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A Mixed Methods Examination of
Racial and Ethnic Identity In College Students

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Methods.....	18
Results.....	22
<i>Quantitative Data</i>	23
<i>Qualitative Data</i>	27
Discussion.....	41
References.....	50
Appendix A Survey Questionnaires.....	54
Appendix B Interview Guide.....	61

ABSTRACT

The present study compares the salience of ethnic and racial identities across social situations and levels of self-esteem between monoracial majority, monoracial minority and multiracial college students. I utilized mixed methods, including quantitative measures of ethnic identity, racial and ethnic identity salience and self-esteem and qualitative of in-depth interviews. Participants consisted of a racially and ethnically diverse pool of 216 male and female college students from schools across the country. Recruiting occurred via email to cultural organizations at Mount Holyoke College and other colleges and universities across the country. A representative sample of 14 students participated in the qualitative interviews. Using several one-way analyses of variances to determine differences between means within each measure the present study found that monoracial majority students' racial and ethnic identities are less salient than those of monoracial minority and multiracial college students. Additionally, self-esteem did not significantly differ across the three racial and ethnic groups. This study contributes to the understanding of how college students across racial and ethnic groups manage their racial and ethnic identities. Furthermore, it provides new evidence concerning the differences in levels of self-esteem across racial and ethnic groups.

A MIXED METHODS EXAMINATION OF
RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

For many people, race is one of several possible identities that influence daily social interactions. The study of race, race relations, and racial identity development has increased in the last 40 to 50 years. There are several reasons for this increased interest in racial and ethnic identity. The increase in immigration of new non-European ethnic groups, the increase in the number of interracial marriages and multiracial births, and the interest in whiteness as an identity have raised the awareness of the complexities of racial and ethnic identity (Jaret and Reitzes, 1999).

After the civil rights movement, the “biracial baby boom” occurred (Jaret and Reitzes, 1999). The biracial baby boom led the United States to recognize a new racial group, one that classifies its members as being a part of more than one racial or ethnic group. Race and ethnicity are only two roles people use to identify themselves. Research shows that multiracial people (who identify as such) are not the only people who use multiple roles within their identity; instead, most people tend to use multiple roles that occur throughout one’s life (Burke, 1997). The current study focused on the differences between the levels of racial and ethnic identity salience by college students across three racial and ethnic groups; namely monoracial majority, monoracial minority and multiracial.

Before the 2000 census, the estimated population of biracial people in the United States ranged from one to ten million people (Poston, 2001). The wide range in the possible population of multiracial people in the U.S. shows the uncertainty and lack of acknowledgement of the mixed race identity. As society slowly moves forward in accepting multiracial identities, there is the question of what would happen if a separate socially constructed racial category was formed for multiracial people (Pabst, 2003). Writers such as Zack and Graham (as cited in Pabst, 2003) suggest that if multiraciality became a separate racial category, then society's understanding of race as clear dichotomized boundaries would be broken or at the very least challenged: "If individuals of mixed race are granted a separate racial identity, then all myths of racial purity and stability break down because there is then such a large universe of possible races that the historical contingency of any group's racial identity becomes transparent" (Pabst, 2003, p. 202). Self-identified multiracial persons could challenge what it means to be monoracial. In these writings and others predict biracial and multiracial identities will blur the historically clear cut racial lines.

However, despite increased awareness of these complexities, racial identity models focus primarily on one racial or ethnic group at a time. Using a racially separated and narrow field of focus leads to limited knowledge about identity development comparison across racial and ethnic groups. Phinney (1992) recognized the lack of research across racial and ethnic lines and designed a measure to quantitatively study similarities and differences

across racial and ethnic groups called the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). The MEIM is one example of the changes made to empirical research to increase an understanding of racial and ethnic identity across such groups. Another reason for the increase in awareness and interest in the multiracial experience is in response to the 2000 Census, which allowed people to check more than one racial and ethnic identity box, acknowledging the fact that people identify as being a member of more than one racial or ethnic group. Although there has been an increase in population and recognition of biracial and multiracial identity, there has not been an equal increase in research on this newly forming racial identity group.

Racial identity models

Since the 1960s, several models have been developed to explain the process of racial identity development for Blacks and Asian-Americans (Jackson, 2001). There are four stages that are generally used across racial identity models that explain how an individual understands his or her racial identity. In the first stages individuals are unaware or ignorant about his or her racial self. In the next stage he or she accepts and internalizes the definition of their race and ethnic group as proposed by White society; as a result, people may move away from his or her own racial or ethnic group toward the cultural ideals of whiteness. Next, an individual realizes that the images defined by Whites about his or her own ethnic and racial groups are negative and begins to react against whiteness itself. The final goal for the individual is to reach a stage where he or she develops the confidence in a

positive racial identity by integrating his or her racial identity into the rest of the self (Adams, 2001). While it may appear that immersion may possibly occur during these earlier stages, it primarily occurs during the final stage. At this time the individual fully incorporates his or her ethnic and racial identity into all other aspects of one identity.

Racial identity models were created to explain racial identity development in monoracial minority people. These models allow insight into how people use their racial identity to define themselves. However, there is only one racial identity that is developed in the monoracial development models. For multiracial people, more than one racial identity is possibly being developed, which may indicate that they have more salient identities than monoracial people. Monoracial identity development models, such as those by Jackson (2001), Hardiman (2001), and Kim (2001) all focus on racial identity as a response to a person of color's process of understanding his or her experience within the system of racism (Wijeyesinghe, 2001). These racial identity models assume that the experiences of all people of color, including multiracial people, fit into the monoracial racial identity development. Researchers find that the multiracial identity development cannot be compared to the monoracial identity process (Wijeyesinghe, 2001). Because they do not fit the monoracial identity models, it is difficult to understand how multiracial people structure their racial identity. This complexity is difficult to measure using the monoracial models that are linear

and singularly focused, which do not always consider the multiple societal contexts.

Accordingly, models of monoracial identity development do not leave room for a person to develop a racial identity from more than one racial group. The monoracial identity models do not consider the process of choosing a racial or ethnic identity; instead it is assumed that a monoracial racial identity is socially ascribed (Wijeyesinghe, 2001). Within these particular stage models there is no space or time that explains the process of choosing how to racially identify. For multiracial people, having the opportunity to choose a racial identity, instead of being born into a socially ascribed race, adds to the complexity and possibly prolongs the duration of their racial identity development.

In an attempt to remove multiracial people from the marginal status of previous monoracial models, new models specifically for the multiracial identity have been developed. Poston (2001), for example, suggests a new stage model specifically for biracial and multiracial people. In this model there is space and consideration for the integration of multiple cultures, ethnicities, and contextual factors such as social status and support. The individual moves through the following five stages: 1. choose one of the racial or ethnic groups represented; 2. develops feelings of confusion and guilt for choosing one race or ethnicity; 3. learns to appreciate multiple racial and ethnic identities, and 4. is able to integrate all races and ethnicities as a part of one identity (Poston, 2001). However, like most stage models, Poston's

(2001) structure does not allow for the flexibility of racial identity across different social situations. Instead, each stage uses a moment in time defining the experience of change in racial and ethnic identities. Thus, the focus should be on models that allow flexible movement of racial identity across social situations.

In response to the limited ways multiracial people's identities were being studied, Wijeyesinghe presented a non-stage model that incorporates the wide variety of identity choices and experiences that develop over time for multiracial people. Her Factor Model of Multiracial Identity (FMMI) incorporates several contributors to her multidimensional model, such as cultural attachment, political awareness, racial ancestry, and other social identities (2001). This model acknowledges that a multiracial person has many identities that are used to understand experiences in relation to the self. Wijeyesinghe (2001) introduces the concept that identity for multiracials form in response to various experiences and other identities prevalent in one's life. These experiences vary from individual to individual. From the work of Wijeyesinghe (2001), it is possible to study the differences in the number salient roles that are held by monoracial versus multiracial college students.

Another example of a non-stage model for multiracial identity development is introduced by Root (as cited in Renn, 2003). This model focuses on the influence that one's sociocultural context has on shaping the identity of an individual. It specifically focuses on college students, showing how the campus's sociocultural context influences the student's racial identity

development. The model focuses on the person's ability to be comfortable with a self-definition in, across, and/or in between racial groups known as "border crossing" (Renn, 2003). In this model there are four possible states with which a multiracial person can choose to identify: 1. the individual can stand with both feet in all racial backgrounds (i.e. being fully immersed in all racial and ethnic backgrounds); 2. the individual could switch different racial and/or ethnic identities to the foreground or background known as situational ethnicity and race; 3. locate him or herself on the borders of all racial groups; 4. the individual could choose to be in one racial identity group while at the same time allowing space for other racial or ethnic identities. This last state is sometimes referred to as "home base" (Renn, 2003).

