the role of authenticity and how it is related to racial malleability and psychological well-being. This aim was exploratory as there is no existing research exploring the role of authenticity in multiracial well-being. In order to explore the relationship between authenticity, racial malleability, and psychological well-being, preliminary analyses were conducted.

Preliminary Analyses for Authenticity

The psychometric properties of the measures were described in the previous

chapter. (See Table 3). Racial malleability was also significantly correlated with the

Accepting External Influence subscale of the *Authenticity Scale* ($r = .17$, $p = .042$).

Recent life experiences significantly correlated with the *Self-Alienation* subscale of the

Authenticity Scale ($r = .43$, $p = .000$). (See Table 5). Self-alienation significantly

correlated with both perceived stress ($r = .54$, $p = .000$) and life satisfaction ($r = -.34$, $p =$

.000). Specifically, these correlations suggest that the more self-alienated individuals

reported feeling the more they perceived stress and the less life satisfied they reported

feeling. The other two subscales of the *Authenticity Scale*, accepting external influences

($r = .21$, $p = .012$) and authentic living ($r = -.19$, $p = .033$) significantly correlated with

perceived stress. This suggests that an increase in accepting external influences is related

to reporting more perceived stress, while an increase in authentic living is related to

reporting less perceived stress. Tests for multicollinearity indicated that a very low level

of multicollinearity with perceived stress was present ($VIF = 1.04$ for racial malleability,

1.48 for accepting external influences, 1.33 for authentic living, and 1.63 for self-

alienation). Regarding life satisfaction, tests indicated that a very low level of

multicollinearity was present ($VIF = 1.30$ for racial malleability, 1.46 for accepting

external influences, 1.34 for authentic living, and 1.56 for self-alienation).

The Role of Authenticity

To assess the second aim of this study, the relationships among variables was

explored utilizing a hierarchical regression model in order to see how much of the

variance in perceived stress and life satisfaction was accounted for by racial malleability

and authenticity. Given the low correlation between racial malleability and the outcome

variables, a mediation analysis could not be performed, however, there is the potential

that authenticity may enhance the relationship between predictor and outcome variables.

To test for moderation the following steps were taken. The covariate, recent life

experiences, was entered into the first step of the regression model. In the second step of

the model, racial malleability, accepting external influences, authentic living, and self-

alienation were entered. The interaction terms were entered into the third step. These

steps were completed for both perceived stress and life satisfaction.

Authenticity and Perceived Stress. To test the exploratory question of how

authenticity and racial malleability relate perceived stress, a hierarchical linear regression

analysis was performed. The results of a hierarchical linear regression suggest that a

significant portion of total variation in perceived stress was predicted by recent life

experiences, $R^2 = .35$, $F(1, 112) = 59.622$, $p = .000$. After controlling for recent life

experiences, racial malleability, accepting external influences, authentic living, and self-

alienation accounted for a significant amount of the variance in perceived stress, (R^2

change $= .12$. $F = 6.261$, $p = .000$). Specifically, racial malleability did not significantly

predict perceived stress, $b = -.01$, $t = -.173$, $p = .863$. While self-alienation did

significantly predict perceived stress, $b = .36$, $t = 3.959$, $p = .000$. Accepting external

influence, $b = .09$, $t = .897$ $p = .370$, and authentic living, $b = -.16$, $t = -1.128$, $p = .259$,

were not significant predictors of perceived stress. Therefore, self-alienation appeared to

have a significant role given the main effect on the variance in perceived stress. The

addition of the moderators did not significantly improve prediction (R^2 change $= .02$, $F =$

1.486, $p = .223$). (See Table 7). The significant direct effect of self-alienation on

perceived stress suggests that the more one feels self-alienated and not sure of who they are, the more likely they are to perceive higher levels of stress.

Authenticity and Life Satisfaction. To test the exploratory question of how authenticity and racial malleability relate to life satisfaction, a hierarchical linear regression analysis was performed. Results of the regression analysis further clarify the research question regarding the role of authenticity in the relationship between racial malleability and psychological well-being. The results of a hierarchical linear regression suggest that a significant portion of total variation in life satisfaction was predicted by recent life experiences, $R^2 = .17$, $F(1, 114) = 22.794$, $p = .000$. After controlling for recent life experiences, racial malleability, accepting external influences, authentic living, and self-alienation accounted for a significant amount of the variance in life satisfaction, (R^2 change $= .10$, $F = 3.775$, $p = .006$). Specifically, racial malleability did significantly account for some of the variance in life satisfaction, $b = .13$, $t = 2.155$, $p = .031$. Additionally, self-alienation significantly accounted for some of the variance in life satisfaction, $b = -.35$, $t = -3.491$, $p = .000$. Thus, there is a main effect of self-alienation on life satisfaction and perceived stress; self-alienation plays a significant role as a factor of authenticity in multiracial well-being. The addition of authenticity moderators were not significant (R^2 change $= .03$. $F = 1.445$, $p = .234$). (See Table 7).

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This dissertation study examined the relationship between racial malleability and psychological well-being as defined by perceived stress and life satisfaction. Overall, this sample's mean scores indicated low levels of perceived stress compared to diverse community samples in other studies (Lavoie & Douglass, 2011) and average levels of life satisfaction based on normative data for the measure. For the purposes of this study, psychological well-being was defined as one's overall sense of positive psychological characteristics and the absence of negative characteristics, thus this sample demonstrates positive overall psychological well-being. Racial malleability had a significant relationship with life satisfaction, but not with perceived stress. There is, however, partial confirmation for the first hypothesis such that the relationship between racial malleability and perceived stress was moderated by experiences of having one's identity questioned. The second aim of this study was to explore how authenticity was related to racial malleability and psychological well-being. Findings suggest that self-alienation aspects of authenticity are related to psychological well-being such that the more individuals feel disconnected from a sense of who they are, the more stress they perceive and the lower their life satisfaction. Findings are discussed further in this chapter as well as implications for future studies and counseling with multiracial individuals.

