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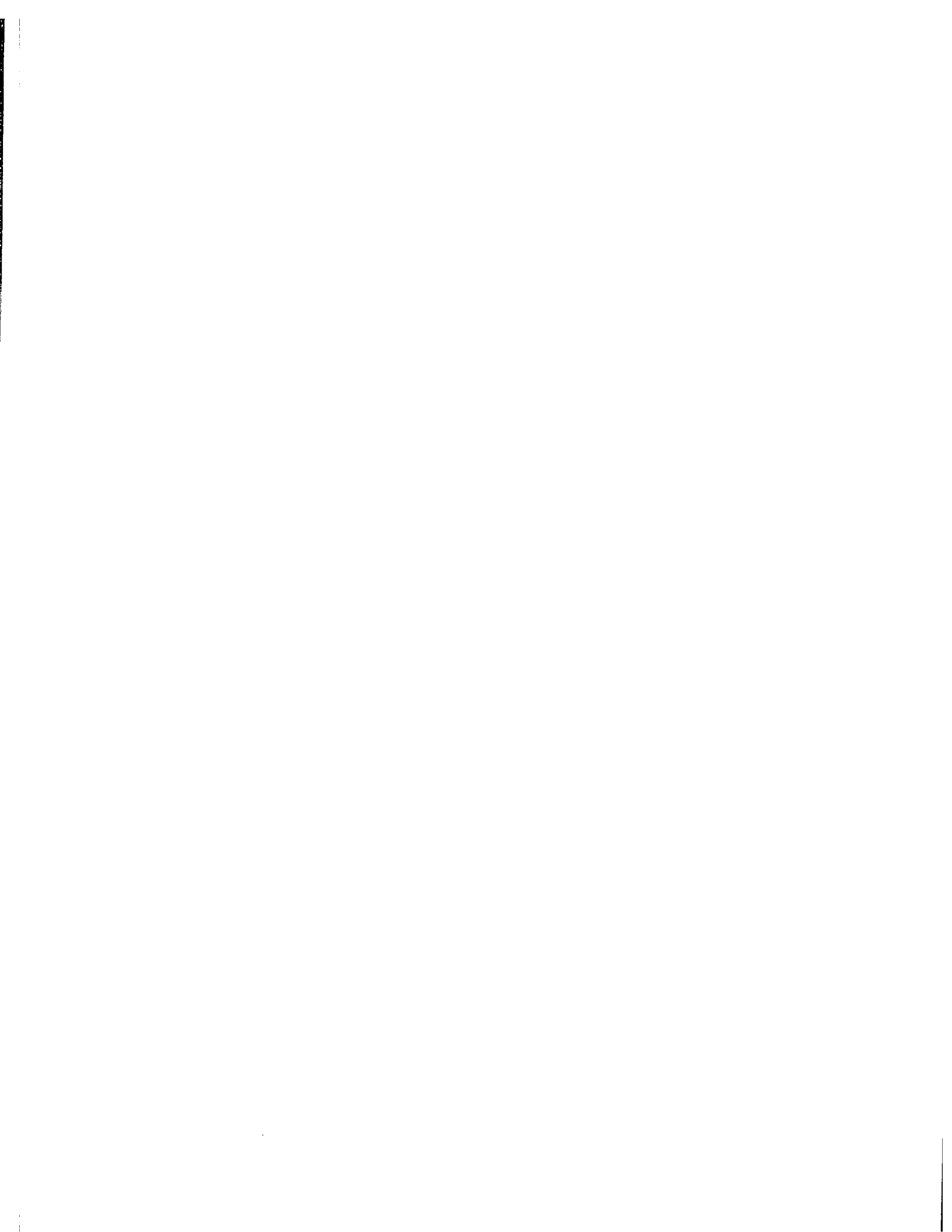
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They Are Still Asking The 'What Are You?' Question:
Race, Racism, And Multiracial People In Higher Education

Christopher Bodenheimer Knaus

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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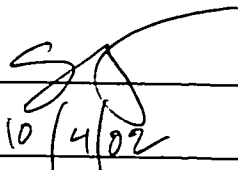
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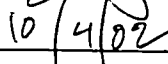
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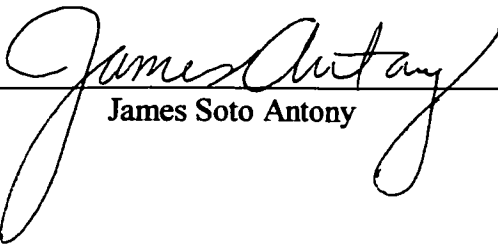
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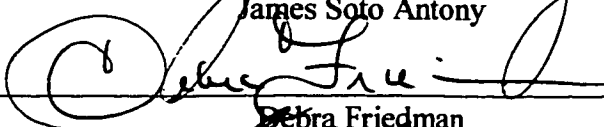


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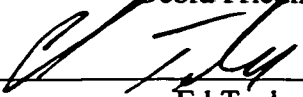
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James Soto Antony



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Ed Taylor

Date:

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University of Washington

Abstract

They Are Still Asking The 'What Are You?' Question:
Race, Racism, And Multiracial People In Higher Education

Christopher Bodenheimer Knaus

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Associate Professor James Soto Antony
College of Education

The purpose of this study was to understand how multiracial undergraduate students think about race and racism, and to understand how education (K-12 and college) has prepared them to think critically about race, racism, and their multiracial identity. This is important because multiracial people are one of the fastest growing groups of people in the U.S., because our current thinking of race and racism is limited to historical monoracial groups, and because multiracial students offer a unique perspective into understanding the new faces of race and racism. Data collection consisted of interviews and semi-guided creative writings, and both were coded, and analyzed to generate recurrent themes. The results of this study indicate that these students had many K-12 teachers that did not address, much less validate, their multiraciality, presented a white Euro-centric curriculum, and ignored the often intense racial teasing they endured from their peers. While these students took different routes to college, they were able to learn for the first time about race and racism through courses, and through their first exposure to large communities of peers of color. While they continued to face racist rejection from many of their white peers and faculty, these students were able to find support from some of their peers of color, many of whom were activists around race issues. These students ultimately suggest that higher education can develop critical awareness of race, racism, and racial identity. One such method of supporting such development could occur if educators required a two pronged course series centered on global issues and personal narratives of diverse peoples. This requirement, coupled with

infusing race and racism (and other excluded perspectives) into the curriculum, could serve to make higher education more supportive of complex multiple identities while educating about the dynamics of racism and other forms of social exclusion.

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And I would like to acknowledge my educational community of scholars, activists, poets, artists, and general freaky people who have supported me in countless ways. Without the support of my extended family, friends, activists and mentors, the humility and distance from reality that a Ph.D. entails would simply have been too much.

Dedication

As much as I struggle to cast off the weight of this dissertation and a Ph.D. as irrelevant, nothing, overrated, elitist, racist, sexist, classist, ableist, I undertook this task for an explicit purpose. I have grown up surrounded by multiracial friends and have grown increasingly tired of the racism these friends and family have faced, in part from my own actions and arrogance. These pages represent a small part of my commitment to addressing the complex systems of oppression that keep people of color and women poor so that white people, especially able-bodied males, can maintain their disproportionate wealth.

I dedicate my efforts to sweet Peggy, who has put up with countless hours of diatribes that ultimately allowed me to work out the details of this dissertation, who never once let me forget the greater purpose of this research, who shared her thoughts and experiences in ways that have illuminated everything in these pages and in my heart, and who taught me that in order to learn, I must first stop speaking:

I also dedicate this effort to my dear sets of families with (or in Phil and Mural's case, about to have) multiracial babies. Chanira and Todd; Steve and Liz. Phil and Mural, you all represent the future, and may we all bear the weight so that your children - our children - will not face as demeaning and negating a future as the students in this study have.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A group of students in one of my classes had an extensive argument over one of the readings I had given them to digest. In the reading, 'Space Traders' by Derrick Bell (1994), it was the year 2000. Aliens had arrived from outer space, bringing with them immense cargo holds of gold, special chemicals that could clean up the heavily toxic United States, and a completely safe energy supply to sustain our already depleted fossil fuels. In return, the United States need only to supply them with each and every African American living in the United States. So began a flurry of activity, where the perhaps predictable outcome prevailed: The leaders of the U.S., overwhelmingly white, decided to make the trade and secure the nation's wealth for that much longer. But the debate between my students was not about whether white people would really "turn them in." Instead, one young woman began the debate with a simple question: "What of those who are only half black? Or even a quarter black?"

So began a rare, yet increasingly popular conversation: What about mixed race people? After the conversation, I spoke with the young student, who clarified for me: "No one ever talks about multiracial people. We're always just this or that, never this and that." Her perspective is not unique. Rather, for many mixed race people in America, life is typically spent on the boundaries of race, a sometimes invisible border separating their lives from monoracial people. Such an experience is often typified by the recurring question, "What are you?" Answers, of course, vary significantly, if given at all. But the

key issue remains: America is collectively confused about race. In this increasingly diverse country, the popular notion of race consists of a monoracial person, usually black, but increasingly also considered Asian, Latino, Native American. And yet this popular notion does not address the continued presence of multiracial peoples, people whose lives are often spent answering and dealing with the implications of the 'What are you?' question. For this very question signifies that the experiences of multiracial people lie just outside the margins of the typical mainstream, presumed monoracial, society.

The mere asking of the 'What are you?' question begs the reply: Why does it matter? But rather than focus on why it (racial ambiguity) matters so much for others, I am concerned with what racial ambiguity means to those who are multiracial. The 'What are you?' question would simply not be asked unless we lived within a monoracial paradigm, which I assert lies at the heart of racial misunderstanding and informs the misconceptions of race and racism within the United States. Monoracial thinking is an overly simplistic paradigm that simply does not allow for multiracial people and their experiences. As I will argue below, this rapidly increasing population is grossly misunderstood precisely because we think of race and racism in monoracial terms. As such, we have a limited understanding of how these students experience college and of how colleges experience these students.

Purpose of Study

The first goal of this study is to develop a working theoretical framework for understanding how multiracial students experience race and racism and how education might stimulate the development of critical thinking about these contested terms. This framework, which I call a "critical awareness" of the dynamics of race and racism, results

from a synthesis of the literature on multiracial people and their experiences with the multicultural education and racial identity development literatures. As I explain at the end of the second chapter, the theoretical framework of critical awareness is essential to ending racial exclusion within the United States. The second goal of this study is to explore how multiracial undergraduate students think about race and racism and to examine how these students' thinking overlaps with the critical awareness framework. The third goal is to understand how various aspects of the college experience (e.g. curriculum, teaching styles, peer influences) have shaped multiracial students' thinking about race, racism, and the extent to which they have contributed to the development of a critical awareness about race and racism.

Background

The multiracial population in the United States appears to be growing, though because of an overarching monoracial assumption in American politics, there are not comprehensive statistics or trends on multiracial people (U.S. Census, 2001). In the 2000 Census, approximately 2.4% of the population in the United States self-identified as multiracial by checking more than one box. Of these almost 7 million people, 40% lived in the west and 42% were under 18 years old (U.S. Census, 2001). But this snapshot does little to illustrate the overall growth trend associated with multiracial people. Interracial marriage has sharply increased since at least the 1960's, when anti-miscegenation laws were repealed in the appropriately titled Supreme Court decision, *Loving v. Commonwealth of Virginia* (Rosenblatt, et al., 1995). But formal interracial marriages stem back at least to the late 1800's (Williamson, 1995), although clearly the numbers have increased from the hundreds and thousands to perhaps millions today (Root, 2001).

If 2000 was "the year of the mulatto," as author Danzy Senna (1998) asserted, then we have been welcomed into the multiracial century.

With limited national statistics (and no trend data since only the 2000 Census allowed for checking more than one race as a categorical choice), it is important to consider that the multiracial population is potentially much larger than current statistics demonstrate. This is because many multiracial people have had to choose a single racial identity since birth. Multiracial people have been forced, at some level, to develop a response to the 'what are you?' question by checking a single box, indicating their adherence to only one race (Guillermo, 1996; Fears, 2001; Moore, 1995). A clear example of this can be seen through the 'one drop rule,' where an individual is considered black if they have any amount of "black" blood in them (see Fears, 2001; Sarris, 1995; Spencer, 1997; Spickard, 1989).

Such experiences have prompted Maria P. P. Root (1996) to offer up a Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People (see Appendix A). This Bill of Rights begins with the right not to justify one's existence in the world (Root, p. 7), and yet this is what multiracial children do when asked what they are. This became clear to me when a friend of mine relayed a story of her growing up. In the fifth grade, she was selected to fulfill the role of a Chinese lady in the school play. That she was the only Asian in the class apparently had much more impact on the decision to cast her in such a role than did the fact that she was half-Korean and half white. Her multiraciality here, though, was invisible (as was her being half-Korean, not Chinese). The bottom line is that in the eyes of others and in a room full of white people, she was and is more Asian than white, more Asian than multiracial, and at best, considered an 'other.' Her experience is not unique.

The recent debates about the expansion of the Census 2000 categories on race serves as a public reminder of this invalidation. What perhaps might have been a shift in the ways in which data on race are collected, instead became a defense of the already prevailing mainstream monoracial paradigm. Civil rights organizations bristled at the idea of "diluting" the numbers of people who identify as a particular race (see Fernandez, 1996; Nash, 1997). Essentially, many civil rights groups had argued that multiracial people should not be allowed to choose their identity as it might impact the numbers of already established monoracial groups of color. This debate highlights the complex two-headed dragon of racism that multiracial people face from monoracial white society and from people of color identifying as monoracial.

Multiracial people have been in the United States since the Europeans first began their imperialistic takeover of what is now the East coast. Some of the first texts published once the Europeans were established in their new colonial homes were about multiracial characters or entailed biographies of multiracial peoples (see Williams, 1993). Williamson (1995) provides an historical analysis of numerous accounts of miscegenation beginning with the early settlements in the late 1600's, indicating that the presence of multiracial people came before the establishment of what is now known as the United States. Many of these accounts centered on the experiences of children born of African mothers enslaved and raped by their white plantation masters (Rosenblatt, et al., 1995). From the beginning, most of these children were considered black setting an early precedence for slavery rooted in the U.S. government imposed one drop rule (see also Williamson, 1995). In his detailed history of poor cotton workers in Texas, Neil Foley (1997) clarifies that not only did miscegenation occur in the mid to late 1800's, it was

rarely prosecuted. Despite these and other historical accounts multiracial people continue to have their mere existence denied (Root, 1996).

The situation is still poor for many people of color (many of whom are multiracial) within the United States. This historical and contemporary racial exclusion is made evident by lower educational success rates for many people of color (NCES, 1998; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998), by the dramatic incarceration rates that people of color face (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000), and by the fact that people of color are much worse off in almost every major statistical category ranging from health to income, than are white people (see Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1999; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998). Given recent trends in anti-immigrant policies (which have dramatically increased in the 9/11 anti-Arab/Muslim/Palestinian fervor) and police brutality disproportionately impacting communities of color (most recently in Cincinnati, New York, and Seattle), it does not appear as if the United States is anywhere near the end of racism. And the United States is a microcosm of our global society in this regard. From the spread of HIV in Africa, to the presence of famine in countries comprised mostly of people of color, to infant mortality rates in developing countries, and even to the fact that most developing countries are comprised almost entirely of people of color, the social position of people of color is and has been, relative to white people, inadequate at best and in most cases, downright terrible.

While these indicators of well-being do not necessarily preclude participation in society, they do place serious limitations on the extent to which those excluded can participate in this democracy. Racial disparities are based, to a large degree, on historical

and continued racial exclusion and appear to be worsening. The need to address this racism only increases with the continued growth of multiracial communities. Much of what we know of the experiences of communities of color are rooted in data collection that frames race and racism along distinct racial lines. Such boundaries in reality, however, are often blurred beyond distinction. The more subtle forms of racism that people of color face is much different today from the overt legal, political, and structural forms that permeated American society as recently as the 1960's (Chin, 1997; Collins, 2000; Wu, 2002).

Today, race and racism are contextualized, situational, and variable. Mitigating factors such as class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and religion all play a role in shaping personal experiences (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1989; Williams-León, 2001). Such experiences are further exemplified by the extent to which individuals identify culturally or ethnically (Cross, 1991; Phinney, 1990) and by variations in skin tone (Gladwell, 1998; Spickard, 1989). While a person of color may not know whether the negative treatment they receive today is due to their perceived racial status, skin tone, ethnic or cultural identity, from sexism, classism, or heterosexism, they do know it is negative. Further, the racism that Asian Americans face is different from that of recently immigrated Asians (Spickard, 2001; Wu, 2002), just as African Americans face a different form of racism than do other people of color (Espinoza & Harris, 2000; Hess, et al., 2001), and the racism that Pacific Islanders face is, in many ways, unique from Asian Americans (Root, 1997; Spickard, 2001). Adding to this complexity are the experiences of multiracial people, whose mere existence further blurs the boundaries of race and

racism. But the end result of all these differing forms of racism is the same: White people benefit at the expense of people of color (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997; Tatum, 1997).

Given what appears to be an immensely expanding multiracial population and the recent possibility of being able to claim mixed racial heritages, educators must be concerned about the validity of current definitions of race and racism. It is past time to consider race as merely a biological construct and the more progressive definition of race as socially constructed has also outlived its usefulness. In the multiracial century, we can no longer discuss the changing significance of race. Rather, we need to focus on the nature of racism for those living at the margins. We need a new framework for thinking about and understanding how the experiences of multiracial people are fundamentally unique from and yet still somehow similar to the experiences of monoracial people of color (Williams-León & Nakashima, 2001b). As such, the present study provides a new way of thinking about race and racism, and clarifies the role higher plays in shaping this new way of thinking.

Why Higher Education?

This study is derived from an overarching concern with the persistence of racism and the perpetuation of white supremacy within the United States, yet it is not my purpose to merely argue or demonstrate that racism exists; that has been done elsewhere in dramatic fashion (see Kozol, 1991; Grier & Cobbs, 1968; Lipitz, 1998; Marks, 1998; Takaki, 1993; Tatum, 1997; Walker, 1995; Wu, 2002; Zinn, 1995). I focus instead on understanding how to address and promote the well-being of all people within the United States based on illustrations of the complexities of race and racism. Such well-being rests on a democratic argument that all citizens have the right to equitably participate in a

democracy. Philosophers, politicians, educators, and researchers have long argued that the goal of education is to prepare citizens for participation in democratic society (see Barber, 1992; Dewey, 1916; Gutmann, 1987). I argue that such a goal of education must also address the exclusion of others from participation. Given that race is often a primary factor leading to exclusion, education must serve as the vehicle for fostering an awareness of how this exclusion occurs. Indeed, it is precisely this awareness that is needed to guide subsequent action that challenges the seeming permanence of racism (see Bell, 1992).

Positioning the responsibility of addressing this racial exclusion within education, however, is a daunting and challenging task. First, educators do not have universally accepted methods of teaching students to not be racist. In fact, educators do not even agree on operating definitions of race and racism that could guide such efforts, much less do educators (or even the American public) have any sort of agreed upon understanding of what it means to be a person of color (much less multiracial) in America. Further compounding the complexity of individual and collective experiences of people of color and people of mixed racial heritage is that educators who shape public education often know little about how these populations think about racism, much less how schooling and college influence this thinking.

Undergraduate education should assume the responsibility of fostering critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism because of its democratic charge to educate and prepare all citizens and because it has the unique ability to do so in a way that public K-12 education, strapped under the weight of highly charged national reform agendas, simply cannot. Undergraduate education prepares most of the leadership within the

United States, and these leaders must be critically aware of the dynamics that perpetuate exclusion if we are to create an inclusive racially diverse democracy. Undergraduate education is particularly poised to foster such an awareness because of its extensive intellectual resources and because undergraduate students are developmentally prepared to begin a process of exploring their and other's racial identities. During the college years, students can expose themselves to different ideas, types of people, and ways of thinking (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Vogt, 1997). Therefore, undergraduate education can, and in many cases does, create an environment conducive to students coming to challenge previously held beliefs (Inman & Pascarella, 1998). Before address and teaching about racial exclusion, however, educators need to understand the nature of how race and racism are lived as daily experiences (Banks, 1993a), especially by those at the margins.

Importance of Study

This dissertation is rooted in the larger goal of raising awareness of the dynamics of race and racism as they structure experiences for multiracial college students. More specifically, this study will focus on the daily experiences and reflections of multiracial students who have been both dynamically supported and effectively shut down through their college education. This study extends the work of numerous scholars by bringing together theory and insight from college student development, multicultural education, racial identity development, and higher education literatures. Rarely do such literatures come together, and ever rarer still, do they come to bear on multiracial populations.

This study is also important because it informs a conversation that is in dire lack of empirical research and sustained theory development. Multiracial people have not been accounted for in the social science literature in general, and more specifically have not been addressed in academic conversations surrounding race and racism (Root, 1996). Yet precisely because multiracial students will come to positions of leadership and ultimately become a new generation of "race" scholars, attention must be given to the education they receive. If we are to believe that this is indeed the multiracial century, then it is about time educators conceive of race, racism, and multicultural education as reflecting this growing population. The students in this study, young, dynamic, critical, represent the new wave of democratic leaders, and if we are to prepare them well, we must begin to listen to their stories, experiences, and insight.

Organization of the Dissertation

In the next chapter, I lay out a conceptual rationale and study design rooted in uncovering contemporary thinking about race and racism amongst multiracial college students. I demonstrate how a critical awareness of race and racism is key to ending racial exclusion and show why the responsibility for building such awareness should appropriately rest with undergraduate education. I then develop a conceptual rationale, beginning with a discussion of how racial identity development combines with multicultural education to create an effective theory of fostering critical awareness. I then clarify the role and impact of the growing literature on multiracial identity and demonstrate the importance and need for understanding the voices of multiracial students whose experiences have been relegated to the margins. After providing an overview of

the impact of college on students' thinking about race and racism, I highlight some challenges to fostering such an awareness.

In chapter Three, I present the research design that guided my efforts to tap into these particular students' experiences. I provide rationale for the ethnographic methods used in this qualitative study of multiracial undergraduates. I discuss several possible alternative methods and ultimately argue that interviews and creative exploratory writing best provide for this type of case study approach. After presenting how I generated the sample, I provide a brief overview of the procedures I used in coming to understand these students.

Chapter Four introduces the reader to each student, providing case study-like data in the form of narratives and personal histories to provide relevant familial context for understanding the experiences of each student. Essentially, this chapter presents each student, their families, and the ways in which they were raised as racialized individuals. In Chapter Five, I clarify these students' experiences in K-12 schooling and discuss the various influences on thinking of race and racism prior to attending college. Chapter Six presents the ways in which particular aspects of undergraduate education have framed race and racism for these students and demonstrates how each student has developed their thinking of race and racism since K-12. Chapter Seven focuses on the implications the previous discussion has for developing theory regarding the structuring of higher education and the connection to race and racism. In Chapter Eight, I synthesize these students' experiences and ideas of improvement into an overall approach to strengthening higher education's efforts to foster critical thinking about race and racism. Ultimately, I conclude with a model of social identity that offers higher education entry points into

fostering a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism while supporting positive identity development.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

“I consider myself black. I identify with black culture though my life doesn't reflect it. In the eyes of black people, I'm half white.”

