

**Original Research Article****MULTIRACIAL GENERATIONS: (MIS)IDENTIFICATION  
& SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCES OF  
INTERMINORITY MULTIRACIALS AND HALF-WHITE  
MULTIRACIALS**

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Multiracials were the fastest growing ethnoracial group in America according to the 2020 United States Census, and our investigation sought to contribute to the growing body of literature on the (mis)identification and ethnoracial socialization experiences of various half-White Multiracial groups (Wasian, Whitino, Whindian, half Middle Eastern-half White, and half Black-half-White Multiracials) and interminority Multiracial groups (Blasian, Latinasian, and Blatino Multiracials). We took an interdisciplinary approach in our literature review of Multiracial experiences, incorporating historical contexts that influenced Multiracials experiences, cross-cultural research (e.g., how phenotypically ambiguous Multiracials have become commodified in the advent of globalization and international marketing), critical race studies, and social psychology. We asked Multiracial groups about their experiences of identity (mis)categorization, parents' approach to ethnoracial socialization, and how their personal, phenotypically influenced, and socially perceived identities influence experiences with coracial and non-coracial peers. We found that phenotypically ambiguous Multiracials were the most likely to experience misidentification. Interminority Multiracials were more likely to be misperceived as a higher-status ethnoracial group and half-White Multiracials were more likely to be misperceived as a lower-status ethnoracial group. Moreover, phenotypically ambiguous Multiracials reported a marginally higher proportion of non-coracial friends. Furthermore, interminority Multiracials were more likely to be socialized in both parents' cultures than half-White Multiracials. We discuss our findings in the context of cultural pluralism and identity development, and hope our research contributes to the literature on the experiences of various Multiracial groups.

**Keywords:** Multiracial, Identity, Socialization, Phenotype, Relationships.

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***“For a lot of people, I seem to check a lot of boxes: immigrant, woman, Black, Asian. Your qualifications are always going to be subject to criticism and you have to develop a thick skin.”***

— U.S. District Court Judge Tanya Sue Chutkan (District of Columbia)

Multiracials were the fastest growing ethnoracial group in America according to the 2020 United States Census (Foster-Frau et al., 2021). This demographic trend underscores the growing need to understand how various factors — such as ethnoracial socialization, personal identity, perceived phenotypic appearance, socially ascribed identity, and other factors — influence Multiracials’ interpersonal experiences. To explore these dimensions, our investigation gathered a large, diverse sample of monoracial groups, half-White Multiracial groups, and interminority (non-White) Multiracial groups. As such, our investigation contributes to the literature by answering calls for more research centered on Multiracials of Latinasian (East Asian-Hispanic: DeGuzman, 2005; Meija et al., 2022), Blasian (Black-East Asian: Castillo, 2022; Moskowitz, 2022; Poudel, 2023), Wasian (East Asian-White: Haemin & Vittrup, 2022; Yamane, 2018), Blatino (Black-Hispanic: Garcia-Louis, 2016; Moslimani et al., 2023), Whitino (Hispanic-White: Parker et al., 2015), Whindian (South Asian Indian-White: Mehta, 2023), and other Multiracial identities (Seider & Huguley, 2023) beyond Black-White Multiracials.

Our literature review is organized as follows: First, we set the contextual backdrop by outlining events in US history that have been consequential to the US Multiracial population. Second, we discuss research on microaggressions, including misidentification and identity invalidation, and how they affect Multiracials’ experiences. Third, we discuss trends revealing how the era of globalization has led to the commodification of Multiracials’ phenotypic ambiguity. Finally, we discuss research on Multiracials’ ethnoracial socialization experiences.

### **Positionality Statement (Author Biographical Sketch)**

Several of the coauthors are Multiracial and identify with several of the Multiracial groups studied in this research. Each of the Multiracial group terms used (i.e., Wasians, Blasians, Latinasians, Whindians, Whitinos, Blatinos) reflects the terminology used in Multiracial literature, by Mixed Student Unions and other Multiracial organizations, and how several of the coauthors describe themselves.

### **Multiracials and US History**

#### ***The One Drop Rule***

Throughout American history, Multiracials’ experiences of prejudice and discrimination have been based on phenotype, genetic composition, and ascriptive identity (i.e., socially perceived identity, usually based on phenotype). For instance, the *One Drop Rule* was inherently anti-Multiracial as it required that individuals with “one drop” of Black ancestry be classified solely as Black for social and legal purposes - a legislated invalidation of Multiracials’ identities (Hollinger, 2005). The one drop rule was not formulated with monoracial minorities in mind; rather, its purpose was to restrict the social mobility of part-White Multiracials and their potential to blur racial boundaries. By subsuming part-White Multiracial groups into their respective monoracial minority categories, the One Drop Rule preserved the racial status quo by preventing them from accessing the social and legal privileges that America’s racial caste system reserved for those classified as *White*.

Another historical context associated with Multiracials’ history in the US is the history of America’s presence in East/Southeast Asia. In the following section, we discuss the relevance of Multiracial identity and phenotype in this international context.

#### ***Multiracial Adoption and Immigration Laws***

Phenotype influenced transnational adoptions following the Korean War, as half-Korean Multiracials were the majority (over 65.21%) of the 3,435 South Korean children adopted by Americans in the 1950s (McKee, 2013; Sarri et al., 1998), with more than 4,000 half-Korean

Multiracials being adopted between 1953 and 1965 (Lee, 2016). Most half-Korean Multiracials were Wasians as only 30% were Blasians (Halloran, 1976). In addition, when South Korea issued new transnational adoption restrictions in 1989 to promote domestic adoption, one of the new policies was “*placing only racially-mixed or disabled children internationally after the year 1995*” (Sarri et al., 1998). Thus, many Korean adoptees since 1995 have likely been Multiracial. Overall, 200,000+ South Korean children have been sent abroad for adoption, mostly to the US (Oh, 2019). Moreover, “*Over 40,000 of these children were Multiracial*” (Kim, 2015).

The 1982 Amerasian Immigration Act (AIA) and the 1987 Amerasian Homecoming Act (AHA) provide another example of how phenotype and ascribed identity has been consequential to Multiracials’ experiences as these post-Vietnam War immigration laws were created specifically for the Multiracial offspring of US soldiers in Asia (Doolan, 2021). The AIA gave half-Asian Multiracials born between 1951 and 1982 in Cambodia, Korea, Laos, Thailand, or Vietnam priority for immigration and lawful permanent residency in the United States. The AHA was implemented to address issues regarding the immigration of the 30,000 half-Asian Multiracials in Vietnam (English, 2001; Valverde, 1992).

Phenotypic appearance was a determining factor for immigration. By using “*face and skin color*” to determine if applicants had an American father, US Immigration officials essentially used the *What Are You* question to admit part/half-Asian Multiracials to the US (Thomas, 2019; Ward, 2023). As a result, immigration officials “*denied valid Amerasian applicants*” if they felt their “*appearance was less distinctly Black or White*” or if their father was “*non-Black or non-White*” (Ward, 2023). “*Amerasians with Asian, Latino, or Native American fathers proved difficult to identify*” (Thomas, 2015, p. 195). Ultimately, these Multiracial immigration laws resulted “*in the migrations of 23,000 Vietnamese Amerasians and 67,000 of their relatives*” (Doolan, 2019).

### ***Multiracials’ Political Voice Since the 1990s***

Multiracials’ experiences and the broad cultural perception of Multiracials have changed significantly in recent decades. In 2021, the US government officially recognized June 7 to June 14 as *Multiracial Heritage Week*, with the *Loving Day* celebration on June 12 in recognition of the US Supreme Court’s *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) ruling that granted the right to interracial marriage in the United States. The ruling nullified anti-miscegenation laws in the states that still had laws against White-minority marriages. In addition, in 1993, Maria Root published the *Bill of Rights for People of Mixed Heritages*. A few years later, several Multiracial Civil Rights groups, including leaders such as Susan Graham (President of Project RACE, a group she created based on her experiences as the White monoracial mother of half-Black sons) and Charles Byrd (Black, White, Native American journalist), were successful in having the US Census Bureau update the item on racial identity to allow individuals to check all that apply on the 2000 US Census (Hirschman, 2000).

The US Census victory was a significant development as it established Multiracial Americans as a community with a political voice. It was during the 1990s that public perceptions of Multiracials, and the manner in which media and transcapitalist businesses capitalized on Multiracials’ phenotypic ambiguity, began to change significantly.

### **Humanity’s Racial Heroes**

Sanchez (2004) argued that since the 1990s “*The multiracial body has been appropriated as an angelic savior symbol[izing multiculturalism], often representing hope for the future and its potential for overcoming racial strife*” (p. 277; as cited in Gonzales, 2019). Multiracials are perceived as “*the embodiment of some future where racism no longer exists*” (Buggs, 2017).

In media and the general cultural imagination, Multiracials have been cast in the role of being the world’s new racial heroes who will help us bridge cultural divides and forge a post-racial society (Corrin & Cook, 1999; Strmic-Pawl, 2014, 2016). Given America’s dark racial history, it is understandable why some view America’s growing Multiracial population as an encouraging development. As noted in political science research on Multiracial candidates,

“Wamble and Laird (2018, 12–14) show [that] Black candidates who use “post-racial rhetoric” incur gains from White voters, [and] **multiracial people themselves are often treated as the epitome of “post-racial” America** (Thornton, 2009, 112–13)” (Lemi, 2021) (emphasis added).

Indeed, Multiracials are viewed

*“as the model postmodern and cosmopolitan identity of the future, which transgresses race and abolishes racism”* (Haritaworn, 2009), with *“those of mixed-race touted as a vanguard of postracial success”* (Spenrath, 2016).

Public discussion of Multiracial identity *“has repeatedly used images of multiracial bodies to document an approaching diverse, blended future”* (Newman, 2019).

Multiracials have more intragroup diversity than any other ethnoracial group and they increase the intragroup diversity of the (ostensibly homogeneous) monoracial groups they are associated with. Thus, greater understanding and appreciation of the varied interpersonal experiences of different Multiracial groups is needed given that experiences differ significantly based on phenotype, language, accent, religion, how one is generally socially perceived (hereafter *ascriptive identity*), and which ethnoracial/cultural identities Multiracials identify with (including identification with their Multiracial identity).

### **Note on Terminology**

Susan Graham remarked that when Multiracial activists of the 1990s were asked by the Office of Management and Budget what name they would prefer, the community overwhelmingly supported the term Multiracial as *“it is more inclusive than biracial”* (Graham, 2016). As such, we use the term *Multiracial* instead of biracial throughout this article, and we capitalize Multiracial *“to validate and empower Multiracial individuals”* (Atkin et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the term coracial is used in instances in which one of the ethnoracial backgrounds of the Multiracial group being discussed overlaps with a monoracial comparison group (e.g., a comparison between Latinindians and their monoracial Pakistani or Sri Lankan peers). The term non-coracial is used in instances where the comparison is between a Multiracial group and monoracial groups that they do not share an ethnoracial background with (e.g., a comparison between Wasians and Native American monoracials).

Finally, ethnorracially diverse contexts (e.g., ethnorracially diverse friendships) will be described as *diverse* instead of being described as Multiracial (e.g., multiracial friendships).<sup>1</sup> Alyssa Ream (2023) noted this issue in her bibliometric review of Multiracial research, stating that *“The term “mixed-race” was not included in the final analysis as it populated numerous articles that utilized “mixed-race” to describe a diverse sample of monoracial participants”* (p. 2). We never use the term Multiracial to discuss participants who are mixed in other ways (e.g., interfaith household, multiethnic, multicultural, etc).

In the following section, we discuss the research on Multiracials’ experiences of misidentification and microaggressions, phenotypic ambiguity and commodification, and ethnoracial socialization.

## **Multiracial Microaggressions**

*“Multiracial individuals are daily required to either pass or authenticate, they perpetuate the association of culture-specific language, vocabularies, behaviors, and appearances by either performing or avoiding them”* (Miller, 2007).

*“Multiracial individuals are blatantly asked dehumanizing questions like “What are you?””* (Gaither, 2015).

## What Are You?

*What Are You*, the question Multiracials hear quite possibly more than any other social group, can be psychologically distressing (Gaither, 2015; Tran et al., 2016). Multiracials experience racial mislabeling, or identity incongruent discrimination, where they are perceived to identify with a group that does not match their self-identity (Franco & O'Brien, 2018). Multiracials are also more likely to experience racial identity invalidation or denial from coracials who may feel that they do not embody the group enough to be included (Albuja et al., 2019; Harris, 2022; Sanchez et al., 2020; Tran et al., 2016). These markers of embodiment may include phenotype, linguistic background (e.g., being fluent in one's heritage language), music, food, knowledge of cultural history, among others. These experiences have a negative effect on identity development (Rockquemore et al., 2009; Stohry, 2022).