Expansion of Racial Categories

One of the contributions of this dissertation study is related to the need to expand racial categories. Participants were given multiple opportunities to self-identify their races during this study. Often participants chose to elect the *other, please specify* category when response options did not represent the identity of the participant. For

example, one participant checked *White, Asian,* and *other* in order to specify that she is also of Middle Eastern descent. When asked in an open-ended question how she identifies she responded, "My father is Palestinian Arab, Hazara Afghan and Uyghur Chinese. None of these three ethnic groups are ever on check boxes and do not fit into the neatly fit categories. My mother is Irish." Another participant, who only checked *Latino*, responded to the open-ended question, "I am Indian, Hispanic and Dutch" and described her racial identity as *I consider myself biracial, but I experience the world as a person of color*. It is important to note the complexity of assessing racial identification in this population as the US Census only has checkbox options, some of the nuances to how people identify are lost in quantitative response options. Other multiracial quantitative research studies utilize a reductionist approach and consolidate racial categories in order to make comparison across racial mixes such as looking at Asian-White people compared to Black-White individuals (Lou, Lalonde, & Wilson, 2011). This study reinforced findings from qualitative studies (Jackson, 2012, Miville et al., 2005) pointing to the similarities of multiracial individuals as a population and therefore is one of the first quantitative studies that did not analyze the differences across racial mixes rather the commonalities among the multiracial population were explored.

Multiracial Identity and Psychological Well-Being

This sample overall reported positive psychological well-being demonstrated by lower mean scores on negative aspects of well-being, perceived stress, and average scores on positive aspects of well-being, life satisfaction, when compared to diverse community samples population (Lavoie & Douglas, 2011; Pavot & Diener, 1993). This finding helps to extend the research on multiracial identity and psychological well-being. Recent

research has found contrary findings; Schlabach (2013) found that there were group differences in emotional and social well-being based on scores from the *Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale* (CES-D) such that multiracial adolescents tended to have lower emotional well-being compared to their monoracial peers. Mixed findings could be related to the utilization of different measures to assess for psychological well-being. The present study utilized a measure of perceived stress rather than a measure of depressive symptoms as the CES-D been demonstrated to be a problematic measure of psychological well-being in diverse samples (Kim, DeCoster, Huang, & Chiriboga, 2011). Binning and colleagues (2009) also assessed for multiracial psychological well-being using a measure of global stress and found that individuals who identified with multiple racial groups reported significantly lower stress. Furthermore, prior to this study, other multiracial research did not control for recent life experiences that may impact a person's psychological well-being generally. In this study, recent life experiences significantly accounted for variance in perceived stress and life satisfaction. This finding is consistent with research exploring the relationship between daily stressors and perceived stress and life satisfaction (Mayberry & Graham, 2001). However, previous multiracial research exploring psychological well-being neglected to include daily hassles as a control variable, which may account for some error in findings supporting a relationship between multiracial identity and psychological well-being. This study is one step toward deepening the equivocal research as it utilized reliable and valid measures of well-being while controlling for general life stressors in order to elucidate multiracial well-being.

Emerging Factors in Identity Experiences

Identity experiences were assessed in this study using a recently created measure that had been psychometrically validated based on a longer version; this study assessed the factors that emerged from the *Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale* (MCRS) using the 30-item measure with this population. The four factors that emerged were consistent with previous research on the identity experiences unique to multiracial individuals (Jackson, 2012; Nadal et al., 2013; Sanchez, 2010). Three of the factors were consistent with the original factor analyses conducted by Salahuddin and O'Brian (2011) on their 74-item measure: appreciation of human differences, lack of family acceptance, and identity questioning. Specifically, for this sample, appreciation of human difference retained all of its items as originally intended by the measure's creators, which lends psychometric support to this subscale for use with multiracial participants. Lack of family acceptance retained three of its five items with the addition of one item that had loaded on to the multiracial discrimination subscale for the 74-item factor analyses. The item inquires about the experience of having *someone outside of the family* saying something *derogatory about multiracial/biracial people*. It is possible that this item loaded onto the lack of family acceptance because the item brought up instances where someone outside of the family said something derogatory and a family member did not support the participant. Identity questioning, also called others' surprise and disbelief at racial heritage on the original *MCRS*, retained three of its five items based on factor analyzing this measure with the present sample. For this sample of multiracial participants, the two items that were not retained because of the variation in responses,

which could have been due to error rather than a true reflection of the participants experience.

It is particularly important to note that a new factor emerged, racial regard, which was a combination of positively scored items of multiracial pride and reverse scored items from challenges with racial identity. All items on this factor appear to reflect an internal sense or valuing of multiracial identity; similar to what Sellers and colleagues (2006) described as psychological closeness with one's identity which includes perceptions of others' views of one's group. The factor emerging in this study lends empirical evidence that racial regard is a distinct aspect of racial identity. Racial regard has been an important factor for monoracial samples (Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006) as well as multiracial samples (Sanchez, Shih, & Garcia, 2009). For this sample, racial regard was significantly negatively correlated with perceived stress, which demonstrates that a positive racial regard is related to decreased perceived stress. Racial regard was also significantly positively correlated with appreciation of human differences and significantly negatively correlated with identity questioning. This suggests that positive racial regard may be related to a positive view of one's multiracial identity such as seeing oneself as appreciating human differences, but that regard decreases with an increase in identity questioning experiences. Thus, when questioned, individuals may feel a lack of psychological closeness with their identity or that their identity is not valued by others, which is consistent with research highlighting the role of social interactions in individuals' expression of their multiracial identity (Gaither, Sommers, & Ambady, 2013; Jackson, 2012) This factor should be explored in future studies to assess whether it is applicable for use with other samples; further due to the correlation of

regard with perceived stress it is important to consider the impact of regard on multiracial well-being.