Although this borders crossing model by Root, does not take into account as many factors as Wijeyesinghe's FMMI (2001), the goal is the same: to provide a flexible and encompassing explanation for multiracial identity development. Both of the models proposed by Root and Wijeyesinghe provide a rationale to study and accept the process of developing more than one racial identity by demonstrating the complexity of the multiracial identity development. Understanding the complex development of a multiracial identity allows research to move forward and to focus on how multiracial identities are managed in comparison to a monoracial identity. Because of the flexibility of racial identities for multiracials, the perception of a multiracial identity by monoracial people may potentially raise conflicts.

The following study by Khanna (2004), demonstrates the challenges that multiracial people experience as they manage multiple racial identities while interacting with monoracial people. When people, who are racially ambiguous (for example, multiracial persons) assert a racial identity, people question the credibility of this association. A common example of this questioning is: “Really? You don’t look it!” (Khanna, 2004, p. 125). This is one example of the daily experiences multiracial people have with monoracial people influencing the way in which they choose to racially identify. Khanna (2004) studies how social situations, personal context, and the social status of multiracial Asian-Americans can greatly affect how they choose to identify. Khanna (2004) argues that challenging a racial identity affects the self-identification of being a multiracial Asian. Because multiracial Asians are already not “full” Asian, there is a preexisting feeling of not being accepted by Asians. When cultural exposure increases, the feeling of “otherness” will intensify. When a multiracial Asian visits their Asian parent’s country of origin, there is a decrease in the likelihood that the individual will identify as being Asian at all (Khanna, 2004). This example further supports the notion that multiracial identities are flexible, which gives multiracial people the opportunity to choose which racial identity is their primary point of reference placed in their foreground at particular points in time and in a particular sociocultural context. Khanna explains how social situations may affect the salience of racial identities for multiracial people.

As suggested by Khanna's (2004) work, challenging social situations such as the one described above, may force people to choose one racial identity over another. It is not clear if this forced choice increases or decreases the salience of racial identity in these situations. Racial and ethnic identities are fluid, which suggests that there are other roles, such as gender, socioeconomic class, familial status, that can become more salient (within an identity) at different points of time. Khanna's (2004) research best demonstrates that there is fluidity in racial and ethnic identity, specifically within multiracial individuals.

Therefore, given that race is socially constructed, the boundaries between races are dependent on society's definitions (Harris and Sim, 2002). The fluidity of racial identity can also be observed as immigrants' racial identities are assigned and changed by the new host country. For example, it is often seen with Latinos, specifically Dominican immigrants entering the U.S., that there is a shift in racial identification based on the U.S.'s definitions of race. Some immigrants may initially self-identify as White. Over time, through the experience of living in the United States, their racial identity is socially changed from being White or mixed to Black or non-White (Duang, 1998). This example shows how on a national level people may self-identify as one way, but are then in conflict with the host country's definition or categorization of race. Additionally, there is a disconnect, as demonstrated in the work by Khanna (2004), that some multiracial people experience. This disconnect is between how others perceive racial identification versus how

multiracial people racially self-identify. Thus, research is needed to explore the reasons behind these discrepancies and how these perceived discrepancies affect people's self concept.

Multiple identity saliencies

Not only are racial identities fluid on a national level, but they are also fluid during people's daily experiences. It is therefore possible for multiracial people to hold various "context-specific" racial identities (Harris and Sim, 2002, 615). When Harris and Sim asked multiracial students to best fit themselves into one racial category, the context, the student's neighborhood, geographical location, culture, and social networks greatly influenced the way in which students answered (2002). The multiple agents that affect a multiracial student's answer to the "best fit" question in choosing a monoracial identity further supports the complexity of trying to understand the multiracial identity experience. This context-specific or fluid racial identity is easily understood and accepted for people who are multiracial, how fluid and context-specific is a monoracial identity? Additionally, as supported by the work of Khanna (2004), Root's border crossing model (Renn, 2003) and Wijeyesinghe's Factor Model of Multiracial Identity (2001), the fluidity of racial identity for multiracial people leaves room for other identities to become more salient across social contexts. To understand the way race is managed within a person's identity, research must focus on how racial and ethnic identities compare to the other salient roles that are used to define the self. As a person changes social contexts, the importance of race or ethnicity

will change (White and Burke 1987; Jaret and Rietzes, 1999). White and Burke (1987) found that an identity was most salient when experienced as a minority status. For example, if a female student of color entered a classroom of all White females, her identity as a person of color would probably become her most salient identity. It is likely that her as a person of color becomes the most salient identity because it is singled out as different from the racial identities of the other people in the room. If a particular trait or role does not seem applicable or important in a particular social situation, because it is not in the minority status, then that identity would be less salient, leaving the option for having another role to become the focused role in the situation (White and Burke, 1987).

People can organize their self-defining roles in a hierarchy of importance to understand the self in various social situations. If a particular role is salient then it is the primary definition of a person's self-concept (Callero, 1985). Identity salience, in turn, influences the way people form relationships and interact with one another. For example, the most salient roles are used to establish a personal point of reference when perceiving and evaluating others (Callero, 1985). In other words, people value in others the identities that they identify as most salient in themselves. Therefore people will strongly focus on their own salient roles in social situations. White and Burke's research (1987) provided evidence that roles have varying levels of salience or importance in one's life. The salience of roles determines the consistency or variability in commitment to those specific roles across social

situations (1987). Salience affects how strongly a role is used as the guiding influence in interactions with other characteristics which defines a person's self.

We can then conclude that a person's salient roles are a projection of oneself to others defining who that person is (Callero, 1985). These roles are used as a public announcement of how people define themselves in that particular social situation. For example, if at school a student's racial identity is most salient, she will define herself by her racial identity and teach others that her racial identity is most important to her in a that setting. These roles are then used by others to define that individual.

A study by Jaret and Reitzes (1999), presented an analysis of the importance of one's racial and ethnic identity between Black, White and multiracial college students in comparison to other socially constructed identities. Jaret and Reitzes (1999) argued that Black college students rated their racial identity higher than White students and were more likely to use racially descriptive terms when describing themselves. For multiracial college students, their racial identity became more salient when their identity was marginalized, congruent with the White and Burke (1987) findings. As found by Jaret and Reitzes (1999) study of racial and ethnic identity for Whites, Blacks and multiracials across social situations to a person's self-concept, a person's racial or ethnic identity is a "cognitive template that people use to organize information about themselves and others and those racial identities are influenced by sociocultural factors" (Jaret and Reitzes, 1999, p. 713).

With our understanding that race influences social status and that sociocultural factors such as the social status of one's group, may affect a person's self-concept, it is fair to conclude that social status may also have a significant impact on self-esteem.

A study by Cast and Stets (1999) introduces the idea that a person's self-concept and self-esteem are influenced by the individual's position and movement in and out of social power. In the United States race is placed in a socially and politically constructed hierarchy, in which people of European descent, "Whites," have a disproportionate amount of power compared to non-whites (Lopez, 2000). The racial hierarchy in the U.S. places non-White races at the targeted or minority level. Whites are perceived to hold and do hold greater social power than non-Whites in social contexts. Thus, social power is assigned to a person's racial identity. Because race is one of many socially constructed roles that are used to define the self, there is developing interest in studying how racial identity salience, social status and self-esteem intersect (Oyserman, Grant and Ager, 1995). The reviewed literature explains the stratification of race in the U.S. and the importance of racial and ethnic identities to people's self-concept. Further connecting these ideas is the research focusing on the levels of self-esteem across racial and ethnic groups as defined by social status. The next question to ask is how is the sense of self, with the context of race and ethnicity, affected by the individual's membership of a socially lower status group?

Self-esteem and racial and ethnic identities

Social inequalities are constructed by the group of highest social power. Lower social status groups encounter many challenges that are meant to keep them from reaching the top of the social ladder. Race is a major category that determines people's social status. Research indicates that there is a relationship between a person's racially determined social status and level of self-esteem. The socially constructed self gives a sense of meaning and organization to people's experiences (Oyserman, Grant & Ager, 1995). The self can motivate a person into action by providing incentives, standards, plans, and strategies for successful behavior. It is argued by many that African-Americans, particularly Black males, endure the greatest social injustice and oppression (Oyserman et al.). This discrimination forces them into the difficult experience of either creating or maintaining a positive self-image while simultaneously fighting against the negative images produced by society (Oyserman, et al.). As a result the question should be asked: are there differences in levels of self-esteem due to the experiences associated with being in a socially lower status group, as determined by the racial category?