What these microaggressions against Multiracials reflect is monoracial-centric bias (also referred to as *monoracism*), a discomfort with the reality that individuals can form a hybridization of 2+ cultural identities within themselves and/or balance the co-existence of 2+ separate cultures within themselves (Stanley, 2004). A similar pattern is found for other identities that are not nominally discrete. For instance, a study of half-White Multiracial bisexual women found that people assume they will eventually choose men over women and that they will eventually choose a White lover (Ghabrial, 2019).

Multiracials experience more microaggressions within their own families than monoracials. For instance, Wasians are more likely to experience microaggressions from both sides of their family than Blasians and other Asian-Multiracial groups (Nadal et al., 2013; Tashiro, 2016), especially the White side of their family (Poudel, 2023). In addition, Wasians "*often experience facial-feature discrimination (Hwang, 2021)*" whereas Black-White Multiracials are more likely to experience "*skin-tone discrimination (Landor & McNeil Smith, 2019)*" (Vazquez et al., 2022). One way Blasian (Wasian) males can have their asserted Black (Asian) identities accepted is via sports participation as monoracial perceivers are more likely to attach their athleticism or success in sports to their minority backgrounds (Hoskins, 2007).

## Phenotypes and Experiences

Although it may be considered a surface-level factor in regards to compatibility, one's phenotypic appearance holds substantial influence over person-to-person connections, and the probability of one's acceptance into various social circles. One's phenotype may lead others to assume what one's interests, tastes in music, personality, etc, are based on the ethnoracial, historical, religious, media-based, geographic, and cultural associations to one's phenotype.

Among adolescents, phenotype is a predictor of ethnoracial identity and social segregation among school peers (Quillian & Redd, 2009). Multiracials are in a unique position given the influence of phenotype on the formation of social groups. Oftentimes, Multiracials may appear ethnoracially ambiguous and/or may carry less distinct phenotypic features than their monoracial counterparts. Thus, it may be more difficult for Multiracials to associate with coracial monoracial friend groups based on appearance alone.

Allison Hartley (2018) illustrated this dynamic in *My Experiences as a Wasian Girl*:

*"People perceive the "other" first — the part of [me] that differs [from them]. When visiting mom's side of the family in Hong Kong, [people] point out my White appearance, while my Caucasian peers in Houston saw my dark hair & eyes."* - Allison Hartley, 2018

This is consequential in the political arena as Multiracial political candidates are less likely to "*be viewed as 'full' members of the racial group compared to monoracial candidates who can draw on their backgrounds more 'authentically'*" (Lerman et al., 2015, p. 59; McIlwain & Caliendo, 2011)" (Lemi, 2021). However, Multiracials' phenotypic representation is politically beneficial when appealing to non-coracial voters. Indeed, "*multiracial candidates have the advantage of building coalitions with voters from other groups*" in a way that is not true for monoracial candidates (Lemi, 2021).

Multiracial individuals whose phenotype resembles a specific ethnoracial group may have an advantage in being able to connect and form friendships with their coracial monoracial peers in that group. Compared to phenotypically ambiguous Multiracials, their phenotypic similarity may elicit more welcoming attitudes from their coracial monoracial peers. Importantly, this would reflect *visual acceptance* rather than *inclusion*.

The idea of visual acceptance is also consequential to the experiences of Multiracials' parents in public settings where verifying individuals' identity is a priority. For instance, the monoracial parents of Multiracials have been accused of engaging in child trafficking or kidnapping while traveling with their child(ren) through airports based solely on phenotypic differences (Coffey, 2023; Kaonga, 2023).

*"All too often, it feels like Blasian people are either overlooked, objects of fetish, or expected to end racism with our existence"* (Pennington, 2018; **emphasis added**, as cited in Moskowicz, 2022).

Multiracials' social experiences also differ based on their composition. In particular, there is no legal history associated with government norms and designations for Multiracials with Hispanic or Asian heritage relative to those with Black or Native American (hypodescent) heritage (Gullickson & Morning, 2011). Indeed, *"There is no part-Asian historical figure comparable to the (tragic) 'mulatta' in the U.S. cultural imaginary"* (Xu et al., 2021). As such, Black-White Multiracials tend to experience hypodescent more than Wasians (Ho & Kteily, 2022). For instance, among majority-White Multiracials, *"[25%] Asian individuals are consistently considered more White than [25%] Black individuals"* (Brandt, 2010).

In short, Multiracials are not a monolith: the experiences of interminority Multiracials differ from those of half-White Multiracials (Kandamby, 2023; Tamai, 2017), the experiences of first-generation Multiracials differ from those of second-generation Multiracials (as second-generation Multiracials have at least one Multiracial parent who can relate to their Multiracial identity), and Multiracials' different ethnoracial compositions produce different experiences due to *"the existence of different multiracialisms, with distinct logics and experiences (Strmic-Pawl, 2016), grounded in the history of varied racialized groups' incorporation in the United States"* (Xu et al., 2021).

### Phenotypic Ambiguity

*"My dad is Caucasian and my mom is African American. I am half Black and half White. Being biracial is a blurred line that is equal parts staggering and illuminating."* - Meghan Markle, Multiracial Duchess of Sussex (Elle Magazine, 2016)

Multiracials increase the intragroup diversity of the groups they are composed of, though monoracial identifiers within ethnoracial groups may be less inclusive of this intragroup diversity than Multiracials. Indeed, Multiracials report experiencing ostracism from their coracial-monoracial peer groups and thus less racial belongingness (Franco et al., 2016; Kamimura, 2010).

Given the influence of phenotypic appearance on the ease and probability of acceptance by ethnoracial groups, Multiracials who are considered more phenotypically ambiguous may experience even greater social challenges. Interestingly, a wealth of literature highlights a preference for phenotypically ambiguous individuals in commercial contexts.

### *The Commodification of Phenotypically Ambiguous Multiracials*

*"Multiracial bodies are popular commodified images used by global capital to sell both products & ideas of cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, & globality"* (King-O'Riain, 2014, p. 271).

Interdisciplinary research indicates that phenotypically ambiguous Multiracials are preferred in the marketplace of globalization. In fact, *"during the 1990s, racially ambiguous-looking people began to appear in advertisements designed to appeal to a broad, ethnically nonspecific audience"* (DaCosta, 2007). As noted by Carter (2007),

*“executives in advertising & marketing, recognizing that many Americans enjoy puzzling over Multiracial celebrities, actors, & models, give the public more of what they expect—in the name of selling products.”* Ruth La Ferla (2003) discussed how *“both in the mainstream & at the high end of the marketplace, what is perceived as good, desirable, successful is often a face whose heritage is hard to pin down.”*

Nilsen & Turner (2014) noted *“a trend in TV is the casting of actors who are marked as racially ambiguous & therefore removed from any identifiable cultural identity.”* In short, Multiracials are used as safe diversity bringing *“color into the frame without conflict”* (Squires, 2014, p. 7).

*“Clearly, racial mixture is a hot commodity in today’s global market [as] multiraciality, in commercial culture today, implies the euphoric triumph of global capital,”* (Santa Ana, 2008).

The marketability of Multiracials is prevalent in today's society because *“[Multiracials] can be taken to represent a form of new-age mixedness comprising cosmopolitan hybridity and diasporic transnational mobility”* (Matthews, 2007).

In Japan, Editorial director Sayumi Gunji of the Japanese fashion magazine Numero Tokyo estimated that ~35% of runway models are Multiracial and is quoted as saying *“Almost all top models in their 20s are Hafu, especially the top models of popular fashion magazines”* (Chung & Ogura, 2018). In fact, Washington (2017) argues that Ariana Miyamoto’s crowning as Miss Japan in 2015 was used by the event organizers to appeal *“to a transnational judging body with their obviously transnational contestant”* during the Miss Universe competition.

Research on Multiracials in Thailand reports that *“in Bangkok, 60% of the entertainment industry are mixed race”* (Rondilla, 2009). Weisman (2001) suggested that images of Multiracials are *“constructed & commodified... to support evolving ideas of Thai modernity, & to project a modern, developed, & cosmopolitan [image of Thailand] to an international audience”* (p. 233).

In Brazil and Japan, research on the Latinasian female band Linda Sansei discussed how they *“commercialize[d] their mixed-race bodies to appeal to fans... from Japan to Brazil and beyond”* (Rivas, 2015). In South Korea, there is a perception *“that biracial children will serve as valuable diplomatic assets for Korea”* (Lee, 2012).

The disbanded South Korean band Chocolat, a majority Multiracial girl band, provides another example of the commodification of Multiracials for transcapitalist profit in the era of globalization. An article by discussed the following remarks by Former band member Melanie Lee stated in a 2017 interview with Kpopalypse (Asian American Music, 2017) that *“Our company boss didn’t really care, he just wanted an all-biracial group.”*

The article commented that

*“While debuting an all-mixed group would have been a huge opportunity to bring attention to social issues about race in Korea, instead the company only viewed it as a marketing venture and to gain more revenue”* (Asian American Music, 2017).

In Australia, Germany, and the United Kingdom, Multiracials are aspirationally held as *global super-citizens* (Haritaworn, 2009; Matthews, 2007). In short, countries have commodified Multiracial bodies on the world stage as their way to *“celebrate and desire multiculturalism as a means through which to access the economic exchanges encouraged by globalization”* (Rivas, 2015). Moreover, Multiracials’ phenotypic ambiguity *“[has] become a genetic commodity [as] racial ambiguity is harnessed for global capital [thanks to] the capitalist ideal of racial ambiguity that is deemed especially attractive and lucrative”* (Splernath, 2016).

The preference for phenotypically ambiguous Multiracial employees, particularly in brand modeling and customer-facing advertisement/engagement roles, can be understood by considering the social cognitions of intergroup relations. Bias occurs during our uncontrolled automatic responses and happens when people who ostensibly purport no racial preference subconsciously respond with (1) more negative affect when they encounter non-coracial individuals (e.g., behaviors such as frowning,

less positive/ more negative attitude, questionable mannerisms, impatience, aversion to prolonged interaction) than when they encounter coracial peers, (2) less positive affect when they encounter non-coracial peers than when they encounter coracial peers, or both. Encounters with Multiracial individuals, on the other hand, may not evoke involuntary racial biases due to Multiracials' greater phenotypic ambiguity. In short, businesses may see phenotypically ambiguous employees as *safe diversity*.

To this point, brand and consumer research on the strategic usage of Multiracial models and employees indicates that companies may use them due to monoracial customers' inability to automatically/implicitly categorize them (Chung & Ogura, 2018; Pipkin, 2023; Sengupta, 2018; Walters, 2018). The underlying assumption is that Multiracials' phenotypic ambiguity decreases the odds that a customer's biases regarding a particular ethnoracial group will become cognitively accessible as quickly as they do when interacting with monoracials of different ethnoracial groups (Ho et al., 2013; Gaither, 2015).

As such, the assumption is that consumption may be facilitated by Multiracial brand markers as they allow companies to *receive the rewards of increasing diversity* while avoiding diversifying in ways that they presume may harm consumption opportunities due to the potential biases of potential customers. Thus, because Multiracials' ambiguity is utilized as "*a marker of the social capital of progressivism*" (Harris, 2022), companies "*claim to celebrate diversity... [though] this diversity is narrowly defined*" (Duan, 2017, p. 66). Nadrich (2019) captured this notion perfectly when stating that "*Because participants were not viewed as a definitive member of a specific racial group, some of the stigmas attached to specific groups were not immediately attributed to them.*"

In this way, the commodification of phenotypically ambiguous Multiracials "*to hustle world music, athletic apparel, & popular films*" (Brayton, 2013) that "*entertainment, modeling, beauty pageant, and sports industries ... (re)produce and consume*" (Fresnoza-Flot, 2019) suggests that "*race contains market value as long as it is kept at arm's length from ostensibly stable racial groups*" (Spennath, 2016). As Waring (2013) argues, the valorization of Multiracials' bodies is associated with how well their phenotype blurs racial categorization.

It is noteworthy that the aforementioned preference for Wasians is also reflected in this context. In China for example, "*mixed-race Eurasian face filters and models are prolific on Chinese social media, but the same preference isn't given to mixed-race Black and Chinese people*" (VICE Asia, 2022). Interracial White and Chinese couples who upload videos of their Wasian children displaying multilingual acumen and/or early multicultural competence gain substantially more followers than the parents of Blasian children (Jiang, 2023; see also Haugen, 2022). Moreover, Wasian Multiracials in China "*are considered more attractive and intelligent than their monoethnic Chinese peers*" (Jiang, 2023).

In addition to their experiences of commodification, Multiracials' phenotype also influences their ethnoracial socialization experiences.

### **Multiracials' Ethnoracial Socialization**

*"Multiracials can be seen 'as possessing insight & knowledge of two or more distinct worlds'... which enables him or her to lead the parent societies into transcending their differences"* (Root, 1992, p. 282, as cited in Leopardo, 2016).