The only emerging identity experience factor that was significantly, positively correlated to racial malleability was appreciation of human differences. It is possible that awareness of human differences and being more appreciative of those cultural differences relates to being more racially malleable because that awareness leads to identifying differently in varying contexts. It is not clear from this study what the order of that relationship may be, but it is clear that the awareness and appreciation of human differences is positively related to racial regard and being more racially malleable. This finding is consistent with research on multiracial identity integration (Cheng & Lee, 2009). Cheng and Lee (2009) found that integrating one's multiracial identity was malleable based on positive and negative environmental cues, which impacted the individual's perception of racial distance or conflict among their racial groups. Thus, heightened perception of human differences and environmental cues about the regard of one's racial identities may impact the individual's racial malleability.

Racial Malleability and Psychological Well-Being

The current study findings also suggest that there is a significant positive relationship between racial malleability and psychological well-being as measured by life satisfaction. This finding adds to the research on racial malleability as previously it has only been studied in relationship to negative aspects of psychological well-being as measured by the CES-D. Sanchez, Shih and Garcia (2009) found that being more racially malleable was associated with greater depressive symptoms, and that this relationship was mediated by having an unstable racial regard. In the current study, racial regard

could not be explored as a mediator given the non-significant relationship between racial malleability and perceived stress. Also, there was no direct effect of racial regard on life satisfaction, which is required for mediation analyses, however racial regard was explored as a moderator and found to be non-significant. The measure of racial regard in this study is a statistically and conceptually derived measure as it was based on how factors loaded from an existing measure of multiracial pride and challenges of racial identity. The measure was reliable based on this sample; future studies should evaluate the use of these items as a measure of racial regard in order to assess with racial regard impacts the relationship of racial malleability and psychological well-being.

Additionally, racial malleability and perceived stress were moderated by experiences of identity questioning such that increased frequency of having one's identity questioned enhanced the relationship between racial malleability and perceived stress. Therefore being more malleable and having experiences of identity questioning is related to higher levels of perceived stress. This supports existing research that for multiracial people, identity questioning is a stressful and common event (Jackson, 2012). This finding empirically supports multiracial theory suggesting that others' perceptions of a multiracial individual's identity impacts how the individual self-identifies and is related to lower psychological well-being (Sanchez, 2010).

The relationship between racial malleability and life satisfaction was not moderated by identity experiences in this study. However, recent research has explored how perceived discrimination might play a role in how multiracial people identify such that feeling connection to being multiracial mediates a positive relationship between perceived discrimination and life satisfaction (Giamo, Schmitt, & Outten, 2012).

Authenticity and Psychological Well-Being

In the present study, the role of authenticity was explored in multiracial psychological well-being. Findings suggest that an important factor in multiracial psychological well-being is the concept of self-alienation. Self-alienation is defined as "the subjective experience of not knowing oneself, or feeling out of touch with the true self" (Wood et al., 2008, p. 386). For this multiracial sample, self-alienation had a positive significant relationship with perceived stress, such that the more self-alienation participants reported, the more perceived stress they reported. Further, participants indicated a decrease in life satisfaction. These findings suggest that the relationship between racial malleability and negative aspects of psychological well-being is almost nonexistent; rather, it is whether the individual feels they know themselves that has a significant effect on their psychological well-being. Therefore, regardless of how racially malleable participants are, feeling in touch with oneself relates to positive psychological well-being. Given the relationship between self-alienation and psychological well-being, it appears that overall feeling connected and knowing oneself may be a significant buffer for stress and impact life satisfaction for multiracial people. This is consistent with the literature on self-concept and the importance of authenticity in self-complexity, such that stress may be buffered if individuals are authentic in the components of self they affirm in a given situation (Ryan, LaGuardia, & Rawsthorne, 2005). Though authenticity has been explored qualitatively with multiracial individuals (Romo, 2011), this study adds quantitative support for the role of authenticity, especially self-alienation, in multiracial well-being.

Interestingly, though racially malleability was not related to perceived stress, accepting external influences was significantly correlated with both racial malleability and perceived stress. Accepting external influence is an aspect of authenticity (Wood et al, 2008), which accounts for the role of the social environment in one's sense of self. This finding further supports research that cultural identity and self-understanding are influenced by one's social environment (English & Chen, 2007). Though racial malleability and perceived stress did not have a significant relationship for this sample, the significant correlation with accepting external influence may indicate an alternative explanation for previous findings that racial malleability was related to lower psychological well-being. It is possible that the degree to which participants accept external influences impacts their racial malleability, but that alone may not impact their psychological well-being. Rather it may depend on the type of external influences that participants accept that impacts their psychological well-being. For example, in an environment where negative messages about being multiracial are conveyed, participants who accept external influences and are racially malleable may have lower psychological well-being. Thus, the degree to which the individual can filter the information from their social environment through their own self-knowledge may be essential in understanding the relationships between racial malleability and psychological well-being.

Additionally, authentic living, which is defined as the congruence between the way one feels internally and their behaviors, is significantly negatively correlated with perceived stress. Therefore, the more congruence individuals feel between their internal sense of self and their behaviors, the less perceived stress they report. Though authentic living was not significant in the hierarchical linear regression model, the correlation

indicates that authentic living may play a role in multiracial well-being. For example, it may be that authentic living is context-specific rather than an overall sense of authenticity. Recent research on acculturation has indicated that individuals may use different acculturation strategies depending upon the behavioral or value domain, such that someone may be more assimilating in their approach to language while bicultural when it comes social interactions (Miller et al., 2013). It is possible that multiracial people employ a similar approach and feel that they are authentically living in that context.