- Michelle Davis

In this chapter, I attempt to clarify my framework for understanding a critical awareness of race and racism and describe why the educational system should be responsible for fostering such awareness. Before I outline the structure of this chapter, I wish to clarify what I mean by a critical awareness. What makes awareness of racism critical is the ability to see through two related lenses: the social and historical context of racial exclusion, and our own personal roles in promoting or challenging that exclusion. Understanding the social and historical context of racial exclusion is an integral part of an awareness of the dynamics of racism, but this awareness is not critical until we position ourselves within that context and question the role we play as individuals in promoting or challenging racism. A core aspect of conceiving of race and racism as critical entails an understanding of those not just in the mainstream of racial identity, but also those at the margins. As such, a critical awareness entails understanding the perspectives of not just monoracial people of color, white people (or people who define themselves as such), but also people of mixed racial heritages and transracially adopted people. This research centers upon this type of critical understanding.

Organization of Chapter

This literature review consists of three parts. The first clarifies how race and racism have been used and thought of in academic research, and begins to untangle these words' many connotations in an effort to develop an appreciation of the complexities underlying common definitions of race and racism. The fact that these terms themselves have been used and defined in contrasting ways tells us much about the contested nature of race and racism within the United States. I begin by analyzing contrasting definitions of race in an attempt to show how differing notions of race inform and shape definitions of racism. I then discuss and weigh tensions between multiple definitions of racism and demonstrate the problematic nature of some of these commonly held definitions. Many of these commonly held definitions have served to hide or even deny the very existence and experiences of people at the margins of racial identity, most particularly people with multiracial backgrounds (Root, 1996; Spencer, 1997; Spickard, 1996; Zack, 1993). I stress the importance of being critically aware of race and racism and show how education is particularly poised to and responsible for the preparation of anti-racist citizens who can operate within a democratic society. Ultimately, I demonstrate the importance of studying how the development of a critical awareness of race and racism can, and to a certain extent already may be a function of higher education.

I examine founding and popular theories of race and racism in the hopes of clarifying the tensions within these definitions and also as a way to inform my own framework for understanding social relations within the United States. Regardless of whether race is defined as a biological or a social construct, it has typically meant that an individual can have no less and no more than one racial identity. Although within the

sciences race has largely been discarded as a biological construct, much of the social science research and policy informing practice is rooted in race's biological foundation, which asserts that there are fundamental differences between the races of people. This discussion of race ultimately sheds light on what I believe is the key tension within social relations: the difference between theory and practice (which is ultimately the difference between what we understand and what we do). This tension is explored in more detail by examining multiple definitions of racism. I begin by exploring how definitions of race come to shape definitions of racism. I then analyze the disjoint between theory and practice, or, within the context of racism, prejudice and discrimination.

In the second part of this chapter, I argue why education should be centrally concerned with the fostering of a critical awareness of race and racism. Here, I extend the work of Paul Vogt (1997), who argued that education should be most concerned with the teaching of tolerance as a baseline behavior, rather than focusing on changing underlying beliefs. I assert that education should be concerned with teaching critical thinking and awareness of the impact of racist beliefs, which should then inform our students' behavior. This departs from Paul Vogt's work on promoting tolerance in that I argue that it is not enough to be tolerant, nor is it enough to teach behavior. I conclude part one by arguing that racism cannot be viewed as either a set of beliefs or a set of actions, but rather, we must think critically about racism as a process of forming and maintaining prejudices and engaging in discriminatory behavior based on those prejudices. Further, these processes must be situated within the socio-historical context of racial oppression that benefits white people at the expense of people of color. Even within this context, understandings of racism have been limited to race as a rigid structure, whereby the

mixing of the races, or miscegenation, supposedly does not occur. In fact, part of what makes racism an effective way of maintaining white supremacy resides in notion that mixed race people are often seen as people of color, not white.

In the third part of this chapter, I clarify the racial identity development literature. Drawing primarily on the work of Cross (1991) and Helms (1993), I discuss black identity development (the roots of racial identity development) before moving to consider white identity development literature. I highlight criticisms of both models before bringing to bear the central assumption of monoraciality behind racial identity development theory in general. I then discuss multiracial identity development and present a much more complicated perspective of the development of racial identities. I then connect racial identity development and multicultural education by presenting an overview of James Banks' (1995) dimensions of multicultural education and an alternative model by Sonia Nieto (1996). Both multicultural education and racial identity development share a common theme of depicting the challenging of racism as the final developmental stage towards which individuals and organizations should strive. After consideration of both models, I connect the multicultural education literature to higher education, and provide a brief history of what is now known as multicultural education (again using the work of Banks).

After presenting much of the guiding theory behind thinking about race, racism, and racial identity in educational contexts, I address the specific socio-cultural context of higher education. Here I consider structures and policies that promote or hinder the fostering of a critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism. After this discussion, which includes a brief overview of the literature on college student socialization and

college student development. I conclude section two by highlighting current challenges to fostering such an awareness. These two sections should provide a conceptual framework for thinking about why the fostering of a critical awareness is important, and why this task should rest with higher education. In particular, this chapter should clarify that these questions are not new to those concerned with higher education, but rather, that they need to be revisited now more than ever.

PART I: DEFINITION OF TERMS

Definitions of Race

For the most part, race has been defined as a system of categorizing people into one specific racial categorization based upon either biological or socially constructed traits. Race initially came to popularity as a biological means of classifying people based on skin color and genetic differences in physical and mental abilities (see van den Berghe, 1967; 1981). Its roots in the United States date back to when the European colonizers were seeking independence. In fact, the Declaration of Independence was issued forth at the same time Johann Blumenbach reclassified racial categories (see Gould, 1994). Blumenbach's *De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa*, proclaimed five racial classifications, which departed from the previous work by Carolus Linnaeus in 1758. The key was that his reclassification positioned Europeans in general and Caucasians in specific at the top of the racial order (Gould, 1994). Ethiopians (or Africans) were listed at the bottom. From then on, race served as a "scientific" means of classifying people based upon such an arbitrary hierarchy.

Herein begins the tension between how race has been defined (theory) and used in real life (practice). The definition of race as a biological construct has long since been

denounced as scientifically invalid (see Corcos, 1997; Littlefield, et. al., 1982; Montagu, 1997), yet has remained in use by social, behavioral, and applied scientists regardless of its lack of scientific merit (for more on this, see Muir, 1993; for recent examples of its use in medical studies, see Exner, et al., 2001; Schwartz, 2001; Wood, 2001; Yancy, et al., 2001). Biologists and geneticists of the early 20th century have failed in their responsibility to educate the public as to the need to abandon race as a scientific construct (Muir, 1993). Ultimately, there are not fundamental differences between the "races" of people, but rather, there are socially constructed, cultural differences (Montagu, 1997). Another problem with race's biological roots lies with the clear historical patterns of miscegenation, which have literally spawned generations of biracial and multiracial people (see Brown, 2001; Daniel, 1992a; Root, 2001), people who do not fit nicely within a particular rigid racial categorization. What is needed, then, is an alternative definition of race that helps us understand the social, historical, and cultural experiences different people have.

Such a definition actually gained credence as the biological foundation of race came to be seen as invalid. Scholars have since argued that race is merely a socially constructed way of classifying people; Marcel de Serres (1845; 1996) argued this back in 1845, van den Berghe (1967) defined race as a system of social classification, but argued that it was still based on physical criteria. While he rooted race in physical differences, he also argued that these differences were devoid of social significance in and of themselves. Long before van den Berghe, however, Du Bois (1897) used race as a broad category that reflected the "deeper differences" between people. These included the cohesiveness and continuity of groups, common cultures, history and similar habits of thought based on the

historical situation of particular communities (Du Bois, 1897, as cited in Sunquist, 1996). These traits and connections to a larger group are what define race in practice, and show how race is socially constructed in a way that allows us to gloss over the many cultures, languages, histories, and personal and group ethnic identities (Corcos, 1997). This can be seen through historical accounts of biracial and multiracial people (see Green, 1970; Williamson, 1995), but also through the mere use of terminology such as ethnicity, ethnic identity, and culture. Race, somehow, is socially constructed to signify all of these things, and more. In practice, however, at least within the United States, race is socially constructed through policies, procedures, by the media, by teaching practices in schooling, and through other social means controlled by the mainstream (Tatum, 1997). The end result: a system of oppression based upon a faulty categorization.

While I do not wish to clarify this categorization so that it can be used to neatly oppress specific rather than general groups, I do believe it is important to clarify the often extremely different experiences between the so-called races and how these differences have been and continue to be conceived of through definitions of terms. In discussing these two definitions of race, I hope to show that the use of race as a biological construct does not adequately address the social situations within which it is used. The very nature of determining race has always been problematic in the United States, and this can be best seen through the fact that most people who had one drop of "black" blood in their heritage were (and to a certain degree still are) considered black, regardless of how much "white" blood they had (Franklin, 1993). The social and political nature of determining race tells us we need a definition that more adequately reflects this arbitrariness, because the bottom line is that an individual may look white or black, but in actuality, may be

none of these. As such, I prefer a more critical definition of race as an overly simplistic social construction used to classify people based on presumed cultural characteristics. Race is essentially used as a proxy for other often-arbitrary variables, such as socio-economic class, skin tone, geographic origin, and assumptions of other people's experiences.

But, I am less concerned with how people define race per se, and more concerned with why and how race is actually used. Ultimately, race allows for the collapsing of the complexities of culture, identity, language, community, and exclusion into a catch-phrase racial category. The importance of a critical definition of race, however, lies with exploring the roots of the term itself, and follows Robert Miles' (1988) call for the necessity of showing why and how race is used in social relations. It is not enough to simply define race and to take advantage of its commonsense status, but rather, we must come to critically understand how white people have used race to classify and *oppress* people of color. I now discuss some of the primary ways in which race has been used in such a manner by examining the notion of racism.

Definitions Of Racism

Race has been used as a means of keeping people of color out of institutional power within the United States since the first colonizers began to occupy and destroy the previous inhabitants of what they called the New World (Marks, 1998; Takaki, 1993; Zinn, 1996). While certainly this is not to say that people of color do not have histories of subjugating people within their power either. The key difference, however, rests with institutional power within the United States. Since the arrival of the white colonizers, any

racial discrimination (by whites or people of color) served to decrease the social status of people of color and increase the status of white people (Derman-Sparks & Brunson Phillips, 1997). Racism has since served to keep power in the hands of white people (Tatum, 1997), most particularly, white landowners. In particular, racism has come to connote actions that result in the systematic oppression of people of color, through real or imagined differences in language, skin color, ethnic identity, or culture (see van den Berghe, 1967). Through such a lens, racism has come to mean differential and negative treatment based on difference from what is perceived to be the mainstream in United States society. In essence, the further one is from what is perceived to be the mainstream (white-light skinned), the closer one is to the margins of society (black-dark skinned), and the mainstream practices cultural hegemony to insure marginalized peoples stay there (See Brown, 2001; Daniel, 1992b; Root, 1992; Walker, 1983).

Since Blumenbach's racial classification began to shape thinking about race in the United States, much of American society has been focused around the issue of race. This is not to say that racism began with the white European invaders of the native Americas, but that race within the United States began to be used as a way to classify and oppress people of color from the inception of this country. In what follows, I argue that my working definition of racism is synonymous with understanding how race has purposively been used as a reason for keeping people of color out of power within the United States. I then raise multiple definitions and discuss how each deals with the tensions between theory and practice. Within the context of racism, these tensions play out in analyzing the interaction between prejudice and discrimination.

I am primarily concerned with two definitions of racism. The first set of definitions provides us with an understanding of racism through a sociological lens, and actually helps us understand the structural dynamics and societal impact of racism. In the second set of definitions, I explore the personal dynamics of racism and discuss Vogt's (1997) focus on the behavioral aspect of racism. I then discuss an alternative view used in anti-racist work that takes a more holistic approach and considers how our beliefs and actions are interrelated. To this second set, I provide a framework for this study by coming to understand multiraciality as fitting firmly within the parameters of racism.

It is essential here to understand the complexity of understanding race and racism. While in an ideal world, once an understanding is gained, that knowledge does not again go away. As we know, however, race and racism, as with social problems in general, are contextualized and context specific. As such, race and racism are permanently shifting, depending on the context, the players involved, and the societal situation. Variations in skin tones, cultural background, personal histories, language intonations, gender, economic background, among a multitude of other factors all shape the contexts within which race is considered and racism occurs. An understanding of such complex and ever changing factors is therefore necessarily fluid. Rather than conceive of an understanding of race and racism as an attainable outcome, I assume that educators should attempt to foster an understanding knowing that such education is rooted in a process of lifelong learning.

Using the work of anti-racist educators, I argue that the distance between beliefs and action (or theory and practice) is not unmanageable, and in fact, must be addressed concurrently. I then challenge that education should be concerned with teaching that

assumes racism occurs and that how it actually occurs is best left up to students to decide.

It is not enough, I conclude, to view racism as a set of beliefs that come unattached to actions or as Vogt (1997) puts forth, a set of actions that are less directly impacted by our beliefs. Rather, we must view racism as a process of forming and maintaining prejudices and engaging in discriminatory behavior based upon those prejudices. Further, this process must be situated within a socio-historical context of racial oppression that benefits white people at the expense of people of color. This is not to say, however, that white people are not negatively impacted by racism, but rather that people of color are impacted in ways that are more directly tangible and immediate (for more on the negative impact of racism on white people, see Clark & O'Donnell, 1999).

Structural Dynamics of Racism

It is towards an understanding of these tangible and immediate effects that a process of becoming critically aware of racism must begin with. Louise Derman-Sparks and Carol Brunson Phillips (1997) present the structural dynamics of racism as a means of coming to understand how racism has been created, institutionalized, and maintained at the expense of people of color within the United States. These dynamics help us to understand the nature of racism and position our understanding within the context of multiple definitions of race, ultimately leaving room for both biological and socially constructed versions of race, so long as the end result rests with the negative treatment of people of color in order to benefit white people. The dynamics of racism provide a framework for considering multiracial experiences, particularly those that dictate that darker skinned biracial people who are half white as being seen only as people of color as directly supporting systems of white superiority.

Derman-Sparks and Brunson Phillips (1997) lay out the structural dynamics of racism as a framework for beginning anti-racist teaching, and argue that four principles guide these overall dynamics (see Table 1). The first is that racism operates overtly and covertly. Overt racism, easy to identify, is often supported by research that roots conversations of race in biological terms (see Hernstein & Murray, 1994; Muir, 1993). But overt racism can also be seen through discriminating immigration policies (Takaki, 1993), through national health and education statistics (see NCES, 1998; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998), and through the segregationist policies of the early to mid 1900's (Zinn, 1995). It is the covert manifestations of racism, however, that anti-racist educators need to be most concerned with, because these are

often the most harmful and the most hidden. These include policies and practices that systematically benefit white people, such as IQ testing, school tracking, Euro-centric curricula, and a lack of cultural understanding, among other things (Derman-Sparks and Brunson Phillips, p. 11). The key, according to this first principle for beginning anti-racist teaching, is that while racism may not always be obvious, its impact on people of color usually is.

The second principle is that racism is based on a politically constructed definition of race that allows for legislation and other social means of influencing collective thought and action against people of color. The previous discussion of race shows us that despite having no scientific basis, race is still used to define people based on skin color¹, and often overlooks the social, historical, and cultural context of those living within the United States. Historically, the United States has rested on the use of a constricted definition based largely on skin color, and it is towards understanding this phenomenon that the second principle is based.

The third principle rests on the development of capitalism, and ties racism into the core of how and why the United States developed as a colonial, and then imperialistic global power. The key here is to understand how the United States, and western society as a whole, have developed into a global power as a result of the oppression of people of color, through slavery, economic exploitation, and colonialization (see Zinn, 1995). Race has been used as a means to justify the domination of people of color throughout the history of the United States, and can be seen through the historical use of negative representations of all people of color in media and politics (Dyer, 1997). But perhaps the most clear demonstration is that the economic development of the United States was

based on the institution of slavery, and the United States would likely never have attained its current global power without having an economic benefit of millions of slaves (Du Bois. 1903).

Table 1

The Structural Dynamics of Racism

Principles	Elements
Racism is overt and covert	Overt: Acknowledgement of race Clear policies and practices Ex. immigration quotas and legal segregation Covert: No acknowledgement of race Hidden practices Ex. Admissions procedures and practical segregation
Race is politically constructed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race has no scientific validity • Used to organize society • Changing definitions of who is white, black, brown. • Ex. Census, most federal data broken down by race.
Racism is rooted in development of the U.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. began as colony (Europeans invaded Native America) • Economic system was founded on slavery
Racism interacts with other forms of oppression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race, Class, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Ability have cumulative and individual impacts • Ex. Women of color face sexism and racism and often do not know which one of these impacts them • Ex. Racism leads to increased unemployment for people of color, which means many people of color must face classism as well.

The fourth principle lies with the interconnected nature of all forms of oppression. Here, Derman-Sparks & Brunson Phillips (1997) argue that all forms of oppression must be understood independently as well as within the context of each other (see also Bell, 1997). It is not enough to simply look at racism as an isolated social phenomenon, when half the population in the United States is female, and must live within the context of sexism. Women of color, then, must endure the double bind of being oppressed because of race and gender (see hooks, Patricia Williams, June Jordan). Understanding racism within a larger context of oppression helps us to understand the interconnected nature of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism and ablism (see Adams & Marchesani, 1997; Pharr, 1988). In concerning ourselves with addressing racism it is essential to place our concerns within the larger context of social inequality and remember that the larger goal is to foster critical awareness of social relations for the purpose of addressing social inequality as students see it. This is perhaps best seen through the voices of the students in this study who demonstrate a racial continuum that begins with seeing only America in black and white and ends where individuals are seen as meandering fluidly throughout constructs such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and class to allow for unique identities that transverse such rigid categorizations (see Table 7, Chapter Eight).

These principles contribute to the structural dynamics within the United States and combined, frame the way in which people of color are treated on the basis of their presumed race. They provide a context for understanding our personal roles and are intended to lay out a plan for anti-racist teaching (Derman-Sparks & Brunson Phillips, 1997). But these dynamics are structural in nature and as such, focus on providing the theoretical framework through which we can think about and analyze oppression in

general and racism in particular within the United States. These dynamics do not get at the question of causality, nor do they address how we come to end racism. Instead, this structural definition describes the social, historical and cultural dynamics of racism. What is needed, then, is a complementary discussion of the individual dynamics that contribute to this racial inequality. As I shift the focus to the individual, the emphasis shifts towards the root causes of racism. In other words, how do our personal beliefs, our discriminatory behavior, or a combination of the two create and contribute to racial inequality?

Personal Dynamics of Racism

van den Berghe defined racism as a set of beliefs that real or imagined genetic differences are associated with socially relevant abilities that vary along lines of race (van den Berghe, 1967, p. 11). The definition of racism as a set of beliefs or prejudices is nothing new (Allport, 1954), and many definitions of racism start with negative personal beliefs or stereotypes about different social groups. Montagu's pivotal work (originally published in 1942) argued that group prejudice was the key psychological factor leading to racism (and other forms of oppression). Prejudice, Montagu (1997) argued, is a normal psychological trait based on our fear of losing social status. It can be conscious or unconscious, and in and of itself, is not necessarily harmful. Rather, it is the expression of racial prejudice and stereotypes that is negative.

Paul Vogt focuses his work on transforming this expression into a toleration of difference. Vogt (1997) joins others in extending Montagu and Allport's work by arguing that a definition of racism is not adequate unless it explains the behaviors associated with the racially prejudiced beliefs we all have (Sleeter, 1996; Tatum, 1997). Vogt argued that education should be most concerned with the teaching of tolerance as a baseline behavior.

rather than focusing on changing beliefs. He argues that we know very little about how attitudes and beliefs influence behavior. As such, we should focus on what we know and that remains limited to observable discriminating action. In essence, this is the core tension underlying attempts to address individual racism: Should the focus be on halting behavior that negatively discriminates (according to whom is another core tension) or on altering the underlying belief systems? Certainly one could make the argument that education already is in the business of altering, indeed shaping, belief systems. All one would have to ask is, to what extent do educators wish to instill in each student the beliefs of freedom, justice and equality? Just as a follow up question of what exactly these ideals mean begs a deeper analysis, so, too, does the previous question beg further analysis of why and how exactly do race and racism work?

Vogt comes to define racism largely through his discussion of the role of education in fostering tolerance. In focusing on education for tolerance, Vogt makes his definition clear; he is most concerned with addressing the act of racism. While he makes room for people to hold onto racist beliefs, he concerns himself with making sure people do not act or discriminate based on their beliefs. Vogt suggests that while the mere putting up with people should not be the highest goal of education (we should strive for more than simply tolerating people), it must, however, be centrally addressed because without tolerance, we cannot have diversity and equality, both of which are necessary conditions for democracy (Wolff, 1965; Vogt, 1997).

Vogt's operating definition of racism as discrimination based on race, however, does not address the roots of this behavior. While it may be true that we need to tolerate people within a democracy in order to have diversity and equality, it does not follow that

educators can change behavior without first addressing the roots of that behavior as Vogt seems to be suggesting. Sonia Nieto (1996) defines personal discrimination as the beliefs and behaviors aimed at certain groups of people by others, and calls it racism when this discrimination is based on race (and sexism when its based on gender). But the key is that she makes no differentiation between the beliefs and the behaviors; in fact, racism is the result of both. This definition provides a foundation through which we come to see addressing racism as a developmental process.

Vogt assumes that we do not know enough about the connection between beliefs and action to effectively change those beliefs. I argue that this is precisely where more research is needed, and that educators would be well served by using a developmental approach to behavior change which has had much success within the past 10 years. It makes little sense to try to change behavior without addressing why that behavior is there in the first place. The Stages of Change (SOC) model demonstrates this by taking a social-psychological approach to individual behavior change (Maibach & Cotton, 1995; Prochaska, et al., 1992). This developmental model monitors individual behavior change through a continuum of five stages. Individuals progress through Precontemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, and Action, in the hopes of arriving at the final stage, Maintenance, where behavior change becomes permanent.