The racial and/or ethnic socialization (RES) experiences of Multiracials differs from that of monoracials in several ways given that they differ from both of their parents (Christophe et al., 2021; Hughes et al., 2006; Vezaldenos et al., 2023). A broad array of components comprise RES socialization experiences. To name a few: participating in celebrations, rituals, customs, dances, rites of passage, and similar events relevant for each parents' identity; consuming and learning how to prepare parents' culture-specific cuisine, snacks, and drinks; gaining literacy in their parents' heritage language (particularly the ability to converse with grandparents), learning speech patterns, relevant dialects, and adhering to honorifics; visiting and/or living in each parents' heritage country; learning the religious and/or spiritual traditions (including funeral practices) associated with each parents' identity; consuming culturally relevant media such as well-known movies, shows, music, poems,



books; learning about important historical people and events, visiting historical landmarks; learning how to properly wear clothing, accessories, adornments, hairstyles, and other components of self-presentation specific to each culture; and playing board games popular within parents' heritage culture.

Unfortunately, Multiracials report feeling less parental support than monoracials (Hughes et al., 2006; Schlabach, 2013; Wilt, 2011). Importantly, the perception of parental support is moderated by the degree to which Multiracials' parents engage in RES. Multiracials report stronger relationships with their parents based on the degree to which their parents openly discuss their ethnoracial identity with them, try to understand their Multiracial experience, and show respect for their Multiracial heritage (Soliz et al., 2009). Parents' support of their Multiracial offspring's experiences is protective against general/societal ethnoracial bias and discrimination (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020), adverse experiences in academic settings (Peng, 2023), and family-based discrimination (Christophe et al., 2023).

Within families, the only people with whom Multiracials have phenotypic resemblance is with their genetic siblings (Garcia, 2022). The ontological levels at which these differences exist (e.g., phenotypic, genetic proportion, social perception, etc) influence Multiracials' RES in context specific ways. Parents generally socialize Multiracial offspring based on how they believe they will be racialized in the social world (Ortiz, 2017). For instance, Multiracials who are considered White presenting (Multiracials who are mistakenly perceived as monoracial White individuals due to their phenotype) or White passing (Multiracials who intentionally adjust their self-presentation to emphasize their White background) may be more likely to be socialized predominantly in relation to their White heritage by their parents than those whose phenotype is in greater proximity to their non-White background (Atkin et al., 2022).

In addition, the resilience that is generally expected of interracial couples may also be required when making concessions to one another in an attempt to raise their child in a manner that is inclusive of each culture. For example, Seider et al. (2023) discusses a Jewish parent whose "*Spanish co-parent stood up to his own extended family in order to support her investment in circumcising their son (in keeping with Jewish tradition).*"

### ***Parents' Sex and Ethnoracial Background***

The intersectional patterns of ethnoracial background and sex of Multiracials' parents are also relevant given women's role in the socialization of offspring. For instance, Wasians are disproportionately likely to have an East Asian mom and a White dad (Chen & Liu, 2021; Kitano et al., 1984; Liang & Ito, 1999; Mok, 1999) whereas Black-White Multiracials usually have a White mom and Black dad (Jacobs & Labov, 2002). As such, Wasians may be more likely to receive RES while growing up than Black-White Multiracials.

For example, the sharp increase in anti-Asian prejudice that Wasians experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic motivated their monoracial East Asian mothers to engage in racial socialization with their children (Kura, 2023). In contrast, their White husbands minimized/downplayed their experiences of racism. Moreover, the monoracial East Asian mothers of Wasians report experiencing discrimination from their White husband's side of the family (Kura, 2022). In comparison, consider that "*White [moms] with Multiracial children face the challenge of socializing a person of color without the experience of living as a racial-ethnic minority (O'Donoghue, 2005),*" (Atkin and Yoo, 2019).

Furthermore, the majority of Multiracials are raised in households in which there is no Multiracial parent present for socialization specific to their Multiracial heritage. In Multiracial-Monoracial couples, the monoracial parent may have the advantage regarding which culture to prioritize for their offspring's ethnoracial socialization as any offspring they have will be at least 50% the identity of the monoracial parent. Given that second-Generation Multiracials' parents tend to overlap with at least one of their identities (Littlejohn, 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2022), whichever ethnoracial identity is overrepresented between the parents is likely the one that will have priority.

Much like children who are sequential relative to simultaneous multilinguals, Multiracial youth in Multiracial-Monoracial households may be more likely to experience *sequential ethnoracial socialization* to each parents' culture(s) with the overrepresented culture taking priority, whereas the Multiracial offspring of monoracial parents may be more likely to experience *simultaneous ethnoracial socialization*. Importantly, the minority parent of part/half-White Multiracial offspring lack "*the experience of blended heritage*" (Mehta, 2023, p. 169). As Whindian author Samira Mehta states, having "*a mentor with an experience of mixedness is important because being mixed is a distinct experience.*"

An example of Multiracials being socialized to engage in cultural hybridization can be found in the way interracial-interfaith (and sometimes binational) mixed families practice family rites in Brazil. Of married Japanese immigrants in Brazil, about 70% are in interracial marriages (Sakurai, 2013). Consider Latinasians raised with a Hispanic Catholic parent and a Japanese Buddhist parent. When such families practice funeral rites they begin with Catholicism's 7th-Day Mass and then perform Buddhism's 49th-Day Rite of Rebirth (Sakurai, 2013). This striking example of multiculturalism within mixed households demonstrates both acceptance of unique Buddhist and Catholic traditions and the parents' mutual respect for each other's values. Moreover, it exemplifies cultural hybridization as the sequence of these rituals represents a fusion of elements from two distinct religious traditions creating a new, unified practice. Such an approach contributes to healthy RES by enabling Latinasian offspring to honor and integrate the diverse heritages of each parent.

### Overview of Hypotheses

We began with a review of Multiracial American history and contrasted early narratives of Multiracials with the narratives of post-racial valorization that have emerged since the 1990s, particularly the commodification of phenotypically ambiguous Multiracials in the era of globalization. We then nested components of Multiracials' identity formation and interpersonal experiences within these broader historical and societal themes. We now present the hypotheses for our study.

The purpose of our study was to explore factors which may contribute to 1) Multiracials' experiences of identity (mis)identification and (in)validation, 2) Multiracials' experiences of ethnoracial socialization, and 3) how these factors, in addition to Multiracials' phenotypic appearance and composition (e.g., half-White groups, interminority groups, and their Multiracial generation), influence Multiracials' identity formation.

#### ***Hypothesis 1: What Are You?***

Our first hypothesis was that Multiracials would report more experiences of misidentification and *non-identification* than monoracials. In addition, we predicted that the prevalence of these experiences would differ based on the degree of Multiracials' reported phenotypic ambiguity. We also investigated whether half-White Multiracials are referred to by their minority background.

#### ***Hypothesis 2: Phenotypic Ambiguity and Friendship Diversity***

Our second hypothesis was that (a) phenotypically ambiguous Multiracials would have the highest proportion of non-coracial friends, and that (b) Multiracials' friendship patterns would be independent of ethnoracial identity for Multiracials relative to monoracials.

#### ***Hypothesis 3: Ethnoracial Socialization (RES)***

Our third hypothesis was that Multiracials' RES experiences would differ based on phenotype, between interminority and half-White Multiracials, within the various Multiracial identities of interminority and half-White Multiracial groups (e.g., Latinasian and Blasian; Wasian and Whitino), and the sex of the minority parent for half-White Multiracials.

This study was pre-registered via AsPredicted and can be found here: <https://aspredicted.org/im743.pdf>.

## Methods

### *Participants*

Participants were 489 undergraduate students ( $M_{age} = 20.37$ ; range = 18-34; 370 women; 25 lesbians/gays, 96 bisexuals, 336 heterosexuals) at a western university in the United States. The ethnoracial composition of the monoracial participants ( $n = 245$ ) was: 157 East/Southeast Asian [hereafter East Asian], 34 Hispanic, 29 White, 15 Middle Eastern/North African [hereafter MENA], 8 South Asian Indian, and 2 were Black.

The ethnoracial composition of the Multiracial participants ( $n = 243$ ) was: 166 were half-White (2.4% of which were *majority White* or  $\geq 51\%$  White with one minority identity) and 77 were interminority (30.6% of which were *majority minority* as they had one parent who was  $\leq 49\%$  White). The ethnoracial composition of interminority Multiracials was: 27 Latinasian, 9 Blatino, 7 Blasian, and 12 were composed of three or more groups (73% of which were  $\leq 49\%$  White with two minority identities). The ethnoracial composition of half-White Multiracials was: 108 Wasian, 17 Whitino, 7 Black-White, 6 Whindian, and 6 were MENA-White. Lastly, 61.1% were first-generation Multiracials (e.g., President Barack Obama) and 38.9% were second-generation (or higher) Multiracials (e.g., they have at least one Multiracial parent; Sasha and Malia Obama).

Our proportion of half-White and interminority Multiracials is consistent with research finding that majority of Multiracial individuals in America identify as half-White (Alba, 2021) and are first-generation Multiracials (the offspring of monoracial parents of different ethnoracial backgrounds) (Pilgrim, 2021; Song & Gutierrez, 2015; Waring, 2023; Xu et al., 2021). For instance, in 2018, only 25.52% of Multiracial births were to non-White parents of different minority backgrounds (Alba, 2021).

### Procedures

Participants were recruited using the SONA system (Fidler, 1997) and were given class credit compensation for their participation in this study. We constructed an assessment survey to assess participants' perceived roles in race-based friend groups. The anonymous survey was administered to participants online via Qualtrics. The duration of time spent on the survey was approximately 60 minutes. All participants provided informed consent by clicking a button indicating that they consent to participate in the study. Participants were redirected to debriefing information following the completion of the questionnaire. This study was approved by the institutional review board.

### Measures

All participants completed an array of demographic items to help us construct a portrait of how each participant identified in relation to relevant sociocultural and experiential factors.

### *Demographic Data*

Information on ethnoracial background was collected for participants, their parents, their current or most recent lover, and their lover's parents. The following demographic data was collected for participants and their current or most recent lover: sex, sexuality, gender, age, domestic or international/immigrant student status, nationality and country(ies) they were raised in, and years in the United States.

### *Phenotypic Appearance*

Phenotype was assessed with the following variable: *If you are multiracial, do you feel as though you look more like one of your racial groups than the other(s)?* The potential responses were *I look distinctly like one* (1), *I look distinctly like a combination of both* (2), and *I look ambiguous (people have a hard time figuring out any of my races)* (3). A subsequent item asked participants to specify *Which one* if they indicated that they look distinctly like one.

### ***Misidentification: What Are You***

To assess (mis)identification, we asked participants what people usually guess when trying to figure out their Multiracial background. We used participants' responses on the demographic items associated with their ethnoracial background to code the degree of accuracy and inaccuracy experienced when people try to guess their identities. In addition to coding what people guess correctly and guessed incorrectly, we coded for *overlooked* aspects of their identity. For instance, if a Blasian individual indicated that people generally guess that they are Filipino and Hispanic, we coded Filipino as the correctly guessed aspect of their identity, Hispanic as the incorrectly guessed aspect, and Black as the overlooked aspect.

### ***Racial Socialization***

We used several variables to capture multiracial socialization experiences. One variable asked *At home, does your family try to incorporate & expose you to traditions/customs/learning of all your races, or just one in particular?* and the potential responses were "Mainly one (please specify)" and "Good exposure to all." Another variable asked "Are you closer to one parent over the other? If so, please specify which parent." The potential responses were *Closer to dad* (1), *Closer to mom* (2), and *It's Equal* (3). Another variable asked "Do you feel closer to one of your racial identities than your others? - If yes, please specify which racial identity."

### ***Minimum Genetic Threshold for Identity***

Minimum percentage to identify was assessed with the following item: *If there had to be a minimum percentage that you would have to meet in order to identify with a race, what percentage do you think that would be?* Participants were also asked *What do you think constitutes as having enough in order to identify with a racial identity?*

### ***High and Low-Status Identity Coding***

We coded the societal status of participants' ethnoracial background(s) when assessing the identity(ies) Multiracials (1) reported being socialized into, (2) reported being misidentified as, and (3) reported that people overlook. This was based on research on America's tri-racial hierarchy of ethnoracial stratification (Bonilla-Silva, 2004; Walters, 2018). Specifically, we coded individuals' White ethnoracial background as their highest status identity, followed by East Asian, Hispanic, South Asian Indian, MENA, and Black as their lowest status ethnoracial background.