The Role of Social Environment

Multiracial identity theory has highlighted the role of the social environment. Messages multiracial people receive from their families, social circles, and the larger historical societal views have been identified as important factors (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). For this study, analyses focused upon individuals aged 18 to 40 years as these individuals were believed to be generationally distinct from multiracial adults older than 41 years of age as there were significant cultural shifts in the recognition of multiracial identity during this time period (Nishime, 2012). Previous studies have explored psychological well-being for multiracial adolescents and found negative outcomes for adjustment, depressive symptoms, and lower self-esteem (Shih & Sanchez, 2009). However, developmental differences between multiracial adolescents and adults have not been explored empirically. Age was not found to be a significant factor in this study, which suggests that age alone does not account for individual differences in the relationship between racial malleability and psychological well-being for this sample. This may be due to shifting practices in racial socialization, which has

been identified as having an important role in the development of multiracial identity

(Rollins & Hunter, 2013). Therefore, the shift in societal views on being multiracial may

gradually impact the way parents socialize their children to think about race. This shift in

parenting practices and societal views may not cleanly impact one generation of

multiracial people compared to another, rather it may need to be assessed individually

instead of assuming generational shifts.

Lack of Family Acceptance. For the study sample, lack of family acceptance

was found to be a significant predictor of perceived stress. It is important to note that

lack of family acceptance was only significant when the interaction terms were included

in the model. It is possible that the relationship between lack of family acceptance and

perceived stress is influenced by other factors such as the interaction between racial

malleability and identity questioning. Previous research has highlighted the importance of

family messages regarding racial microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2013). Thus, a

relationship may be contextual whereby lack of family acceptance and the experience of

identity questioning may impact psychological well-being during negative environments

where race is salient. Further, there may need to be other measures of the social

experiences of multiracial people such as accounting for social connectedness (Good,

Chavez, & Sanchez, 2010) and racial socialization (Rollins & Hunter, 2013; Lorezo-

Blanco, Bares, & Delva, 2013), which have been shown to influence family relationships

and multiracial identity.

Implications

This dissertation research has implications for research and counseling with

multiracial people. First it fills in some of the dearth in multiracial research in

counseling. Edwards and Pedrotti (2008) highlighted the lack of research on multiracial individuals put forth in counseling journals. This research underscores the importance of allowing individuals to self-identify with more complexity than checkbox responses for assessing race. Participants frequently preferred to write in more detail about how they identify. In order to accurately capture this segment of the population on the US Census, education, and health care forms, there must be a shift in how race is assessed within the United States. There is a need to allow for the multiracial population to choose how they express their identity rather than the current checkbox options, which sacrifice accuracy for simplicity. Furthermore, the current study utilized psychometrically validated quantitative measures specifically created for multiracial individuals, which helps to build the growing empirical literature with tools developed for, with and about a population that is unique in traditional psychological research (Salahuddin & O'Brian, 2011). The current study helps to fill in the gap for studies examining the role of racial malleability in psychological well-being and indicates that the relationship must continue to be explored. Overall, the findings from this study continue to bridge the gap between multiracial theory and empirical research.

Helping professionals working with multiracial individuals should acknowledge the complexity and diversity of multiracial individuals. Further, the current sample did not indicate higher levels of stress compared to the general population, but did report having average life satisfaction. Therefore deficit models characterizing multiracial individuals as uniformly suffer from confusion, sadness and lack of connection are outdated. When working with multiracial individuals, however, findings from this study indicate that experiences of having one's identity questioned or perceiving a lack of

family acceptance should be assessed, as those experiences may impact psychological well-being. Additionally, regardless of how multiracial individuals identify in varied situations, having a strong sense of self plays an important role in psychological well-being. Helping professionals may focus their work on helping multiracial people develop self-knowledge as a way of helping increase life satisfaction and buffer against stress.

Limitations

Though this study adds to the research on multiracial individuals, it is not without limitations. First, the cross-sectional design of this study does not allow for a time-ordered model to establish how identity experiences influence racial malleability or vice versa. It is important to note that current quantitative methodology is limited in gathering the context-specific logic of identifying differently in various situations. Additionally, this study used snowball-sampling methods, which resulted in varying sample sizes for different racial and ethnic heritages. This limits the ability to compare racial and ethnic combinations to look for group differences, as it would reduce the power of the study to compare unequal groups. Further, a small portion of the sample was born outside of the United States, but currently lives in the United States; also some individuals who were born in the United States are currently living abroad. Time residing in the United States or abroad was not assessed and given the small sample, differences could not be addressed in this study. While a previous study highlighted variation in life satisfaction based on different combinations of ethnic identity, previous qualitative research has emphasized the similarities across multiracial individuals, therefore this study focused on common multiracial experiences. Many of these measures used in the current study have not been widely used therefore a larger sample size would have provided greater

statistical power to run sophisticated analyses for the assessing the psychometric utility of the measures. Finally, participants were recruited via multiracial related social networking groups so multiracial identity may have been particularly central to their identity, which could limit the generalizability of this study to other multiracial samples.

Future Directions

This study sets the stage for future research exploring the relationship between racial malleability and psychological well-being. Continued research exploring the relationship between multiracial identity and psychological well-being must explore the use of alternative ways of measuring well-being with multiracial individuals while controlling for general life stressors that impact well-being. Future studies may assess for specific multiracial experiences and whether people felt congruence between their internal sense of self and their behaviors in that specific experience and how that may relate to psychological well-being.

Future studies should incorporate other demographic variables or experiences related to being an ethnic minority. Studies may include the role of perceived social status in racial malleability as recent studies have shown that social class (as assessed by parents' educational attainment and racial distribution of one's environment) may account for who identifies as multiracial (Townsend et al., 2012). Also, based on a recent study that points to the buffering effects of identifying as multiracial on the relationship between discrimination and psychological well-being (Giamo, Schmitt, & Outten, 2012), future research should examine the relationship between racial malleability and discrimination.

In the present study, relationships between constructs that have not previously been studied with a multiracial sample were illuminated; further examination of these relationships may be beneficial to extending the research with this population. Remaining questions center on the relationship between identity questioning and a lack of family acceptance, as well as how aspects of authenticity influence the relationship. In addition, a mixed methods design may be beneficial in shedding light on the role of racial malleability in different contexts by contextualizing assessed processes of malleability, questioning and social interactions with thick descriptions of lived experiences. Incorporating qualitative data in a study of multiracial experiences would allow an examination of the meaning making processes in which participants engage, which likely influence a variety of outcomes.