Given these disparities in status, members of oppressed groups (e.g. Blacks who are members of low social status) might be associated with the development of low self-esteem (Hughes and Demo, 1989). However, studies show that this pattern does not hold up for many Blacks. In fact, in comparison to Whites, most Blacks have higher self-esteems (Hughes and Demo, 1989). Hughes and Demo (1989) found that for Blacks, self-esteem is

dependent on their strength in the Black identity, relationships with friends and family and their religious involvement. In college, there are opportunities for students to build relationships with new people and continue developing their identity; therefore the current research takes what is known of the relationship between racial identities and levels of self-esteem to specifically focus on college students.

Phinney's (1992) work with ethnic identity salience across ethnic minority groups revealed similar connections between self-esteem and identity. Phinney argues that, for ethnic minority college students, there is a positive correlation between self-esteem and ethnic identity. However, for White college students, self-esteem was unrelated to ethnic identity. White and Burke (1987) argue that the level of self-esteem depends on the person's ethnic or racial identity. Therefore, Blacks who commit to the Black ethnic group as a salient role to their identity may have higher self-esteem than Whites who commit to their ethnic group identity (White and Burke, 1987). While it is unclear from Phinney's work why Whites may have lower self-esteem when they commit to their ethnic identities, White and Burke (1987) suggest that the reason for higher self-esteem in Blacks is because of a sense of "Black pride." To understand one's commitment to identity salience is critical to an individual's self-esteem, it is perhaps we need to define what we mean by commitment in this context.

Commitment to a specific role refers to the both the intensity and extensiveness of the identity with that certain role (White and Burke, 1987).

Extensiveness refers to the, “Number of other persons to whom one relates as a consequence of occupying a particular position.” Intensiveness refers to the, “degree to which others to whom one relates as a consequence of occupying a position, playing a role or having an identity” (White and Burke, 1987, p. 318-319). Therefore, the more committed, meaning the intensity and extensiveness, a Black student is to his or her Black ethnic identity, the higher the level of self-esteem will be (White and Burke, 1987). The connection between ethnic identity salience and the level of self-esteem is positively supported through the findings by White and Burke (1987). Because, there is limited research on multiracial identities, we know little about the relationship between self-esteem and multiracial identity. According to Jaret and Reitzes (1999) the understanding of self-esteem for a multiracial person is more difficult because there is the possibility that he or she is identifying with more than one racial or ethnic group when in various social situations.

The present study

The current study asks if racial and ethnic identities are important for all college students, or are they more salient for those who are in the lower social status groups. Jaret and Reitzes (1999) suggested that findings may be different if the specific racial mix of their participants were measured. The current study expands beyond the Jaret and Reitzes (1999) study by allowing participants to both racially and ethnically identify themselves and not have to choose preexisting racial or ethnic groups. Only studying the White and Black experience omits a number of other racial identity experiences and

leads to a limited understanding of non-White racial and ethnic identities. Historically the relationships between Whites and Blacks have been the defining experiences of race in the United States (Lopez, 2000), but these are not the only racial and ethnic groups represented in the U.S. A goal of the current study is to have members of many monoracial and ethnic groups represented instead of dichotomizing race into the Black vs. White experience.

The Factor Model of Multiracial Identity by Wijeyesinghe (2001) emphasizes the number of different social influences that shapes a multiracial identity. A “multiracial” racial identity already represents the self with many racial identities; therefore, multiracial students may be more aware of holding multiple roles. In an attempt to understand the similarities and differences between monoracial and multiracial racial identity salience, the current study compares the number of salient roles between these two groups. There is an expectation that multiracial college students will have more salient roles as a part of their identity than monoracial college students. While racial identities are important to consider, it is equally important to recognize that exploring salient roles is more expansive; such an exploration would include: race, gender, sexual orientation and familial status. This expectation comes from Wijeyesinghe’ (2001) Factor Model of Multiracial Identity which is based on the expansive inclusion of various influences multiracial persons use during their development. The current study specifically compares how race is used and ranked in order of importance when college students define themselves. The following questions are posed in the current study: is there a difference in

how monoracial minority, monoracial majority and multiracial college students rank order their roles within their identity? When does race play as a salient role? The current research continues to examine the different levels of self-esteem, ethnic and racial identity, and identity salience by comparing average levels of self-esteem across the three previously described racial and ethnic groups.

METHODS

Participants

Three-hundred and five students participated in the present study. I used 216 male and female college students participated in the current study. Of those 216 students, 14 participated in a follow up in-depth interview. Three of the in-depth interviews (one from each racial and ethnic category) were selected for analysis. One-hundred thirty-seven open-responses were recorded and used in analysis (monoracial majority $n = 69$, monoracial minority $n = 28$ and multiracial $n = 40$). Eighty-five participants' data were collected during spring semester 2007 prior to the inclusion of the open-ended questions. Participants were recruited through emails to various cultural organizations at Mount Holyoke College and at a number of other colleges and universities across the country. Participants had the opportunity to both racially and ethnically self identify. They were then classified as being members of one of the following racial groups: monoracial majority (students who are only of the social majority, White European, race or ethnicity), monoracial minority (students of only one non-White or non-majority race or

ethnicity) and multiracial (students who are of more than one racial or ethnic group).

The numerical breakdown of these three groups is: 106 monoracial majority students, 53 monoracial minority students, and 57 multiracial students.

Procedure

The current research is a mixed methods study including a quantitative questionnaire and an optional follow-up qualitative in-depth interview.

Participants were recruited via email; all emails had the same script, in which I introduced myself and the purpose of my study to all prospective participants. I first extended the invitation to members of various cultural organizations at Mount Holyoke College. Emails were then sent to faculty members of neighboring colleges and universities asking for permission to forward the script to any organization or class the faculty member felt would be appropriate. The sole restriction was that participants must be currently enrolled in a community college or a four year college or university undergraduate program. This restriction was strongly emphasized in the script used for recruitment.

Participants were given an informed consent as the first page of the survey and interview to acknowledge their voluntary participation as well as indication that at any point during the survey or interview he or she may end the study. Students were instructed to answer all of the questions fully and independently. Participants were either entered in a raffle with a cash prize of \$50 or received research credit for the participation in the quantitative section

of this study. The quantitative questionnaire took approximately 35 minutes to complete. The questionnaires were administered either online through PsychData, which is a data collecting program or as a hard paper copy administered by the researcher or research assistants at the participant's most convenient time. The use of PsychData was advantageous because it was possible to reach a larger population at one time. At the same time, because participants had the option of stopping the study at any point in time, there is a possibility that participants stopped working on or did not completely fill out the questionnaire; therefore, paper copies were administered at the end of fall semester. The questionnaire included five measures (See appendix A).

Measures

Demographics.

The demographics form, included questions concerning participants' gender, age, socioeconomic status, type of college they attend, their racial and ethnic identity and that of their parents. Following the demographics form a series of open-ended response questions asking how participants identified themselves in general terms and in terms of race and ethnicity. There were questions that also asked if there were discrepancies between how others perceive them and how they self-identify.

Identity salience measure.

The Identity Salience Measure measures the importance or salience of (meaning how often participants think about the provided identities) 10 socially constructed identities on a regular basis. The rating scale ranged from

one to four; one meaning never thought about the identity to four, meaning the identity was thought of very frequently. The 10 identities include: gender, student, member of college community, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, political affiliation, religious affiliation age and membership in family.

Multigroup ethnic identity measure.

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992) uses 14 items to assess and compare ethnic identity across ethnic minority groups. The MEIM has three subscales to measure ethnic identity: positive ethnic attitudes and sense of belonging, ethnic identity achievement and ethnic behaviors or practices (Phinney, 1992). A Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess reliability of the scores, for the MEIM the overall reliability was 0.93.

Rosenberg self-esteem inventory.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory measures levels of self-esteem on a basis of 10 questions. Questions have participants reflect on feelings of self worth. Statements such as; "I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others" and "I feel I do not have much to be proud of," were rated using a scale ranging from one to four (one indicating strong disagreement with the statement and four indicating strong agreement). The Cronbach's alpha reliability score was 0.77.

At the end of the survey participants indicated if he or she wanted to participate in the follow up in-depth interview. The tape recorded interviews took approximately an hour to complete. Students were paid \$10 or received research credit for their participation. The interviews were primarily

conducted in the researcher's lab. Additionally the researcher traveled off campus to a local state college to conduct interviews with male and female students.

The interview questions were based on questions from Miville, Constantine, Baysden and So-Lloyd (2005). Additional questions were asked for further clarification when necessary. In collaboration with my advisor, I developed questions that focused on the participant's racial identity salience when in the following seven identified social situations:

1. Family (immediate and extended)
2. Friends
3. Relationships (romantic)
4. At school (at home university vs. at another 5 college school)
5. In the classroom
6. Professional setting
7. Anonymous situations

Analysis of Results

I completed several one-way analyses of variances to determine the differences between means of racial and ethnic groups for the MEIM, Identity Salience measure and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory. To control for factors which affect levels of self-esteem, I conducted two analyses of covariance (ANCOVA). Each ANCOVA had self-esteem as the dependent variable, one analysis had a covariate as gender and another with the covariate as the type of school participants attended.