### ***Proportional Coding***

In a few instances, we coded and analyzed outcomes based on the proportion of participants' White ethnoracial background. Specifically, we coded Multiracials based on if they were Majority White (51%+ White; e.g., actress Emilia Clarke 12.5% South Asian Indian [mom] and 87.5% White [both parents]), Half-White (e.g., 44th US President Barack Obama), Majority Minority (51%+ non-White; e.g., NFL Quarterback Dak Prescott 50% Black [dad] and 50% Native American and White [mom]) or non-White Interminority (e.g., US Vice President Kamala Harris).

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics on Phenotypic Appearance

First, we assessed Multiracials' self-reported phenotypic appearance and how the proportions of each differs across generations and compositional proportions. A chi-square analysis determined that a plurality of Multiracial participants identified as phenotypically ambiguous (43.9%) with smaller proportions indicating they look distinctly like one of their ethnoracial backgrounds (27.4%) or a combination of both (28.7%),  $\chi^2(2, N = 237) = 11.92, p = .003$ .

Regarding the phenotypic appearance reported by Multiracials of different generations, a chi-square analysis found that second-generation Multiracials were marginally more likely to indicate phenotypic ambiguity (52.54%) than first-generation Multiracials (40.65%), and first-generation Multiracials were more likely to report feeling that they resembled a combination of their ethnoracial backgrounds (34.15%) than second-generation Multiracials (16.95%),  $\chi^2(2, N = 182) = 5.81, p = .055$ . Moreover, there was no difference in second-generation Multiracials' reported phenotypic appearance based on their compositional proportions, whether they were 50-50 ( $n = 7$ ; 10%), 75-25 ( $n = 27$ ; 38.6%), or 50-25-25 ( $n = 36$ ; 51.4%) (see Figure 1). It is noteworthy that second-generation Multiracials were significantly more likely to be 75-25 or 50-25-25 than 50-50,  $\chi^2(2, N = 182) = 5.81, p < .001$ .

Furthermore, interminority Multiracials were slightly more likely to be second-generation (64.5%) whereas half-White Multiracials were disproportionately more likely to be first-generation (74.2%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 336) = 46.37, p < .001$ . Finally, regardless of phenotype, Multiracials indicated that they discuss all of their ethnoracial identities whenever their ethnoracial background comes up in conversation (84.8%),  $\chi^2(2, N = 165) = 199.09, p < .001$ .

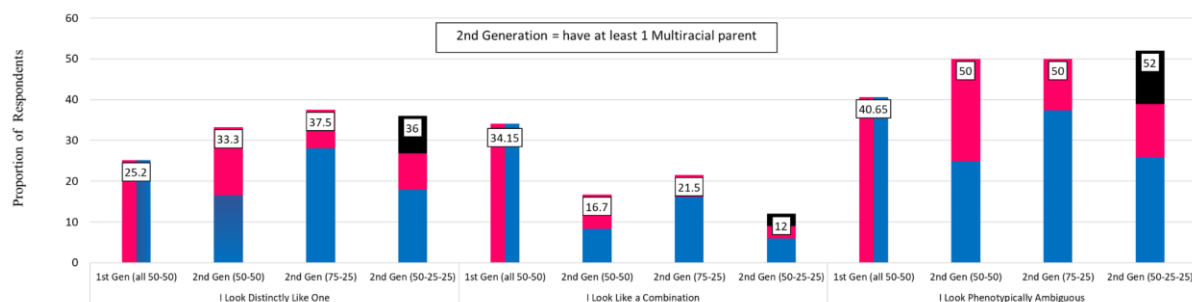


Figure 1: Multiracials' Phenotypic Appearance Based on Compositional Proportion

### Hypothesis 1: What Are You?

Our first hypothesis was that Multiracials would report more experiences of misidentification and *non-identification* than monoracials. This was primarily assessed using variables discussed a priori in our [preregistration](#). However, given that both the size and diversity of our Multiracial sample afforded opportunities for unique quantitative insights, several post-hoc analyses were conducted.

#### *Experiences of (Mis)Identification*

The likelihood that individuals will correctly guess, incorrectly guess (error of commission), and/or overlook (error of omission) aspects of Multiracials' ethnoracial background differs significantly across Multiracial groups. For instance, people are more likely to fail to correctly guess any background of half-White Multiracials (19.4%) compared to interminority Multiracials (11.1%),  $\chi^2(4, N = 147) = 49.29, p < .001$ , whereas people are more likely to overlook an aspect of the ethnoracial background of interminority Multiracials (79.3%) than of half-White Multiracials (61.5%),  $\chi^2(5, N = 154) = 16.22, p = .006$ .

The most overlooked minority race for half-White Multiracials is their East Asian identity (70.8%) whereas the most commonly overlooked identity for interminority Multiracials is their Hispanic identity (47.8%),  $\chi^2(2, N = 111) = 16.72, p < .001$ .

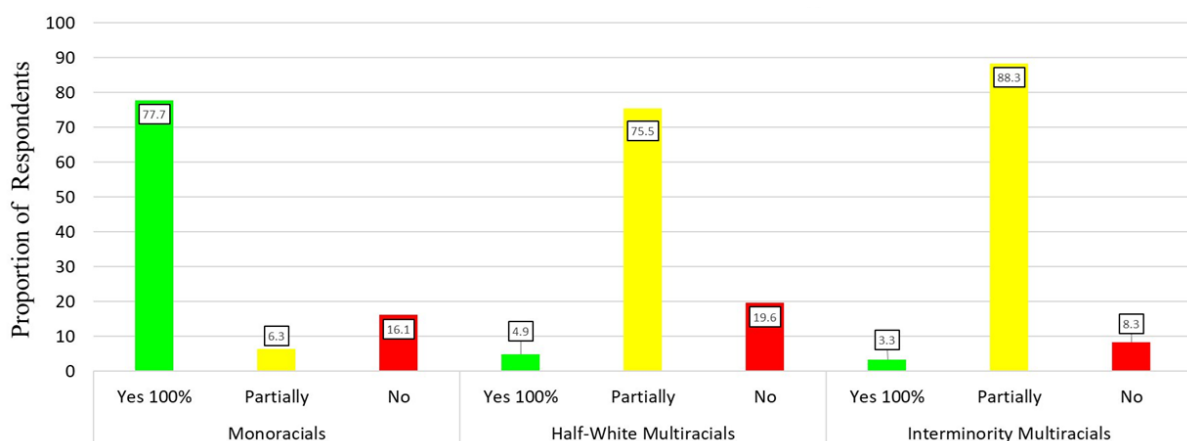
Among half-White Multiracials and interminority Multiracials who are part-White, people are significantly more likely to overlook the White racial background of interminority Multiracials (81.8%) than of half-White Multiracials (52%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 122) = 6.56, p = .01$ .

Among half-White Multiracials, most people are aware that they are Multiracial, as only 32.7% (n = 33) report that people assume that they are *only White*, though most of those who recognize that they are Multiracial (n = 68) incorrectly guess what their minority background is (72.06%; n = 49),  $\chi^2(2, N = 101) = 13.39, p < .001$ .

### ***Comparing Monoracials' and Multiracials' Experiences of Misidentification***

Research suggests that monoracial individuals also experience identity invalidation and/or misidentification. As such, we also assessed monoracials' perceptions of how accurately people perceive their ethn racial background. We then compared monoracials' and Multiracials' perception of how accurately people perceive them when guessing their ethn racial background.

A chi-square test of independence found monoracials were more likely to report that people correctly perceive their ethn racial background (77.7%; n = 224) whereas half-White Multiracials (75.5%; n = 102) and interminority Multiracials (88.3%; n = 60) were more likely to report that people were only partially correct when guessing their backgrounds,  $\chi^2(4, N = 386) = 250.63, p < .001$  (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2: How Accurate are Guesses of Monoracials' and Multiracials' Ethn racial Backgrounds**

### ***Misperceived as Higher or Lower Ethn racial Status***

Next, we assessed whether Multiracials and monoracials who experienced (in)validation and (mis)identification were misperceived as a group of higher or lower ethn racial status. Research on the direction of misclassification found that "*being misclassified into a lower-status group... may engender greater degrees of stress. Still, misclassification into a higher-status group is not associated with significant positive emotional outcomes*" (Campbell & Troyer, 2007, p. 761). Moreover, being misperceived as a lower-status ethn racial group is associated with more negative emotional and physical symptoms than being misidentified as a higher-status ethn racial group (Stepanikova, 2010).

Among those who reported being misidentified (whether they were misperceived or had an identity overlooked) when people guessed their ethn racial background, most monoracials indicated that they were misperceived as an ethn racial group of higher-status (71.7%) as opposed to lower-status (28.3%) (e.g., an Iranian individual being misperceived as White), whereas most Multiracials reported that they were misperceived as an ethn racial group of lower-status (57.2%) (e.g., a Wasian

individual being misperceived as half Cuban-half Kenyan) as opposed to higher-status (42.8%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 184) = 11.59, p < .001$  (see Figure 3).

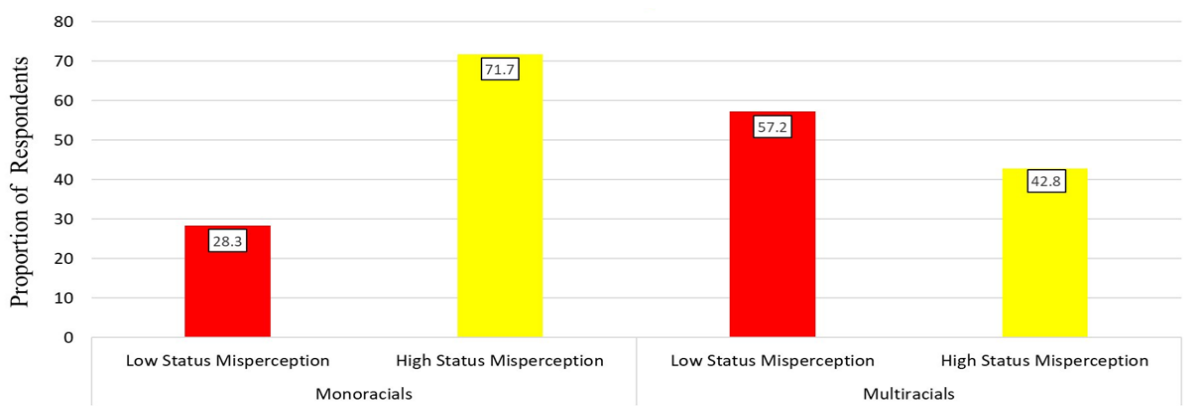


Figure 3: Monoracials and Multiracials Misperceived as Higher or Lower Ethnoracial Identity

**Proportions and Misidentification**

Among Multiracials who reported being misidentified (whether they were misperceived or had an identity overlooked) when people guessed their ethnoracial background, majority-White Multiracials (75% White) indicated that they were misidentified as only being White (83.3%) whereas Majority-Minority Multiracials (25% White) reported being misidentified as a lower-status ethnoracial group or only being their minority background (75%),  $\chi^2(3, N = 139) = 8.59, p = .035$  (see Figure 4).

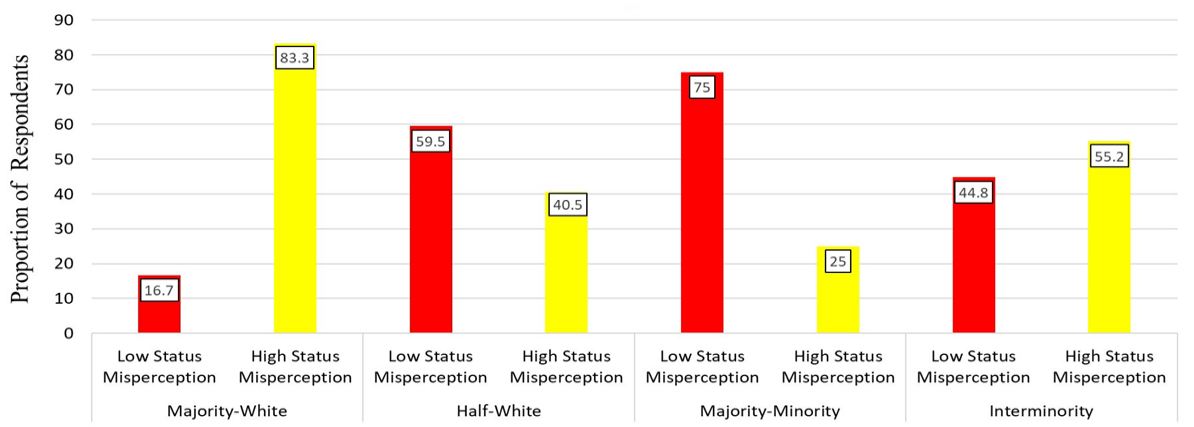


Figure 4: Multiracials Misperceived as Higher or Lower Ethnoracial Identity by Ethnoracial Composition and Proportion

**Phenotype and Misidentification**

Among half-White Multiracials, those who indicated that they look phenotypically ambiguous were the most likely to report that people overlook an aspect of their identity (53.5%), those who indicated that they phenotypically look like a combination of both parents were the most likely to report that people correctly guess their minority background (48.1%), and those who indicated that they phenotypically look distinctly like one of their ethnoracial backgrounds were the most likely to report that people assume they are only White (66.7%),  $\chi^2(6, N = 97) = 48.06, p < .001$ . In addition, half-White Multiracials who indicated that they look phenotypically ambiguous were the most likely half-White participants to report that people *did not guess anything right at all* about their ethnoracial background (34.9%; nothing correct), whereas those who indicated looking like one or a combination of both parents were far less likely to report that people did not guess anything correct (3.7% and 14.3%, respectively),  $\chi^2(2, N = 98) = 10.82, p = .004$ .