The relevant aspect here is that individuals must progress through the first three stages before changing their behavior (at the action stage) and these primary stages focuses explicitly on thinking about changing the targeted behavior. Prior to actually trying out different behaviors, individuals must prepare themselves to alter or modify their own behavior, and this starts with reanalyzing their beliefs about the targeted

behavior. The key for educators, then, lies with using stage-appropriate approaches to ensure stage progression, and the focus on behavior in the fourth stage cannot occur without first addressing the fact that someone might not see how their behavior might be problematic (Knaus, Pinkleton, & Austin, 2000; Prochaska, et al., 1992). Addressing individual behavior must be done developmentally according to an individual proclivity to think about the targeted problem (in this case, individual racism), reflect on personal actions, and then alter actions based on this continual process and our redefining worldview. Vogt's focus on promoting behavior change does not adequately address the need to consider developmentally appropriate ways of going about changing racist behavior, partially because educators will probably never agree upon which behaviors constitute racism and partially because this approach addresses the outcomes, not the causes, of a deeper problem.

Applying this non-developmental approach to addressing behavior change would not necessarily lead to the expectation that racist teachers act like they are not racist unless such educators were first provided tools to help think about racism. Is it reasonable to expect teachers to be able to treat all students equitably if such teachers lack the training, educational understanding, and are afforded the needed space for reflecting on their understandings of racism? Derman-Sparks & Brunson Phillips expand on the need to actively decide to change our behavior:

...[People] can choose to change it-to consciously seek to reduce and eventually eliminate racism, and it is its place to create new institutional relationships not dependent on domination and subordination of any racial groups. Here, individual intent and attitude become critical because they

influence whether a person chooses to acquiesce passively or to resist (p. 23).

The question then becomes, how do we teach to change attitudes *and* behaviors? Can educators do both? Vogt argues that we must be concerned primarily with teaching tolerating behavior, while Derman-Sparks and Brunson Phillips argue that attitudinal change is the critical aspect and that behavior can only be taught after such attitudes are modified.

I think we need to do both. It would follow that anti-racist educators (Derman-Sparks & Brunson Phillips) would have a developmental approach to addressing racism, and I would argue that is precisely what is needed. Developmentally, we can see racism as stemming from a set of prejudiced beliefs that then may give rise to individual discriminatory behavior that contributes to societal and institutional racism. Addressing the structural dynamics of racism suggests the need to address three distinct, yet interrelated aspects: 1) beliefs or attitudes about people based on race; 2) discriminatory behavior or action based on these beliefs, and; 3) the social, historical, and institutional aspects of racism. The students in this study use their experiences on the margins of racial identity to give voice to how, in practice, higher educators at a comprehensive research university actually go about addressing these aspects.

Now that I have provided a brief overview of the tensions in scope of definitions of racism, I wish to further clarify personal dynamics of racism. Racism, as I have argued, consists of institutionally supported discrimination based on race that socially elevates whites and has negative impacts on all people of color. According to Beverly Tatum (1997), this means white people have institutionalized benefits and privileges

based on the fact that we, as white people (author included), are not people of color (or not perceived as such²). Privilege is key to this definition and is often overlooked by most white people (McIntosh, 1993). White people systematically benefit from racism, and in fact, this is the purpose of maintaining racism. This does not, as Tatum points out, mean that white people feel powerful, but that they benefit in ways that they are often not able to see (Tatum, 1997, see also McIntosh, 1993; McIntyre, 1997). Racism, then, entails prejudiced beliefs about race, discriminating behavior based on those beliefs, and the resulting social power that white people (or people perceived as white) have within the United States to institutionally support and validate our racist ideology and behaviors.

An understanding of racism would be incomplete without acknowledging the personal impact of considering our individual role in being affected by, maintaining, and or challenging such an oppressive system. The inability of many white people (and light skinned people of color) to see this system of benefits as real has been referred to as internalized domination, where white people come to normalize the idea of oppression (Bell, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993; Tatum, 1997). White people, as members of a dominant group, internalize their superiority and come to accept the status quo as a valid representation of reality. Just as white people internalize their superiority, people of color also internalize their subordination (Bell, 1997; Tatum, 1997). In this manner, people of color begin to believe in stereotypes about their subordinate status, and begin to challenge other people of color rather than the structures that contribute to and maintain the status quo. Racism continues to a large degree because people come to believe in their dominance or subordination (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997). A key part of becoming critically aware rests in challenging these internalized beliefs.

Understanding our own personal roles moves us beyond thinking about racism as it impacts others in an inequitable society. In fact, understanding how we come to act in racially discriminatory ways helps us to consider our roles in the promotion of such inequality. But it is not enough to understand the effects of racism. It is not enough to define racism as a theoretical construct detached and removed from our beliefs, prejudices, and discriminating behaviors. Educators must come to think of racism as a comprehensive system of oppression that includes social and historical factors, personal and structural dynamics, and that is rooted in our beliefs and actions. A definition of racism that fails to consider one of the above fails to become critical, and as such, fails to move us towards a theory that challenges racism in its everyday manifestations *and* at its roots.

The ability to understand our unique roles and responsibilities in addressing racism is the key to fostering a critical awareness of racism, and it is a thorough definition that takes into consideration all of these aspects that makes a critical awareness possible. Therefore, as I will argue from this point on, racism is a set of beliefs about race that guide discriminatory behavior that serves to reinforce the social, historical, and contemporary oppression of people of color in order to benefit white people. I believe this definition is more useful because it considers behavior as the last step in a developmental analysis that is rooted in our beliefs, because it positions our understanding of racial oppression in the social and historical roots of that oppression, and because it provides a rationale for developing a comprehensive plan to address racism. But perhaps most importantly, this definition provides a useful segue between theory and practice (and between beliefs and behavior) in offering critical awareness, or

an understanding of our personal roles in maintaining racism, as an approach for bringing about the end of racism. In the next section, I address how a critical awareness of such a definition is the foundation for a process of overcoming and ending racism, and begin to root this process in formal education.

Where Does Critical Awareness Take Us?

Why do we need an in-depth understanding of such a system of oppression based on race? And why must this understanding be critical to the point of understanding our personal role in promoting or ending such a system? To put it simply, I am concerned with ending racism. The first step towards this end is to understand how racism perpetuates itself through institutional means and through our personal actions (or inaction). I am not interested in demonstrating that racism occurs; that has been done elsewhere by social scientists, authors, poets, historians, and teachers (Baldwin, 1963; Bell, 1992; Chrystos, 1995; Davidson, 1996; hooks, 1989; Jordan, 1989; Marks, 1998; Takaki, 1993; Valdes, 1996; Wu, 2002; Zinn, 1995). Rather, in this study I attempt to provide a theoretical framework for understanding how racism occurs in a specific college setting and how higher educators can begin to address these particular manifestations of racism.

Part of critical awareness is coming to understand how race has been used to structure society and, along the lines of Derman-Sparks and Brunson Phillips, how racism has guided the foundation of capitalism in the United States. It is not enough to learn that race is more than just a biological categorization of people. If we are to firmly address and eradicate racism, we need a deeper understanding of how racism classifies people based on skin color in a manner that simplifies and invalidates the experiences of people

outside the margins of mainstream white society. This understanding is essential if we are to address how people of color are oppressed and denied their right to develop and participate in democratic society within the United States.

In what follows, I root critical awareness in the Freirian notion of critical consciousness, and argue that the deeper goal is to promote a method of critical inquiry wherein students begin to grasp, and ultimately shape, reality. I then demonstrate what critical consciousness and critical awareness look like within the context of racism. I sum up by briefly examining barriers to critical awareness.

In his book, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Paulo Freire argued that “the more accurately men grasp true causality, the more critical their understanding of reality will be” (1973: p. 44). This “critical understanding,” Freire continues, “leads to critical action” (p. 44). Ultimately, it is towards this critical action—the action of undoing individual and institutionalized racism—that I am most concerned with. When people are critically aware, they are more likely to challenge the system, each other, and the status quo of oppression as they see it. This action will likely not occur without first understanding our roles in promoting social inequality. This rests with a critical awareness that stems from critical thinking about the dynamics of race and racism, which ultimately leads to an understanding of the causes of racial inequality.

A critical awareness of racism provides the needed information to understand the reality of racial oppression. The more people critically understand our contributions to and the structural impact of racism, the more likely we will understand racism as it shapes our lives. And this is how people gradually come to understand social relations in general and our role in promoting racism in particular. A critical awareness of the

dynamics of race and racism begins the process of coming to critically examine an individual's personal role in racism. In applying Friere's (1973) notion of critical consciousness, this is followed by critical action that challenges racial inequality. Critical awareness, then, should lead to critical action that addresses racism. The importance of fostering a critical awareness, however, does not lie with fostering specific anti-racist action (or even tolerance). Educators must be concerned first and foremost with teaching the critical thinking skills needed to guide subsequent critical action. What students ultimately do with that awareness is up to them.

A critical awareness of the dynamics of racism begins with a self-reflective process that focuses on understanding our own role in promoting or addressing racism. This begins with an understanding of the self within the context of our social relations with others. It is not enough to learn about how society oppresses people based on race, but rather, individuals must also "commit to re-examining themselves constantly" (Freire, 1970; p. 43). This entails a process of critical self-reflection based on a critical understanding of causality. Once individuals come to understand the complex ways in which racism works and the ways they may support or challenge such oppression, they can then learn to change their personal reality. In such a light, critical awareness of the dynamics of racism entails a critical understanding of social and institutional racism as well as a critical self-reflective process about our personal roles in promoting such inequality.

It is also important to consider why many do not have such a critical awareness. Part of our contemporary crisis, bell hooks argues, "is created by a lack of meaningful access to truth" (hooks, 1994; p. 29). Many people are simply unaware of the blatant

discrimination that people of color are systematically confronted with (McIntyre, 1997; Tatum, 1997). But our lack of acknowledging racism clearly does not mean that racism is not present. While the invisibility of racism may be perpetuated through the mass media (Dyer, 1997, Moore, 2002), this masking of the realities of real racial and class differences does not mean that those differences do not exist. White people also tend not to see racism due to our own internalized superiority (DeRosa, 1999; McIntosh, 1996; Sleeter, 1996c; Yamato, 1988; see also Shawn, 1998 for a narrative on class privilege) which leads to the rationalization of the status quo (Freire, 1970) and a staunch defense of racist structures (McIntyre, 1997; Tatum, 1997). Essentially, the process of coming to a critical awareness of racism entails, for white people, challenging who we are and how we have come to be (see Helms, 1993; McIntyre, 1997). For people of color, the adoption of a critical awareness often entails rejecting the presumed safety of working within the status quo and can lead to isolation by white people and other people of color (see Cross, 1991; Derman-Sparks & Brunson Phillips, 1997).

We cannot address racism if we do not fully understand its fluid, complex nature. But this understanding is not enough. We also need to understand our own role in promoting or ending racism. I have attempted to demonstrate that this dualistic understanding results in a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism and forms the basis for ending racism. In the next section, I begin to outline why education must be centrally concerned with the promotion of such a lifetime process.

PART II: WHY FOSTERING CRITICAL AWARENESS SHOULD REST WITH EDUCATION

In this section, I argue that it is the responsibility of formal education to foster a critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism in its students. I base this argument on three principles. The first is that education has a democratic purpose to educate all students for equitable participation in society. Second, I use Paolo Freire's work to demonstrate that education has a particular role in promoting critical thinking and critical reflection that focuses on the empowerment of individuals. Thirdly, I argue that education is particularly poised to foster critical awareness in a way that no other public institution is capable of due to schooling's immersion process. After arguing for the role of education in general, I make the case that undergraduate education must be responsible for fostering critical awareness because college students are developmentally ready for the type of self-analysis that critical awareness requires in a way that K-12 students may not be, and because, to a certain extent, many colleges already engage in such efforts.

The first reason that education should be centrally concerned with fostering a critical awareness of the dynamics of oppression is because education has the responsibility to train all students to be able to operate within a democracy. Amy Gutmann argued that a "society that supports conscious social reproduction must educate all educable children to be capable of participating in collectively shaping their society" (1987: p. 39). Education, in this light, is responsible for shaping public consciousness and this must be done by equitably educating all students. In a democracy, this responsibility largely rests with formal education (Barber, 1992; Dewey, 1939; Gagnon, 1989; Jensen, 1950). Clearly education and schooling alone, however, cannot be called on to educate

for democracy (Goodlad, 2000), but they can and should foster citizenship and the ability to participate as much as they can (Barber, 1992; Gutmann, 1987). Formal education has as its purpose the preparation of citizens for participation and, as such, must equitably teach all students the skills for participation (Gutmann, 1987). In this manner, education comes to shape society by empowering all students to participate.

Paul Vogt (1997) has argued that citizens in a diverse democracy need to understand how to tolerate things they do not like, and that education has a societal responsibility to ensure students learn this. I extend his argument by asserting that a democratic society that strives to educate all children to equitably participate (and therefore tolerate) must also teach for an understanding of the ways in which other children (and later, adults) are kept from participating. If education has the democratic responsibility to teach students to tolerate others, then education also must teach students about how others are not tolerated. Education can and should foster the rejection of intolerance, a precursor to pluralistic democracy (see Wolff, 1969). In this light, education has the responsibility to teach racial tolerance and the rejection of racial intolerance, or racism.

The second reason that education should be centrally concerned with fostering a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism is based on the Freirian notion that equates education with the fostering of critical thinking and reflection about our social conditions. Education, according to Freire (1970), should be centrally concerned with teaching students to think critically about what sort of action they should take given the social circumstances of how particular groups of people are treated. Freire (1973) argues that the deeper goal of education is to promote a method of critical inquiry wherein students

begin to grasp, and ultimately shape, reality. Here, Freire would not advocate for teaching tolerance, per se, but rather for teaching critical thinking and inquiry skills so that students could begin to actively address intolerance, as they perceive it. This way, instead of prescribing the behavior of its students, education actively encourages students to articulate their own method of addressing social problems based on critical reflection about those problems (Freire, 1973). This demonstrates the importance of focus: education must teach *the ability to become critically aware* if we are to empower students to critical action that challenges racism.

Freire demonstrated that education has a particular role in promoting critical thinking and critical reflection and his work with peasants and teaching literacy show how dramatic of an impact education can have in fostering critical awareness. Certainly this applies to racism as well, and Freire's empowering approach to education fits well within the context of teaching about a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism. Freire (1973) demonstrated the importance of a critical educational effort in developing critical awareness, and leaves us wondering if any other forum could be as effective and democratically organized as formal education.

The third compelling argument for resting the responsibility of fostering critical awareness with education is based on the unmatched capacity that schooling has to inculcate the values of society. I argue that no other aspect of society has the capacity for such an educational endeavor. Libraries, the internet, and community centers all offer small-scale opportunities for extended education (see Gutmann, 1987), yet none offer the comprehensive immersion capabilities of classrooms and schools. There is no other democratic, public place where students are inculcated as directly as education (for more

on the ways in which students are taught values. see Jackson, et al, 1993). While students do spend almost as much time using media (the Internet, television, radio) as they do in the classroom (Mediascope, 2000; Rideout, et al., 1999) the direct effects of mass media appear somewhat limited (Rubin, 1994). It is also important to think about the peer components to education that all other public institutions do not appear capable of matching. Where else can students interact with (in many cases) so many different peers on a daily basis for at least thirteen years (and many more if we consider higher education)?

The search for a critical awareness lies with access to what Marcuse (1965) called authentic information. He based access to information that challenged the status quo as key to a democracy and the ability to equitably deliberate. Education is particularly poised to present such authentic information, given its ability to teach through multiple methods, its ability to maintain a multidisciplinary, inclusive curriculum, and through the increasing focus on multicultural education. In addition, education has diverse students and communities as its resources for providing alternative perspectives in a way that other public institutions would be hard pressed to equal. The mere presence of such diversity can create opportunities for interaction across difference, which has been shown to have a positive impact on tolerance (Vogt, 1997).

Education, it should be clear, should have the responsibility to foster critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism. But while education must carry the democratic charge of training students to coexist by promoting better social relations, I have yet to address where students fit within an institutional rationale for rooting such an awareness in education. In the next section, I argue that consideration of students leads to

the argument that higher education must carry the bulk of this responsibility because college students are developmentally ready to consider such awareness and because higher education already engages in several efforts that appear, according to the students in this study, fairly effective.

Why Higher Education In Particular?

I position this responsibility on the shoulders of higher education because it is a developmentally appropriate place for extensive focus on fostering a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism. In what follows, I demonstrate that college students are developmentally prepared to critically examine their roles in the promotion or ending of racism. I first argue that a certain amount of developmental preparedness is needed in order to be able to understand our individual roles in promoting racism. I then argue that college students tend to exhibit such preparedness using college student development literature.

It is important to begin with resting the responsibility for fostering a critical awareness of racism with higher education because most college students are developmentally ready to critically examine the dynamics of race and racism. This is not to say that K-12 students are not able to become critically aware, nor is it to say that such efforts should not take place in K-12 education. Indeed, the process of coming to understand the dynamics of racism should begin when children first enroll in schooling. But this process should come full circle in college, where students come to think more critically about their own roles and responsibilities in creating and maintaining social inequality.

Coming to a critical awareness of racism entails a process of coming to think about oneself as a racial entity (as a person of color, a white person, a mixed race person, a transracially adopted person, or a person who does not fit within these prescribed racial categories). The process of coming to understand our unique and collective racial identities has serious ramifications for people who support the status quo of white supremacy (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1990). In particular, coming to understand our roles in promoting racism may have a tremendous psychological impact on white people (Helms, 1990), and this understanding will not occur if we are not developmentally able to bear this weight. Similarly, understanding their role in internalizing racism entails significant psychological pressure for students of color (Cross, 1991). This is especially burdensome for those who identify and choose to pass as white and who may be rejected by others who do not see them as white (see Kich, 192; Nakashima, 1996; Spickard, 1989). Students, therefore, who are asked to become critically aware, are also asked to deal with the weight of understanding their impact on racism. This cannot be approached without consideration for the developmental status of the individual, and generally, young adults are more likely capable of dismantling their worldview and of being able to create a new anti-racist worldview. Granted, developmentally, it may be more advantageous to build up a more valid understanding of the world we live in beginning in kindergarten. But seeing as that is not currently happening (Loewen, 1995), and given the political nature of educational reform, higher education must take on the role of addressing the needs of society that K-12 does not.

Developmentally, children progress along a continuum of thinking about themselves. The way in which children begin to think of themselves in relation to others

is a developmental process that starts once babies see themselves as distinct from their parents (Pulaski, 1980). But less is known about what happens from that point on. What is known, for the most part, stems from Piaget's work on child development and ways of learning (see Piaget, 1976). Piaget argued that "the child learns by dealing with the new, the unexpected, and fitting it into his already existing framework of knowledge through reflective abstraction" (Pulaski, 1980; p. 201). But what happens when this new, unexpected information calls for a reformulation of the already existing framework? Simply put, what do children do when they learn something that challenges their previously held worldview?

This question, of course, is not easily answered. According to racial identity development literature, someone must be capable and ready before they can learn about how their worldview is fundamentally not okay (Helms, 1990). We do know that late adolescence is the key time for reformulating who we are in light of newer information about social relations. In her analysis of how to target adolescents through media, Austin (1995) argues that from age 13 on, children focus on developing an inner conscious and a unique individual identity. Stephenson (1966) argues, in his development of consciousness model, that the last stage of development comes when children (or young adults) begin to consider the motivations of others. This is similar to Kohlberg's (1976) fifth stage in his stages of morality, where the key is being aware that people hold a diversity of values and opinions. This assumes that as we develop our individual identity, we also begin to consider others' identity, and presumably have some sort of consciousness of the presence and well-being of others (Stephenson, 1966).

The previous discussion demonstrates that young adults progress along a continuum of development that results in an increased consciousness of others. But in many cases, it is not until college that students actually face social conditions that allow for the exercise of that newly developed consciousness (if it even was developed in high school). During adolescence, young adults may begin to formulate their unique identities and consciousness (Austin, 1995), but it is not until college that many students actually have the freedom to associate with a much wider variety of people and diversity of thought. This is accentuated by the reality that college often consists of a more diverse group of students and faculty than do many middle and high schools (Pascarella & Terezini, 1991). In other words, adolescents may do much of the developmental work that it takes to build up their own sense of identity while in high school (Power, et al., 1989), but college often presents the first real chance to assess and reflect on how this identity fits within a suddenly enlarged and diversified world (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terezini, 1991).

The college student development literature also shows support for the developmental capabilities of college students, and highlights the capacity higher education has for fostering critical awareness. To put this in context, however, we must consider Astin's (1993) longitudinal study of the impact of college. Astin argued that many affective changes (such as promoting racial understanding or other aspects of personality and self-concept) may be due more to the college experience than to maturation. This is further demonstrated through the racial identity literature on college students. While several studies have assessed progression along a spectrum of racial identity development in younger students (see Cross, 1991; Holcomb-McCoy, 1997)

many more studies of racial identity development are exclusively focused on college students (see Knox, 1996; Tatum, 1992, 1994; Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995; Yang, 1992). This recent focus seems to indicate the benefits of attempting to foster awareness of racism in college. In other words, students are shaped a great deal by their college education and this can be attributed partially to their developmental status and partially to the way in which higher education is structured within the United States.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) then show that during college, students come to resolve issues related to their identity and self-concept. As students come to reconcile their previously held beliefs with their newfound knowledge, in part based on increased interaction with a diversity of thought, they come to view themselves in a more positive light. This process suggests that developmentally, college students appear to be at the height of their ability to take in information that possibly challenges their worldview, and to reconcile this in a way that results in the formation of a positive identity. Maintaining this creation of a positive identity, while increasing the possibility that students become more aware of their impact on others, should be the purpose of college within a democratic society.

It appears that young adults are developmentally capable of changing their worldview in the face of harmful or challenging information. As such, I argue that higher education should be responsible for fostering awareness of the dynamics of racism because it is the developmentally appropriate place for such a focus. I have argued that college students are developmentally prepared to critically examine their roles in racism and these students demonstrate this through studies of racial identity and college student development. Higher education, therefore, should attempt to foster a critical awareness

because its students are able to critically examine their roles in racism in a way that K-12 students simply are not.

Summary of Parts I and II

I have explored the tensions in contemporary definitions of race and racism in an effort to more fully demonstrate why a critical awareness of these concepts is an essential goal of education. I summarized multiple definitions of racism into one which presents a process through which educators can focus their anti-racist efforts: Racism is based on prejudiced beliefs about people based on an overly simplistic definition of race, entails discriminatory behavior based upon those beliefs, and operates within a social, historical, and institutional context. In practice, racism, fluid and contextualized, interacts with other aspects of our social identities (such as gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, ability, and skin tone) in a way that supports white supremacy. I then argued that higher education has a particular responsibility to foster a critical awareness of such racism because its students are developmentally capable of considering the implications of such a critical awareness. Ultimately, I have attempted to show how democratic society depends upon the fostering of such an awareness of social relations based on an understanding of the fluidity of race, and that education should take advantage of its beneficial conditions for raising such awareness.