Three interviews, one representing each of the three racial and ethnic groups, were randomly selected to be used in the qualitative data analysis.

The interviews were treated as case studies, therefore the main researcher read

for common themes or the absence of a theme across the three racial and ethnic groups. The qualitative data were used to further support and expand upon the findings from the quantitative survey.

RESULTS

Quantitative

Participants were asked to rank order various roles that they consider when describing themselves (e.g. how do you define yourself?). The number of listed roles ranged from one to twenty. Multiracial college students on average listed slightly more identity roles towards their identity than the monoracial students, M for monoracial minority = 3.41, for monoracial majority = 4.11 and for multiracial students = 4.0. Although multiracial college students listed a slightly higher number of salient roles, the difference between groups was not statistically significant, $F(2, 128) = 0.92, p = 0.40$.

Using the same question as discussed above, participant responses were coded to examine whether students used a racial identifier in their self descriptions. Seventy participants used their race in their description, while 67 participants did not use their race. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) examined difference in the location of race in students' descriptions of roles across three racial and ethnic groups. Of the participants who used race as one of their salient roles, monoracial majority students placed race significantly lower in their rank order than monoracial minority and multiracial students, $F(2, 134) = 13.79, p < .001$. For monoracial majority students $M = 9.84$ monoracial minority and multiracial college students had

similar means placing race in fifth place in their salient role hierarchy (monoracial minority students $M = 5.21$ and multiracial students $M = 5.38$). The Bonferroni post hoc analysis indicated that there was significant differences between monoracial majority and monoracial minority students ($MD = 4.63, p < .001$) as well as between monoracial majority and multiracial students ($MD = 4.47, p < .001$). There was no significant difference between monoracial minority and multiracial college students ($MD = 0.16, p = 1.00$). The post hoc analysis indicates that monoracial minority and multiracial college students place race significantly higher than from monoracial majority students do.

To examine whether there were differences on the ethnic identity on the MEIM as a function of racial and ethnic grouping (monoracial majority, monoracial minority and multiracial / multiethnic) a ANOVA was conducted; the results for the ANOVA were significant ($F(2, 204) = 17.07$) for means and standard deviations see Table 1. Post hoc analysis determined that there was significant difference between monoracial minorities and majorities ($MD = 0.50, p < .001$), and monoracial majority students and multiracial students ($MD = 0.40, p < .001$). There was no significant difference between monoracial minority and multiracial students ($MD = 0.10, p = 1.00$). Monoracial minority students had the highest ethnic identity. In addition, the MEIM subscales, Ethnic Search and Affirmation and Belonging were also examined for group differences. On average monoracial majority students scored lower than both monoracial minority and multiracial students for ethnic search, $F(2, 204) =$

21.54, $p < .001$ as well as for affirmation and belonging, $F(2, 204) = 9.11, p < .001$.

The Bonfferoni post hoc analysis determined the significant differences between Ethnic Search as well as Affirmation and Belonging between monoracial minorities and majorities ($MD = 0.56, p < .001$; $MD = 0.46, p < .001$). Data indicates that there are no significant differences between monoracial minority and multiracial students for ethnic identity, Ethnic Search and Affirmation and Belonging to community.

Table 1 Means and Standard Deviations of Multigroup Ethnic Identity

Variable	Ethnic Identity		Ethnic Search		Affirmation and Belonging	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Monoracial Minority	3.07	.58	2.89	.60	3.20	.68
Monoracial Majority	2.57	.51	2.33	.60	2.74	.64
Biracial/multiracial	2.97	.61	2.89	.65	3.02	.68

Of the ten identities indicated on the identity salience measure, I focused on the racial identity and ethnic identity salience levels. Monoracial minority and multiracial students reported higher average means of racial and ethnic identity salience than monoracial majority students (see table 2). I used a one-way analysis of variance to determine if there were significant differences across racial and ethnic groups for racial identity salience and ethnic identity salience. Statistically significant differences between racial and ethnic groups for racial and ethnic identity salience were found from the

Identity Salience Measure ($F(2, 213) = 27.59, p <.001$; $F(2, 212) = 41.31, p <.001$). The Bonferroni post hoc analysis indicated significant differences between monoracial minorities and majorities ($MD = 1.10, p <.001$). Additionally, the Bonferroni post hoc indicated significant differences between monoracial majorities' and minorities' levels of racial identity salience ($MD = 1.05, p <.001$), monoracial minorities reported significantly higher levels of racial identity salience than monoracial majorities. Finally the Bonferroni post hoc test indicated significant differences in the levels of ethnic ($MD = 1.09, p <.001$) and racial identity salience ($MD = 0.90, p <.001$) between monoracial majority and multiracial students; determining that multiracial students have significantly higher ethnic and racial identity salience. There are no significant differences in ethnic and racial identity salience between monoracial minority and multiracial college students.

Table 2

One-Way Analysis of Variance Summary for Racial and Ethnic Identity Salience Across Racial and Ethnic Groups

Source	<u>Racial Identity Salience</u>			<u>Ethnic Identity Salience</u>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Monoracial Minority	53	2.91	0.99	53	2.92	0.13
Monoracial Majority	106	1.86	0.92	106	1.82	0.08
Biracial/ Multiracial	57	2.75	1.02	56	2.91	0.13
Total	216	2.35	1.07	215	2.38	0.07

A one-way analysis of variance was used to analyze the levels of self-esteem reported by the Rosenberg Measure of Self-Esteem, across racial and ethnic groups. Data indicate that monoracial majority students on average had a slightly higher level of self-esteem, but the differences between means of the different groups were not statistically significant, $F(2,199) = 0.61, p = 0.55$. An analysis of covariance was used to control for factors that may have caused significant differences in levels of self-esteem across racial and ethnic groups. The analyses of covariance for participant gender and the type of school were not significant ($F(1, 197) = 0.74, p = 0.39$; $F(1, 137) = 0.88, p = 0.12$, respectively). Participants' gender and the type of school they attend did not have significant impact on the levels of self-esteem racial and ethnic groups.

Qualitative Data

In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted to further expand on findings from the quantitative data. There were six themes found from the in-depth interview analysis. Interviews were first transcribed for analysis. Then I read through the transcriptions looking for themes that occurred separately in each interview. To determine relevance of themes, I examined the identified themes across interviews. The six themes found in the three in-depth interviews:

1. Racial and ethnic identity salience and awareness
2. An event in school raises awareness of racial identity differences
3. Parents are the main influential people in participant's identity
4. Observed societal pressures to racially identify in a certain way

5. Perceptions of race- being off campus vs. on campus. Recognition of other's races and racial influences in experiences
6. Perception that multiracial people are different from monoracial people only because they have more than one race, but do not reflect on any other characteristics about the person.

Participant A.A. is a self-identified Black-American male who attends Westfield State College (WSC). He grew up with both of his parents, who are from the Congo, and he has a younger brother. A.A. is a peer-advisor, explaining he has a good working relationship with faculty and staff members as well as good relationships with the general student body at WSC.

Racial and ethnic identity awareness

For A.A., society has ascribed his racial categorization based on his physical features. Thus, A.A. assumes that when everyone sees him people perceive him as "Black." His racial identity had never been questioned by another person. He responded to the question, "How do you respond when someone asks you what you are?" by shaking his head and pointing to himself. A.A. did not believe that growing up with both his parents had any effect on his racial identity:

I: How do you respond when someone asks you what your racial or ethnic background is, or do people ever ask you the what are you question?

A.A.: (Blows out air) Not really (chuckles) I think they can tell just by looking at me. I mean people ask me where my parents are from, my parents are from Africa, but no.

Race related event at school

A.A. describes a racially charged event in elementary school as the catalyst for his awareness of his race. Prior to the event A.A. did not think

much about his racial identity until a classmate in 5th grade, called him a “bad name” (related to his race). This was the first time A.A. could remember ever being confronted with a conflict or a thought about the color of his skin. It was not clear how this event impacted A.A.’s perspective of his racial identity. It did not seem that this event had lasting negative impressions about himself or the classmate. When asked how his parents reacted and how they felt about the event, he said it wasn’t a big deal because we were just kids and didn’t understand the meaning of the word. A.A. also explained that he and his classmate are now very close friends, having grown up playing soccer together.