Among interminority Multiracials, those who indicated that they look phenotypically ambiguous were the ONLY interminority participants to report that people *failed to correctly guess anything* about their ethnoraacial background (19.2% vs. 0% for those who did not report that they look ambiguous),  $\chi^2(2, N = 60) = 7.13, p = .028$ .

Phenotypically ambiguous Multiracials (78.8%) were more likely than Multiracials who indicated resembling one of their identities (53.8%) or those who indicated looking like a combination of their identities (56.3%) to report that their non-coracial friends usually refer to them as Multiracial when describing them to other people,  $\chi^2(2, N = 123) = 7.60, p = .022$ .

**Eye Color.** Finally, we considered whether eye color would influence phenotypic perceptions and thus Multiracials' experiences of (mis)identification. A Chi-Square analysis found that half-White Multiracials with non-brown/black eye colors reported that people are more likely to correctly guess that they are part-White (70.6%) whereas half-White Multiracials with brown or black eye colors reported that people are more likely to overlook that they are part-White (56.6%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 100) = 4.19, p = .041$ .

### Threshold for Intragroup Diversity

In 2016, Lexi, the 6-year old foster daughter of the Page family, was transferred to her father's Choctaw tribal family because she is 1.56% Native American (Fieldstadt, 2016). According to the United States' *Indian Child Welfare Act*, being 1/64th Native American is sufficient for legally consequential identification as a Multiracial Native American. In Los Angeles, the Nisei Week Foundation (2023) requires that contestants be at least 50% Japanese to participate in their festival celebrating Japanese culture, effectively creating a proportional requirement for participation. These contrasting thresholds highlight the complexities regarding what qualifies as *sufficient heritage* for identifying as a member of various ethnoraacial groups.

As such, we asked participants a pair of questions focused on what they believe the minimum percentage of an ethnoraacial identity should be for someone to identify as a member of an ethnoraacial group (see *Measures*). The genetic percentage values participants provided were utilized in the analyses presented below. Analyses based on the qualitative coding of participants' explanations are presented at the end of this subsection.

A univariate ANOVA found a main effect of ethnoraacial background on minimum genetic percentage necessary for Multiracials to identify as one of their racial backgrounds,  $F(6, 447) = 8.49, p < .001$  (see Figure 5). Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons revealed that East Asians reported a higher minimum threshold for ethnoraacial group identification ( $M = 37.97\%$ ) than White subjects ( $M = 19.21\%$ ;  $p < .001$ ), half-White Multiracials ( $M = 24.94\%$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and interminority Multiracials ( $M = 26.58\%$ ;  $p = .002$ ). In addition, MENA respondents ( $M = 44.17\%$ ) reported a higher minimum threshold than half-White Multiracials ( $p = .027$ ) and White monoracials ( $p = .006$ ). The threshold reported by Hispanic ( $M = 30.38\%$ ) and South Asian Indian ( $M = 34.33\%$ ) respondents did not differ significantly from other groups.

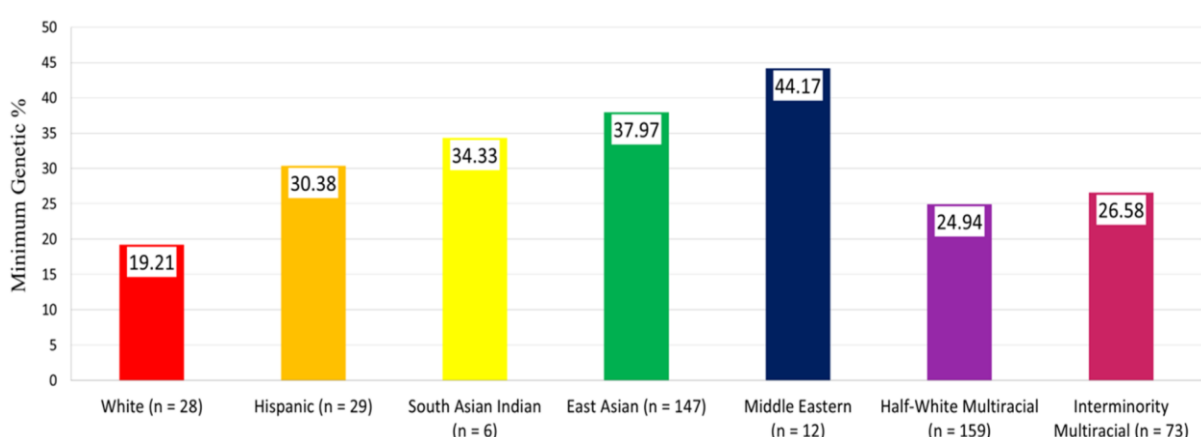


Figure 5 Minimum Genetic Percentage Necessary for Multiracials to Identify as One of Their Identities



A subsequent set of univariate ANOVAs assessed intragroup differences in the minimum genetic percentage reported among various Multiracial groups and their respective monoracial counterparts.

We found a main effect of MENA and White identities on the minimum genetic percentage participants reported as necessary for Multiracials to identify as one of their ethnoracial backgrounds,  $F(2, 48) = 9.23, p < .001$ . Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons revealed that monoracial MENA respondents reported a higher minimum threshold for ethnoracial group identification than White respondents ( $p < .001$ ) and half-MENA Multiracials ( $M = 25.91\%$ ;  $p = .037$ ).

We found a main effect of East Asian and White identities on the minimum genetic percentage participants reported as necessary for Multiracials to identify as one of their backgrounds,  $F(2, 305) = 22.79, p < .001$ . Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons revealed that East Asian respondents reported a higher minimum threshold for ethnoracial group identification than Wasians ( $M = 24.27\%$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and White respondents ( $p < .001$ ).

A univariate ANOVA found a marginal effect of Hispanic identity on minimum genetic percentage participants reported as necessary for Multiracials to identify as one of their racial backgrounds,  $F(2, 98) = 2.60, p = .079$ . Hispanic respondents reported a descriptively higher minimum threshold for ethnoracial group identification ( $M = 30.38\%$ ) than White monoracials and Whitinos ( $M = 27.59\%$ ).

A univariate ANOVA found a marginal effect of East Asian and Hispanic identities on the minimum genetic percentage participants reported as necessary for Multiracials to identify as one of their backgrounds,  $F(2, 199) = 2.81, p = .063$ . Both East Asian and Hispanic respondents reported a descriptively higher minimum threshold for ethnoracial group identification than Latinasians ( $M = 28.49\%$ ).

Next, a univariate ANOVA found a marginal effect of South Asian Indian and White identities on the minimum genetic percentage participants reported as necessary for Multiracials to identify as one of their backgrounds,  $F(2, 41) = 3.03, p = .059$ . Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons revealed that monoracial South Asian respondents reported a higher minimum threshold ( $M = 34.3\%$ ;  $p = .068$ ) than White respondents and Multiracial South Asians were in between ( $M = 25.35\%$ ).

Finally, a univariate ANOVA found a main effect of East Asian and Black identities on the minimum genetic percentage participants reported as necessary for Multiracials to identify as one of their backgrounds,  $F(1, 155) = 4.17, p = .043$ . East Asian respondents reported a higher minimum threshold than Blasians ( $M = 23.86\%$ ). Note that there were too few Black monoracial respondents to include in the analysis ( $n = 2$ ). In addition, the minimum genetic threshold reported by Blatinos ( $M = 32.50\%$ ) did not differ from Hispanic respondents, and the threshold reported by Black-White Multiracials ( $M = 21.62\%$ ) did not differ from White respondents.

*“The United States is home to the highest number of immigrants of any country in the world, with just under 14% of the population being foreign-born” (Ward, 2023).*

**Nationality and Threshold for Intragroup Diversity.** We reasoned that individuals with stronger ties to their heritage culture may require a higher genetic percentage for a Multiracial ingroup member to be considered a member of their ethnoracial group. As such, we assessed the minimum percentage required separately for each ethnoracial background as a function of the respondents' nationality.

A pair of univariate ANOVAs found a main effect of nationality on minimum genetic percentage required for Hispanic individuals,  $F(1, 27) = 4.22, p = .050$ , and East Asian individuals,  $F(1, 139) = 7.22, p = .008$ . A higher genetic percentage requirement was reported for international Hispanic students ( $M = 52\%$ ) compared to domestic Hispanic students ( $M = 26.92\%$ ), and for international East Asian students ( $M = 43.64\%$ ) compared to domestic East Asian students ( $M = 33.52\%$ ).

Next, we considered whether the results may differ between monoracial individuals who are monoethnic and multiethnic, with the thought being that the multiethnic individuals may have a lower

threshold than monoethnic individuals - reflecting the difference between Multiracial and monoracial respondents. A univariate ANOVA revealed that there was no significant difference between the minimum genetic percentage reported by monoethnic monoracials ( $M = 35.43\%$ ;  $n = 197$ ) and multiethnic monoracials ( $M = 30.57\%$ ;  $n = 21$ ) (nor were there any differences among specific ethnoracial groups or nationalities, though very few international students were multiethnic).

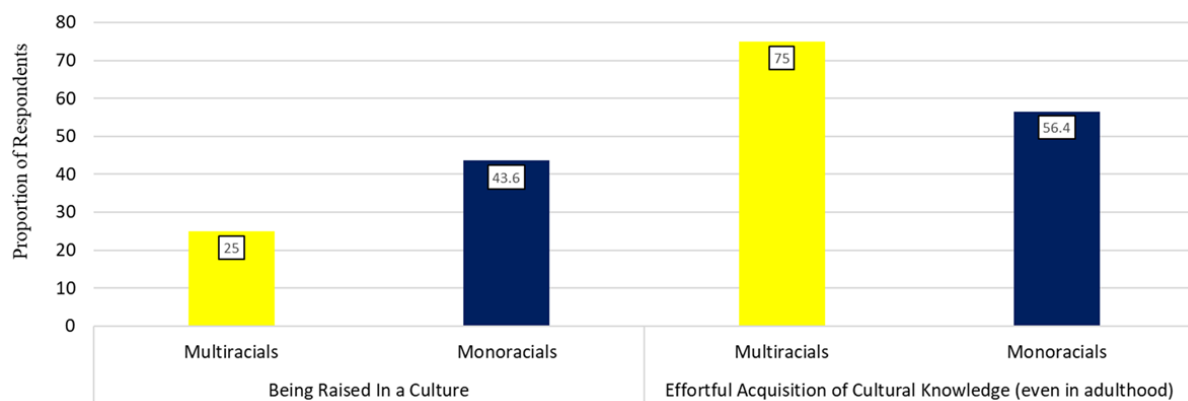
### *Participants' Explanations of Identity Gatekeeping*

Finally, we coded participants' responses to the two items associated with the genetic threshold analysis. Note that participants who did not respond to at least one of the two items or whose response did not directly address either prompt (i.e., idk, not sure, N/A, unsure) did not have their response included in the calculations.

A chi-square goodness of fit analysis revealed that participants were significantly more likely to mention cultural knowledge (38.6%), DNA/genetic inheritance (28%), individuals' right to identify however they like based on how they feel/ self-asserted identity (14.7%), and a combination of cultural knowledge and DNA (10.4%) than they were to mention phenotypic appearance (6.8%), or any other basis,  $\chi^2(6, N = 414) = 347.78, p < .001$ .

Given that most participants mentioned culture, we coded another variable based on the two most prevalent explanations provided within the culture responses: (A) being raised in a (each) culture (cultures) and (B) learning about, developing a connection to, and/or practicing the culture(s). Importantly, responses in the *Raised In* category emphasized being raised in/with their parents' cultural background while growing up, whereas the *Cultural Knowledge* responses generally referred to the effortful acquisition (even if initiated in adulthood) of cultural knowledge, developing a personal connection to a culture, and/or sharing in the experiences, celebrations, and investing in other components of a culture.

A chi-square test of independence found that Multiracials were significantly more likely to endorse cultural knowledge as a requirement for identification (75%) than monoracials (56.4%) whereas monoracials were more likely to endorse being raised in a culture (43.6%) than Multiracials (25%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 143) = 5.39, p = .020$  (see Figure 6).