In the next section, I argue that much of what higher education does with regards to fostering awareness of racism can be seen through the framework of multicultural education. Although not always direct, multicultural education often attempts to focus on raising critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism. One of the more direct methods of assessing higher education's impact can be seen through the literature on

racial identity development, but it is important to consider that this is not the only relevant literature or voice in fostering such awareness. Ultimately, I critique these models as not adhering to a rigorous enough definition of race that allows for the complexities of multiple identities. Essentially, both racial identity development and multicultural education tend to make a clear monoracial focus, thereby excluding one of the most rapidly growing populations in the United States (Root, 1996). Further, I critique these models as being limited in scope, because they rarely address the similarities of excluding multiracial people and as seeing individuals as racial beings first and foremost, rather than positioning racial identity as one of a number of fluid social identities that all people have (including, but not limited to, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and socio-economic class). After positioning racial identity development within a multiracial framework, I blend in multicultural education models to provide an overall vision of awareness raising efforts, and show how education can and should extend its effect on improving social relations within the United States.

PART III: RACIAL IDENTITY, MULTIRACIALITY, AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Part two is organized into three sections. The first section clarifies how racial identity development has been used in education to foster a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism. In the second section, I more fully consider racial identity development using a more critical definition of race that brings multiracial people in from the margins. I then connect the ideas from racial identity development for monoracial and multiracial people to multicultural education, and argue for a developmental model

that helps assess individual and institutional development of critical awareness. I conclude by highlighting present policy and organizational dimensions of education that help shape critical awareness, and relate these to the socialization of college students. This provides much of the theoretical framework for this study, which I describe in detail in the next chapter.

Racial Identity Development

In this section, I summarize the racial identity development literature, discuss its use within education, and make the connection between critical awareness and how racial identity models provide a process for coming to understand and reflect upon monoracial identity. I argue that while racial identity development models do not adequately address racial identity development for growing populations of people within the United States, including transracial adoptees, biracial, and multiracial populations, racial identity development models do share common themes that suggest an end result of becoming critically aware of the dynamics of racism. I outline the foundations of racial identity development through Cross (1991), who analyzed black racial identity development, and Helms (1990), who focused on understanding white racial identity development. I demonstrate the importance of both these specific theories and developmental models in general, moving to consider the growing literature on other racial groups, including Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. After more fully exploring racial identity development centered on the experiences of people with multiracial heritages, I demonstrate how racial identity development models have made clear monoracial assumptions that limit their application to a large population within the United States. I then situate these theories within multicultural education efforts and argue that in order to

address these criticisms a two-tiered approach is needed that considers both individual and institutional development.

What is Racial Identity Development?

Just as ending racism begins with the development of an understanding of racism, an understanding of one's individual role in promoting or ending racism begins with a critical self-analysis. This process of self-analyzing one's racial status is often called racial identity development and fits within a larger framework of multicultural education. Essentially, racial identity development offers a personalized map towards promoting or fostering adherence to the ideals of social justice (Helms, 1990), and a critical awareness of racism is needed to reach such an ideal.

Racial identity development is a method of tracking how individuals psychologically progress in their identification with and connection to particular ethnic or racial groups. While there are numerous models of ethnic identity development (see Phinney, 1990; Thompson & Carter, 1997; Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001), I use two models based on the development of a personal adherence to the ideals of racial or social justice. These models (Cross' Psychology of Nigrescence and Helm's White Identity Development) focus explicitly on particular racial groups (African Americans and White people) but, once taken out of their monoracial contexts, have clear implications for the fostering of a critical awareness of race and racism in all people. A core assumption behind the racial identity development models under study is that the very development of a racialized identity occurs within a societal context of racism. Such a context makes racial identity development models the link between education for a democratic society and fostering a critical awareness of racism; if individuals are to understand race and

racism, educators must consider the implications this understanding has on their racial identity, and ultimately, their well-being. Further, educators must also consider the racial identities of their students, for in order to educate about race, educators must have some consciousness as to what our students already know.

Black identity development

The idea of racial identity development has been around for some time (see Du Bois, 1903a), and while people have obviously been racially conscious prior to scholar's attempts to understand this consciousness, only fairly recently has acknowledgement as a model of psychological development by mainstream psychological literature occurred (Cross, 1994). The first major theoretical work occurred in the 1970's (Cross, 1971; Jackson, 1976; Thomas, 1971), but perhaps the most well known work is that of William Cross, who notes that the term Nigrescence is French for "*the process of becoming black*" (Cross, 1994, p. 120). Racial identity development theory came about as scholars began to think more critically about black identity change, particularly in the post-civil rights era. More recently, it has influenced scholars interested in understanding identity development for Native Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, gays, lesbians, and white people (Cross, 1994; Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). The most well developed models in racial identity theory, however, focus on black or white identity. I will focus on these models, then, while understanding the need for further attention to the varied experiences of all people (for more on this, see Root, 1994; Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001).

Cross' model, the Theory or Psychology of Nigrescence, consists of five sequential stages of resocialization for African Americans (Cross, 1991). While African

Americans typically progress through this model in a linear fashion, it is essential to consider that individuals may regress stages and may not ever progress past certain stages. This model is also context specific, meaning that an individual's position at any stage may change depending on the immediate racialized context. Nigrescence begins with the *Preencounter* stage (see Table 2), in which race is seen as unimportant. Here, being black has no real personal meaning or significance. The next stage, called *Encounter*, usually involves some sort of incident that calls into question the importance of race in an individual's life. Once this awareness has been raised, an individual may enter into the *Immersion-Emersion* stage, in which the development of a new positive image of race can begin.

The first phase of this stage, *Immersion*, entails a withdrawal from white people as the individual moves away from old perspectives, leading to movements such as Afrocentrism (Cross, 1991), although recent literature has placed Afrocentric ideals in the next stage (see Asante, 1998). In the *Emersion* phase an individual begins to look critically at this new identity and gradually comes to construct a positive image of the self as a black person. The fourth stage, *Internalization*, begins the development of confidence and security in racial identity, which leads to a more open attitude towards white people. The final stage, called *Internalization-Commitment*, is where individuals come to identify as a group and base their social action on benefiting that group. In this stage, an individual will actively address racism against African Americans and make commitments to social justice.

Table 2**Cross' Theory of Nigrescence**

Stage	Stage Attributes
Preencounter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling that race is not important • Race is a hassle • Possible anti-black attitudes
Encounter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incident that challenges the low-salience of race • Can be a process or an event that is personalized • Turning point in attitudes about being black • Often entails guilt and/or anger
Immersion-Emersion	Transition from black identity as unimportant to black identity as deeply salient to personal identity
Immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immersion into black culture • Focus on what black is not (not what black is) • Symbolized by Afrocentric movement • Intense emotion (anger, frustration, and joy)
Emersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key transitional stage • People either <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Reaffirm their commitment to creating positive identity b) Regress and withdraw from "blackness" c) Drop out (maintain feelings, but they lose salience) • Reaffirmation entails push to get deeper in the struggle
Internalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internalization of new, positive identity • Expanded notion of blackness • Self confidence • Shift in anger at white people to anger at systems of oppression • Blend blackness with other aspects of personal identity (such as gender, religion, spirituality)
Internalization-Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained interest and dedication to addressing racism or communal needs • Often entails lifetime commitment

Based on Cross, 1991.

Nigrescence has been used to understand the development of children and adults, and frequently has been used to study college student populations (Helms, 1990). Cross (1991) summarized 45 studies on black identity and, perhaps not surprisingly, found that the studies that tended to find a correlation between a positive personal identity and positive orientation to racial group consisted of college students. Understanding Nigrescence, however, has done more than just demonstrate how black college students can develop a positive racial identity.

Nigrescence has also illuminated the need for raising awareness of racial dynamics and has, through its utilization, helped validate many of the personal feelings that come with being a person of color in a predominantly white society that does not value people of color. A core aspect of black identity in the United States is a psychological defense mechanism that is rooted in protection from the effects of racism. Racism is part of the American experience and results in the development of an anticipatory set of defenses based on the idea that regardless of one's station in American society, any person of color can be the target of racism (Cross, 1991). Understanding these concepts (perhaps common knowledge to many) guides us through the complexities of racial identity development, for such development for people of color occurs within a framework of racism in the United States (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). While Nigrescence models appear to focus explicitly on personal progression and identity as one's status as black, it is critical to consider this process within the localized context of racism. In other words, Nigrescence itself is a response to white racism.

White identity development

Janet Helms focused on white identity development and based her model on the progression of whites to a nonracist identity (Helms, 1993). This model assumes that while internalizing racism operates to the disadvantage of people of color (as seen in Nigrescence models), it works to advantage the social position of white people (Helms, 1994). This is not to say that white people are better off believing in racist doctrines, but that a white person's internal development towards a positive *non-racist* identity requires redeveloping through seemingly positive attributes. These seemingly positive attributes are based on the fallacies of racial categories (Montagu, 1997) and hidden benefits that white people often believe are due to their ability (McIntosh, 1993) but which actually have more to do with the structures of a racist society (Clark, 1999). White racial identity development involves awareness of the structures of racism within the United States as well as individual attitudes and beliefs in white superiority, and it includes the understanding that being healthy and white means one must also be nonracist (Helms, 1990).

Helms' (1990: 1995) model of white racial identity development consists of two primary phases: the abandonment of racism and the defining of a nonracist white identity (see Table 3). As with Nigrescence it is important to note that not all individuals will progress linearly through the phases, although it appears that regression to previous stages is not possible in this model (Thompson, 1994). Essentially, abandoning racism, according to this model, is based on the process of becoming aware of racism. Within each phase, statuses exist that map attitudinal development along two continua. The first status in the abandonment of racism is *Contact*, where white people have limited social

interaction with people of color and do not think much of racism. The next status, called *Disintegration*, entails acknowledgement of whiteness and the benefits of racism, and leads to white people feeling guilty and uncomfortable about being white. This often leads to *Reintegration*, where individuals consciously acknowledge being white and begin to believe in their white superiority. This stage is based in part on selective attention to information that may challenge such notions of superiority.

In the second phase, a nonracist white identity is defined through a process of coming to consciousness about being white (Helms, 1990). Defining a nonracist identity begins with *Pseudo-Independence*. At this status, an individual defines whiteness in a positive manner and begins to question the superiority/inferiority complex. At this point, white people tend to increase social interaction with people of color but still fail to see outside their own perspective. In the next status, *Immersion-Emersion*, a white person questions themselves and seeks to clarify stereotypes. As an individual perceives their role in promoting racism more clearly, the person begins to actively address racism. This can lead to the final status, called *Autonomy*, in which white people internalize their new positive definitions of whiteness and actively seek information about other forms of oppression. The model culminates with white people working towards an ideal of social justice that includes, but is not limited to, racism.

Table 3**Helms' White Racial Identity Development**

Phase	Status	Status Attributes
Abandonment of Racism	Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unaware of racism • Limited interaction with people of color
	Disintegration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning acknowledgement of whiteness • Conflicted white identification • Uncomfortable with race • Guilt
	Reintegration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscious acknowledgement of whiteness • Acceptance of white superiority • Selective attention to information that challenges notions of superiority
Defining a Nonracist White Identity	Pseudo-Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to question white identity, but still uncomfortable with whiteness • Limited acknowledge responsibility of white people in promoting racism • Limited acceptance and curiosity about people of color • Begin to search for positive definition of whiteness • Goals become changing people of color
	Immersion-Emersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical questioning of racial identity • Seeking positive definition of whiteness • Goal becomes changing other white people
	Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internalization of positive definition of whiteness • Addressing and confronting racism • Increased awareness of other forms of oppression

Based on Helms, 1990.

Interestingly, while white racial identity development appears to have stemmed from the work on black racial identity development, within the past few years, studies, personal analyses, and critiques of white racial identity theory have increased

dramatically. Indeed, as whiteness studies increasingly gains acceptance (for examples, see Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Lipsitz, 1998), attention to white people's development of racial identity has increased (see Clark & O'Donnell, 1999; Croteau, 1999; D'Andrea, 1999; Pope-Davis, et al., 1999). Most recently academic circles have expanded into workshops and entire conferences focusing exclusively on white privilege and racism³.

This in itself can be seen as a mixed blessing: As white people come to the forefront of conversations about racism, they often overwhelm the voices of people of color. While this is balanced by recent work on whiteness from the perspective of people of color (see especially Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Roediger, 1998; Tatum, 1999), it is essential to consider the development of theories of oppression within the framework of continued racial exclusion. The positive result of attention to white identity development is that it has helped raise awareness of racism for many white people. Used as both a tool for helping white people process through racism (Tatum, 1992; 1994) and as a means of understanding white racism (Carter & Helms, 1990; McIntyre, 1997), white racial identity theory has a significant presence in anti-racist work. There have been two major strands of work: a focus on the developmental nature of racial identity theory, which has tended to be quantitative in nature (Pope-Davis, et al., 1999; Tokar & Swanson, 1991), and a focus on understanding racial identity, which has been based on case studies analyzing the impact of courses on racism (see McIntyre, 1997; Tatum, 1992; 1994), narratives of personal progression towards an anti-racist white identity (Clark, 1999; Cooper, 1999; Croteau, 1999; D'Andrea, 1999; DeRosa, 1999; O'Grady, 1999) and naturalistic inquiry, which often entails learning from these narratives (Clark & O'Donnell, 1999; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1999; Watt, 1999; Yang, 1992). These studies

and narratives satisfy an important need: Historically, there have been few well-known positive role models for white people to base their own development of a nonracist identity on (rare examples include John Brown[†] and Mab Segrest; see Segrest, 1994; Quarles, 1972). White racial identity theory has contributed in two important ways: it has led to an increase in discussion about racism and the role of white people in its maintenance, and it has helped educators focus their anti-racist educational work.

Critiques of Racial Identity Development

Both black and white identity development models have been critiqued for what they do not address, and while these models have recently expanded to incorporate other groups of color and to consider ethnicity as well as race (Jackson, 2001), this expansion has remained rooted in the same problematic assumptions. To begin with, racial identity development models have traditionally relied upon a foundation of quantitative analyses (Brown, 1997; Pope-Davis, et al., 1999; Tokar & Swanson, 1991). Pamela Knox (1996), for instance, argued that the limited empirical support she found for developmental racial identity stage models might lie in racial identity's complicated nature. This, she argues, may be due to the scope of the models, which assess attitudinal progression, but do not take into consideration the behaviors, emotions or thoughts that may correlate with this development (Knox, 1996). While this initially may be a methodological question, in practice, such critique gets at the root of racial identity development. Who indeed can assess someone else's racial identity? And further, how can something so fluid, so contextualized as racial identity in America be measured based upon a particular timeframe? Would not answers to questions that illuminate racial identity vary by day, depending on who was asking the questions, the manner in which the questions were

asked, and on the immediate social, personal, and historical context of the individual?

Ultimately, racial identity development provides an understanding of racial identity, but I argue it provides a snapshot of a parade. This is not to say such models are not valuable, indeed racial identity development models are pivotal in coming to understand some processes of coming to a social identity. But racial identity development, like social identity in general, is exploratory, fluid, and qualitative in nature, suggesting that racial identity development models may have reached beyond their scope in application to individuals.

A second critique expands on this and calls into further question how much the context of each individual is considered in racial identity development models. Helms' model has been challenged as not developmental due to the unstable nature of stage development (Rowe, et al., 1994). This criticism was addressed by Thompson (1994), however, who asserted to the contrary that stage development was often predicated on significant events or social movements. The fact that not everyone progresses from the same stimulus is likely due to individuals not being ready to progress. This individualized inability to progress demonstrates that racial identity development is based on individual progression, and does not indicate instability of stage development, but rather the personal nature of racial identity. The authors of the initial critique (Rowe, et al., 1994) present their alternative proposal to stage development in the form of racial consciousness, but their model does not make any connections to actual behavior based on their conceptions of white consciousness.

Ultimately, racial identity development models are entrenched into rigid definitions of race. Acknowledging some of the previous rigidity of earlier models,

Bailey Jackson identified a shift in social phenomena in the 1980's and 1990's: while ethnicity has been overlooked, it must now be more fully considered (Jackson, 2001; p. 26). Christopher Brown, however, had previously challenged Nigrescence for its failure to account for variance within the African American community and because it stereotypes African Americans into a homogeneous group (1997, p. 20). Brown argued that Cross' work uses "race as a proxy for views" (p. 20). Is ethnicity, then, just another variant, or is it perhaps something that calls into question the very development of a racial identity? Can one develop (or be expected to) a black racial identity when such a person is not considered black by the black community? How will multiracial or even non-African American blacks develop a racial identity that is altogether not something that they may identify as? A similar critique can be made of Asian American Identity Development Theory (Kim, 2001), and Hardiman (2001) and Helms' (1994 white racial identity development models.

Ultimately, racial identity development models, like the previous discussion of race and racism, appear rooted in the same monoracial assumption that do not allow for variations in skin tones, personal, social and historical contexts, social class, gender or other social identities. While the development of race-specific models highlights important nuances that are specific to particular racial categories (see Horse, 2001; Kim, 2001), these models, indeed racial identity development models in general, are designed to map out racial identification processes for individuals with no conflicting racial heritages. In other words, racial identity development has not been designed, nor expanded to include those of mixed racial heritage (Root, 1992). While the nuances associated with processes of coming to identify as Asian American, American Indian,

Latino, African American, or white have increasingly been clarified by RID theories (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Hardiman, 2001; Horse, 2001; Kim, 2001), the complexities of the increasingly large and significantly ever present population of mixed racial heritage has been overlooked. Rather than someone developing a sense of self as sometimes Korean American, Asian American, a native English speaking Asian, or merely a woman, a heterosexual, an American, racial identity development limits consideration of the extent to which race and ethnic identity interplay with other significant social identities that vary according to a multitude of factors. While certainly some of these influences have a role in shaping monoracial identity, such factors seem to be severely overlooked in terms of how they come together to prescribe a social reality within the overarching context of white supremacy perpetuated by white people and often internalized by people of color within the United States (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997; Tatum, 1997).

Positioning his study in two historically black state colleges, Brown (1997) critiqued the notion of stage development by arguing that negative encounters are not necessary to trigger identity development, but rather, that positive experiences can also facilitate such a process. While this finding may seem minor, its implications for fostering a critical awareness is key: Taking a positive approach to fostering awareness of the need for identity development may have more impact than Cross' apparent call to tap into negative events that may conflict with previous values. These implications carry over into the white racial identity model and suggest that approaches to foster racial identity development must take into consideration the developmental status of the targeted individual and depend on the social context within which these efforts are situated.

With such a dualistic approach that considers both negative and positive experiences associated with race and racism, racial identity development models provide a unique and essential framework for thinking about and addressing racism.

Developmental racial identity models tend to focus on the beliefs and attitudes that ultimately contribute to antiracist and pro-community behavior. In fact, both Nigrescence and Helms' White racial identity theory culminate in stages where beliefs lead the individual to action based on ending racism. These models are critiqued for being too linear to clarify such a dynamic process of development, yet this can be addressed through more appropriate application of the models (Tatum, 1999). In fact, in light of these criticisms, I would argue that what is needed are practical applications that loosely define these developmental stages as fundamentally qualitative in nature. This is not to say that qualitative work is not already associated with racial identity models, but that in the application, quantitative measures seem too simplistic and rigid (Thompson, 1999). Further, racial identity theory has left little room for the social context of racism and racial identity within the United States, and this belies the fact that the civil rights movement gave birth to racial identity theory (Thompson, 1999). What is needed, then, is a unified theory that considers the socio-historical context of racism, the personal development of racialized consciousness rooted in multiracialism, multilingualism, and multiculturalism, and the intersections of multiple social identities (such as gender, class, religion, sexuality, and ability).

Multiraciality

While racial identity development models have increasingly expanded to more adequately address the racial diversity within the United States (see edited text by

Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). they have still failed to adequately address or respond to the ever present reality of mixed racial heritage. Multiracial people span racial categorization and demand an altogether new method of approaching racial categorization. One article in the aforementioned edited text, entitled New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development focuses explicitly on multiracial racial identity development. The article, while perhaps a token inclusion into the world of racial identity development literature, provides an overview of multiracial identity development, but leaves out voices critical of the very conception of racial identity (see Brown, 1997; Korgen, 1998; Root, 1995; Zack, 1993).

Before presenting several multiracial identity development models, Wijeyesinghe (2001) articulates the need for more research on multiracial people in general. The article begins by arguing that multiracial identity is seen as "irrelevant or secondary to research on monoracial populations" (Wijeyesinghe, 2001, p. 131). As such, there exists a common assumption that multiracial people are confused, distraught, and unable to fit in anywhere..." (p. 131). Two similar stage models of biracial identity were developed by Poston and Kich, and Wijeyesinghe ultimately argues that these models do not consider the social and historical context of racism that challenges those who might choose to develop a multiracial identity. Further, both models approach multiraciality as if it were its own distinct racial categorization, which denies the very significant racial and cultural distinctions inherent in any multiracial grouping. Similar approaches have also followed the same developmental approach to a specific, rigid identity (see also Jacobs, 1992; Kich, 1992). To accommodate for these shortcomings, Wijeyesinghe asserted the factor model of multiracial identity (FMMI). The FMMI combines eight

factors that come together to influence the choosing of a racial identity: racial ancestry, early experiences and socialization, cultural attachment, physical appearance, social and historical context, political awareness and orientation, other social identities, and spirituality (p. 138-143). The FMMI conceives of racial identity as evolving and complex, and entails the previous factors interacting with each other while also operating alone to shape a more fluid sense of multiracial identity (Wijeyesinghe, 1992).

In contrast to the previously mentioned monoracial and multiracial identity development models, the FMMI is not developmental in nature. It does not assume some sort of progression towards a gradually more and more comfortable and fixed racial identity. While this may be a strength in applying this model and its eight factors to counseling and interpersonal development, it does not adequately address concerns of how multiracial people conceive of others, much less think critically about the very social and cultural context that, in part, has contributed to choosing multiracial or monoracial identities. Yet it does highlight the very fluid nature of race and social identities in a way that these more developmental models fail to. And while taken alone, FMMI does not assist in the practical matter of teaching about race and racism, it does offer important insight into the very content of what teaching about race and racism must entail.

Racism has never been limited to the impact of white privilege on people of color. Nor can racism be expanded in scope to consider only the discriminatory behavior of groups of color over other groups of color. Indeed, racism must also be looked at in terms of the impact having to choose one identity over another has on an individual and at the social group level. And this very process of having to choose what to identify as can and often does result in being further rejected by other people of color, white people, family,

peers, and a schooling culture of monoracialism (Gay, 1995; Korgen, 1998; Rosenblatt, et al., 1995; Zack, 1993). And this weighted impact is precisely what makes acknowledging and validating one's own multiracial identity unique and, to a certain extent, revolutionary. With this expanded understanding of monoracial and multiracial identity development, I turn to more fully consider the literature on multiracial people, using the FMMI as a framework for coming to understand such experiences.