Parental influence

A.A. labeled his parents as the most influential people to the development of his identity. A.A. indicated that his racial identity was not specifically affected by his parents; he suggested that his general identity, specifically his ethnic identity, was influenced by his parents. In addition to not talking about his racial identity, A.A.’s ethnic identity does not seem to be a very salient role in his life. Although it seems at first that A.A. may have a strong ethnic relation to his family’s background, later in the interview it does not seem that ethnicity is very salient. At first A.A. explains that his parents have taught him to always remember where he came from, to know his history and various customs from the Congo, but later in the interview, when I asked him directly if he practiced any costumes or traditions specific to his ethnicity, he did not seem to think he had any. He explained he goes to church, but that

was the only type of custom he practiced. So it seems that even though his parents have taught him about celebrations and foods specific to the Congo,

A.A. does not recognize this as anything special:

I: Who have been important people in helping you identify the way you do?

A.A.: My parents... (Slight pause) my parents definitely, um they always try to, you know, keep me informed about my, my, ah, ancestry and stuff like that and where they came from.

I: How do they do that? Do you celebrate specific customs or anything like that or keep foods in the house?

A.A.: Yeah, certain foods, at a wedding, stuff like that certain types of parties.

(Later in the interview)

I: Does your family practice any customs or beliefs that are specific to your family's traditions in the Congo?

A.A.: Nothing really, I mean we just go to church, I mean I haven't gone lately, but (Laughs) I try to, you know, but that's pretty much really it.

Societal pressures and racial identity

A.A. explained the societal pressures to behave and identify in certain ways because of his race. Specifically, A.A. behaves in a way that will disprove stereotypes people may hold about who is based on his race:

I: Have you ever felt any sort of pressure to racially identify?

A.A.: Yeah, yeah definitely, I mean there's a lot of stereotypes out there, so... (Pause) I basically try to behave just to prove everybody wrong...I guess

I: Does your behavior change depending on who you are with?

A.A.: No, I, I act the same all the time, but just to prove everybody else wrong I guess, sort of the people have those certain stereotypes.

Racial experiences off campus

In addition to recognizing societal pressures surrounding racial identity, another common theme arose was the awareness or perceptions of race on and off campus. A.A. is very aware that race divides people into

groups both on campus, for example in the lunch room and off campus in various social settings. Although A.A. is aware that these divisions occur, he does not organize friendships or place himself only with other Black students:

I: Since being on a White campus how does that make you feel in terms of racially who you are?

A.A: Um...well I notice like here in the dining common...(Pause) you know, all the Black kids, you know will sit together, but I personally, I just like to sit with everybody because I'm friends with everybody

I: Do you feel that your racial or ethnic identity changes importance depending on where you are or who you are with?

A.A: Yeah, I guess maybe when I'm with friends... (Pause) Um...I don't even know. Ah I think maybe when I'm outside of a school setting, definitely. Yeah off campus because, um I mean obviously everyone comes here for the same reason to study, but when you are out somewhere else, you know, and someone could just look at you and like I said with those stereotypes, they can, they don't know what you're about or who you are, but they may automatically assume something about you, but you could actually be a really well educated person.

I: Specifically off campus you have experienced change in importance?

A.A.: Everyday. Yeah you know, just going into like a store, people will stare at you, I remember going to the Cape, people looking at me like I had two heads cause I was the only Black person walking around.

Monoracial versus multiracial identity

The general theme from this question is that the only difference between monoracial people and multiracial people are their racial makeup or background. The following excerpt gives an example of how the perceived differences between monoracial persons and multiracial persons are that a multiracial persons have more than one race that is a part of them.

Multiracial people can identify with more than one race is the main difference,

A.A. seemed to think this was really the only difference, personality and beliefs are different across all people:

I: Do you think there's any sort of similarity or difference between you and someone who is multiracial or identifies as being mixed race?

A.A.: No, not other than, you know they have a little bit of each race, nothing else.

I: Do you think someone who is mixed race would have similar experiences off campus as you have?

A.A: Ah, yeah, def, I think so, um... (Pause) someone who is, you know, mixed race, um you know maybe they have a White mother and a Black father, you know, just, I mean some people in general don't agree with interracial dating or anything like that so that could definitely be tough for them, I could see that.

The second interview was conducted with a White (monoracial majority) male student from Westfield State College. J.R. grew up with his mother and now has step siblings. J.R. grew up in a predominately White community and attended a school system which mostly reflected his neighborhood.

Racial and ethnic identity awareness

The topic of race and ethnicity is rarely discussed among family and friends. J.R.'s racial category membership (like A.A.'s) was socially ascribed, meaning based on his appearance, J.R. assumes that everyone perceives him as "White." The only time his race or ethnicity was questioned was in school by a teacher for a specific project about ethnicity. Other than this experience, J.R. did not seem to place any level of importance on racial or ethnic identity. This may be the reason why he seemed to struggle with how to discuss the topic of race and ethnicity:

I: Do you remember the first time or incident where you were first aware of your racial identity?

J.R.: Um... (Pause) I just kind of always took it like it was. I've just never really, became, never had to become aware like what color I was. Not really, well...I just I shouldn't say not really, I guess during, cause in middle school, when all the schools came together it was more diverse so then I became um, I guess more aware. Like I was ah, yeah like all the schools in my town, all the elementary schools all came together and there kids that I had never met or talked to before or seen.

I: Have you ever had the question what are you racially? Or how would you answer the question what are you racially or ethnically?

J.R.: Um no. No, people usually just assume. Wait you are talking ah Caucasian? Correct?

I: Yeah. What about if someone were to ask you about your ethnicity? How would you respond?

J.R.: Um... (Pause), I just, I would say, it's not like, Irish, English and like that?

I: Yeah

J.R.: I'd just tell them Irish, English and French.

I: Do you have any beliefs or practice customs with your family that is particular to your White culture or ethnicity?

J.R.: Um... (Pause) not really, unless you count Saint Patrick's Day. Cause I don't know, not other then that, just normal holidays

Parental influence

J.R.'s mother was the person who has been the most influential person in his identity development. Race was taught not be something to differentiate between people and that personality and feelings of safety are most important when choosing friends:

I: Who have been important people in helping you identify the way you do?

J.R.: Um... (Pause) I'd have to say my, probably my mom. She never had, she doesn't have any grudges or racist qualities, she just always never, never talked to me about any of that, like how one race is like better then the other she always just said, choose your friends like um on personality and how you feel, and be careful and use your head when you hang out with certain people. She just wants me to make conscious decisions about good kids and bad kids, it's just how it began and how it still is.

Societal pressures and racial identity

J. R. does not recognize societal pressures to racially identify or to behave in a certain ways. J.R. explains that most of his friends are White, but he also has friends of other races and ethnicities, but this doesn't change the way he behaves:

I: Do you ever feel pressured to choose, or pick a race or act in a certain way because of your racial identity?

J.R.: Um, no. Cause, where I, back at home there's my group of friends, the majority is White, but then we have I think, one of my friends I told you I played soccer with and he's Black and I have another friend who is Puerto Rican, and another friends who is Egyptian and like, that's just our group and that's just, I don't have to act any different around them.

J.R.'s perception of race has not changed since entering college, he reports that didn't have any problems with people of other races before and still doesn't. He does notice that racial groups are divided on campus, specifically in the cafeteria and explains that race could have an effect on his own experience as well as other's experiences at college:

I: Has your racial identity or the way you perceive race changed since coming to Westfield State?

J.R.: Um... (Pause) I would say no, because it's always been, like I haven't grown up to hate like anybody more or vise versa cause I mean I never really hated any, any ah other races, I'd just say its stayed the same.

I: Do you think that your racial identity, being White has influenced your positive experience at WSC?

J.R.: Um... (Pause) it, I'd like to say no, I'm gonna say it might because, um I never, like a part from like here, if there are like friends hanging, like when my friends are hanging out with other kids they happen to be Black I usually see, um (Pause) like Black kids keeping together to themselves in like the lunch room, like they are always at a certain table. I don't know if that means, if they don't, I don't know, if that's just who they feel comfortable being friends with, I don't know, I'm sure they are having a great time at school too, but I'm just saying,

if ah, that's what they choose or how it all happened, I don't know how all that happened.

Race and experiences off campus

J.R. describes that he recognizes racial differences when people of other races are divided into different groups in social settings (like the cafeteria example previously given) when he is off campus. Like A.A., J.R. seems to become more aware of his racial identity when he is in social situations, particularly off campus, that seem to be racially divided. J.R.'s own racial identity is recognized when he is placed in a situation with people of other races that are seemingly clumped together:

I: Do you feel that your racial or ethnic identity changes importance or significance to yourself at all, like in social situations?

J.R.: Um... (Pause) I would say usually no. But then I guess I can think of maybe some, I don't know if it would be importance or it would just be different, to be um, say if I go, sometimes I go to the club on Thursdays, downtown and just my group, my group of friends I'd go with we just would kind of stick together. I don't know. Like usually, around there, its not mostly White people. I don't know if that makes it less important or more important, but its just different then how I'm used to.

I: So you notice differences...