Conclusions

The findings of this study reinforce the complexity of multiracial identity. First and foremost, the way multiracial people identify is diverse and requires alternative options to truly assess how people self-identify. Second, racial malleability may not have a direct effect on negative aspects of psychological well-being, but identifying differently in different contexts does relate to positive aspects of well-being. Third, lack of family acceptance and identity questioning may play a role in the relationship between racial malleability and perceived stress and that relationship should be further explored. Finally, self-alienation plays a significant role in the psychological well-being of multiracial individuals. As this segment of the population grows both popular and empirical curiosity about their experiences increases as well. The current dissertation study contributes an examination of the complexity inherent in fully understanding the

multiracial experience. Additionally, this research helps to fill the gap between existing

multiracial identity theory and empirical evidence as well as provides an empirical

extension of the extant racial identity literature.

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TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the sample (N = 149).

	n	*%*
Gender		
Female	117	78.5
Male	29	19.5
Transgender	2	1.3
Unknown	1	.7
Region		
New England	7	4.7
Mid-Atlantic	24	16.1
Midwest-East North Central	17	11.4
Midwest-West North Central	11	7.4
South Atlantic	43	28.9
East South Central	3	2.0
West South Central	4	2.7
West Mountain	3	2.0
West Pacific	33	22.1
Not Currently in the US	3	2.0
Educational Attainment		
High school degree or equivalent	16	10.7
Some college but no degree	23	15.4
Associates Degree	9	6.0
Bachelor Degree	60	40.3
Master's Degree	32	21.5
Professional Degree	4	2.7
Doctorate Degree	5	3.4
Phenotype		
I look monoracial and most people assume I am monoracial.	13	8.7
I physically look White: I could "pass" (as White).	10	6.7
My physical features are ambiguous, people assume I am a person of color mixed with another race.	46	30.9
My physical features are ambiguous, people question what I am and their assumptions of what I am frequently changes.	79	53.0
Unknown	1	.7

99

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the racial categories with which participants identified (N = 149).

Racial Category	n	%
Asian	1	.7
Asian-Latino	4	2.7
Asian-Latino-White	1	.7
Asian-White	17	11.4
Asian-White-Middle Eastern	1	.7
Black	3	2.0
Black-Asian	7	4.7
Black-Asian-Latino	2	1.3
Black-Asian-Latino-White	3	2.0
Black-Asian-White	5	3.4
Black-Asian-White-Native American	2	1.3
Black-Latino	7	4.7
Black-Latino-Native American	2	1.3
Black-Latino-White	3	2.0
Black-Pacific Islander	1	.7
Black-White	65	43.6
Black-White-Native American	7	4.7
East Indian	1	.7
Latino	3	2.0
Latino-Middle Eastern	1	.7
Latino-White	8	5.4
Multiracial	1	.7
White	1	.7
White-Native American	2	1.3
White-Pacific Islander	1	.7

Table 3. Psychometric Properties of Major Study Variables.

Aim	Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*	α	Range Potential	Actual	Skew
1,2	Life experiences	122	75.07	17.03	.91	41-164	49-127	.96
1,2	Racial malleability	149	4.09	1.49	.81	1-7	1-7	-.26
1	Identity experiences							
1	Appreciation of human** differences	134	21.32	4.59	.90	0-25	0-25	-2.13
1	Racial regard**	135	20.98	4.34	.76	0-25	3-25	-1.38
1	Lack of family acceptance**	135	7.90	5.50	.73	0-20	0-20	.627
1	Identity questioning**	137	9.41	3.94	.65	0-15	0-15	-.24
2	Authenticity							
2	Accepting external influences	142	11.51	5.02	.89	4-28	4-28	.74
2	Authentic living	142	23.86	3.19	.72	4-28	10-28	-1.24
2	Self-alienation	144	8.83	5.63	.83	4-28	4-27	1.30
1,2	Psychological well-being							
1,2	Perceived stress	128	16.55	6.74			4-38	.50
1,2	Life satisfaction	130	24.18	6.39			6-35	-.74

**NOTE: Appreciation of human differences, racial regard, lack of family acceptance, and identity questioning were derived based on factor loadings of the items from the *Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale* with this particular sample.

Table 4. Correlation matrix for study variables in Aim 1.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Life Experiences	--							
Racial Malleability	-.08	--						
Appreciation of human differences	.09	.18*	--					
Racial regard	-.22**	-.09	.17*	--				
Lack of Family Acceptance	.31**	.04	.03	-.13	--			
Identity Questioning	.07	.07	.08	-.18*	.25**	--		
Perceived Stress	.56**	.01	.03	-.25**	.30**	.04	--	
Life Satisfaction	-.38**	.19*	.04	.14	-.17*	-.003	-.50**	--

*p <.05 level. **p <.001 level.

Table 5. Correlation matrix for study variables in Aim 2.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Life Experiences	--						
Racial Malleability	-.08	--					
Accepting External Influences	.01	.17*	--				
Authentic Living	-.02	-.15	-.33**	--			
Self-Alienation	.43*	.09	.36**	-.24*	--		
Perceived Stress	.56**	.01	.21*	-.19*	.54**	--	
Life Satisfaction	-.38**	.19*	.08	-.05	-.34**	-.50**	--

*p <.05 level. **p <.001 level.

Table 6. Hierarchical linear regression analyses predicting psychological well-being from racial malleability and identity challenge and resilience experiences.

| | Psychological Well-Being | | | |
| | Perceived Stress | | Life Satisfaction | |
Predictor	ΔR^2	b	ΔR^2	b
Step 1	.36**		.17**	
Recent life experiences		.23**		-.15**
Step 2	.03		.05	
Racial malleability		.03		.13*
Appreciation of human differences		.001		.04
Racial regard		-.21		.11
Lack of family acceptance		.17		-.08
Identity questioning		-.11		.06
Step 3	.06*		.04	
Racial malleability x Appreciation of human differences		-.01		.01
Racial malleability x Racial regard		.01		-.01
Racial malleability x Lack of family acceptance		-.02		.02
Racial malleability x Identity questioning		.03*		.001
Total R^2	.45*		.51	
n	149		149	

*p <.05 level. **p <.001 level.