Each of the eight factors have variable influence on how a multiracial individual chooses to identify. These factors have no inherent order of importance or weight in influencing an individual, and as such, rely on the combination of a few or all influences to help shape an individual's choice in choosing particular identities at particular times. The first factor, racial ancestry, is perhaps the most variable of the influences. This is because racial ancestry may be more related to the familial context of race, or in other words, simply passed down as what the family has typically identified as (Wijeyesinghe, 2001). In many multiracial families, of course, racial ancestry is at least dualistic in nature, but that does not mean that the family discuss, much less acknowledge such. Racial ancestry might be determined by social contexts, a monoracially identified parent, or a number of other factors.

The second factor, early experiences and socialization, vary greatly per individual and per individual responses to similar experiences. From birth, these are the "overt as well as subtle messages about their racial identity, racial ancestry, or racial group membership" (Wijeyesinghe, p. 138). In Funderburg's (1994) collection of multiracial personal stories, the first section of stories are all about daily life. These include chapters on parents and family, neighborhood, school, friends and strangers, and work, among

other things. And as the individuals in her collection clearly assert, growing up multiracial impacted the people one could associate with, the experiences in schooling, and ultimately the ways in which one could come to think of themselves (Funderburg, 1994). And as we shall see, to many multiracial people, their status as outside the racial norm is clear from day one (Brown, 2001; Dalmage, 2000; Jacobs, 1992; Katz, 1996; Moore, 1995). But it is clear, family context, especially while growing up, appears to have a dramatic impact on multiracial identity (see also Brown, 2001; Gibbs & Hines, 1992; Johnson, 1992; Katz, 1996; Root, 2001; Wilson, 1987; Zack, 1993).

Maria Root's Bill of Rights (see Appendix A) helps illustrate an important aspect of the FMMI, and of multiracial identity development in general. Root (1996) argued that multiracial individuals have a right to identify themselves differently than strangers and even their own parents identify them as. So while growing up interacting with others may shape how a multiracial person comes to identify as, ultimately, the choice of how to identify, it should be clear, is up to the individual, and that individual alone. And importantly, Root clarifies that even those who grow up in the exact same environment can still develop their own unique sense of identity. As such, multiracial people also have the right to identify differently than do their brothers and sisters (Root, 1996). The recognition that ultimately, socialization processes are differently interpreted by unique individuals ensures that multiracial identity models, developmental or not, approach identity as formulated through individualized responses to complex experiences.

The next factor, cultural attachment, stems from such an individualized response. Cultural attachment is related to the extent to which an individual has been exposed to particular aspects of cultural traditions, meanings, and values (Wijeyesinghe, 2001). The

extent to which one grows up in a family that is connected to certain aspects of culture, or that one grows up around people who similarly identify with that culture can greatly impact one's decision to choose to identify with that culture (Funderburg, 1994; Korgen, 1998; Rosenblatt, et al., 1995; Standen, 1996; Zack, 1993). For example, a Chinese American growing up in a predominantly white area with very limited contact with other Chinese Americans may support a different multiracial identity than would growing up in a predominantly Chinese neighborhood. Again, however, Root (2001) asserts that such exposure or isolation to cultural environments may very well have no impact, depending on the individual in question.

Physical appearance, another factor, plays a significant role in how others decide what your identity is. The notion of "passing" as white has been around as long as the concept of race has, although some have argued that with the shifting laws and increased civil rights afforded to people of color, there is now less incentive to "become" white (Korgen, 1998). But physical appearance is not only about whether or not one can pass as white (for more on this see Brown, 2001; Funderburg, 1994; Spickard, 1989). Having an appearance that more closely resembles, in mainstream monoracial America's eyes, a monoracial identity also can shape how one is treated based on what race that individual may be presumed to be (see Johnson, 1992; Spickard, 1989). The bottom line is that in the United States, whether or not one is aware of others' assumptions, an individual's assumed race can dramatically impact the ways in which others approach and interact with that individual (Korgen, 1998). Physical appearance, because it can be tangible, clear, and concise (light skin versus darker skin), can support and/or hinder consideration

of a multiracial or monoracial identity in ways that the other factors simply cannot influence as directly.

The social and historical context of race and racism in the United States serves as another factor in influencing multiracial identity. Whether or not an individual has developed a critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism, processes of coming to think of oneself are steeped within a historical context that has greatly limited the extent to which multiracial people can choose to identify as anything other than the minority group to which they partially belong (Wijeyesinghe, 2001). While this is gradually changing, perhaps most dramatically illuminated by the Census's new categorizations, the bottom line is that within the United States, the one-drop rule is still plays a large role in determining what others perceive people as based largely on physical appearance (Spickard, 1989; Williamson, 1995). The processes of choosing a multiracial or monoracial identity are deeply embedded within a context of racism and "colorism" (see Daniel, 1992b), and while any person can choose to identify however they deem fit, the social reality in the United States may limit the extent to which others validate such an identity (Funderburg, 1994; Spickard, 1989).

Ultimately, multiracial people experience an altogether different form of racism than do monoracial people of color. While many aspects are similar, particularly for those multiracial people who identify as monoracial, many multiracial people are greatly encouraged by mainstream race-conscious America to see themselves through other people's eyes (Spickard, 2001). As such, they are effectively socialized, through mass media, schooling, church, and peer culture to assert a monoracial identity. And mainstream American eyes, be them white, black, Asian, Chicano/Latina, or Native

American eyes, are deeply rooted in a monoracial worldview that limits multiracial peoples ability to pick an identity that others validate (Hall, 1992; Ropp, 1997). Race ultimately prescribes monoraciality (Espiritu, 2001; Wilson, 1987), and drastically oversimplifies culture, ethnic identity, and social positioning under the framework of skin tone.

An awareness and understanding of the social and historical context of the complexities of race and racism can also be a factor in multiracial identity. Wijeyesinghe (2001) refers to this factor as political awareness and orientation, and argues that political convictions can greatly impact choice of multiracial identity. As with each factor, significant change can bring about or support a change in identity choice. While political awareness may not necessarily preclude any sort of multiracial or monoracial identity, shifts in political awareness may stimulate or be accompanied by such a shift (Kich, 1992; Korgen, 1998). This directly follows the previously discussed monoracial identity models, where shifts in identity can be directly caused by immersion into different cultural experiences or awakening to the social context of race and racism (see Cross, 1991; Helms, 1990; Tatum, 1997). Indeed, much of the crux of monoracial identity development is rooted in educating precisely for such awareness, although such education does not mean that actual shifts in racial identity will occur.

Another factor Wijeyesinghe notes is the impact other social identities may have on multiracial or monoracial identity choices. Other social identities, such as gender, religion, sexuality, social class, ability, age, or even occupation may, in some instances, take on increased, or decreased significance. As such, race and multiracial or monoracial identity must be placed within a context of other relevant social identities. In some

instances, other social identities will be more important than any sort of racial identity, and in some people, racial identity may never take on as dramatic of a role as will gender or sexuality (Collins, 2000; Williams-León, 2001). For many, racial identity cannot be isolated from other social identities such as gender, sexuality, class (see Collins, 2000; hooks, 1989; Hurtado, 1996; Marable, 1997; Rothenberg, 2001; Walters, 1998). In essence, some people are never able to only have a racialized identity, but rather may also be required to have other social identities (such as that of a black women, a Chicana lesbian, or a disabled woman of color). Typically, the oppressed social identities are the ones with which individuals are required to be aware of, or at least constantly reminded of their status as outside mainstream United States (Collins, 1996; Pharr, 1988). As most monoracial identity development models do not appear to fully account for this impact, it is essential that with an understanding of racialized identity as fluid, so, too, do multiracial identity development models consider the impact of multiple social identities.

The last factor in the factor model of multiracial identity is that of spirituality. Wijeyesinghe (2001) defines this factor much more broadly than religious practice, which I would include among the previous other social identities. Instead, spirituality in this sense can impact racialized identity by impacting an overall approach to considering other people and the self. In this sense, spirituality can also be seen as a larger framework of how an individual thinks of themselves in light of other people and the world. For many people, spirituality guides a sense of understanding ones role in life, and this can greatly impact the way in which, and extent to which an individual comes to identify racially.

Taken together, these factors combine to shape, in a multitude of ways, a person's often continuous and contextualized process of choosing a racial identity. And in an arena of monoracialism, where multiracial people can face extreme pressures from people of color and from white people, understanding how these pressures can come together to frame identity choices is key. Ultimately, the FMMI model helps illuminate the enormous variety of pressures that multiracial peoples face, and asserts that merely progressing along a finite continuum of racial identity does not necessarily fit the experiences of multiracial people, many of whom have multiple racial identities depending on the situation. The FMMI, combined with more extensive understanding of multiracial experiences, helps to clarify that multiraciality is both similar to and very unique from monoraciality.

Yet there still exists only limited research on multiracial experiences, particularly regarding the role of education in helping to shape and support not only identity choices, but also a depth of identity. This research should help to clarify the roles that education can play, with regards to these eight students. But first, in the next section I lay out how the previous theories fit within a larger understanding of multicultural education. In this manner, I demonstrate how understanding multiracial identity and multiracial experiences fits within the framework of multicultural education and thus, has a role in education for a democratic society.

Racial Identity Development and Multicultural Education

In this section, I outline how this expanded notion of racial identity development fits within the larger context of multicultural education in a way that provides a comprehensive approach to fostering the development of a critical awareness of the

dynamics of racism. After arguing that multicultural education has ending racism and the affirmation of all students as its core goals, I present James Banks and Sonia Nieto's models of multicultural education. These models help guide thinking about the purpose of multicultural education and guide efforts to foster a critical awareness of racism. I then discuss the historical roots of multicultural education and position these roots within current higher education practices.

Racial identity development theories help educators consider ways of developing affirming racial identities in all students. But these models leave us short of considering what we actually do to students to impact thinking about racism. Certainly these models have clear implications for thinking about race and racism and serve to guide workshops and specific courses on racial identity (Tatum, 1992), but they do not directly map out a plan of how to explicitly structure education so that all students have the opportunity to come to think critically about race and racism. This is partially due to the limited scope of these models: they address either racial identity development for white people or African Americans and other people of color. The key question is: How do we blend what we know about racial identity development and the experiences of multiracial people into the context of education for all students?

Racial identity development, once combined with the literature on multiracial experiences, provides a framework for structuring education for a critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism, which, in all likelihood, will also lead to increased racialized consciousness. I am not arguing that the purpose of education is to fostering individualized racial identity development, but rather to foster a critical awareness of race and racism. But a core aspect of such an awareness, according to racial identity

development models, appears to be an increased consciousness of one's own role in racism. Clearly this is impacted by racial identity. The key rests with racial identity development models demonstrating that awareness of racism is a central aspect of any sort of racial identity development, for all people. A critical awareness entails come to understand how racism operates under a framework of white supremacy, and for this purpose, monoracial identity development models appear to meet this need. Multiracial identity development, however, must also be considered in terms of how to actually educate students about race and racism. My purpose here, however, is to support the claim that we should be teaching about race and racism and that there are developmental reasons for doing so; reasons rooted in the very nature of coming to understand race and racism.

The process of developing critical consciousness begins with systemic efforts to foster an understanding about our own racial identity, but this must also be situated within a larger context of fostering critical thinking skills and coming to learn about our collective histories and contemporary struggles (Banks, 1993a, 1995a; Sleeter, 1996). Arguably, this is the broad purpose of multicultural education. One of the major goals of multicultural education is to create and foster the democratic ideals of justice, equality and freedom (Banks, 1995b) and as such, it is towards the theories of multicultural education that I now turn.

The goals of multicultural education are similar to those of racial identity theory in that both attempt to foster the ideals of social justice through raising awareness of the socio-historical reality of racism. The key difference is that multicultural education can be more readily seen as educating for a larger context of social justice that includes

addressing the exclusion of people of color, women, poor, non-native English speakers, gays, lesbians, and bisexuals (Sleeter, 1996). But another difference lies in their scope: multicultural education theory has a broad focus but mainly concerns itself with the organizational dynamics of education, while racial identity development maps individual progression. In what follows, I present several theories of multicultural education as a framework for understanding racialized identities.

Banks' dimensions of multicultural education

Any overview of contemporary multicultural education theory should begin with the work of James Banks, one of the founders of what is now known as multicultural education. Banks (1992) argued that one of the factors that makes multicultural education necessary is that beliefs and knowledge about ethnic and cultural groups limit many people's perspectives. Schools, therefore, have the "responsibility to contribute to the development of multicultural literacy and understanding" (p. 275). Schools contribute through their use of multicultural education, which educates all students to function effectively in pluralistic democracy (Banks, 1993a, p. 5).

This literacy and understanding must be addressed in multiple ways as schools come to foster democratic action in all students. Banks (1994, 1995b) identified five dimensions of multicultural education: 1) content integration, 2) the knowledge construction process, 3) prejudice reduction, 4) equity pedagogy, and 5) an empowering school culture and social structure. Content integration ultimately consists of including diverse perspectives to clarify ideas within the disciplines. It entails integrating the perspectives of ethnic and cultural groups, particularly those who are traditionally excluded from the curriculum. This integration transforms education into a process that

affirms students for who they are because they see themselves reflected in the curriculum (Banks, 1994).

Banks' knowledge construction process has been received as much more controversial because it focuses on developing critical thinking students "who have the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and commitments needed to participate in democratic action" (Banks, 1993a, p. 5). This calls for a curriculum that encourages students to examine the historical roots of what is considered 'knowledge' and entails coming to understand how racism has been perpetuated through academia and the sciences (Banks, 1994). The key for understanding the knowledge construction process rests with uncovering the how history becomes institutionalized within a society and reflects those who have conquered others, not those who have been conquered. In this way, the historical and contemporary contexts of all students become core components of curricular and pedagogic approaches.

Banks' third dimension calls for multicultural education to center on reducing prejudice. This dimension parallels much of the work by anti-racist educators, and consists of curricular and pedagogic attempts to develop in students more democratic attitudes and values (Banks, 1994). The key here is that specific efforts must be made in order to address the negative racial attitudes that most students enter school with (Banks, 1991, 1993b). It is not enough to teach about power and to include more diversity in curricular and teaching aspects of education, but rather, racism must have a central focus as well. Multicultural education, then, calls for addressing racism up front, and challenges educators to consider multiple approaches to reducing racial, gendered, heterosexual, and class-based prejudice (Sleeter, 1996).

Equity pedagogy, the fourth dimension, consists of teaching that reflects and supports the learning styles of diverse students (Banks, 1994). It can be linked to Gay's (2000) notion of culturally relevant pedagogy, where the teaching style must reflect and depend on the learning styles of the students at hand. While equity pedagogy must reflect individuals within a classroom, it must also be concerned with trends among social groups, and calls for multiple teaching styles at appropriate times. Equity pedagogy means that teachers must consider factors such as language barriers (see Valdes, 1996), socio-economic class (Rose, 1989), and ethnic culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994) in ensuring that teaching styles appropriately match students' learning styles.

An empowering school culture and social structure, the fifth dimension, entails a dramatic restructuring of school so that all students are treated and fostered equitably. Here Banks calls for institutional transformation of the school as a cultural system that has not historically been inclusive, much less valuing, of all its students (Banks, 1994). This includes ensuring that staff behavior, participation in social activities, testing practices, tracking, and even food service remain equitable and supportive to all students. It is not enough to integrate the curriculum, to educate about the knowledge construction process, to reduce prejudice and to teach using an equitable approach. All of these must also happen within a larger context of appreciation for and fostering of diversity and difference. The entire school norms, roles, and ethos must change with the implementation of the other four dimensions of multicultural education if educators wish to begin to educate all students equitably for participation in democratic society (Banks, 1994).

Banks' dimensions of multicultural education provide a powerful theoretical map for fostering a critical awareness of racism. It should be clear that racial identity development fits well within his model. In particular, Helms, Cross, and Banks' models begin with the representation and reflection of the social and historical account of all people. The knowledge construction dimension calls for ensuring that students are presented with the information needed to develop a critical understanding of their social situation. These approaches combine to challenge students to move beyond the early stages of racial identity, and can be seen as a means of laying out the groundwork for students to come to analyze their own identity. The focus on reducing prejudice fits within the middle stages of racial identity development, where individuals are uncomfortable with their status as oppressed or as an oppressor. Banks' dimensions of multicultural education arguably encompass racial identity development and the two types of theories operate along parallel assumptions of how to structure schooling to support self-analytical development.

While Banks' dimensions fit well with racial identity theory, these dimensions do more to address the educational and social conditions than promote attempts to develop positive racialized identities. Sonia Nieto, on the other hand, presents her characteristics of multicultural education, which consist of levels of support for pluralism. Her model, more developmental in nature, corresponds directly with individual progression towards becoming critically aware of racism (Nieto, 1996). In essence, Banks' theory helps to guide how we structure education to foster democratic action in all students and a core piece of this is centered on racial identity development. Nieto, on the other hand, presents levels of multicultural education, whereby the focus becomes assessing the extent to

which these theories translate into the practice of supporting pluralistic peoples. This follows Banks' (1993a) call to close the gap between our ideals and our practices.

Nieto's model of multicultural education

Nieto (1996) begins with a baseline of *Tolerance*, or having the capacity to bear something. This is the crux of the work by Vogt (1997), who argued that educators must be concerned first and foremost with fostering tolerance in our students. The next stage, *Acceptance*, goes farther by acknowledging differences without denying their importance. Acceptance typically includes celebration of some differences (through food and dance). The key here, however, is that tolerance does not necessarily ensure that students are reflected in curricular content, in positions of leadership, nor does it mean students will be taught according to their learning styles. *Acceptance*, at least, begins the superficial acknowledgement of difference.

This celebratory and superficial focus, however, does not entail a great deal of deep *Respect*, the third stage. Here, the focus on admiration leads to an exposure to different ways of seeing things. Fundamental respect through the curriculum and pedagogy presents information and perspectives about all people, especially marginalized groups. This stage parallels Banks' dimensions by asserting that students must not only be reflected in the curriculum, but must also be taught according to their individual and cultural learning styles, and must be taught information that is relevant and presented from balanced perspectives (Nieto, 1996). Respect can be used to assess the effectiveness and thoroughness of the implementation of Banks' dimensions, where if all students are not being respected as who they are, the core tenets of Banks' multicultural education model are not being met.

Respect leads to the culminating stage of *Affirmation, Solidarity, and Critique*, where different languages and cultures are legitimated and embraced as positive and unique. At the individual level, people work through conflict as a means to attain social justice. This rests with maintaining a commitment to affirm and critique, and it is this critique that leads to a critical awareness of race and racism. The key here is that it is not enough to respect each other, but rather, analytical work must be done to understand how throughout history particular groups of people have not been respected. This lays out a foundation through which students can begin to question and critique current methods of their own education.

In this light, racism can be confronted head-on (Nieto, 1996) in a way that neither the dimensions of multicultural education nor racial identity theory address. Reducing prejudice, having more information about our collective histories, and understanding our own racial identities does help to lead us to understand how racism operates, but it is only with ensuring that we apply this background knowledge to the practical realities of everyday racism that we begin to address and end racism. It is not enough to have well-developed theories about how to structure education to foster the beliefs and intentions that allow for democratic ideals. Rather, what is needed is theory that guides practice and that ensures our practice is looked at as critically as are our theories. Nieto's levels help us place these theories within an applied analytical framework, whereby we can begin to question to what extent do these multicultural education efforts actually change the behavioral practice of racism?

Racial identity development models, once synthesized to more fully include the experiences of multiracial people and the existence of other social identities (again, such

as gender, class, sexuality, religion, and ability) provide a theory for developing a personalized understanding of race and racism. This begins the process of coming to think critically about our own roles in promoting or ending racism. Racial identity development has its own niche in shaping workshops and specific classes, but also fits within this scope of multicultural education. Banks' dimensions provide a theoretical framework through which education is structured to foster a process of coming to think more critically about ourselves. As I have argued, multicultural education does this by teaching the socio-historical context of all students through equitable teaching styles. Analysis of the effectiveness of these theories rests largely with understanding how, in the end, the existence of racism is challenged. Ultimately, I argue that a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism is taught through a combination of understanding our personal dynamics of race (racial identity development) and multicultural education (which focuses more on the structural dynamics of racism).

I have demonstrated that multicultural education provides a theoretical perspective from which to focus efforts at raising such awareness while racial identity development offers the specifics through which curriculum and pedagogy should be tailored. It is important to remember that ethnic and cultural identification must remain a choice for our students (Banks, 1992). Opportunities for the development of racialized identities should be open and available to all, not as a requirement, but as an option for individual development based on understanding the socio-historical contexts of race, ethnicity, and cultural groups. Multicultural education is transforming our current educational practices into something that fosters the democratic ideals of freedom.

justice, and equality. This means that educators must foster a critical awareness of racism; what students do with this awareness is ultimately their democratic choice.

Education And The Shaping Of Critical Awareness

In what follows, I provide a brief history of what is now called multicultural education and discuss how ethnic studies fits within the foundation of contemporary multicultural education. I then outline contemporary policies and practices that continue to shape how students come to think about racism, and demonstrate that higher education teaches much more about racism through its practices than through its curriculum. After this discussion, I address the socialization of college students and consider what we know about the impact of college on students.

A brief history of multicultural education

Given what little agreement there is on precisely what racism is, much less how educators should approach its use in the classroom, it should come as little surprise that there does not exist a clear history of education about issues of racism. There has been some work on prejudice reduction (see Vogt, 1997), fostering critical thinking (see Freire, 1973; Giroux, 1983) and teaching morality (see Kohlberg, 1976; Vogt, 1997), but their impact on racial attitudes remains undocumented. Back in the 1700's, Rousseau (1979) asserted that educators are unable to predict the outcomes of our work. Despite this, he continued to argue for a rigorous structure of mentoring education for his student, Emile, which fostered moral, independent, and critical thinking. Within the United States, it is precisely because students have the free will to decide how they will think that places responsibility upon educators to teach about morality, and such has been argued at least since the turn of the last century (Dewey, 1916; Du Bois, 1903b).

Multicultural education is a form of moral education, as both are centered upon Rousseau's (1979) central tenet: We should teach people first, and foremost, to not harm others. The morality of not harming others serves as a proxy for teaching about racism. For antiracist education is focused on not harming people based on race. As such, some of the roots of multicultural education can be traced back to the work of John Dewey (Gay, 1995). Dewey (1916; 1939) argued for the moral development of students to ensure their capabilities to participate and deliberate within a democratic society (as have others; see in particular Barber, 1992; Gutmann, 1987). Since Dewey, however, moral education (see Power, et al., 1989) has remained largely separated from the multicultural education movement. While it is important to understand that some of the roots of multicultural education and addressing racism date back to democratic educators such as Dewey, it is also important to consider the socio-historical context of how multicultural education developed during the late sixties and early seventies.