J.R.: I guess more so when I'm outside after everything's finished, because in inside, um everything, like everyone is just hanging having a good time and like the music is playing and everything, and then outside everything like changes, cause like everybody is back with their group of friends, and its not like all scattered all everywhere.

Monoracial versus multiracial identity

J.R. perceived multiracial people as being different from himself because they have more than one racial identity that they come from. He indicated that being multiracial seems to be something positive because two races had to come together. J.R. indicated that there are differences between

racess enough to make it a point that interracial couples or multiracial people are something special. In his explanation of differences and similarities race was not connected to personality or characteristics, instead race was used as a descriptive category, J.R. indicated that it is very possible for everyone, regardless of racial makeup, to have similarities in personality and interests:

I: How do you think other people or how do you perceive multiracial people?

J.R.: Um I mean, I think it's, I think it's awesome, that um cause that means somewhere along the line two different ah races had to get together and make like a strong enough bond to ah, make a child. So I mean. I think, that's, that's cool to have more then you know, to have more then one race to come from, I don't know I think, maybe it should happen more often.

I: What are some similarities or differences that you notice between yourself or Monoracial people to multiracial people?

J.R. Um... (Pause) just probably just um, they probably maybe have different, different family beliefs, maybe sometimes, but um for both, both categories, I'd say that its probably the activities and hobbies and things that I like to listen to that's probably like that's mostly where we are all alike.

The third interview was conducted with a (Mount Holyoke College) student who does not self identify with any one race. S.W. recognizes that her parents are of different races, her mother Middle Eastern and her father White American, but she does not identify with either race; she chooses not to use race to describe herself at all. S.W. grew up with both of her parents and she has a younger sister. S.W's mother was born and raised in Iran and her father was born in the Unites States, but mostly grew up in Canada. S.W. was born in Iran and lived there for the first two years of her life.

Racial and ethnic identity awareness

When asked about her racial identity and how has her family affected it, S.W. starts her explanation that she does not have a racial identity. S.W. does not racially identify with one racial group. Instead S.W. takes aspects from each of her parents' cultures and uses it to develop her own identity:

I: How has your family makeup influenced your ethnic or racial identity?

S.W.: Well actually, in terms of that I have never really thought of myself having a racial or ethnic identity, I guess I've got both and I have been raised with both so much that I never really thought of myself of needing one. Because it just seems silly to me to go from one to the other and then back and forth that I feel really comfortable just taking both into my life and having those cultures mixed together to make me who I am.

I: You are saying that in general that you live your life the way you are without keeping in mind the...

S.W.: Oh yeah I don't identify myself as one or the other, unless I am specifically asked and then I'll just tell them that my parents are this and this, but not really ever in relation to me.

Race related event at school

S.W. describes a specific event that happened in school that led to her realization that she was "different" from other people. Before then S.W. did not remember being aware of her racial and ethnic makeup as being any differently from anyone else:

I: Do you remember a time that you first realized that you may be racially or ethnically different from some people in your family or others because of the way your family is made up?

S.W.: Um... (Pause) I think the first recognition, I'm guessing possibly sixth grade cause I know before sixth grade we had a lot of connection between Iranian family back home so that was... So I guess we had this cultural fair and we had to write about stories where, we are immigrants traveled from and of course I picked to travel from Iran, and no one else had and I realized that right away, cause I was bringing in cultural foods and no one else had any clue about. So it was

very, I think positive experience because I got to share some of, but I first realized that “hey people aren’t that way.”

Parental influence

During the interview, S.W. explained how at present she does not racially or ethnically identify with any one race, but when she was younger, her mother’s ethnic identity, the Iranian cultural presence in her house, and S.W.’s experience living in Iran for two years greatly pulled her to identify with her mother’s ethnicity. But as she developed she learned about her father’s side and eventually chose the path “straight down the middle” of her family’s racial and ethnic identities. This is how she answered when asked what her racial and ethnic identity was:

S.W.: Well I’d start by telling them like where I am now, like especially like just being like in-between like partially American and partially Middle Eastern and then kind of like in the middle of that and then I’d go back, you know, to tell them how that came about, like at first I’d say that I got the introduction to Middle Eastern culture from my mom and then as I got older I realized my mom’s side of the family, really they had the culture...I learned about my dad’s family, because they had this whole history of keeping everything well documented and kept like, because there weren’t as many oral stories their tradition was written down, so I’ve decided that well, I’d combine the two because one has oral stories and the gatherings and the other has the well documented history so I figured having both, a well documented history with lots of oral traditions family gatherings...seemed really nice way to get everything the one culture was lacking from the other, because they are so different.

Both of S.W.’s parents were influential people in her identity development, but her mother had the most impact. S.W. mentions that in addition to her parents her friends she has made over the years have also helped with her identity development:

S.W.: Well specifically with my friends, like with my friends I am very definitely straight down the middle, part both. Especially with my friends, because I feel comfortable, a lot them have known me for a good three years almost so now they know where I'm coming from so I feel comfortable telling them that I have both. But when, for example, I'm sitting with family in Iran or going to a gathering or something, I'll feel very awkward going down the middle, like I normally stay down the middle, but I tend to like accentuate the fact that I'm Middle Eastern just a slight bit more because its more comfortable for me to do that...

Societal pressures and racial identity

When asked about pressures to identify in a certain way, S.W. described how her parents made her aware of difficulties for individuals who identify as Middle Eastern and American. At times her parents cautioned her at times to not fully identify with one race or culture or the other. S.W. does not identify with one race; she used both race and culture to describe the differences between each group her family is made of. There was no mention of experiences based on her racial identity directly on or off campus that had any influence on the way she identified:

I: Is there ever a time where you feel pressured to choose one (race) over another in terms of identity?

S.W.: Um... (Slight pause) I've actually...I don't think recently I haven't felt that much pressure, but I know what's going on internationally and it might be a lot of pressure if things take a really horrible turn. But I know now everything is completely fine I've not been pressured at one point or the other, I know my parents at certain times have been like 'it's not safe to be Middle Eastern' or 'it's not safe to have these certain ideals,' but I've basically just taken that into consideration and thought about it, and then kept on going straight.

Monoracial versus multiracial identity

I asked S.W. if there were differences or similarities between how she identifies and how other multiracial people identify. S.W. reported that there

are differences between herself and other people because she identifies with both sides, whereas she believes other people, especially college students may only identify with one side. S.W. states:

S.W.: Well I don't think it's (choosing to not racially identify and to pick pieces of each race) very common, just because most people will take one or the other side and then come to the conclusion later on in their lives. Like I know if talk to a lot of older people then that might be true. But I think right now, cause the whole college experience is mostly about people forming their own identities and things, so I know having such an identity right now may not actually be a very common thing. So I'm guessing the main difference right now is people will definitely be picking one side and people will definitely be trying to figure out like what's specific to one half and what's specific to the other and then just going back and forth instead of being straight in the middle. And I know, like I myself am in the middle, but when I go, when I go to my American family this is what we do and when I go to my other family this is what we do, so those traditions and how they figure out the identity that they are most comfortable with.

The monoracial students demonstrated different types of understanding from the multiracial student about their racial and ethnic identity. The two monoracial students did not describe their racial or ethnic identity as being very salient, though they both became more aware of it when put in various types of social situations. The multiracial student, though does not racially identify with any one group, she does understand that she had to make the decision about how she would identify versus how other's racially identify her. There were commonalities across the three interviews, such as identifying a parent(s) as the most influential person and the interviewees all gave examples of how much a social situation effects the way a person identifies.

DISCUSSION

The present study is a mixed methods examination of racial and ethnic identity salience across three groups of college students: monoracial majority, monoracial minority and multiracial. The goal of the present study was to collect data that will continue empirical research on racial and ethnic identity, provide more extensive work focusing on biracial and multiracial identity, and further the understanding of the differences in levels of self-esteem between racial and ethnic identity and self-esteem. Contrary to expectation, multiracial college students do not have more salient roles towards their identity than their monoracial peers. When race is used by students in their list of self-defining roles, monoracial minority and multiracial students place race higher in their list of roles than monoracial majority students did. Monoracial majority students have significantly lower levels of racial and ethnic identity salience compared to multiracial and monoracial minority students. There is no significant difference in ethnic identity between monoracial minority and multiracial college students. Finally, no significant difference in levels of self-esteem was found across the three racial and ethnic groups.

College student's hierarchy of salient roles

Literature suggests that the multiracial identity is more complex than a monoracial identity (White and Burke, 1987; Jaret and Reitzes, 1999; Wijeyesinghe, 2001; Rockquemore and Brunisma, 2002; Miville, Constantine, Baysden and Sol-Lloyd, 2005). In this study I developed a series of open-

ended questions to learn how college students understand and organize their hierarchy of salient roles towards their identity. Because of the number of factors that influence a multiracial identity, I expected that students who identify as biracial or multiracial would have more salient roles within their identity than their monoracial peers.