Table 7. Hierarchical linear regression analyses predicting psychological well-being from racial malleability and authenticity.

| | Psychological Well-Being | | | |
| | Perceived Stress | | Life Satisfaction | |
Predictor	ΔR^2	b	ΔR^2	b
Step 1	.35**		.17**	
Recent life experiences		.23**		-.15**
Step 2	.12**		.10*	
Racial malleability		-.01		.13*
Accepting external influences		.09		.18
Authentic living		-.16		-.11
Self-alienation		.36**		-.35**
Step 3	.02		.03	
Racial malleability x Accepting external influences		.001		.02
Racial malleability x Authentic living		.01		-.01
Racial malleability x Self-alienation		-.02		.01
Total R^2	.49		.30	
n	149		149	

*p <.05 level. **p <.001 level.

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Recruitment email to participants

eProst ID: 20120463

Approval Date: 9/26/2012

Version:

Approved

Greetings!

My name is Lauren Smith and I am a doctoral student in counseling psychology at the University of Miami. As part of my dissertation research, I am conducting a survey of adult multiracial individuals' experiences with shifting expressions of racial identity and identity questioning.

The purpose of this research study is to understand the experiences of multiracial individuals, how shifting racial expressions, authenticity, identity questioning and experiences that represent challenges and resilience impact multiracial individuals' well-being. I would appreciate if you could participate and/or forward this study to potential participants.

Participants must self-identify as biracial, multiracial, mixed race or as having parents of two or more different races, and be over the age of 18.
To participate in the study, please click here:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GNNSXTZ

Prospective participants who meet these criteria can click on the link provided above and will be directed to two eligibility questions and then the informed consent, which includes additional information on study participation. Participation in the study is expected to take approximately 30 minutes.

Participation is confidential and participants may withdraw from the study at any time. If participants have any questions, they may contact me at L.smith26@umiami.edu.

Thank you.

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

Project Title: Racial Malleability and Authenticity in Multiracial Well-Being
Researcher(s): Lauren E. Smith, Ed.M., Laura-Kohn-Wood, Ph.D. and Guerda
Nicolas, Ph.D.

Introduction: You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Lauren E. Smith, Ed. M., doctoral candidate in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Miami, and Dr. Laura Kohn-Wood and Dr. Guerda Nicolas, faculty members at the University of Miami. You are being asked to participate because we are interested in the experiences of individuals who identify with more than one race. You are being asked because you are an adult 18 years or older. We are interested in a diverse sample of multiracial adults. Please read this form carefully before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to understand how malleable racial identity and experiences such as having your identity questioned may impact well-being.

Procedures: If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in the one-time completion of a series of questions/surveys online and a demographic form. Surveys will ask about your experiences of challenge and strengths being bi/multiracial, authenticity, malleability and your overall sense of well-being. The survey will take no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

Risks/Benefits: There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but results will help psychologists and mental health providers to better understand multiracial identity and the lived experiences of multiracial people in order to clarify existing themes presented in research and popular media.

Confidentiality: We will protect the privacy of those who participate in the research study. Confidentiality will be maintained by the Survey Monkey security measures of encrypting your information, maintaining your data on secure servers, and using advanced technology for Internet security. Your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet. No identifying information will be shared with anyone who is not connected with the research project. Information presented at conferences or for publication will not identify any individuals who participated. There will be no way to connect individual responses to individuals. No identifying information will be collected on the demographic form or any of the surveys. There are no questions on the surveys that will ask for identifying information. Survey responses will be kept in a secured password-protected file.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions: You are encouraged to ask questions. If you have any questions about this research study, please call Lauren Smith at L.Smith26@umiami.edu or 609-439-7522. Faculty advisors for this study may be contacted as well: Laura Kohn-Wood at L.Kohnwood@miami.edu or Guerda Nicolas at nguerda@miami.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, please contact the University of Miami Human Subject Research Office (HSRO) at (305) 243-3195 or eprost@med.miami.edu.

Statement of Consent: I have read the information in this consent form and agree to participate in this survey. Please click the link below to provide consent for your participation in this study.

Please check one box.

_____ I **DO** consent to participate in this survey.
_____ I **DO NOT** consent to participate in this survey.

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC MEASURE

Please respond to the following questions.

Age: _____

Gender/Sex:
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Transgender

What state do you currently reside in?
Select One

What country were you born in?
Select one

What is your primary preferred language?
Select one

What is your marital status?
- ☐ Single, never married
- ☐ Cohabitating
- ☐ Domestic Partnership
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, mark the previous grade or highest degree received.
- ☐ Did not complete high school
- ☐ High School Graduate or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- ☐ Some College
- ☐ Associate Degree (for example: AA, AS)
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree (for example: BA, AB, BS)
- ☐ Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA)
- ☐ Professional degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)
- ☐ Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD)

What is your total household income?
- ☐ I do not have an income

□ Less than $10,000
□ $10,000 to $19,999
□ $20,000 to $29,999
□ $30,000 to $39,999
□ $40,000 to $49,999
□ $50,000 to $59,999
□ $60,000 to $69,999
□ $70,000 to $79,999
□ $80,000 to $89,999
□ $90,000 to $99,999
□ $100,000 to $149,999
□ $150,000 or more

Your Race: Check all that Apply
□ Black/African American
□ White, Non-Hispanic
□ Asian/Pacific Islander
□ Native American
□ Other (Please specify: _____)