While certainly the work of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois has had tremendous influence on the development of multicultural education, much of this impact came after their deaths. Similarly, the publication of Allport's (1954) The Nature of Prejudice had a significant impact, but it was not until the political movements of the sixties that substantial educational reform regarding race came about (Banks, 1994). Most of the reform then and now has consisted of the addition of ethnic studies type programs and courses, but the progression of multicultural education can best be seen through a model of its development.

James Banks (1994) presented the history of multicultural education in five phases. The first phase consisted of *monoethnic* courses. This phase, and the beginning of

what is largely thought of as multicultural education in the United States, came about as ethnic minorities (African Americans, American Indians, Mexican Americans, and Asian Americans in particular) demanded that schools and colleges establish courses that reflect their own histories, literatures, and perspectives (Gutierrez, 1995; Marable, 2000). While there was a clear concern with white racism and its impact on people of color, the courses remained ethnic-specific, and, for the most part, students and faculty limited their approaches to studying their respective ethnic groups (Liu & Yu, 1995). This is not to say that early ethnic studies, which grew out of black history movements and the work of David Walker, Marcus Garvey, Booker T. Washington, and W. E. B. Du Bois, was not interdisciplinary (King, 1995), but that its focus remained largely ethnic-specific. Essentially, African American faculty would teach African American students, Asian American students were taught by Asian American faculty, and so on.

This compartmentalization was partially addressed in the second phase, which consisted of the blending of ethnic-specific courses into *multiethnic* studies courses. As ethnic groups continued to push for ethnic-specific courses, often schools and colleges would respond by combining ethnic groups into umbrella courses (Marable, 2000). While initially this was seen as avoidance, umbrella courses have since been seen as enhancing ethnic studies. As these multiethnic courses and programs were created, the focus of the departments and courses became less political and more scholarly. The courses began to address diverse perspectives and included a broader array of students (Banks, 1994). Comparative analysis of the different marginalized groups' experiences became a theoretical foundation that resulted in more scholarly work that considered the perspectives of traditionally excluded and marginalized populations.

The third phase, called multiethnic education, arose as educators, spurred on by community and student activists, realized that ethnic specific and multiethnic courses were still not addressing the marginalized status of students of color. Even as these courses were being implemented, they were being further marginalized in small, under-funded departments that were not perceived as academically rigorous (Hu-DeHart, 1995). Furthermore, these courses did nothing to address the educational inequality that students of color had to face. As educators continued the call for developing more broad-based courses, they coupled that with a call for total school reform (Banks, 1994). Multiethnic education, then, underwent a movement towards addressing curricular needs as well as the overall school environment.

The fourth phase is called multicultural education and is based on understanding the need for pluralistic education. In this phase, educators combine the efforts to raise awareness of ethnic minorities with efforts to reflect students of color in the more mainstream curriculum. The purpose is still rooted in addressing racism, but other issues of oppression are becoming recognized in academia as well (Banks, 1994). Courses and academic programs that focus broadly on addressing the socio-historical context of people of color, gays, lesbians, women, and poor students typify the multicultural education phase. Ultimately, this phase focuses the five previously highlighted dimensions of multicultural education with a comprehensive attempt to begin structural change.

The fifth phase consists of institutionalization, whereby multicultural education becomes infused with the whole school environment. In this phase, all of Banks' dimensions of multicultural education would be realized, although, of course, higher

education has not yet reached this point. While certain aspects of multicultural education have been institutionalized at particular institutions, overall systemic reform that supports and affirms the identities of all students has yet to occur. This lack of an example of such a setting within higher education probably stems more from the notion that such affirmation of all students is a lofty ideal that quiet possibly will never be fully attained.

To summarize, multicultural education came about largely as a result of the political activism of the sixties, began as ethnic specific courses and approaches, and has gradually come to represent a larger way of thinking and educating for participation in a diverse democratic society. I now focus explicitly on higher education and consider multicultural education within the context of selective, comprehensive research universities.

Critical awareness and the socio-cultural context of education

In what follows, I discuss admissions access to higher education and present contact theory as a theoretical framework for understanding the need and potential for diverse campuses to foster a critical awareness. I then discuss specific attempts to foster a critical awareness through curricular design and the implementation of anti-racist courses. I finish by arguing that higher education has a wide array of approaches that it can use to foster critical awareness but that as most of the participants in this study assert, such approaches are not fully utilized. I connect higher education to the implementation of Banks' five dimensions, which serves as a framework for considering the experiences of the multiracial students in this study.

Higher education in the U.S. has a deep history of excluding people of color (and women) in the first two hundred and fifty years of its development (Burstyn, 1973;

Lomawaima, 1995; Solomon, 1985; Wood, 1991). As such, historically, higher education has not been conducive to raising awareness of the dynamics of racism. This is not to say that people of color were not interested or did not attempt to create their own schools (Lee & Slaughter-Defoe, 1995; Lomawaima, 1995), but that most colleges did not accept people of color until relatively recently. The relative numbers of enrolled people of color have dramatically increased over the past forty years (Bennet, 1995; NCES, 2000), leading to an increased need to foster awareness of the newly arrived, and at least physically included, students. But even as overall enrollment numbers have been increasing, numbers for specific ethnic and cultural groups have remained stagnant (Altbach, 1991). For example, while overall Asian American enrollment has skyrocketed over the past couple of decades (NCES, 2000), numbers for Pacific Islanders have been disproportionately low (Ah Sam & Robinson, 1998; Luce, 1985). African Americans had seen dramatic increases in the sixties and seventies as well, but have since leveled off and in many cases returned to enrollment rates of thirty years ago (Bennet, 1995; NCES, 2000). Higher education is rightfully concerned with increasing campus racial diversity, but it is important to recognize that getting diverse students onto college campuses is only the first step towards fostering a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism.

Higher education has, at least in theory, maintained its commitment to increasing the diversity of its student bodies. This was demonstrated most recently through the University of Michigan's public defense of the use of affirmative action in admissions (see Cantor, 1998; 1999; Schmidt, 1999). Similarly, while the University of Washington was relatively quiet during the initiative process and campaign that led up to the banning of affirmative action in Washington, subsequent statements reaffirming the value of

affirmative action were issued after the initiative passed (see McCormick, 2000). For the most part, higher education extols the value of diversity (see "On the Importance of Diversity in Higher Education," endorsed by the American Council on Education, American Association for Higher Education, Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, The College Board, and many other professional organizations affiliated with American higher education [Regents of the University of Michigan, 2000]). This position is similarly reflected in the mission statements of many selective institutions in the country (Alger, 1997; Bowen & Bok, 1998). Clearly, higher education has articulated a commitment to racial diversity. What this commitment means is another debate.

But what interest does higher education have in maintaining its diverse student bodies? In states where the use of affirmative action has been ruled illegal, recruitment efforts have been redoubled (Rodriguez, 1997; Schevitz, 2000; Schubert, 1999; Traub, 1999). Certainly there must be a reason for spending millions of dollars on recruitment and outreach efforts. Jeffrey Milem (1999) argued that the educational benefits of diversity are themselves compelling enough to warrant such an effort. Milem presented individual, institutional, and societal benefits of having diversity in colleges and universities. His central argument is the notion that increased contact with diverse students benefits all members of society (Milem, 1999). Chang (2002a) demonstrated that more racially diverse campuses are more likely to expose their students to a wider array of viewpoints. The key, of course, is not to have diverse segregated campuses but to have diverse students interact. The strength of higher education, therefore, rests in its ability to

bring diverse people together (in campuses, in residence halls, in classrooms, and in many other creative ways-see Hurtado, et al., 1999).

The notion that a diverse student body maximizes the learning experiences of all students stems out of Allport's (1954) contact theory. This theory was influential in the formation of schools two hundred years ago (Vogt, 1997) and has since become an integral operating assumption of many schools and colleges. The central idea is that exposure to different types of people has two main benefits. The first is that the reduction of prejudice and intergroup conflict (Vogt, 1997), while the second is an increased openness to different ideas and perspectives (Milem, in press a; Milem & Hakuta, 2000). Tan, et al. (1997) demonstrated that vicarious contact (e.g. exposure through media) had a positive impact if the portrayals were positive but contact theory takes this further and demonstrates the dramatic impact bringing diverse peoples together can have on the mutual development of all involved people.

Allport (1954) qualified his claim of the benefits of diversity by asserting that specific criteria and conditions must first be met. It is not enough to simply bring diverse people together but that rather, specific steps must be taken in building a diverse student body (Hurtado, et al., 1999). The first is that the immersion into diverse contexts must happen quickly and be enforced by respected authorities. Second, intergroup contact must be frequent enough for people to come to know each other individually. Third, each group and individual must have equal status. And, fourth, groups coming into contact must be cooperative rather than competitive (see Vogt, 1997). Many campuses of higher education already meet these conditions (see Hurtado, et al., 1999), yet the need for careful consideration of recruitment and outreach efforts remains. It is not enough to

recruit students of color and then expect benefits to follow; specific efforts must be undertaken to achieve the full benefits predicted by contact theory.

Further, educators must also consider a central assumption beneath building a diverse student body; namely that for many people of color attending predominantly white institutions, their experience and interaction with people who are racially different from them is a daily occurrence. The call for increased diversity on predominantly white campuses, therefore, sends coded messages to different racial groups. White students hear such a call and can rest assured that racism impacting people of color is being actively confronted. Students of color, on the other hand, can take the call to mean that their very presence on campus is needed to help raise the awareness of their white peers. The implications of this message are clear: Students of color are supposed to talk about their experiences while on campus⁵. This is reinforced by the sheer lack of a presence of other students of color in many classes at predominantly white universities: thereby further isolating students of color. As the students in this study who consider themselves people of color first clearly demonstrate in the coming chapters, such expectations are not without direct costs.

Yet institutions of higher education certainly have the capability to achieve conditions that are entirely conducive and supportive to these isolated students of color (see Hurtado, et al., 1999). Ensuring that positive contact occurs from the beginning of the college environment is not difficult to imagine, and in fact, many colleges attempt such contact through orientation programs. The frequency of contact can partially be addressed through communal living spaces and residence halls (see Inman & Pascarella, 1998), and through classroom contact (Blum, 1998; Vogt, 1997). Both of these, however,

entail ensuring enough diverse students are on campuses. It is more difficult to achieve the third condition of equal status for all groups, particularly in light of the socially inequitable conditions within the United States. Ensuring that students work together cooperatively instead of competitively has implications for grading structures within academic work, and ultimately suggests rethinking the way higher education considers and constructs the pursuit of knowledge (Banks, 1993a).

But even without ensuring or controlling for these conditions, the impact of exposure to diverse people and ideas has been documented through studies assessing the influence of college on students. The impact of interaction, not just exposure, to diverse ideas and people on openness to diversity has been documented through the literature on the impact of college (Astin, 1993; Hagedorn & Terenzini, 1996; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Gurin (1999) has argued that increased levels of interaction with diversity has shown increases in complexity of thinking and an ability to root thinking in social and historical knowledge. Such students were also more likely to be engaged and motivated in their college and academic experiences. This interaction not only benefits white students but had qualitative benefits to African American students as well, so long as both intergroup and intragroup interaction was present (Gurin, 1999). The key is that increased diversity that results in diverse exposure on college campuses has a significant impact on developing critical thinking and the ability to consider different perspectives (Gurin, 1999). This ability to consider others is at the core of an awareness of the dynamics of racism, and as such, a diverse student body supports the conditions necessary for fostering of a critical awareness. Yet again, it is important to consider that

for many people of color on predominantly white campuses, their experience is already couched in an arena of racial diversity.

Ultimately, higher education can create the conditions necessary for fostering critical thinking in general, and especially for fostering a critical awareness of racism. Critical thinking requires thinking through multiple perspectives, and it stands to reason that this is enhanced by the presence and interaction of others who think differently. To encourage, as Leistyna and Woodrum (1996) argue is the point of critical pedagogy, an understanding of the interconnections between ideology, power and culture, one presumably must encounter different ideologies, perspectives on power, and diverse cultures. If educators are fundamentally concerned with teaching critical thinking skills, then diversity of thought and culture must be brought together, respected and examined. Critical thinking cannot be taught in an atmosphere of isolation from different cultural perspectives (Freire, 1973; Giroux, 1983).

But aside from bringing diverse students physically together, higher education has the capability to educate for critical awareness through a variety of other means. While certainly higher education already works to address this through the aforementioned dimensions of multicultural education, other approaches are currently in use as well. Chang (2002b) researched the impact of diversity related courses in reducing prejudice (see also Antony, 1993; Hurtado, et al., 1999), and demonstrated the importance these courses and structural curricular change can have on the reduction of prejudice. It is important to consider here that the courses Chang assessed were not anti-racist or social justice courses, yet their impact remained severe. In the coming chapters, most of the

students in this study demonstrate the impact of such courses. In fact, all but one student has voluntarily taken one or more courses that center on race and racism.

The presence of anti-racist and social justice courses also appears on the rise (see, for example, McIntyre, 1997; Tatum, 1992, 1994). These courses focus explicitly on promoting critical thinking about racism and other forms of oppression (Derman-Sparks & Brunson Phillips, 1997), rather than the more broad focus on teaching the socio-historical perspectives historically seen through ethnic studies courses (Hu-DeHart, 1995; Marable, 2000). While the focus may differ, both attempt to reduce prejudice and raise awareness of the dynamics of racism. But we know less about the effectiveness of ethnic studies courses in promoting awareness of the dynamics of racism. Anti-racist or social justice courses (and even workshops-see Springer, et al., 1996), on the other hand, have had demonstrated success in raising awareness of the dynamics of oppression (see McIntyre, 1997; Tatum, 1992). There seems to be little doubt that both approaches have some impact, but the nature of this impact is unknown.

Much of the work we have done has centered on the overall impact college has on socializing students with regards to values and perspectives that appear racially inclusive (such as openness to diversity). Educators know that college is having some sort of impact. While we do not know the nature of the tolerance that students appear to exhibit, we do know that college students are being socialized during their college years to be more tolerant (Vogt, 1997). Whether this tolerance is an outcome of an adoption of the core beliefs and values of social justice or based on the adoption of more sophisticated politically correct terminology has yet to be adequately studied (Jackman, 1994). In the

next section, I briefly outline what we know about how college students are socialized for a critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism through their college experiences.

Critical Awareness and College Student Socialization

In the previous section, I discussed the general structures that higher education uses to shape in its students openness to diversity. But this discussion did not go into depth about whether or not college students are coming to be critically aware of the dynamics, nor did I assess what college does to limit the fostering of a critical awareness. The main purpose of this discussion is to understand that the fostering of a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism requires comprehensive immersion into a college experience that practices Banks' five dimensions of multicultural education. The extent to which these dimensions are practiced determines the extent to which students will systematically be socialized into critical thinking about the dynamics of racism. The whole college experience can and should be structured to foster a critical awareness through total immersion in a way that utilizes what we know of college's socialization processes. Later chapters more clearly demonstrate the connection between the college experience and Banks' five dimensions, but here, I briefly touch upon previous research.

There is a rich body of literature on college student development. The roots of this work entail understanding the intellectual growth and affective and behavioral changes during the college years (see Evans, et al., 1998). The influences on this growth and change is what is commonly referred to as the socialization processes of education. College students are socialized through many means, from coursework, to faculty or peer interactions, to student orientations, all the way down to how cafeteria food is laid out. All of these factors, and the entire college immersion process, can have some impact on

how students come to think about themselves and the world they live in (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Much of what we know about college student socialization is based on the research on student development. What is most relevant here is the influence college has on developing critical thinking, reduced racial prejudice, and openness to diversity, which have already been addressed in the previous section.

We know that, in thinking about structuring the college environment to be more conducive to fostering a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism, educators must address the curriculum, faculty teaching styles, residence hall living arrangements, and structured and random peer contact (such as Greek houses, student and cultural groups) to name a few. In other words, morality is taught and expressed throughout the college experience. In order to facilitate the development of a particular morality (in this case, critical awareness of racism leading to critical action), educators must be concerned with curricular and non-curricular components of educational experiences (Astin, 1993). Students are socialized through uncountable means, and educators desirous of having explicit impact would do well to consider the many factors that account for possible student development (see Jackson, et al., 1993). Understanding and accounting for the many ways in which students are socialized to think about race and racism through their college experience can have a profound, yet unrealized impact on the development of a critical awareness of racism.

In the previous sections, I made the case for why the fostering of a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism must rest with higher education. I also argued that higher education has a history of processes and methods that contribute to the conditions necessary for fostering such awareness. As such, I argue that higher education is the

pivotal setting for the socialization of students to think critically about race and racism.

This has already been demonstrated through the impact that college has had on numerous students' thinking about diversity (Astin, 1993; Hagedorn & Terenzini, 1996; Gurin, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Vogt, 1997). Developmentally, college students are in a place to benefit from efforts that foster their critical development, and as such, educators must consider the numerous socialization processes that facilitate such development.

Thompson and Carter (1997) explore this further in presenting the notion of racial socialization. The notion of racial socialization differs from racial identity development in that it is focused on the processes that influence personal development. Racial socialization occurs through the family, through immediate community contexts, larger social contexts, national politics, media, and through peer influence (Thompson & Carter, 1997). This socialization process happens outside (and inside) of the college experience, yet has serious implications for educators. It is not enough to consider the socialization processes that are directly (and indirectly) malleable by colleges. Rather, educators must be aware of the many influences and socialization processes throughout society, and must tap into these processes if critical awareness is to mean more than simply an academic thought exercise.

Higher education can and should serve as the primary socializing force in the education of students for participation in democratic society. With regards to social relations, this means higher education should socialize students to recognize and value different perspectives, ways of thinking, and ultimately, ways of living. No other public (or private) institution or sector has such a broad-reaching socializing capacity. As such,

higher education should take affirmative steps towards socializing its students to develop a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism that ultimately lead to critical action to ensure that all people can exercise their right to participate in this democratic society.

Educators do not currently know the impact higher education has on the development of a critical awareness of racism. Perhaps the most impressive challenge to shaping a critical awareness through higher education rests with educators lack of serious dialogue and structuring of college experiences on democratic ideals of freedom, justice, and equality. While certainly there is much discussion of the purposes of higher education, but this discussion often occurs outside of the day-to-day practice of higher education (which I would argue happens through classrooms, residence halls, and a multitude of other factors that influence socialization). If discussions about nurturing the skills needed to participate and ensure our actions are rooted in democratic principles do occur, they often occur in classroom theoretical discussions, or on decision-making boards (see Ingram, 1995; Schuster, et al., 1994). Rarely do these conversations about the larger purpose of higher education follow Freire's (1973) notion of staying rooted in the everyday practical reality, and as such, rarely begin with or have practical ramifications for classroom teaching, research inquiry, or student socialization processes. Discussions of race on campuses, for example, rarely address how educators structure education to foster a more critical awareness of the issues at hand.

Educators, by and large, have not agreed upon a vision of higher education, have not agreed on the intended outcomes of that unarticulated vision, and have not agreed on methods of reaching that vision. Assuming that such an articulated vision would be rooted in fostering democratic participation and that the connection to fostering an

awareness of racism would be clear, higher education could then proceed to lay out its intended outcomes and discuss how best to attain those outcomes. Ultimately, the most pressing barrier to higher education rests with beginning the conversation about the very purpose of higher education.

Once this perpetual conversation begins, attempts at addressing the structures of higher education that limit a systematic fostering of critical thinking fit within Banks' five dimensions of multicultural education. In fact, his dimensions lay out a practical plan of how to think about structural change that enhances higher education's immense socializing capabilities. Banks' dimensions in brief (for reference, see p. 12-13) consist of integrating the curriculum, understanding and analyzing the knowledge construction process, reducing prejudice, engaging in equitable pedagogy, and coming to foster an empowering school culture. Each of these dimensions, as illustrated by the students in this study, can serve as barriers to socialization for critical awareness (for more on critical or liberatory pedagogy that address these dimensions, see Cochran-Smith, 1991; Giroux, 1983; Greene, 1986; Macedo, 1993; Shor, 1980). While it is important to understand the ways in which the five dimensions serve to limit critical pedagogy, it is also important to not allow the mere presence of barriers to limit attempts at systemic change. As such, I now begin to shift the focus from what we know does not work, to what we know much less about: what works.

The important aspect is that educators know how we are failing our students. What we need now is a deeper understanding of how we can come to address our limitations as we come to actively shape higher education's socialization processes to more adequately reflect the core democratic values of freedom, justice, and equity. There

are many barriers to creating a liberatory pedagogic environment, just as there are many barriers to fostering specific awareness of racism. But what we need now is more understanding of approaches to overcome these barriers in efforts to foster the development of a critical awareness of racism that leads to critical democratic action.

Summary Of Part III

The purpose of this section was to provide an overview of the work that has been done within higher education to foster a critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism. This was based a definition of a critical awareness of racism centered on understanding the social and historical context of racial exclusion coupled with an understanding of the personal impact we all have on promoting or ending racism. I then argued that ultimately, an equitable democratic society depends on the fostering of a critical awareness of racism. A key component of such an awareness of racism is understanding the clear monoracial assumption that most conversations and theories dealing with race and racism make. Critically understanding race and racism entails deeply considering the basic fact that the experiences of multiracial people are at sometimes similar, and in many ways very unique from monoracial people. I positioned the responsibility for such fostering with higher education because its students are developmentally ready to weigh the responsibilities of coming to critically examine their roles in racism.

With that framework in mind, I outlined how racial identity development fits within the framework of multicultural education. I argued that racial identity development is largely concerned with individual progression to a personal identity that ends with a commitment to social action around issues of race. This fits within a larger

conception of multicultural education that is concerned with teaching the social and historical awareness of all people. Perhaps most central to fostering a critical awareness of racism rests with Banks' second and third dimensions, which focus on understanding the knowledge construction process and the reduction of prejudice. But multicultural education is also centered on a larger educational reform movement that systemic reform through curricular, pedagogic and transformative change. Understanding these dimensions also serves as a framework for understanding the barriers to creating the structural conditions for promoting a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I synthesized diverse bodies of literature, spanning racial identity development, multicultural education, and multiracial experiences into an overarching framework. The culminating idea is that educators must strive to develop a critical awareness of race and racism because this awareness fulfills part of our democratic charge to bring about an end to social exclusion based upon race. This awareness rests upon an understanding of race as a complex social construct that inadequately categorizes monoracial people within a contemporary context of multiraciality. More specifically, I use critical awareness as a framework for understanding how multiracial students come to identify racially, experience college, and ultimately think of efforts to address racism.