The findings of the current study do not support this hypothesis. Instead data indicate that there are no significant differences between the number of salient identity roles of the three racial and ethnic groups. The number of salient roles does not seem to reflect how students manage their salient roles nor does membership in a racial or ethnic group determine the number of salient roles. In other words, the complexity of multiracial identity is not simply a reflection of the number of roles someone identifies with. Complexity may need to be studied more qualitatively to understand how salient roles are managed within an individual.

The ranking of roles was also used to determine if race was placed differently in importance across racial and ethnic groups. After coding for the presence of race in students' role hierarchy, I found that monoracial majority students placed race significantly lower in their rank order than monoracial minority and multiracial students. This finding suggests that monoracial minority and multiracial students think of race as a more important role in their understanding of themselves than monoracial majority students. It is not surprising that monoracial minority students in this study placed race higher in importance than monoracial majority students because many studies have

shown that race is more salient in minorities than it is in majorities (White and Burke, 1987; Phinney, 1992; Jaret and Reitzes, 1999). Because race is the prime salient role in the social construction of American society (Cast and Stets 1999) it affects social status, and social status in turn, affects self-esteem. Because this social construct is defined by the monoracial majority, race becomes less of an issue for them, and more of an issue for the monoracial minority and multiracial population. Tatum (1997) supports this notion when she asserts: "...In the areas where a person is a member of the dominant or advantaged social group, the category is usually not mentioned....The parts of our identity that do capture our attention are those that other people notice, and that reflect back to us" (p. 21). This clearly explains why monoracial minority and multiracial students use race as a salient role.

These findings provide support for the preexisting theories (White and Burke, 1987; Phinney, 1992; Jaret and Reitzes, 1999) that racial identity is more salient or important for minorities. The low level of racial and ethnic identity salience and awareness in Whites is illustrated by the in-depth interview with J.R (White male from a state college). His lack of awareness and his difficulty in relating his experiences to his racial and ethnic identity indicate their lower level of salience. In the interview, J.R. demonstrated his uncertainty in what exactly the interviewer was looking for. His questions as to what ethnicity is indicate that he rarely discusses or thinks about race and ethnic identity. In addition he used the stereotypical symbol of heavy

drinking and the St. Patrick's Day parade as a minimal and superficial connection to his Irish heritage. J.R.'s example further supports the quantitative findings that racial and ethnic identities are not highly salient for monoracial majority students as earlier found by Tatum (1997).

The current study's findings show that multiracial students place race significantly higher in their role hierarchy indicating a more salient level of racial and ethnic identity than monoracial majority students do. These findings contradict the results of the Jaret and Reitzes (1999) study, which found that Whites and multiracial people both rated racial and ethnic identity lower than Blacks. These discrepancies could be a result of, among other variables, differences in methodology. The current study used an open-ended question to ask participants to: "List in order of personal significance different aspects of your personal identity (e.g., how do you identify yourself)," whereas the Jaret and Reitzes (1999) study asked the more focused question of, "How important is your racial or ethnic identity to your overall identity?" (p. 720). It is possible that because the Jaret and Reitzes (1999) specifically asked their participants to evaluate the significance of racial and ethnic identity to their other identities, that their study yields different results.

The current study did not specifically ask students about racial and ethnic identity salience; instead it allowed students to freely self-identify however they felt was appropriate. The different wording between the two studies could evoke different reactions about the importance of their racial and ethnic identity in relation to other identities or salient roles, therefore leading

to different responses. Allowing students to freely rank their salient roles without specific prompts to race and/or ethnicity, may provide a more honest and unbiased point of view of the significance of racial and ethnic identity from its participants.

Racial and ethnic identity and self-esteem

The finding that there is no significant difference in the levels of self-esteem among racial and ethnic groups was the most unexpected result. These findings are not congruent with other studies' findings (White and Burke, 1987; Phinney, 1992). Previous research have mixed conclusions concerning levels of self-esteem across racial and ethnic groups; some studies indicate that multiracial people have lower self-esteem, but others find that multiracial people have higher levels of self-esteem compared to their monoracial peers (Bracey, Bamaca, Umana-Taylor, 2003). Most of the more recent literature (within the last 30 years) indicates that there are differences in levels of self-esteem across racial and ethnic groups, and specifically that Whites have lower levels of self-esteem than monoracial minority people (White and Burke, 1987).

The three in-depth interviews indicate that racial and ethnic identity does not seem to be related to self-esteem. Nowhere across the three interviews do participants indicate that self-esteem is specifically affected by their racial or ethnic identity. Both A.A. (monoracial minority male student) and the J.R. (monoracial majority male student) indicate that their race may have some effect on school experiences in the type of social situations they

encounter, but they still felt positive about their experience at college. In the interviews there was no question that specifically asked about student's self-esteem, but the positive descriptions of college experiences may indicate a positive sense of self:

I: Since coming to college has your perception of race or racial identity changed at all?

A.A.: Um... well I notice like here in the dining room... (Pause) you know, all the Black kids, you know, will sit together, but I personally, I just like to sit with everybody else because I'm friends with everybody.

I: How would you describe your general experience at college?

A.A.: I've liked it a lot. Yeah. Definitely. Um just meeting new people, I always like meeting new people. Sometimes I wish I went to a little big bigger school, but I mean WSC is a good place.

Similarly to A.A., J.R. describes his positive experiences at WSC and the awareness that race can affect experiences, but not indicating it effecting self-esteem:

I: How would you describe your general experience at college?

J.R.: Its' good. I, I'm on the soccer team so it's good there and which is, now that I think of it all White, so um, but good generally.

I: Do you think your racial identity has influenced your positive experience?

J.R.: I'd like to say no, I'm gonna say it might because, um I never, like a part from like here, if there are like friends hanging out...Um I usually see, um (Pause) like Black kids keeping together to themselves in like the lunch room like they are always at a certain table and I don't know if that means, it that's just who they feel comfortable being friends with, I don't know, I'm sure they are having a great time at school too, but I'm just saying if ah, that's what the choose or how it all happened I don't know how all that happened.

S.W. (multiracial female student) indicates that by not identifying with one specific race, but instead taking bits from both sides of her family has been a positive experience, which may indicate a positive self-esteem:

I: How does it feel to be mixed race?

S.W.: I really like it actually, I love having two cultures and learning so many different things...cause that just means I can reach out to people differently and had I been just American or just Middle Eastern then I would have one mind set versus the two and I think it gave me a brighter horizon and I'm very, very thankful for that.

Not only are the current study's findings not congruent with previous research, they suggest that race, a socially constructed classification, does not define a person's sense of self-esteem. Because the current study did not find any significant differences across racial and ethnic groups, further research should address the question if there is a correlated relationship between race and ethnic identity salience and self-esteem for college students.

The current study, as well as studies by Phinney (1992) and White and Burke (1987) used the Rosenberg measure of self-esteem. Not only were the results from the current study not statistically different across ethnic and racial groups, the average levels of self-esteem were higher for monoracial majority students than those found in the reviewed studies. There are several possible explanations for these findings. The first is that there could be a possible increase in the over all self-esteem in the college age population since the studies by White and Burke (1987) and Phinney (1992). Second, it is possible that, in general, college students may have higher levels of self-esteem because of their higher educational status. More work should focus on self-esteem for people who are in college compared to people of similar age who are not in college to see if levels of education affect self-esteem.

An important limitation of this study is the participant population distribution. There were only nine participants who could be categorized as Latino/Hispanic/Latin American/South American; this led to several conversations debating how to treat this population because of its unique identity as an ethnic group and not specifically one racial group. If there were more participants represented in this population, it would have been possible to separate them out from the monoracial minority category.

A larger population of monoracial minority and multiracial students would enhance this study and possibly find more differences between groups. Another limitation is the fact that the free-response questions were non-validated measures of role hierarchy in individual identity. Though it does not seem like a validation study would need to be conducted on questions that were clearly given, it still needs to be considered as a possible factor in effecting the outcome of the results.

Implications

Data collected from the present study contributes to the gaps in both quantitative and qualitative research on the multiracial identity. Specifically, the current study provides sufficient data in the comparison of racial and ethnic identity salience and self-esteem levels across racial and ethnic groups. Changes in social situations affect the salience in the roles of race and ethnicity for college students. Additionally, social status, as defined by one's racial group membership, affects racial and ethnic identity salience. Given the diverse landscape of our society, it is critical that we become more sensitive

and aware of social status, race, and ethnicity and how these social roles shape our interactions. It is imperative that individuals in positions of power or authority understand how their points of reference depend on their social situation and are perceived by the individual with whom they are interacting. Self-awareness of projected roles is valuable for teachers and professors in situations of learning, and admissions officers in their decisions, and essentially anyone who interacts with another of a different race.