Your Ethnicity: Check all that Apply
□ Black or African American, including Caribbean, Haitian, African, and others
(Please specify: _____)
□ Asian or Asian American, including Chinese, Japanese, and others
(Please specify: _____)
□ Hispanic or Latino, including Cuban, Mexican, and others
(Please specify: _____)
□ White, Caucasian, Anglo, European American, not Hispanic
(Please specify: _____)
□ Pacific Islander including Tongan, Samoan, and others
(Please specify: _____)
□ Other
(Please specify: _____)

Categories like the above are inherently unable to capture the complexity of multiracial individuals' identity so in the following space please describe how you see yourself in terms of race and/or ethnicity:

Please select which of the following best described your racial identity:
(1) I consider myself exclusively one race
(2) I sometimes consider myself one race, sometimes another race, and sometimes biracial, depending on the circumstances
(3) I consider myself biracial, but I experience the world as a person of color
(4) I consider myself exclusively biracial (neither one race nor another race)
(5) I consider myself exclusively White (not person of color or biracial)

(6) Race is meaningless, I do not believe in racial identities

(7) Other—please specify: _____

Please check all that apply for the race/ethnicity of your biological mother.
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ White, Non-Hispanic
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Latino/Hispanic
- ☐ Other (Please specify: _____)

Please check all that apply for the race/ethnicity of your biological father.
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ White, Non-Hispanic
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Latino/Hispanic
- ☐ Other (Please specify: _____)

What was the racial composition of your grammar or elementary school?
- ☐ Mostly Black/African American
- ☐ Mostly White
- ☐ Multiracial/Multi-ethnic
- ☐ Mostly Asian/Asian-American
- ☐ Mostly Latino/Hispanic
- ☐ Other (Please specify: _____)

What was the racial composition of your closest friends in grammar or elementary school?
- ☐ Mostly Black/African American
- ☐ Mostly White
- ☐ Multiracial/Multi-ethnic
- ☐ Mostly Asian/Asian-American
- ☐ Mostly Latino/Hispanic
- ☐ Other (Please specify: _____)

What was the racial composition of your junior high or middle school?
- ☐ Mostly Black/African American
- ☐ Mostly White
- ☐ Multiracial/Multi-ethnic
- ☐ Mostly Asian/Asian-American
- ☐ Mostly Latino/Hispanic
- ☐ Other (Please specify: _____)

What was the racial composition of your high school?

□ Mostly Black/African American
□ Mostly White
□ Multiracial/Multi-ethnic
□ Mostly Asian/Asian-American
□ Mostly Latino/Hispanic
□ Other (Please specify: _____)

What was the racial composition of your closest friends in high school?
□ Mostly Black/African American
□ Mostly White
□ Multiracial/Multi-ethnic
□ Mostly Asian/Asian-American
□ Mostly Latino/Hispanic
□ Other (Please specify: _____)

What was the racial composition of your neighborhood while growing up?
□ Mostly Black/African American
□ Mostly White
□ Multiracial/Multi-ethnic
□ Mostly Asian/Asian-American
□ Mostly Latino/Hispanic
□ Other (Please specify: _____)

What was/is the racial composition of your college? (if you are currently in college, please use your current situation)
□ Mostly Black/African American
□ Mostly White
□ Multiracial/Multi-ethnic
□ Mostly Asian/Asian-American
□ Mostly Latino/Hispanic
□ Other (Please specify: _____)

The connection you felt with your mother's family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) can best be described as:
□ Extremely connected
□ Somewhat connected
□ Somewhat disconnected
□ Extremely disconnected
□ No contact

The connection you felt with your father's family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) can best be described as:
□ Extremely connected
□ Somewhat connected
□ Somewhat disconnected
□ Extremely disconnected

☐ No contact

Which of the following best describes your physical appearance?
    ☐ I look monoracial and most people assume that I am monoracial.
    ☐ My physical features are ambiguous, people assume I am a person of color mixed with another race.
    ☐ My physical features are ambiguous, people question what I am and their assumption of what I am frequently changes.
    ☐ I physically look white; I could "pass" (as white).

APPENDIX D: MALLEABLE RACIAL IDENTIFICATION

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

1. In different situations, I will identify more closely with one of my racial identities than another.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. I often identify more with one racial identity than another depending on the race of the person I am with.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. Depending on the activity, I feel closer to one racial identity than another.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. I feel that I adapt to the situation at hand by identifying as one racial identity or another.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. One racial identity can be more important than another in the moment depending on the race of the people I am with.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

APPENDIX E: AUTHENTICITY SCALE

1. "I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe me at all						Describes me very well

2. "I don't know how I really feel inside."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe me at all						Describes me very well

3. "I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe me at all						Describes me very well

4. "I usually do what other people tell me to do."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe me at all						Describes me very well

5. "I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe me at all						Describes me very well

6. "Other people influence me greatly."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe me at all						Describes me very well

7. "I feel as if I don't know myself very well."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe me at all						Describes me very well

8. "I always stand by what I believe in."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe me at all						Describes me very well

9. "I am true to myself in most situations."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe me at all						Describes me very well

10. "I feel out of touch with the 'real me.'"

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe me at all						Describes me very well

11. "I live in accordance with my values and beliefs."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe me at all						Describes me very well

12. "I feel alienated from myself."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe me at all						Describes me very well

APPENDIX F: MULTIRACIAL CHALLENGES AND RESILIENCE SCALE

Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale (MCRS) Part 1

The term "multiracial" refers to an individual whose biological parents represent two or more different racial groups (e.g., your mother is Black, White, Asian, Native American, Middle Eastern, Latino, or biracial, and your father is a different race than your mother).

For the following 15 items, please indicate how often each event has happened to you (frequency) and how distressed you felt as a result of the event (distress). Please use the following 6-point scales.