**Figure 6 Being Raised in a Culture Versus Acquiring Cultural Knowledge**

### **Hypothesis 2: Friendship Diversity and Phenotypic Ambiguity**

Hypothesis 2 predicted that ethnoracially ambiguous Multiracials would have a higher proportion of non-coracial friendships than Multiracials who reported looking like either one of or a combination of their ethnoracial backgrounds.

#### *Coding*

We coded a variable that combined those who indicated looking like one or a combination of their ethnoracial backgrounds to allow for a pure comparison between Multiracials who feel they are phenotypically ambiguous and those who do not. In addition, we applied a split file using the

Multiracial generation variable (first-generation, second or later generations) to center our friendship analyses on first-generation Multiracials as this would ensure that they were only composed of two ethnoraical groups. This is relevant because calculations of the proportion of non-coracial friends is directly related to the number of ethnoraical backgrounds one is composed of, second-generation Multiracials may be composed of 2, 3, 4, or more ethnoraical backgrounds, and each additional background removes a group that could be considered non-coracial friends. For example, a second-generation Multiracial with a Blasian mom and Whitino dad will have one of the lowest proportions of non-coracial friends given that friends of 4 ethnoraical groups (Black, East Asian, Hispanic, and White) have been removed from consideration.

### ***Phenotypes and Friends***

A 2 (phenotypically ambiguous or not) x 2 (half-White or interminority) factorial ANOVA (among first-generation Multiracials) revealed a marginal interaction effect on the proportion of non-coracial friends,  $F(1, 118) = 3.60, p = .06$ . Bonferroni pairwise comparisons revealed that phenotypically ambiguous interminority Multiracials reported a significantly higher proportion of non-coracial friends ( $M = 58.21\%$ ) than phenotypically ambiguous half-White Multiracials ( $M = 43.09\%$ ,  $p = .028$ ) and a marginally higher proportion than interminority Multiracials who reported that they were not phenotypically ambiguous ( $M = 45.07\%$ ,  $p = .066$ ), but did not significantly differ from the proportion reported by half-White Multiracials who reported that they were not phenotypically ambiguous ( $M = 46.03\%$ ).

An analysis testing the assumption that Multiracial individuals whose phenotype primarily resembles one of their ethnoraical groups would have more friends from that coracial monoracial peer group than phenotypically ambiguous Multiracials was not significant.

We report the trend of our analysis with Wasians for other researchers who may be interested in following up with a larger sample. A descriptively (though not significantly) higher proportion of East Asian friends was reported by Wasians who reported looking phenotypically East Asian ( $M = 29.22\%$ ) than those who reported looking phenotypically White ( $M = 26.97\%$ ) or phenotypically ambiguous ( $M = 23.69\%$ ). The proportion of White friends was lower for those who reported looking phenotypically East Asian ( $M = 12.94\%$ ) than for those who reported looking phenotypically White ( $M = 20.40\%$ ) or phenotypically ambiguous ( $M = 24.85\%$ ).

### **Hypothesis 3: Ethnoraical Socialization (RES)**

Hypothesis three predicted that Multiracials' RES experiences would differ based on phenotype, ethnoraical composition, and, for half-White Multiracials, the sex of the minority parent.

#### ***By Sex of Parent***

Among those who reported being socialized solely into one of their parents' backgrounds, interminority Multiracials were marginally more likely to be socialized in both parents' cultures (23.8%) than half-White Multiracials (5.1%), though both Interminority (57.1%) and half-White (56.4%) Multiracials were equally likely to be socialized into their mom's culture,  $\chi^2(2, N = 60) = 5.71, p = .058$ . There was no support for a parent-sex effect for half-White Multiracials' RES as they were socialized predominantly in the minority parent's culture, whether it was their mom's (60.7%) or dad's (42.9%).

#### ***By Culture***

**Coding Strategy.** The coding structure for highest and lowest identity was applied to RES analyses. For example, Wasian Multiracials' highest status ethnoraical background would be their White background, whereas for Latinasian and Blasian Multiracials it would be their East Asian background. Importantly, this coding structure enabled RES comparisons between half-White and interminority Multiracials which would not have been possible if we assessed whether they were socialized into their White or minority backgrounds. This is because many interminority Multiracials could only be coded based on their 2+ minority backgrounds. Thus, coding the backgrounds as low-

status and high-status enabled the half-White and non-White interminority Multiracials to be assessed within the same analyses.

**Findings.** Half-White Multiracials were more likely to be socialized into both parents' cultures (59.4%), though the proportion of those socialized solely into their minority background (21.7%) and White ethnoraical background (18.9%) did not differ,  $\chi^2(2, N = 143) = 44.03, p < .001$ .

Similar results were found for interminority Multiracials, as they were more likely to be socialized into both parents' cultures (65.15%), though the proportion of those socialized solely into their higher-status (18.18%) and lower-status ethnoraical background (16.67%) did not differ,  $\chi^2(2, N = 66) = 30.09, p < .001$ .

A chi-square test of independence assessing all Multiracial groups' RES based on the status of their respective ethnoraical identities was significant,  $\chi^2(16, N = 178) = 36.0, p = .003$  (see Figure 7). All Multiracial groups were most likely to be socialized into both parents' ethnoraical backgrounds (with the exception of Whitinos and Blatinos). Among those who reported being socialized into one of their ethnoraical backgrounds, half-White Multiracials were more likely to be socialized into their lower-status identity than their higher-status identity (with the exception of Whindians), and interminority Multiracials were more likely to be socialized into their higher-status identity than their lower-status identity (with the exception of MENA-interminority Multiracials).

Patterns for part-White Latinasians and Blasians resembled their non-White counterparts. Among 14 part-White Latinasians, 6 (42.86%) were socialized into all of their ethnoraical backgrounds, and 5 were socialized into their higher-status background, of which 4 indicated was their East Asian background (28.57%) and 1 indicated was their White background. Among 5 part-White Blasians, 3 (60%) were socialized into all of their ethnoraical backgrounds, 1 was socialized into their East Asian background and the other was socialized into their African American background. Lastly, patterns for part-White Blatinos differed from non-White Blatinos as 5 out of 6 of them reported being socialized into all of their ethnoraical backgrounds, and the other reported being socialized into their high-status minority background. No Blatinos reported being socialized solely into their Black background.

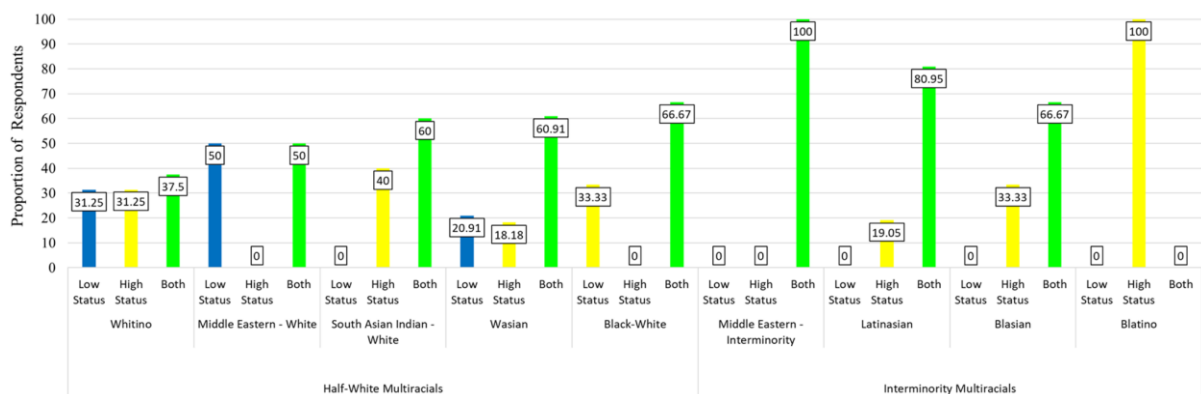


Figure 7 Multiracials' RES Based on Their High and Low-Status Identities

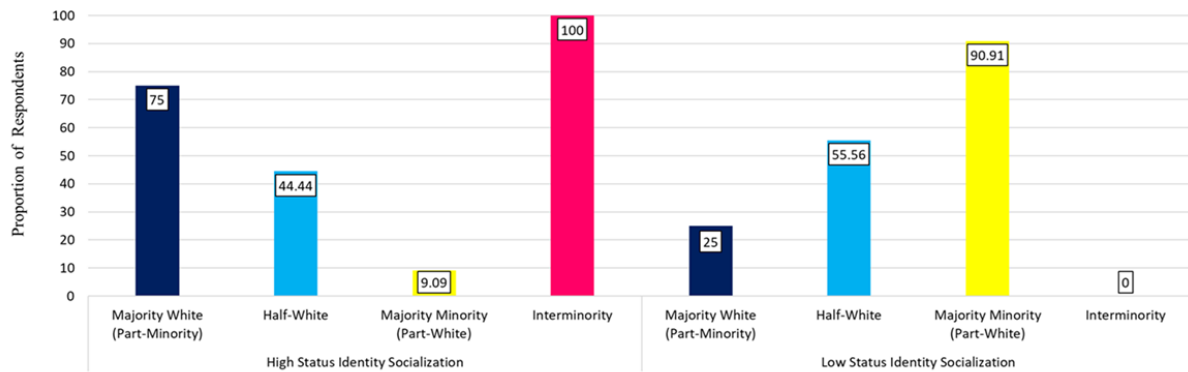
### Socialization by Genetic Proportion

In addition to Multiracials' overall composition, their *proportion* of specific high and low-status ethnoraical identities also influenced RES outcomes.

A chi-square analysis revealed that Majority White Multiracials were equally likely to be socialized into their parents' shared White ethnoraical background or all ethnoraical backgrounds (both 42.86%), whereas Majority Minority (54.17%), half-White (60.27%), and (most of all) interminority Multiracials (73.17%) were more likely to be socialized into the different ethnoraical backgrounds of both parents,  $\chi^2(6, N = 208) = 22.39, p = .001$ . In addition, half-White Multiracials were more likely to report being socialized into their lower-status (minority) identity (22.06%) whereas interminority Multiracials were more likely to report being socialized into their higher-status

minority identity (26.83%). A subsequent analysis focused solely on participants who reported being socialized into only their high or low-status ethnoraical identities was also significant,  $\chi^2(3, N = 80) = 19.99, p < .001$  (see Figure 8).

The importance of proportionality was made crystal clear in a subsequent analysis comparing majority White and majority minority Multiracials socialized into either their high or low-status ethnoraical identities,  $\chi^2(1, N = 15) = 6.52, p = .011$ . Majority-White Multiracials reported being more likely to be socialized into their White identity (75%) whereas majority minority Multiracials reported being more likely to be socialized into their minority identity (90.9%).



**Figure 8 Multiracials' RES Into Their Higher or Low-Status Ethnoraical Identities Based on the Proportion of Their White Background**

### *More Likely to Identify with Which Identity*

Interminority Multiracials who are part-White were substantially more likely to report identifying with their minority identity (62.5%) whereas half-White Multiracials were more likely to equally identify with both their White and minority identities (46.5%),  $\chi^2(2, N = 115) = 7.07, p = .029$ .

### *Closer to Monoracial or Multiracial Parents' Identity*

Among second-Generation Multiracials, interminority Multiracials were substantially more likely to equally identify with both their monoracial and Multiracial parents (60%) whereas half of half-White Multiracials indicated identifying with their monoracial parent and half with their Multiracial parent (but not both parents equally),  $\chi^2(2, N = 35) = 10.75, p = .005$ .

### *Friendship and Socialization*

We then considered whether RES influenced friendship patterns. A mixed-model ANOVA found a significant interaction between Wasians' reported racial socialization and their proportion of White and East Asian friends,  $F(1, 43) = 4.56, p = .039$ . Bonferroni pairwise comparisons revealed that Wasians reported a marginally higher proportion of White friends if their parents primarily socialized them into their White cultural background ( $M = 26.49%$ ) than their East Asian cultural background ( $M = 18.63%, p = .089$ ), whereas Wasians reported a marginally higher proportion of East Asian friends if their parents primarily socialized them into their East Asian cultural background ( $M = 31.05%$ ) than their White cultural background ( $M = 21.79%, p = .082$ ). Moreover, Wasians whose parents socialized them into their East Asian cultural background reported a significantly higher proportion of East Asian friends ( $M = 31.05%$ ) than White friends ( $M = 18.63%, p = .025$ ).