Higher education utilizes a diversity of approaches in its attempts to develop critical thinking skills and an openness to diversity. While many approaches are currently used, their overall impact on critical thinking in general, and critical awareness of racism in particular, have not been thoroughly assessed. Researchers have looked at the educational benefits of conditions that theoretically support fostering a critical awareness

(such as a diverse student body, increased intergroup contact, and specific coursework), yet the connection between a deeper understanding of racism and these possible factors has yet to be made. While Astin's (1993) work on college's impact on openness to diversity and Gurin's (1999) testimony on critical thinking are beginning to uncover this, we have yet to see how these factors work, in tandem, to foster such an awareness. We have yet to understand the impact of the extent to which institutions actually engage in these measures. Essentially, we have not engaged in a thorough enough analysis of how all of these factors combine (or do not) to facilitate the fostering of a critical awareness in undergraduate education.

Rather than engage in yet another critique of higher education, however, I argue that what is now needed is an understanding of the ways in which those at the margins experience race and ultimately, learn about racism. In such a manner, their stories can illuminate more clearly what a critical awareness of race and racism entails, while demonstrating some of the ways in which higher education can come to foster such an awareness. In the next chapter, I lay out the research methods used to help illustrate the connection between a critical awareness, higher education, and multiracial experiences.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

“I think I have more insight on race than most people because every mixed person gets to sit on that line and see how this shit really don’t make sense. Because if you’re just one race its so much easier to believe in the stereotypes and to judge people. But you’re not going to judge half of your family the same way someone from one race would.”

- Shay Hurley

In the previous two chapters, I argued for undergraduate education’s role in fostering a critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism. I began with the assumption that race and racism are complex, contested, socially constructed phenomena that have typically been based upon a monoracial assumption. I further tried to show that in order to consider one’s own role in the promotion or maintenance of social inequality based on the socially constructed categorization of race, one must be developmentally prepared for such an endeavor. I concluded by arguing that while formal education and schooling in general must be responsible for the democratic education of all of our citizens, undergraduate education can and should provide the opportunity and structure for students to develop a critical awareness of race and racism. Hence, the first goal of this study—to establish a theoretical framework of “critical awareness” as a method of bringing about the end of racism--has been addressed.

The second and third goals of this study were to establish an understanding of how students envision race and racism along with explaining the many complexities of how undergraduate education may foster critical awareness. Rather than attempt to analyze current methods and approaches used by higher education, I focus on the individual student. This is not to say that an analysis of current "best practice" programs across the country is neither valid nor needed. Indeed, a thorough analysis of the guiding theory and outcomes of attempts to foster a critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism could provide a framework for thinking about how particular universities could best approach this daunting task. This study, however, remained rooted in the voices of multiracial college students. Such a focus enriches the literature on how multiracial students experience higher education, while developing theory regarding how particular aspects of the college experience shape undergraduate students' thinking about race and racism. This study moved beyond examining how college students think about race and racism (their personal theories) and relied on student voices to illustrate how higher education has influenced the development of thinking about race and racism.

In this chapter, I outline my research questions and a design that utilizes individual case studies to shed light on how undergraduate education shapes thinking about race and racism. I present case study methodology, in this case, rooted in interviews and semi-guided writings. I then clarify how I generated a diverse sample of multiracial undergraduate students who grew up in unique settings, with drastically different family lives, siblings, peers, and educational experiences. I conclude with an overview of how I analyzed the data.

Research Questions

The overall purpose of this study was to understand how multiracial undergraduate students think about racism, and to understand the extent to which higher education influences the development of a critical awareness of and possible action addressing racism. In order to fulfill this goal, this research was guided by the following questions:

Research Question 1: How do undergraduate students think about race and racism?

- a) To what extent have students developed a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism?

Research Question 2: In examining the ways in which these students think about race and racism, how have the following aspects of undergraduate education shaped their conception and development of a critical awareness of racism?

- a) Administrative structures (e.g. educational policies, admissions, transfer requirements);
- b) Organizational aspects (e.g. residence halls, college and departmental structures, structured interaction, campus/building design and usage);
- c) Curricula (e.g. classes taken, majors, types of intellectual development);
- d) Pedagogical approaches (e.g. classroom dynamics, teaching styles, classroom interaction, classroom rules);
- e) Peer influences (e.g. cultural group affiliation, friends, family, immediate contacts, social group interaction).

Approaches to Data Collection

Case studies served as the overall framework for this study and helped organize interviews and guided writings so that I could analyze each participant (Stake, 1997, 1998). This was important particularly because the social and individual contexts under study were (and are) historically situated and culturally created (Gergen, 1978). As such, it was essential to use methods of inquiry that allow for maximum insight into the complexities of how each student experiences race and racism and that validate the findings by providing multiple and possibly contrasting data. As the purpose of this study was to assess how students think about racism and ultimately position their understanding of racism within their immediate social and political context, I came to fully understand each student as a unique individual who structures and is structured by their immediate surroundings (family context, experiences growing up and in K-12 schooling, peer groups, college experiences, etc.). Through the creation of educational and racial mini-biographies, which I shared with each participant so that they could provide critical feedback and clarification, I came to understand the complexity of the various influences that growing up and going to college has had on these particular students' understanding of racism and their own unique racial identities.

In order to best uncover how these factors influence each individual student, I utilized a case-study approach to clarify the personal contexts, family histories, and educational experiences of each participant. Case studies ultimately allow for an in-depth, nuanced understanding of an individual as a case in and of themselves (Chen & Pearce, 1995, Stake, 1998). Each study participant was approached for the purposes of clarifying their individual context and framework for thinking about race and racism as well as for

understanding how their individual experiences have been shaped by undergraduate education. I then comparatively analyzed these individualized case studies and weighed their similarities and differences to create a fuller, more complex vision of the way in which the social context of their specific undergraduate education has framed race and racism.

This study was centered on making sense of how particular students have had their college experience framed by race and racism, provided their own personal background and cultural context. I did not intend to generate a representative sample that would speak for all college students, all students of color, nor on behalf of all multiracial people. Nor was it my intent to fully describe the social context of racism in college. Clearly, other methods would have been more conducive to such a large-scale goal. Rather, I wished to understand and subsequently illustrate how racism is framed on a specific college campus from the perspective of particular multiracial students, given their cultural and individual perspectives. As such, the primary source of data came from formal structured interviews because they provide forums for philosophical analysis and inquiry into each individual case study. The secondary source of data came from semi-guided writings, where participants wrote about their choice of suggested topics or strayed from my list and creatively expressed themselves as they saw fit. In what follows, I outline precisely what these interviews and semi-guided writings entailed, followed by an overview of how I created my sample, and discuss how the methods came together. Finally, I discuss my methods of analyzing these data and demonstrate my coding techniques and checks to ensure the validity of my interpretations of each case study.

Description of Interviews

Semi-structured interviews, the bulk of the data analyzed for this study, provided the format for participants to engage in a philosophical discussion about race, racism and higher education (see Talburt, 2000, for similar procedures focused on sexuality). Further, in-depth interviews allowed for a selected sample that ensured breadth among participants, while providing a framework for the exploration of each participants' life histories in terms of thinking about race and racism. Interviews provided a forum for uncovering each students' past and present contexts as well as how they view the world, and ultimately formed a method for collecting necessary case study data similar to mini-educational biographies (see Bullough, 1998; Lipka, et. al., 1998, Smith, 1998). These case studies took snapshots of the academic lives of each participant and focused explicitly on the role and influence race and racism have had in shaping such experiences. All interviews began with a semi-structured, or semi-guided format (Mason, 1996; Patton, 1980) that allowed for a focus on particular topics of conversation (such as experiences growing up, thoughts about education and personal experiences with racism). Interviews served as the primary source of data collection (see Appendix A), yet at times were less structured in order to ensure that participants felt comfortable enough to share personal stories and experiences (Mason, 1996). As participants began to feel more comfortable with my presence and role, the interviews would gradually move towards a more conversational tone, which allowed for more in-depth discussion about specific experiences that may have been more emotional in nature.

What these interviews gained in depth and flexibility, they lacked in generalizability and naturalism (Mason, 1996). Because interviews necessarily required

substantial time and energy commitments to data collection, the sample size was small (in this case, eight students were kept for the final analysis). Further, while these semi-structured interviews were not "natural," as the interviews went on, the topics became more sensitive. In day-to-day life, opportunities for guided reflection and contemplation about race and racism do not happen frequently and are not "naturally occurring" (Hammersley & Atkin, 1995). The likelihood that participants thought about the purpose of my questions and answered according to what they thought I wanted to hear was present, especially in the beginning interviews (Alasuutari, 1995). Yet this was partially addressed by my continued presence through interview dates set at regular intervals (approximately once a month, over a period of six months), and through the use of semi-guided writing exercises.

An additional limitation is that interviewees may simply not be aware of particular phenomena or may be unable to discuss themes central to my research agenda (Becker & Geer, 1969). While there are procedures an interviewer can use to facilitate or accommodate such lack of willingness or inability to discuss particular topics (particularly when the topic is controversial, personal and high-risk such as racism), this limitation appears linked to interview methods of inquiry (see Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This is extremely relevant given that, in the end, my sample did not include students who were fundamentally uncomfortable with talking about race, racism, and their personal experiences as multiracial individuals. This limitation should be addressed in future research, as the perspective of those unwilling or uncomfortable to talk about their experiences certainly warrants deep analysis. Multiracial students unable or unwilling to discuss race and racism certainly provide important insight into understanding the

complexities of multiracial identity and the impact of education on such thinking, and as such, warrant further analysis.

Yet with these limitations and given my narrowed focus, however, these interviews provided rich data from these eight participants. Semi-structured interviews typically began with open-ended questions that centered on general experiences growing up or in schooling. Interviews lasted between an hour and two hours, and were held approximately once a month during the winter and spring academic quarters of the academic year 2002. There were between four and five interviews per person, and most interviews were held in public locations on or near the university campus (in cafes, libraries, and in academic buildings). All formal interviews were audio-taped while pre- and post-interview discussions were reserved for more flexible conversations, which I would record as soon as possible (as soon as the participant left the area).

The first interview sets were broad reaching and attempted to obtain a general understanding of the context within which each participant grew up (see Appendix A). A primary focus in the first interviews was to build up rapport with each student. This initial building of rapport was critical as the level of comfort each student had with me directly impacted the extent to which they disclosed relevant aspects of their lives (Jorgenson, 1995; Lindlof, 1995). I was not able to delve deeply into risky topics (such as discussing personal multiracial identity with a white interviewer) until rapport was developed and maintained (Alasuutari, 1995; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Primary interviews also focused on general thoughts about race and racism and helped me gain an overview of personal family background. Questions in these initial interviews were aimed at uncovering students' family background, history, and dynamics in an attempt to understand personal

and familial context within which each student grew up (Seidman, 1991). First interviews also began to get at personal definitions of race and racism, as well as a general overview of experiences in K-12 schooling. Some specific questions included (see Appendix A):

- 1) Describe the schools you have gone to (K-12 and higher education)
- 2) Describe your family history, where you grew up, what home life was like.
- 3) What do you identify as? What about your parents/family?
- 4) What do race and racism mean to you? How did you come to think about race and racism in these terms?

The second interviews consisted of a more direct focus on participants' experiences in K-12 schooling, and entailed follow-up questions from the first interview. Most of the second interviews began by clarifying specific instances of racism that students remembered growing up and with the gathering of specific detail about circumstances growing up. The focus then shifted towards experiences with teachers, peer students, and specific educational experiences that may have related to race, racism, and personal racialized identity. This round of interviews focused on educational experiences regarding race and racism, and began to uncover nuances within their K-12 academic context that may have had implications for their later thinking about race and racism. Questions used in the second interview included:

- 1) What does it mean to identify as you do? How has that changed over your life?
- 2) How did experiences in school pressure/support you to identify as you do?
- 3) How did you learn about racism? What were you taught about race and racism? What did school teach you about race and racism?

4) Describe your relationships with your teachers. With your peers.

While the third interviews tended to focus more on the experiences in college, for some students, these were spent further clarifying experiences in K-12 and on developing a deeper understanding of the impact of particular experiences on how the participant thinks today. Specific questions were asked about how the student has come to their academic line of thinking and major(s), and an overall attempt was made to gauge personal experiences with college structures, faculty, curriculum, and peer student interactions. The fourth interviews more deeply explored experiences in higher education, and focused explicitly on this particular university. These interviews were rooted in understanding experiences having to do with race and racism as well as how this particular college has impacted how students think about race and racism. The fifth and final interviews clarified conflicting or contradictory data, tied up loose ends, and ensured my understanding and perspective of each student as a case study was appropriate and from their perspective, valid. Some questions used in the third, fourth, and fifth interviews were:

- 1) What is the role of higher education in shaping thoughts about race and racism? What is the role of higher education in educating about race? What should it be? What is the role of higher education in addressing racism? What should it be?
- 2) When is race and racism talked about in college? How much did you learn about biracial or mixed race people in college? How have you learned about people of color? What role did higher education play in your thinking about race and racism?

- 3) Do your classes deal internally with issues of race/racism? With mixed race people? With what it means to be white? How have your classes impacted your thinking on race and racism? Have you had access to people with expertise in mixed race peoples or racism?
- 4) What would action that challenges racism look like? How has higher education helped prepare you for that?

Semi-Guided Writings

Interviews were rooted in understanding experiences in schooling, growing up multiracial, and in understanding each student's family context. As interviews went on, I gradually began to uncover students' philosophical thinking regarding the role of higher education in a democratic society as well as their thoughts on the very concepts of race and racism, as multiracial people. Yet these interviews still left me short of the type of depth that I was searching for. While initially I had planned observations of each student, as I began to observe their personal and academic lives, I realized that such insight into how they live their lives would only serve to add a surface level depth of understanding. Essentially, I could not observe students' most critical thoughts. My alternative approach, one planned from the beginning, yet not what I had intended to focus so much on, was to utilize semi-guided creative writings as a means of critical expression of experiences, thoughts, and feelings that participants wanted to share.

These writings were semi-guided in nature, yet as my relationships with students grew more comfortable, I began asking students to stray from any suggested topic towards whatever they had wanted to write about. Along the lines of critical feminist research (Archibald & Crnkovich, 1995; Collins, 2000), I asked students to shape their

own messages, their own agenda regarding their experiences (see Gaskins, 1999; Glancy & Truesdale, 1994). In essence, in the interviews, I shaped and altered the nature of conversations through constant questions, prompts, verbal and non-verbal affirmations. In the writing exercises, I was not physically present, and while certainly my impact could not have been totally removed, in the end, the writing exercises acknowledged these participants as experts about not only their experiences, but about multiracial experiences in general. Semi-guided writings provided forums for participants to present their ideas in non-structured, creative ways as a means to discuss high-risk topics. Such writings allowed for an analysis of participants' thinking without the influence of my interruptions, and served as frameworks for further clarification. These methods combined to triangulate the data (see Denzin, 1978; Erickson, 1986) by providing me with multiple points of discussion (interviews and their writings), and validated their previous experiences. Such triangulation was key, as their unprompted voices provided deep context and personal insight in a way that simply talking to me as an interviewer may not have elicited.

What made these writings more relevant was the ensuing discussion I had with each participant after I analyzed their writings. While I asked for further clarification, they were able to orally validate their written expression. This was especially relevant given that each student was not comfortable putting their raw writings in this text, yet they were still able to convey the messages they wrote in their writings through our discussion of their creative work. As such, while few actual quotes appear directly from their writing, much of the interview quotes are taken from interviews rooted in issues that surfaced in their writing.

That said, utilizing such a critical feminist approach roots expertise and knowledge in those who actually live the experiences under study (Archibald & Crnkovich, 1995; hooks, 1990) did result in powerful poetry and prose from these students, some of which is embedded in the text of the following chapters. In essence, as a researcher, I did not want to be seen as representing multiracial people, nor an expert on their experiences, but rather, merely a facilitator of their reflections on their personal experiences (for examples of collections of the writings and experiences of multiracial people, see Gaskins, 1999; Glancy & Truesdale, 1994; O'Hearn, 1998).

Sample

As argued in the previous chapter, college students appear developmentally ready to begin to seriously critique their status as racially oppressed or as racial oppressors. While more is known about individualized racial identity, much less is known about how college shapes how undergraduate students think about race and racism. Yet this is precisely what would help administrators and faculty begin to more adequately address the need for shaping in students a critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism. This sample, then, consisted of undergraduate students at the University of Washington, which is arguably similar to most urban flagship campuses in its racial diversity (29% people of color) and considered academically competitive. Rather than attempt to study students at multiple college campuses (which could yield comparable analysis between urban and rural campuses, or between community colleges and four-year campuses), this study attempted to achieve the depth that comes with locating such a sample on one college campus. While such a method lacks breadth, the depth of analysis gained by each

students' view of the campus provided a more nuanced understanding of a typical four-year, urban college campus.

In order to provide for further understanding of the role race may play in the shaping of the college experience, I attempted to create a racially diverse sample, especially given that much of the research on multiraciality has been rooted in people who are black and white only (see Standen, 1996; Thornton, 1996; Williams-León & Nakashima, 2001b). While certainly an argument could be made that higher education should be concerned with understanding how best to structure educational experiences for the majority of its students, and therefore, the focus of this study should have been on white students. Further, given that the purpose of this study is to begin to understand how higher education shapes critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism, it makes sense to assume that white people have more to learn about racism than do people of color, and in this manner, it would benefit higher education to understand more about how white people think about racism. The assumption here rests with the notion that structuring higher education towards the needs of the white majority would also benefit students of color.

I argue, however, that higher education is already structured to meet the needs of white people (see Giroux, 1983). A study on how higher education frames thinking about race for white people simply extends the notion of white superiority by indicating that the needs of white students take precedence over the needs of students of color (see Kanpol, 1999; Mayberry, 1996). Rather, I argue what is needed more is an understanding of how race is shaped and perceived to be shaped from the perspective of a broad array of multiracial students. Further, while white people may have more to learn about racism

than the people of color who must live with it everyday, there is also a need for students of color to learn about the structures of racism. It is not enough to assume that people of color do not need to be educated about racism and the mere presence of ethnic studies programs and racial identity development theories for people of color suggest that education about racism is essential. And while there is a need for more critical studies of whiteness, this study is more centrally concerned with understanding how college educates multiracial students as to the nature of race and racism.

The sample of eight multiracial students was compiled using multiple methods. Initially, e-mails were sent out to campus listserves that primarily serve populations of color; many of which are associated with student organizations that cater to students of color. E-mail solicitations asked participants to reply if interested in participation in a study that centered on personal experiences as multiracial and asked people to forward on to possible participants. Not surprisingly, only three eligible students whom I did not already know replied to such e-mails, and of those, only one was actually able to participate in the study. This was partially attributable to my role and public status on campus as a student activist and mentor to undergraduate student activists. Initial responses to my e-mail solicitations consisted mainly of students with whom I had previously worked with, in some capacity. Yet I wanted to create a sample of students whom I did not already know, and as such, I asked the students who replied to me to forward my e-mail on to those whom they thought might respond and that I probably would not know.

In most cases, students contacted for participation in the study received e-mails from a friend who was registered on one of the listserves. This method of sampling was

purposeful yet also entailed an element of random snowball sampling (see Babbie, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1984), since I never knew (and will never know) who actually forwarded solicitation e-mails to many of the students in the sample. I did selectively target a particular campus student group; an organization put on by and for multiracial students on campus, and thus, not surprisingly, the sample consisted of three students involved in its leadership.

Table 4

Sample Demographics

Study Participants*	Age	Gender	Self-Identified Racialized Identity	Year in College	Major
Robert Daniels	21	Male	Black and sometimes black and white	Junior	Political Science, History
Michelle Davis	28	Female	Black	Senior	Medicine
Simon Gomburza	26	Male	Filipino, Irish, English	Junior	Biology
Shay Hurley	24	Female	Black and Korean	Senior	Ethnic Studies
Konomi Holliday	23	Female	Japanese and black	Senior	Ethnic Studies (just changed from Chemistry)
Kathryn Moore	21	Female	Black and white	Junior	Sociology
Emiko Tanaka	24	Female	Transracially Adopted	Senior	International Studies
Chris Wong	20	Male	Chinese and/or White	Junior	Economics
Study Participants not in Final Analysis					
Rod Aquino	24	Male	Filipino and Chinese	Senior	Bioengineering
Brian Jackson	20	Male	White	Junior	Chemistry
Hector Javier	22	Male	Chicano	Junior	English, Communication
Maria Kurig	21	Female	Afro-Puerto Rican	Junior	Spanish, Political Science

* With the exception of those who were dropped from the study, pseudonyms were chosen by each participant.

While I did attempt to cast a wide net in ensuring that the sample was racially diverse and encompassed students with different prior experiences and familial contexts.

the sample was not intended to be representative of multiracial students or people of color. This sample is made up of students who identify, at least at some level publicly or to their friends, as multiracial. The sample does not include multiracial students who do not identify as multiracial, nor does it include monoracial people who often are considered multiracial. And while one student in the sample has an ambiguous racial identity, the sample does not include transracial adoptees, or others that also reside on the margins of racialized identity. As such, this study is not intended to address or account for all, or even the majority of multiracial people. Rather, it is intended to explore the ways in which these particular eight students experience the world and make sense of their education, given their social contexts growing up.

There were initially twelve students who agreed to participate, but only eight are represented in the final analysis. This is because two ended up not being comfortable enough to discuss their experiences growing up multiracial (and had yet to reflect on their status as multiracial). While ideally their experiences should be understood and explored, the purpose of this study is not to force students to consider their racialized identities, and they were dropped from the study in the early stages. The other two dropped out after the first interview because of time constraints. The remaining sample consisted of juniors and seniors, four of whom transferred into this university from another college. In fact, while the other four students came to this campus straight from high school, only two of the transfer students went directly into college after high school. One student attended three colleges prior to enrolling at this university. Two of the students are the first in their families to attend college, while two students have two parents with graduate or professional degrees. All students had majors, although two had recently changed or were

thinking about changing theirs. Majors included American Ethnic Studies, biology, medicine, economics, political science and international studies. At the beginning of the study, each student had been at this university for at least one and a half years.

The eight students ranged in age from 20 to 28, while five were women and three were men. Two grew up in urban Seattle, one south of Seattle in a suburban town, while four grew up in Eastern Washington in rural and suburban communities. One student was born in Korea, yet grew up constantly moving, never spending more than a few years in rural and suburban areas in the South, the East Coast, Germany, and ultimately the Pacific Northwest. The students span wide categories of socio-economic status. While two students spent their entire childhood growing up poor or working class, two others grew up poor and, as they grew older, their family's financial status steadily increased until they were middle class to upper middle class. The other four students grew up middle class. Half of the students came from divorced households, while the other four's parents were still married at the time of the study. All have siblings, and three actually have half-siblings.