Item	Frequency	Distress
	0 _ Never happened to me 1 _ Happened to me once 2 _ Happened to me 2–4 times 3 _ Happened to me 5–7 times 4 _ Happened to me 8–10 times 5 _ Happened to me more than 10 times	0 _ Not at all distressed 1 _ Slightly distressed 2 _ Somewhat distressed 3 _ Moderately distressed 4 _ Very distressed 5 _ Extremely distressed
1. Someone chose NOT to date me because I am multiracial.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
2. An individual acted surprised when they saw me with a family member because we look like we belong to different racial group(s).	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
3. A family member said something negative about multiracial/biracial people.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
4. Someone outside my family said something derogatory about multiracial/biracial people.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
5. I was discriminated against because of one or more of my racial backgrounds.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
6. Someone in my family made a hurtful statement about one of the racial	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5

group(s) with whom I identify.		
7. When I disclosed my racial background, someone acted surprised.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
8. A family member said that I am NOT a "real" member of a racial group(s) with whom I identify.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
9. I told someone about my racial background(s), but they did NOT believe me.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
10. A member of my family expected me to "choose" one racial group with whom to identify.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
11. Someone placed me in a racial category based on their assumptions about my race.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
12. A member of my family treated me like an "outsider" because I am multiracial.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
13. I was the victim of discrimination because I am multiracial.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
14. A person outside of my family made a hurtful statement about one of the racial group(s) with whom I identify.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
15. Someone did NOT believe I was related to a family member because we look like we belong to different racial groups.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5

Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale (MCRS) Part 2

Based on your experiences as a multiracial person, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Please respond to Items 16–30 using the following 6-point scale, indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the statements below.

Item	Rating
	0 _ Strongly disagree
	1 _ Disagree
	2 _ Slightly disagree
	3 _ Slightly agree
	4 _ Agree
	5 _ Strongly Agree
16. I love being multiracial.	0 1 2 3 4 5
17. I hide parts of myself when interacting with some friends.	
18. Being multiracial makes me feel MORE attractive to romantic partners.	0 1 2 3 4 5
19. As a multiracial person, I have developed an appreciation of different cultures.	0 1 2 3 4 5
20. I feel the need to prove my racial identity to others.	0 1 2 3 4 5
21. Because of my experiences as a multiracial person, I value human differences.	0 1 2 3 4 5
22. I am proud that I am multiracial.	0 1 2 3 4 5
23. Being multiracial has taught me to understand multiple perspectives.	0 1 2 3 4 5
24. I feel as if I do NOT belong to any racial group.	0 1 2 3 4 5
25. Because of my experiences as a multiracial person, I have compassion for people who are different than myself.	0 1 2 3 4 5
26. I wish I was NOT multiracial.	0 1 2 3 4 5
27. Being multiracial has taught me to adapt to a variety of cultural situations.	0 1 2 3 4 5
28. Being multiracial makes me feel special.	0 1 2 3 4 5
29. I feel pressure to distance myself from a racial group to which I feel connected.	0 1 2 3 4 5
30. Because I am multiracial, I do NOT have a strong sense of who I am.	0 1 2 3 4 5
	0 1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX G: SATISFACTION WITH LIFE SCALE

Satisfaction With Life Scale

Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding. The 7-point scale is as follows:

1= strongly disagree
2= disagree
3= slightly disagree
4= neither agree nor disagree
5= slightly agree
6= agree
7= strongly agree

__ 1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

__ 2. The conditions of my life are excellent.

__ 3. I am satisfied with my life.

__ 4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

__ 5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

APPENDIX H: PERCEIVED STRESS SCALE

Perceived Stress Scale

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate by circling how often you felt or thought a certain way.

0 = Never 1 = Almost Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Fairly Often 4 = Very Often

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?   0 1 2 3 4

2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?   0 1 2 3 4

3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?   0 1 2 3 4

4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?   0 1 2 3 4

5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?   0 1 2 3 4

6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?   0 1 2 3 4

7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?   0 1 2 3 4

8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?   0 1 2 3 4

9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?   0 1 2 3 4

10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?   0 1 2 3 4

APPENDIX I: SURVEY OF RECENT LIFE EXPERIENCES

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SURVEY OF RECENT LIFE EXPERIENCES

Following is a list of experiences which many people have some time or other. Please indicate for each experience how much it has been part of your life over the past month. Put a "1" in the space provided next to an experience if it was not at all a part of your life over the past month (e.g., "trouble with mother in law – 1"); "2" for an experience which was only slightly part of your life over that time; "3" for an experience which was distinctly part of your life; and "4" for an experience which was very much part of your life over the past month.

Intensity of Experience over Past Month
1 = not at all part of my life
2 = only slightly part of my life
3 = distinctly part of my life
4 = very much part of my life

1. Disliking your daily activities
2. Disliking your work
3. Ethnic or racial conflict
4. Conflicts with in-laws or boyfriend's/girlfriend's family
5. Being let down or disappointed by friends
6. Conflict with supervisor(s) at work
7. Social rejection
8. Too many things to do at once
9. Being taken for granted
10. Financial conflicts with family members
11. Having your trust betrayed by a friend
12. Having your contributions overlooked
13. Struggling to meet your own standards of performance and accomplishment
14. Being taken advantage of
15. Not enough leisure time
16. Cash-flow difficulties
17. A lot of responsibilities at work
18. Dissatisfaction with work
19. Decisions about intimate relationship(s)
20. Not enough time to meet your obligations
21. Financial burdens
22. Lower evaluation of your work than you think you deserve
23. Experiencing high levels of noise
24. Lower evaluations of your work than you hoped for
25. Conflicts with family member(s)

26. Finding your work too demanding
27. Conflicts with friend(s)
28. Trying to secure loan(s)
29. Getting "ripped off" or cheated in the purchase of goods
30. Unwanted interruptions of your work
31. Social isolation
32. Being ignored
33. Dissatisfaction with your physical appearance
34. Unsatisfactory housing conditions
35. Finding work uninteresting
36. Failing to get money you expected
37. Gossip about someone you care about
38. Dissatisfaction with your physical fitness
39. Gossip about yourself
40. Difficulty dealing with modern technology (e.g., computers)
41. Hard work to look after and maintain home