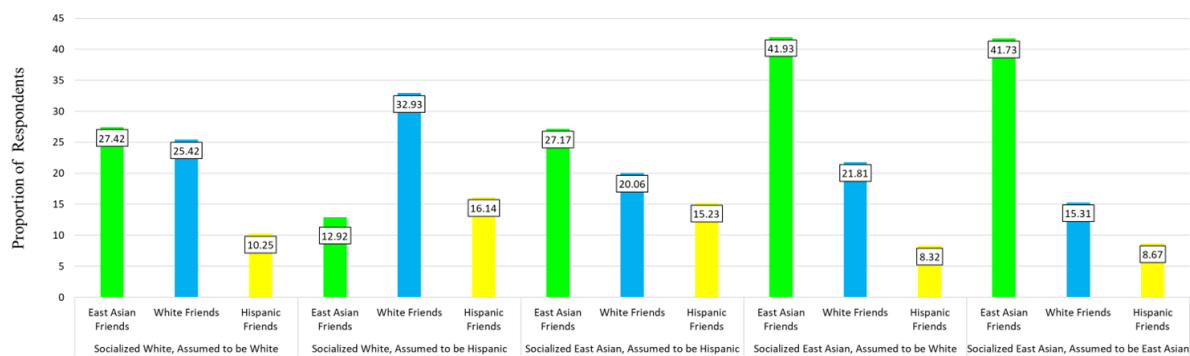
### *What Matters More: Socialization or Socially Perceived Identity?*

Lastly, we considered whether socialization or ascriptive identity had more influence on friendship patterns. Similar to our friendship analyses for hypothesis 2, we used a split file for Multiracials' generation to control for the influence of phenotypic proportionality on appearance.

We found that ethnoracial socialization is most important for Wasians' proportion of East Asian friends,  $F(4, 29) = 3.42$ ,  $p = .021$ ,  $n^2 = 32.1\%$  (see Figure 9). Among Wasians who were socialized into their East Asian heritage, those assumed to be East Asian ( $M = 41.73\%$ ) or White by others ( $M = 41.93\%$ ) reported having a higher proportion of East Asian friends than those assumed to be Hispanic by others ( $M = 27.17\%$ ). Among Wasians who were socialized into their White heritage, those assumed to be White by others ( $M = 41.73\%$ ) reported having a higher proportion of East Asian friends than those assumed to be Hispanic ( $M = 12.92\%$ ).

We then assessed the proportion of Wasians' East Asian, White, and Hispanic friends. This is based on the finding that Wasians are generally misperceived as Hispanic and based on their East Asian and White ethnoracial backgrounds.

A mixed-model ANOVA revealed a main effect of RES and ascriptive ethnoracial identity,  $F(2, 58) = 11.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $n^2 = 28.3\%$ , and an interaction effect on the proportion of East Asian, White, and Hispanic friends,  $F(8, 58) = 2.46$ ,  $p = .023$ ,  $n^2 = 25.3\%$ . Among Wasians who were socialized into their East Asian heritage and assumed to be East Asian, they had significantly more East Asian friends ( $M = 41.73\%$ ) than White friends ( $M = 15.31\%$ ,  $p = .049$ ) and Hispanic friends ( $M = 8.67\%$ ,  $p = .004$ ). Among Wasians who were socialized into their East Asian heritage and socially assumed to be White, they had significantly more East Asian friends ( $M = 41.93\%$ ) than Hispanic friends ( $M = 8.32\%$ ,  $p = .02$ ). Unfortunately, there were too few Blasian, Blatino, Latinasian, Whitino, South Asian Indian Multiracial, Native American Multiracial, and MENA Multiracial participants for similar analyses.



**Figure 9 The Influence of Socialization and Socially Assumed Ethnoracial Identity on Wasians' Friendships**

## Discussion

Our study investigated how Multiracials' phenotypic appearance and ethnoracial socialization experiences influence their sense of identity and experiences of (mis)identification.

### Hypothesis 1: What Are You

There was support for hypothesis one, as Multiracials were more likely to report experiences of identity incongruent discrimination (misidentification/misperception and non-identification/overlooking) than monoracials. In addition, our prediction that a higher prevalence of identity-related microaggressions would be associated with phenotypic ambiguity was supported (Doneghy, 2022; Nadrich, 2019).

### Misperceived as Higher or Lower Ethnoracial Status

*“Individuals who experienced a loss of status as a result of their misclassification were more vulnerable to physical and emotional symptoms, while such an increased vulnerability was not observed among those experiencing a status gain”* (Stepanikova, 2010, p. 178).

Research on the direction of misclassification has found that misperceptions in the direction of a lower-status ethnoracial background (e.g., misperceiving a Latinasian individual as MENA or assuming a Wasian individual is only Chinese) are associated with worse health outcomes than

misperceptions in the direction of a higher-status ethnoraical background (e.g., misperceiving a Blatino individual as South Korean or assuming a Wasian individual is only White) (Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Debose & Winters, 2003; Stepanikova, 2010).

Our study expands on this research by finding that monoracials are most likely to be misperceived as an ethnoraical group of higher-status whereas Multiracials are most likely to be misperceived as an ethnoraical group of lower-status. Moreover, the direction of misclassification for part-White Multiracials varied based on their proportions; specifically, majority-White Multiracials were misperceived as being only White (lower-status identity overlooked) whereas majority-minority Multiracials were misperceived as only being their minority background (White identity overlooked) or misidentified as an ethnoraical group of lower-status.

For monoracials, ontologically speaking, overlooking their identity *requires* misperception, but misperception does not require overlooking. For example, someone may guess their single identity correctly but then guess several others as well (error of commission), almost as if they are assuming the monoracial target is Multiracial. In contrast, for Multiracials, overlooking one of their identities *does not require* misperception. For example, a Latinasian individual may be perceived as only Chinese (error of omission). This would be overlooking their Mexican identity, but there was no misperception/incorrect guess that they were also Iranian (though, on the level of their ethnoraical composition, such a guess could be argued as misperceiving them as monoracial).

### ***Genetic Threshold for Intragroup Diversity***

Another finding associated with hypothesis one was that monoracial minorities tend to require a higher genetic proportion for inclusion within their ethnoraical groups than the genetic requirement reported by Multiracials. This was especially true for international monoracial respondents — those whose socialization was in the greatest proximity to their heritage culture before coming to the United States. In fact, among East Asian international students, their reported minimum genetic percentage did not differ between those who first came to the United States for college and those who have lived in the United States since 5th grade or earlier.

Our qualitative coding and subsequent analyses of participants' criteria for identity gatekeeping found that most participants mentioned (in order of frequency) culture, followed by DNA/ genetic inheritance, self-asserted identity, a combination of cultural knowledge and genetic inheritance, phenotypic appearance, and a small subset mentioned language as the sole criteria. Interestingly, perceptions of what constitutes cultural knowledge differed significantly between monoracials and Multiracials. Monoracials emphasized being raised in a culture and/or growing up in a household with parents rooted in a culture. In contrast, Multiracials emphasized the effortful acquisition of cultural knowledge at any point in life, even independent of any contribution by parents or family.

The difference between monoracials and Multiracials in what counts as a source of one's cultural background — parental upbringing versus personal effort — may stem from Multiracials' unique experiences. Multiracials often experience microaggressions and exclusion from ingroups by their monoracial coracial peers, including their own family, in addition to experience of identity invalidation, misidentification, accusations of cultural appropriation, and potentially being distant from family associated with one or more of their identities, whether due to divorce or other factors (Gaither, 2015). These experiences may lead Multiracials to prioritize personal investment and experiential learning in their identity formation process, with traditional lineage-based criteria as a complementary component. This is consistent with research on the adulthood re-culturation efforts enacted by transracial adoptees and other individuals who may feel that they were not exposed to an aspect of their identity(ies) while growing up (Utley & Chao, 2023). As a result of the freedom acquired in early adulthood, Multiracials motivated to establish (or reestablish) connectedness to a portion of their heritage overlooked during socialization or otherwise missing while growing up may initiate their re-culturation independent of their family's wishes or motivations (Baden et al., 2012).

Research on cultural appropriation and appreciation suggests that the adoption of culture-specific assemblages by non-coracial individuals is generally unwelcome, even though such actions could, at times, reflect inclusive or pluralistic motivations on the part of the non-coracial adopter. The



increase of remote acculturation via the virtual public sphere, migration flows, and globally consumed media has increased individuals' propensity to adopt slices of other cultures into their own identity and/or experiences (Ferguson et al., 2017). Research on cultural affiliation suggests that individuals may be *permitted* to carry themselves with lower-tier emblems of a particular culture based on their degree of interpersonal closeness (Ming-tak Chew, 2022). In the case of Multiracials, permission is not necessary for them to identify as and engage in the culture-specific assemblages of their different ethnoracial backgrounds, regardless of any identity gatekeeping engaged in by their monoracial coracial peers.

Media often defaults to discussing Multiracial individuals in reference to their ascriptive identity and overlooks others. For example, Vice President Kamala Harris is often described in reference to her dad's Black identity as opposed to her mom's South Asian (Tamil Indian) identity. Professional Baseball pitcher Yu Darvish (MENA-East Asian Multiracial) is described as "*the pride of Japan, not the Pride of Japan and Iran*" (Want, 2016). Multiracials should be recognized for all of their identities. For instance, journalist Soledad O'Brien (White-Blatino) has been honored by Irish America magazine, the NAACP, and Catalina Magazine honored her with the Groundbreaking Latina of the Year in 2005. Karissa Valencia (half Mexican, half Chumash native American), creator of the Spirit Animals series on Netflix, has been celebrated by numerous Native American publications. As a half-Native American director, Karissa created the first majority Native American crew in the history of Hollywood (known as the *Native Avengers of Hollywood*), regularly reached out to Native American tribes, and implemented their suggestions into the show. In short, Multiracials' sense of belonging should not require them to performatively sacrifice one of their identities nor should one of their identities be discounted by others.

In addition, the fluidity of Multiracials' identities should not be interpreted as an incomplete sense of self or going through a phase. Rather, the affirmed fluidity of identity that some Multiracials express reflects their fully developed sense of self (Kramer et al., 2015). In asserting their Multiracial identities and rejecting monoracial discourses, Multiracials' *embodied resistance* contributes to deconstructing the entrenched racial hierarchies in our increasingly globalized world (Gonzales, 2019).

## **Hypothesis 2: Phenotypic Ambiguity and Friendship Diversity**

Hypothesis two, which predicted that phenotypically ambiguous Multiracials would have the highest proportion of non-coracial friends, was marginally supported. We reasoned that the sociocultural commodification of Multiracials and the social capital associated with phenotypic ambiguity would afford them more opportunities to make friends from non-coracial groups and more success in solidifying non-coracial friendships. We found that phenotypically ambiguous interminority Multiracials reported having a marginally higher proportion of non-coracial friends than half-White Multiracials and Multiracials who reported that they were not phenotypically ambiguous. These findings underscore the need for further investigations into how Multiracials' phenotypic appearance influences their social networks.

## **Hypothesis 3: Ethnoracial Socialization**

Finally, there was general support for hypothesis three. We found that interminority Multiracials were more likely than half-White Multiracials (especially Majority White Multiracials) to be socialized into each of their ethnoracial backgrounds as opposed to the one they felt reflected their phenotype. The finding that half-White Multiracials were more likely to be socialized into their more phenotypically expressed ethnoracial background is consistent with research indicating that parents' RES approach is influenced by their Multiracials offspring's phenotypic appearance (Jackson et al., 2019; Miville et al., 2005; Root, 1993; Talbot, 2008; Vezeldenos et al., 2023).

We found that Multiracials' friendship patterns were associated with their RES to a greater degree than the ascriptive identity associated with their phenotype. For instance, among Wasians who reported being misperceived as Hispanic by others, those who were socialized into their East Asian heritage reported a higher proportion of East Asian friends than those socialized into their White heritage.



## ***Demographic Patterns***

Regarding phenotype, we found that second-generation Multiracials whose parents overlapped on one of their ethnoracial backgrounds (e.g., Taiwanese mom and Latinasian dad; 75% East Asian and 25% Hispanic) were more likely to report being phenotypically ambiguous. They were also less likely to report looking like a combination of both parents, which makes sense given that they would be a larger proportion of at least one of their identities making it more difficult to look like a phenotypically balanced combination. Descriptively (as there were too few to test in analyses), those with two first-generation Multiracial parents with no overlapping identities reported a phenotypically ambiguous appearance, which makes sense given they were 25% of each of their 4 ethnoracial backgrounds.

Regarding composition, we found that first-generation Multiracials were disproportionately more likely to report being half-White (50% White) than second-generation Multiracials, whereas the proportion of interminority Multiracials only decreased by a few percent among the second-generation. This is largely because most second-generation Multiracials with a half-White parent reported that their other parent was a monoracial minority. As such, the only second-generation Multiracials who were half-White were those with one interminority parent and a monracial White parent (81.25%) and those with two half-White parents (18.75%).

## **Limitations**

Our study is not without limitations and any insights derived from our study should take them into consideration.