Recognizing that there is little difference between the salience of race in identities of monoracial minorities and multiracial persons, it is critical to further examine the diversity within the mixed race experience. Further, the findings of this study show that there were no significant differences in self-esteem between racial and ethnic groups. This clearly points to the idea that there may be different variables that determine levels of self-esteem. Accordingly, there ought to be further investigations as to what other factors may impact levels of self-esteem among college students of various racial and ethnic backgrounds.

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Appendix A Survey Questionnaires

Demographics Form

1. Age: _____
2. Male _____ Female _____ Other _____

The following two questions ask about income. If you are not financially dependent on your family of origin, please check here the box below and answer the questions based on your/current family's income.

Check here if you are financially independent from family of origin

3. What is your current annual family income (your best estimate)?

- _____ less than \$19,999.00
_____ \$20,000 - \$39,999.00
_____ \$40,000 - \$59,999.00
_____ \$60,000 - \$79,000.00
_____ \$80,000 - \$100,000.00
_____ \$100,000 - \$150,000.00
_____ \$151,000 - \$200,000.00
_____ over \$200,000.00

How would you describe yourself ethnically or racially (please check all that apply)?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American/Black | <input type="checkbox"/> Indian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian American | <input type="checkbox"/> Latino(a)/ Hispanic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biracial/Multiethnic | <input type="checkbox"/> Latin American/South American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean /Caribbean American | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian//European American/White | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American/American Indian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> East Asian/East Asian American | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Southeast Asian/Southeast Asian American |
| | _____ |
| | (Please specify) |

How would you describe your parent ethnically or racially (please check all that apply)?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American/Black | <input type="checkbox"/> East Asian/East Asian American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian American | <input type="checkbox"/> Indian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biracial/Multiethnic | <input type="checkbox"/> Latino(a)/Hispanic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean /Caribbean American | <input type="checkbox"/> Latin American/South American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian//European American/White | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American/American Indian |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander |

Southeast Asian/Southeast Asian American _____ (please specify)

How would you describe your parent ethnically or racially (please check all that apply)?

<input type="checkbox"/> African American/Black	<input type="checkbox"/> Latino(a)/Hispanic
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian American	<input type="checkbox"/> Latin American/South American
<input type="checkbox"/> Biracial/Multiethnic	<input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern
<input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean /Caribbean American	<input type="checkbox"/> Native American/American Indian
<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian//European American/White	<input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander
<input type="checkbox"/> East Asian/East Asian American	<input type="checkbox"/> Southeast Asian/Southeast Asian American
<input type="checkbox"/> Indian	_____ (please specify)

Please identify whether your parents are biological, adoptive, etc.

If there are other people who were influential in shaping your racial identity:

Please describe your relationship with this/these person(s):

How would you describe them ethnically or racially (please check all that apply)?

<input type="checkbox"/> African American/Black	(Please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian American	
<input type="checkbox"/> Biracial/Multiethnic	
<input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean /Caribbean American	
<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian//European American/White	
<input type="checkbox"/> East Asian/East Asian American	
<input type="checkbox"/> Indian	
<input type="checkbox"/> Latino(a)/Hispanic	
<input type="checkbox"/> Latin American/South American	
<input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern	
<input type="checkbox"/> Native American/American Indian	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander	
<input type="checkbox"/> Southeast Asian/Southeast Asian American	

Open- Ended Response Questions on Role Salience

9. Please describe in as many words as you would like, how you self-identify racially and ethnically:

10. Please describe in as many words as necessary, how you believe others identify you racially and ethnically:

11. If your responses to 9& 10 are different, how do you account for these discrepancies?

12. Please list in order of personal significance different aspects of your personal identity (e.g., how do you identify yourself?):

13. How do you think others perceive you (in terms of aspects of identity)?

14. If your responses to questions 12 & 13 are different, how do you account for these discrepancies?

Identity Salience Measure

ISM

On a scale of 1-4 please rate how important the following are to you (how frequently do you think about each on a daily basis, generally speaking)

1 = never

2 = sometimes

3 = frequently

4 = very frequently

Gender	1	2	3	4
Student	1	2	3	4
Member of College Community	1	2	3	4
Sexual Orientation	1	2	3	4
Race	1	2	3	4
Ethnicity	1	2	3	4
Political Affiliation	1	2	3	4
Religious Affiliation	1	2	3	4
Age	1	2	3	4
Membership in Family	1	2	3	4

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

MEIM**

In this country, people come from many different countries and cultures, and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or *ethnic groups* that people come from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are Hispanic or Latino, Black or Latino, Black or African-American, Asian-American, Native American or American Indian, Mexican American, and Caucasian or White. These questions are about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it or react to it.

If you are multiracial/multiethnic you can choose to complete the following questions several times for each race/ethnicity or you may choose the most salient race or ethnic group (or choose multiracial as your racial group) and answer for only that one. Please list the race/ethnicity that you are answering for. If appropriate, there are additional copies of this questionnaire at the end of this packet.

I identify as a member of:

_____ (ethnic group)

_____ (racial group)

Use the numbers below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

1= Strongly disagree

2= Disagree

3= Agree

4= Strongly agree

___ 1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.*

___ 2. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.*

___ 3. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.

^

___ 4. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.*

___ 5. I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to. ^

___ 6. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group. ^

___ 7. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me. ^

___ 8. In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.*

___ 9. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group. ^

___ 10. I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.*

___ 11. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group. ^

___ 12. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background. ^

___ 13. My ethnicity is:

1. Asian or Asian-American

2. Black or African-American

3. Hispanic or Latino

4. White or Caucasian, Anglo, European American
5. American Indian or Native American
6. Mixed; Parents are from two different groups
7. Other (write in):

___ 14. My father's ethnicity is (use numbers above)

___ 15. My mother's ethnicity is (use numbers above)

*Ethnic Identity Search Subscale
Subscale

^Ethnic Identity Affirmation and Belonging

Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Measure

RSE

For each statement, record the number in the space provided which best describes your feeling or opinion.

1.....2.....3.....4

Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Strongly Agree

- ___ 1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- ___ 2. At times, I think I am no good at all.
- ___ 3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- ___ 4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
- ___ 5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
- ___ 6. I certainly feel useless at times.
- ___ 7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
- ___ 8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
- ___ 9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
- ___ 10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Appendix B Interview Guide

1. What is your familial make-up? (i.e: divorced, single parent, etc...)
2. If at all how has this shaped/influenced your racial identity?
3. What was the general environment like where you grew up? What was your school environment like? (Racial make-up of your school and neighborhood, accepting, not accepting. Did you go to school in the same town?)
4. Do you have or have you ever had any conversations about race with your family? Friends? If so, what were these conversations like?
 - a. How or what started the conversation(s)?
 - b. What did they entail?
 - c. What is the frequency of them?
5. Do you remember a time or incident where you first were aware that you might be different from others with respect to your race?*
6. What is your first memory of being multiracial- when was your realization of being multiracial?
7. What do you say when someone asks you what your racial/ethnic background is?
 - a. Has this changed over time?*
8. Who have been important people in helping you identify as you do?*
9. Are you aware of anything else that has influenced your decision to identify the way you do? If so, what?
10. Did you ever feel pressured to choose a race? How? And by who?
11. Has your racial identity or the way you perceive race changed at all since coming to college? If so how?
12. How do you describe your general experience at college (Positive negative life changing)?
 - a. Do you think that your racial identity has influenced your experience? If so how?
13. Do you have attitudes and beliefs or do you practice customs of (please choose- (be specific example- Not Asian, but Korean) Native Americans, African-Americans, Asians, Middle Easterners, Latinos/as or Whites?*
14. Where or when do you feel most comfortable in your own skin?
15. Do you feel that your racial or ethnic identity changes importance/significance depending on social situations you are in?
 - a. Family (both immediate and extended)
 - b. Friends
 - c. Romantic relationships
 - d. At school
 - e. In the classroom
 - f. Professional settings
 - g. Any anonymous settings
16. Have you ever spent time outside of the U.S.?
 - a. Can you think of how your racial identity changed?

- b. How did this make you feel?
 - c. How was your racial or ethnic identity managed? Was this managed differently compared to experiences in the U.S.?
17. How does it feel to be mixed race? (Positive, negative)
 18. How do you think that other people perceive multiracial people?
 19. What are some things that you have noticed about multiracial people? (Similarities or differences between yourself and others)**
 20. What are some things you have noticed about monoracial people?***
 - a. Do you feel that there is a difference in how monoracial people treat you vs. another multiracial person? If so how is it different?
 21. Have you ever dealt with experiences of racism? If so, please explain.

*Questions are subject to change depending on results of the quantitative analyses

**Indicated questions taken from previous research conducted by Miville, et al., 2005