### ***Multiracial Demographic Imbalance***

First, all participants were sampled from a single Californian university in the United States which has a predominantly Wasian Multiracial population. Another limitation in our study is the size of the interminority Multiracial sample relative to the half-White Multiracial sample. Despite our efforts to collect more interminority participants, and the fact that California has the largest Latinasian population in the United States (Mejia et al., 2022), our data reflects the reality that most Multiracial individuals (especially since *Loving v. Virginia*, 1967) are half-White. Future studies would benefit from a larger non-White Multiracial population as interminority Multiracials "*have uniquely different racialized experiences to part-White Multiracials in the United States*" (Kandamby, 2023).

Moreover, a larger Multiracial sample would allow for greater specificity when coding participants' identity related responses. For example, comparisons between Multiracials who are part-White interminority (Wasian mom and Hispanic Dad), majority-minority Wasian (Wasian mom and Chinese dad), half-White interminority (White mom and Blasian dad), and majority-White Whitino (White mom and Whitino dad).

We did have some participants who fell into these categories among our total (primary and exploratory/mini-meta) samples. Among our half-White subjects (n = 370), most were truly half-White, though the coding included 22 subjects who were half-White and interminority (e.g., one monoracial White parent and one Blasian parent), 8 who were majority-White (e.g., one Wasian parent and one monoracial White parent), and one who was majority White and interminority (one White parent and one parent who was part-White and interminority).

Among our interminority subjects (n = 136), most were truly interminority, though the coding included 27 part-White participants who were majority-minority with two or more minority backgrounds (e.g., one Hispanic parent and one Wasian parent) and 10 who were majority-minority with one minority background (e.g., one Iranian parent and one half Iranian - half White parent). Larger samples of various Multiracial groups in future studies will allow for more detailed investigations into these nuanced categories, enriching our understanding of the diverse experiences within the Multiracial community.

### ***Ancestral Information***

We did not seek ancestral information which is relevant given that many people who could identify as Multiracial based on grandparents and great grandparents choose not to do so or are unaware of their Multiracial heritage (Gonlin, 2020). Indeed, individuals with two monoracial identifying parents (first-generation) are most likely to identify as Multiracial. In addition, Multiracials may be less likely to identify with their White or Black ancestries relative to their Hispanic, East Asian, MENA, Native American, and South Asian ancestries (Gonlin, 2020; Song & Liebler, 2022). For instance, monoracial White Americans are less likely than any other ethnoracial group to report that their heritage is central to their identity (Cohn et al., 2021), and European immigrant groups have historically worked towards assimilation into White American culture (Roediger, 2005; Woldeab et al., 2021). Furthermore, Asian Americans have the highest intragroup ethnic diversity (e.g., Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Singaporean, Taiwanese, Thai, Vietnamese, etc) whereas Black Americans have the lowest (the *Black American* ethnic group dominates) (Wu et al., 2015).

### ***Methodological Concerns***

Lastly, while our items assessing aspects of racial socialization provided participants opportunities for open-ended responses on virtually every occasion, it would be beneficial to include additional items and scales, such as the Multiracial Identity Integration Scale (Gabriel, 2023), that assess a wider range of contexts which participants may fail to recall for the purposes of qualitative coding in the absence of items with sufficient contextual cues.

### **Future Research**

*“I’m depicted by this AI as White in the past and Asian in the future (because of Techno-Orientalism [which] portrays Asians as futuristic). There isn’t much material to draw on for AI to reflect the mixed experience; no precedent has been set. ...not being able to say we have ‘a face that belongs in a certain era.’”* (Brown, 2023, Wasian journalist for TheColorOfUs writing about the *MyHeritage* Ai art trend)

As discussed in the introduction, “*the media, as a business, has turned the multiracial identity into a commodity*” (Larson, 2016). Phenotypically ambiguous Multiracial models are overrepresented in popular media and in international marketing in many OECD countries (Johnson-Hunt, 2020; Johnston-Guerrero & Combs, 2023; Larson, 2016; Okamura, 2017; Pipkin, 2023; Rivas, 2015; Sengupta, 2018; Washington, 2017). As such, research should continue to investigate the influence of phenotypic ambiguity on Multiracials’ experience.

### ***Phenotypic Markers***

*“Some mixed people adjust their appearance to bring their ascriptive identity in line with their own asserted identity”* (Poudel, 2023). As such, future research should investigate Multiracials groups’ propensity to codeswitch in their self-presentation of potential phenotypic markers of ethnoracial identification in order to phenotypically fit into one or more of their monoracial groups. This may include phenotypic markers in which the ease of malleability is high (hair texture, hair color, eye color) and those in which the ease of malleability is low (skin tone, eye shape, lip size, nose shape, breast size, height, weight), among other phenotypic features.<sup>ii</sup>

For example, Sims et al. (2020) found that monoracial individuals with curly hair were typically assumed to be Multiracial, Black, or Hispanic, except in cases where the subject was an Asian monoracial. Relatedly, Simanian et al. (2023) found that Multiracial women dye their hair more frequently than monoracial women of any ethnoracial background, and research has indicated that changing one’s hair is associated with the ‘performativity of race’ (or *doing* race) differentially across contexts (Lukate & Foster, 2023). In the current study, we found that part-White Multiracials with non-brown/black eye colors were more likely to be perceived as part-White. Thus, it may also be worth considering if individuals wear contact lenses of specific colors to bring their phenotypic appearance in line with their affirmed identity.

### ***Names and Identity***

*“This idea that the individual “looked” Hispanic simply because of their last name demonstrates the power in language and a person’s name as a signifier of their ancestry, race, and ethnicity” (Proctor, 2021).*

First and last names may also influence identity development and interpersonal relationships as names influence market outcomes for both Multiracial individuals and monoracials in interracial marriages (Ooi, 2015). For instance, Wasians with a Chinese father (Chinese last name) make 11% less than Wasians with a Chinese mother (White last name). Among monoracial women in interracial marriages who take their husband’s last name, *“White women married to Asian men earn approximately 10% less than Asian women married to White men”* (Ooi, 2015). As such, naming practices may be an insightful element to consider in future investigations of Multiracial socialization and identity development.

### ***Partial Blended Families***

It would be interesting to investigate the ethnoracial repartner/remarriage preferences of Multiracials’ parents. For instance, among monoracial ex-spouses, the custodial parent may be more likely than the non-custodial parent to date/marry with someone from the ethnoracial background that they do not share with their Multiracial offspring. For example, in their second marriages, the Korean custodial mom of a Latinasian child may be more likely to marry someone of Latin American heritage than the non-custodial Mexican dad may be to marry someone of East Asian heritage. Such motivations may be influenced by the age and sex of their offspring, the race ratio and ethnoracial diversity of the city where the custodial parent lived, the degree to which the parents were motivated to expose their child to all of their heritages, among other factors.

### ***Multiracial Erasure in Academia***

Finally, we believe that future research on Multiracial erasure and microaggressions should investigate how Multiracial student groups perceive their experiences of erasure in academia (Pilgrim, 2021). Though students may select all ethnoracial identities that apply when providing their demographic information, colleges and universities may *“forcibly refashion Multiracial identities into monoracial ones”* as many have *“yet to account systematically for a quickly growing contingent of Multiracial-identifying students”* (Giebel, 2023). As such, there is likely a significant under-allocation of resources for Multiracial students.<sup>iii</sup>

At the same time, universities with an underrepresented portion of a particular monoracial student identity may utilize one of the identities of their Multiracial students in their demographic reporting to make themselves appear more diverse. For example, the data system for some institutions *“automatically sorted Multiracial students into racial groups with the lowest number of students”* (Nojan, 2023).

Moreover, some Multiracial student groups may perceive (and objectively experience) more harm than others. For instance, for Multiracials who are part-Hispanic, *“federal standards require educational institutions to report only the “Hispanic” identity and not the racial classification”* (García-Louis, 2016). Indeed, Latinasian students are more likely to be categorized *“as Hispanic, and not Asian. This suggests that there is more to gain from a person’s Hispanic ethnicity than Asian racial identity”* (Proctor, 2021). As such, the harm that part-Hispanic Multiracials experience may be *“monumental given institutions utilize demographic data in order to assess what types of student services to provide.”* Similarly, Multiracials who are half-White may be seen as less deserving of financial aid and other opportunities associated with their minority ethnoracial identity(ies). For instance, Black-White Multiracials are seen as less eligible for affirmative action than Black-Native American Multiracials (Good et al., 2013).

### **Mixed Student Union**

*“Many schools have clubs for supporting [monoracial] students (which mixed race students are still encouraged to participate in), however, there are not many organizations available for the unique Multiracial experience” (Rosenberg-Chiriboga, 2022).*

As the Multiracial population increases, it becomes more imperative that the personal belongingness needs of Multiracial students are met in order for them to be academically and socially successful, in addition to the influence of belongingness on college students’ wellbeing (Perkins, 2015). Moreover, research on Multiracial students’ experiences in monoracial student organizations finds that they are “*expected to translate racial issues,*” to “*serve as racial buffers,*” are “*used to demonstrate racial diversity within student organizations,*” and are “*asked to recruit other minorities because they are assumed to be diversity magnets*” (Sasso et al., 2023). Though Multiracial students may manage to find a sense of belonging, community, and identity visibility within monoracial student organizations, Mixed Student Unions provide Multiracial students with a sense of belonging and community specific to their Multiracial identity - a provision that is difficult to obtain within organizations tailored specifically to one of their identities (e.g., Hispanic Student Union, Black Student Union).

Mixed Student Unions provide Multiracial students with a space in which their multidimensional backgrounds, unique experiences of misidentification, monoracial ingroup exclusion, and erasure can be shared and discussed with peers who have faced similar experiences, and with allies seeking to understand Multiracials’ experiences. Such communities are particularly beneficial to the mental health of Multiracial students considering that there is a “*lack of professional research or training for helping professionals to provide effective and competent services for Biracial and Multiracial clients*” (Evans & Ramsay, 2015, p. 273). Mixed Student Unions are also inclusive as one of their defining features is that most group members are different from each other in their ethnoracial background, religious identity, and skin tone (among other attributes). As such, Mixed Student Unions and similarly inclusive spaces are beneficial to overall intergroup relations as inclusive communities generate novel pathways for social coevolution.

### **Conclusion**

Most Multiracial studies remain

*“Eurocentric and focus on mixed individuals with White heritage... The task of giving a spotlight to largely underserved [Multiracial] communit[ies] exists almost entirely outside of the institution of academia” (Moskowitz, 2022, p. 10).*

Multiracials were America’s fastest growing ethnoracial group at the time of the 2020 US Census. The growth of the Multiracial population “*will require our nation to redefine current constructs of race, racial identification, and racial classification*” (Potter, 2009, p. 203). We hope that this investigation is an informative contribution to the growing body of literature on Multiracials’ experiences. Our investigation had more Multiracial groups than monoracial groups, and we hope that the diversity of the Multiracial groups that we presented inspires future research to move beyond the Black-White binary in favor of scholarship representative of the increasing ethnoracial diversity in the global public sphere (Buggs, 2017; Garay & Remedios, 2021). Finally, we hope our investigation motivates researchers to consider the relevance of various components of identity (e.g., sex, lived experiences, sexuality, interpersonal relationships, gender, religion, linguistics, fluid and fixed aspects of identity, etc) and the insights that each piece provides in putting together the intersectional jigsaw puzzle of who people are.

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<sup>i</sup> We feel that the casing of the term Multiracial does not avail the usage of the term multiracial in describing an ethn racially diverse context as a literature review search “with quotation marks” for “Multiracial church” produces the same results as a search for “multiracial church” (at the time of this writing). Thus, avoidance of using the term multiracial when describing ethn racially diverse contexts respects and preserves the term for Multiracial individuals, and ensures that potentially confusing applications of the term will not be added to the corpus of literature that may be reviewed by other scholars in future Multiracial research endeavors.

<sup>ii</sup> There may also be genotypic (or otherwise endogenous) markers of identity. For instance, one of the coauthors conversed with GPT (Open Ai, 2023) regarding a half East Asian Multiracial and their non-East Asian dad not experiencing Asian Glow when consuming alcohol while their monoracial East Asian mom (and many relatives on her side of the family) do experience it. Some may consider this to be a genotypic marker of identity given that *"much like the mutation that causes sickle cell anemia protects against malaria in Africa, it is possible that the proliferation of the ALDH2\*2 allele served an analogous function against tuberculosis infections in Asia"* (Darwin & Stanley, 2022).

<sup>iii</sup> It is noteworthy that the same is currently true for Middle Eastern and North African students who are incorrectly classified as White (Arab American Institute, 2021; Byrne, 2022; Maghbouleh et al., 2022; Matthews et al., 2017), and for South Asian Indian and Pakistani students who are subsumed under the superordinate *Asian* identity.

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**Ethics:** The UC-San Diego IRB Board approved this study.