The students came from diverse multiracial backgrounds. While each student identified differently, seven of the students came from clear racial backgrounds. These seven included a student with an Irish and English mother and a Filipino father, three students had white mothers and black fathers, one student had a Chinese mother and a white father, one student had a Korean mother and a black father, and one student had a Japanese mother and a black father. One student, who did not fit in the previous category, had an ambiguous racial background. Adopted shortly after birth by two Japanese parents, this student, based upon her appearance and her assumptions, probably had two

Asian parents, yet she has never known the identity of her biological parents. All the students identified, at some level, as multiracial, though they may not have classified themselves using that terminology. Each claimed at some time, however, at least the possibility of having more than one racial heritage.

These students comprised the sample and fill the rest of these pages with their stories, perspectives, understandings, and experiences. Most of them did not know each other at the beginning of the study, although several had since made acquaintances through their work with multiracial issues. I complemented the interviews with the guided writings, but also with observations on campus of student groups, public spaces where students congregated, and through my observations of the multiracial student organization, of which three students belong to. In what follows, I outline how I analyzed the data and move to the remaining chapters, which center on the these students' voices, their education, given their social contexts growing up.

Data Analysis

Data collection began as soon as the sample was identified. The first interviews began in the winter of 2002, while the final interviews were held in late spring. Interviews were audio recorded and immediately transcribed by the researcher. During transcriptions, I coded personal names, locations, and schools to ensure participant confidentiality. I noted voice intonations that clearly indicated emphasis on particular words or phrases and included pauses and other non-verbals that were clearly intended to have meaning (for example, shaking a head emphatically to indicate a negative response). While transcribing, I edited out irrelevant or confidential comments, as well as any content that participants did not want me to include. Audio tapes were erased shortly after

transcription process was completed. Transcriptions were then provided to each participant, and in the event that transcriptions obtained any sensitive information or anything the participants did not want included, such was deleted from the original data file.



I then created summary notes from each interview transcript, creating two forms of data: complete transcriptions (raw data) and summary notes (reduced data). The summary notes consisted of major themes from each data set. These summaries were created through open coding (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Strauss, 1987), where I repeatedly read passages until recurrent themes emerged. For example, one participant, Robert, consistently pointed out that he identified primarily as black only because others saw him as black. The theme of the impact others have on choosing an identity was identified and kept. Once I found a theme that encompassed the feel of a passage, I analyzed the raw data to determine where else the theme fit, or, in some cases, determined that the theme was but an occasion of something relevant, but not recurring. In the above example, these means finding any other cases where Robert supported or negated the impact others may have on his identity. With themes such as this, I would then insert a follow-up question into the next interview, thereby ensuring that Robert had the ability to respond to my observation, whatever that may have been.

Occasionally, conflicting data would emerge, whereby previous themes would appear to contradict statements made by the participants. In sticking with Robert's example, he also said, on several occasions, that he saw himself as half black and half white, regardless of what others classified him as. I would then bring both of these up and have the participant reflect on the nature of peer influence and attempt to make sense of

the theme that he seemed to both support and contradict. Each participant, not surprisingly, had conflicting views on their own identity, and because of the fluid nature of racialized identity for multiracial people, these were precisely the areas that most illuminated their experiences, thoughts, and identity.

Table 5

Data Collection Timeline

Quarter	Themes	Method of Inquiry
Winter 2002 	Develop Rapport Personal Histories/Background Preliminary Thoughts on Race and Racism Participants' Academic Context	First Interview
	Race and Racism Personal Racial Identity Personal Academic Environment	Second Interview
	Analysis of Campus Racial Context Critical Reflection Higher Education Experiences Personal Environment	Third Interview
Spring 2002 	Impact of This University Influence of peers, faculty, courses, structures Ideas for Practice	Fourth Interview Free Write
	Reflection and Analysis of Personal Issues Critical Reflection Analysis of Own Case Study	Fifth Interview

After open coding for themes and checking the validity of the themes throughout all raw and summary data, I axial coded the remaining themes. This process of generating, destroying, and combining existing and new themes created a format for understanding how particular themes interacted (Strauss, 1987). For example, while Robert demonstrated the complexity of peer influence on his identity choice, the theme of peer influence and its impact was only one theme. Others, such as the impact of his

parents and their understanding of and outlook on race and racism. the lack of his learning about people of color in general and black people in particular in K-12 schools. and his geographic isolation from a large black community, among other things helped influence how he identifies racially. Axial coding combines all these themes under a more broad consideration of the influences that Robert sees as relevant to who he is racially today. These individual themes also interacted with other sets of themes. and through axial coding, I was able to organize the themes into something that actually began to describe Robert's (as well as the other participants') experiences.

These two distinct coding schemes provided a way to analyze the differences and similarities between each participant and helped frame subsequent interview questions. But they also formed the foundation for my creation of mini-racial and educational biographies (see Funderberg, 1994). The racial biography was centered on explaining, through each participant's voice, how they have come to think of themselves racially. The racial biography began with each participants' family context prior to being born and the dynamics of their parents' families, especially with reactions to the interracial marriage that spawned these participants. This biography then covered aspects of how these participants came to identify racially, beginning with their earliest experiences growing up with race and racism. Ultimately, the biography ends with the presentation of each students' philosophical thinking of race and racism given their own experiences coming to identify as they do.

The educational biography clarified the educational experiences each student discussed in detail, from kindergarten, or even preschool in several cases, to their present year in college. The educational biographies stayed away from questions of identity that

were covered in the racial biography, and instead focused on how each participant experienced schooling. Such biographies covered student-teacher interactions, memories of racial exclusion by teachers or peers, parents and family connections to schooling, and ultimately, the curriculum and teaching styles utilized in schooling to teach (or, more often, not to teach) about race, racism, and social groups with whom the individual participant identifies with. Essentially, these biographies combined to create the bulk of the data for the remaining chapters, and combine with the summary notes and raw data to form the entire interview data that I analyzed.

From these four sets of data (summary notes, transcriptions, educational biographies, and racial biographies), I then began the process of making sense of each participant. After each interview, I would add to the summary data and biographies, and adjust the interview guide according to areas that appeared conflictual or confusing. These four data sets combined to create each individual's case study. To these case studies, I added semi-guided writings that the students deemed appropriate, and began to comparatively analyze each case study to determine similarities and differences.

These writings augmented interview data by providing a means of triangulating the data, precisely because they allowed for further opportunities to validate or critique what students had previously shared with me. Because the students were writing on their own, not in my presence, they tended to write powerful, articulate demonstrations of many of the themes throughout the interviews. Several of the writings are included in the chapters that they are most closely aligned with, but it is important to clarify how these writings served to highlight the interview data. Rather than simply responding to my prompts, students articulated their frustration, anger, critique, and other emotive

responses to external stimuli. Responses tended to reflect the current personal and social context of each student, and as such, discussed relationships with friends, academic conferences, experiences in bars, and on campus. In many cases, these writings highlighted themes already identified, but more dramatically articulated their importance. This can be seen throughout the chapters, where I have included selected examples.

Participant data checks also served to triangulate the data, by providing each participant ample time to read over and reflect on their data, writings, biographies, and summaries. Typical data checks consisted of distributing copies of the data, along with my interpretations, to the participants, who then had approximately one week to read over the material. We then sat down in an informal, untaped interview and discussed what was missing, what needed more clarification, what seemed inappropriate or inadequate, and their thoughts on my interpretations. Such informal interviews, along with the creative writing pieces, served to validate their data, and ultimately, shape the rest of these chapters.

In presenting the data, I have chosen an individualistic narrative format, meaning I present each student, in their full complexity rather than summarize each student under a discussion of recurrent themes. Instead of creating normative statements that capture much of what these students say, I honor each students' voices and perspectives by crafting overviews of each students' experiences. The only exception is Chapter Five, where I discuss themes for the sake of clarity. I present these students using their voices as a way to understand the richness and complexity of their stories, but also to underscore the point that each individual has unique, contextualized experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

In what comes next, I present the results of my analysis. In Chapter Four, I introduce these eight students and present their personal, social, and familial contexts as background for understanding their experiences. This chapter serves as a foundation for the remaining chapters, which focus on understanding multiracial identity in a context of racism, and the role education has and can play in developing a critical awareness.

CHAPTER FOUR

BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES:

A SNAPSHOT OF EACH MULTIRACIAL STUDENT

“It wasn’t how I identified. it was how other people saw me. It wasn’t up to me. No one knows my background just by looking at me.”

- Emiko Tanaka

“I would have no problem calling myself fully black if every black person acknowledged me as black. But they don’t.”

- Shay Hurley

From the high-tech boom, the skyrocketing (and recently floored) dot-com industry, and the ever present influx of immigrants from the Pacific Rim, Seattle is perhaps the capital of what Danzy Senna (1998) called the Mulatto Millennium. Seattle is home to one of the largest and fastest growing multiracial populations in the country (U.S. Census, 2001). Just a short hour and a half drive away is Tacoma, the 25th most multiracial city in the country (Abe & Sullivan, 2002; Sullivan, 2001). Within this multiracial context, numerous indicators suggest that Seattle may indeed emerge as the heart of the multiracial movement. Home of Mavin⁶, the magazine that covers the mixed race experience, Seattle also boasts as home to Maria P. P. Root, one of the founders of an academic movement to intellectualize thinking about and inclusion of multiracial people and multiracial identity.

With such a backdrop, Seattle, and Washington's flagship university, set the stage to think about these eight unique students. Each student, Konomi, Simon, Kathryn, Chris, Robert, Emiko, Shay, and Michelle, hails from different geographic regions, different family structures and contexts, spans socio-economic statuses, has different academic majors, and thinks of themselves and their experiences in drastically different and also very similar ways. Each student comes from a unique background, yet all have come to study at the University of Washington, some straight from high school, and others after a long arduous journey through several other college campuses.

Before presenting each student, and providing a brief family context, I wish to clarify that each student in this study has, at some level, engaged in significant conversation about their multiracialized identity. As they replied to an unsolicited e-mail, or were referred to by a friend who knew of their multiracial status and possible willingness to talk, this sample purposefully excluded those who have yet to consider their identity as multiracial. These students' unifying factor is that they are willing to discuss their racial identity, the process of coming to think of themselves in whichever ways they do, and their experiences with race and racism. Future studies should consider the long-term process of coming to identify and understand the experiences of students who do not present themselves, at least at some level, to their friends, family, and peers as multiracial. Such students are currently extremely difficult to identify and locate for participation in such a study. The bottom line is that a researcher cannot responsibly locate many multiracial people precisely because they may not identify as such. With that caveat, each student demonstrates their family history, intellectual depth, and insight in their own unique and powerful ways.

Konomi Holiday

“Diversity is such a funny word these days because they use diversity for blue eyes brown eyes. But I think the biggest thing they need to realize is that people of color have totally different experiences from them. And you can’t get more diverse than that. When they say get over that superficial thing of color. If its so superficial. why do I feel this way? Why am I treated differently?”

A campus leader and activist around issues of racial exclusion, Konomi is well known on campus. She has served in numerous public roles, and her activism brings her into contact with a multitude of student organizations, most of which are comprised of ethnic students. Yet with her public presence, Konomi is consistently unassuming. Her thick frame rises a full head above average height and her equally thick black hair curls into braided strands. She carries with her a warm smile while managing to command respect with her piercing eyes, sharp smile, serious yet shy manner. Konomi’s burnt almond skin often leads to her being misidentified as Pacific Islander, Samoan, or Polynesian, a misidentification clearly belied not only by her being fluent in Japanese, but also by her Japanese sounding name.

Born in Nebraska, Konomi Holiday moved to Japan when she was six months old. She lived in Japan until the age of five, when her family relocated to New York to stay temporarily with her father’s family of origin. About six months later, the family packed up again and moved back across the United States, landing permanently just south of Seattle in a town called Federal Way, Washington. Her younger brother and sister were both born while the family was living in Japan, yet both are also U.S. citizens. She

ended up graduating, as did her younger brother and sister, from a local high school and she has been at the University of Washington ever since.

While her father was stationed in Japan, a friend of his set him up for a blind date with his soon to be wife. They connected immediately, dated shortly, and marriage was not far off. Konomi's father's family was supportive of such a union, perhaps because of his own racially diverse background. Konomi's "dad's grandfather was Indian, from India. And then his grandma was biracial white, Irish, and black." Her father was born and raised in Grenada, a Caribbean island that few people Konomi has interacted with throughout her life have known about, much less where it is. She usually describes it as, "a smaller, less industrialized Jamaica." and much of her father's family still lives there, though some have relocated to New York City.

Konomi's mother was born and raised in Japan and the rest of her mother's family still lives in Japan. A much more mono-racial background in Japan has perhaps influenced the family's non-acceptance of the interracial union. Her grandfather

"Did not like [her] dad. He didn't like the fact that she married a black man. So we used to live with them for a while and my dad had to stay in a room. He wasn't really allowed to come out, because [my grandfather] didn't want to see him."

Konomi's grandmother has actually come to the United States to visit on several occasions, but the rest of her family, including her mom's older sisters, were very clear about their dislike of the marriage.

The marriage, however, did not last. Konomi's parents divorced when she was in seventh grade, and both have since remarried. Her mother remarried a Japanese man and

currently lives in the upper-class neighborhood of Montclair, California, just outside of the Oakland hills. Her father, however, still lives in suburban Federal Way with her younger brother and sister. Her father remarried, but has since divorced, and actually had to give his second ex-wife the condo that he had originally purchased for Konomi and her younger sister to live in.

While Konomi attended primary school for two years in Japan, she had to wait a year prior to enrolling in kindergarten in the United States because she did not speak English as a first language. Konomi spent the rest of her growing up years in Federal Way and went to public schools all her life, with the exception of first and second grade, which were spent at a private school. Throughout her schooling, Konomi faced a barrage of teasing, tormenting, and racist banter. While in schools in Japan, she had been referred to as a *chocolato-chan*, or a chocolate girl. This treatment continued in American schools. "So then I started school here. And I remember being made fun of because my hair was different. They said my hair was nappy, my knees were ashy." After her parents divorced, Konomi lived with her father and attended seventh grade at a new school. In eighth grade, she moved back to Federal Way:

"That's when I noticed people separating into groups in lunch time. I used to try to sit with the white kids. But I'd just sit there. I wasn't really in their conversation or anything like that. I was just kind of an outcast. Just sitting there. And then I tried to sit with the black kids. But they said I acted too white. One girl, who ended up being my best friend later on, was like, 'Why are you following us? Why are you sitting here?' So I spent the rest of eighth grade lunch time in the library. By myself."

While Konomi grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood and school, for the most part she has grown up around people of color, including several biracial students. Yet this immediate context of racial diversity had no direct impact on easing her negative experiences, which she reacted to through a violent rejection of those who teased her. Beginning in kindergarten in Japan, Konomi would begin to build up her "defense mechanism," by fighting back. After being teased in school in Japan, "I remember I kicked a boy between his legs." Violence and fighting shaped a large part of her early schooling in the U.S., too: "What I remember most about elementary school was that I fought a lot." Konomi got into repeated fights with students who called her racial slurs throughout elementary and junior high school. "In ninth grade there was a girl who used to hang out with us. And she'd always talk about Asian people. And call them kinks, and kook or whatever....I just remember I got into a fight with her." Typically, people would provoke Konomi by making fun of people of Asian or African descent. Sometimes, however, "one of the things that would get me is calling me fat and stuff like that." Either way, Konomi was provoked along these lines throughout her schooling experience and for the most part, she would typically react in a violent manner. The most positive influence in schooling came from her teachers, who consistently supported Konomi in academic ways, yet never directly confronted the teasing she grew up with.

While in Japan, Konomi's family was well off, partially because her mother's "family was rich." Her "grandfather owns a bank in Japan," yet the impact of his not supporting the marriage became clear when Konomi's family moved to the United States. "He didn't want to give my mom any money because she married my dad." Upon moving to the U.S., her father did not have a job. "So my mom was supporting us...So we were

poor when we first moved here.” Perhaps because of their lower income status, Konomi’s mother’s father helped them buy a house, and soon afterwards, her father started working at Boeing. They divorced shortly thereafter, and soon both sides of the family had extensive economic resources. Her mother’s then boyfriend (now husband) was the “vice president for this big company,” and when her father started working for Microsoft, “he started making a lot of money. So pretty much from seventh grade on, I lived in the nice area, in the big houses. People would be like, you live there?” While most of Konomi’s friends were middle class, they did not climb the social economic ladder in nearly as dramatic a fashion, nor did they ever reach that high of a rung.

After graduating high school, Konomi came to the University of Washington through a Summer Bridge Program and was supported through the Minority Science and Engineering Program. She came to UW thinking that she “wanted to go to medical school,” plans that have recently shifted. After five years of being one of only a few students with African heritage, much less one of the few biracial students, Konomi has recently switched from biochemistry to American Ethnic Studies. “I’ve always liked helping people, so that’s why I wanted to be a doctor, but then I realize I can help people in other ways.” Currently 23, Konomi is considering graduate programs in ethnic studies or education and will need another year to complete her ethnic studies program.

Simon Gomburza

“I know my history and the history of Filipino Americans well enough to teach it. And I know that there are Filipinos of all shades. I mean, we’re a mixed race ethnic group to begin with. I just wish people could see me for who I really am. I feel like I’m

caught between two worlds of avoidance and misunderstanding.

I'm not just Filipino...and I'm not just white. I'M BOTH!!!!"

- From Simon's Creative Writing

I first met Simon at one of the multiracial student organization's first public meetings. While he took an active role in the leadership of the organization, what first impressed me was his kind, relaxed approach to facilitating the welcoming (and subsequent) meeting. Simon's interest in ensuring everybody would speak blended with his desire to create an inclusive, open community as he transformed the otherwise cold, drab room with its gray paneling into a supportive, nurturing environment for multiracial people to express who they are. With a very light complexion, Simon could pass as white were it not for his silken black hair, and his thin frame holds his head up high: he stands about an even six feet tall. His broad jawbone creates certain intensity, but Simon curtails this seriousness with his sly humor and shy nature.

Born and raised in White Center, a lower income urban neighborhood just south of Seattle, Simon comes from a large family. Simon, an uncle by the time he was five, has six older brothers and sisters, and two younger twin sisters. Growing up, many of his older siblings had already moved out of the house, so he actually grew up mainly with an older brother and his two younger sisters. His parents met at the Space Needle in Seattle, where his father tended a bar and his mother waited tables.

The two families came from very distinct backgrounds. His father, second generation Filipino also born and raised in Seattle, "came from a family of nine kids." His father's family experienced plenty of examples of their not being accepted by others in the area. "My grandpa came over in the thirties, when it was really bad. They had to

duck down in the back seat of the car because they would get bottles thrown at them for just driving.” The non-acceptance of Filipinos clearly had an impact on Simon’s grandfather, who would talk about politics and blame current problems in the world on “all the black people invading.” Simon grew up in such a context of racism coming from his surroundings and his own family. Due, perhaps in no small part, to this local context of racism, Simon’s father did not encourage him to explore being Filipino.

His mother’s side of the family did nothing to contradict, much less challenge, his grandfather’s racism. Simon’s mother grew up in Spokane, where many of her relatives still live. He describes them as being “kind of rural-minded. They tell racist jokes and I have no desire to be around them.” Simon also struggles with his mother: “I feel a little bit like it’s my responsibility to help her understand where I’m coming from.” Clearly, however, she struggles with understanding precisely what Simon, his siblings, and his dad go through being part Filipino in the U.S. Simon’s mother is Irish and his great grandmother is English, which is represented through the passing down of a family heirloom in the form of an antique tea cup (which his mother currently has).

These families came together through a rocky marriage between Simon’s parents. By the time Simon reached seventh grade, his parents divorced, and he spent the rest of his time living with his mother. After the divorce, Simon switched from a public school to a predominantly white private school, where he failed to fit in largely because of his family’s lower socio-economic background. Up until that point, Simon had lived in a diverse neighborhood, but from then on his school experiences were in predominantly white environments. After transferring out of the private school, Simon attended a predominantly white suburban high school. Throughout these years, however, Simon’s

peers were racially and socio-economically diverse, and typically consisted of other socially alienated kids. He describes his high school friends as "kind of nerdy" and clarifies that essentially, they were "people who didn't really fit in." His mother remarried during high school, and Simon did not get along with his new step-father.

Immediately after graduating high school, Simon joined the Army, in the hopes of finding an escape from his family and school contexts. "I hated that school at that point because I was pretty much an outcast already....I had a lot of crap going on in high school. Which is why I was glad to get away to the Army...."While in the Army, however, Simon received a daily dose of racism. Initially, an African American drill sergeant put him in charge, and he was directly able to challenge individuals and their overt racism. After the beginning training, however, Simon was just another soldier. One night his roommate proudly presented Simon with his KKK membership card, and "he was all wanting me to congratulate him or whatever." The ensuing discussion quickly escalated into an argument:

"I talked to him about why it wasn't cool and then he just started getting belligerent and violent. So we were yelling at each other. I left, and when I came back he had lynched my Curious George.... He put a rope around this Curious George stuffed animal that I had on my bed and stapled a note to it that said this is what happens to your kind where I'm from. And I came back in the room – he wasn't there. And it was just hanging from the light in the middle of the room."

Simon reported the incident, although nothing happened until he was able to connect with a ranking officer who was African American. The previous ranking officers were all

white and simply retorted that Simon would not be able to demonstrate proof of who did it. The African American officer, however, allowed Simon to switch rooms, but not without him first gaining a clearer sense of how racism was tolerated within the U.S. Army. After three years, Simon left the Army because "I was just sick of it....I couldn't stand it."

He then went to South Seattle Community College for three years and transferred to the University of Washington. Mid-way through his second year at the University of Washington, Simon was considering shifting his academic focus from the sciences to American Ethnic Studies. He has since become connected to a program that focuses explicitly on teaching about Filipino culture, history, and contemporary life to junior high and high school students, called PINOY Teach. His experience in this program, and his continued involvement around the Filipino community and mixed student organizations has greatly impacted his future plans. Simon is considering options to pursue a graduate degree in education, and wants to teach biology or history.

Kathryn Moore

"Alone, there were no voices to tell her where she belonged. In the darkness, if there was color, she could not make it out. In the darkness, if there was no color, she could not make that out either. And so she sat in between. And she found herself there."

- From Kathryn's Creative Writing

I first met Kathryn in a café near the university campus. I was immediately struck by the bubbly, positive energy emanating around her, and she appeared happy, almost carefree. Kathryn demonstrates her personality through her clothing and hair styles. She

dresses fashionably hip, yet maintains her warmth through bright colors that push the boundaries of style. Her skin is a light almond color and her coarse black hair, when down, rests in tight spirals. When up, her hair runs free in multiple directions. Kathryn clearly looks mixed, though in today's monoracial world, she is probably most often seen as black.

Kathryn was born and raised in Silverdale, a somewhat isolated, predominantly white "tiny town" just across the Puget Sound from Seattle. She is the youngest of two children from her white mother and black father's marriage; her brother was born two and a half years before her. She also has "four half-brothers and sisters who are white," the product of her mother's prior marriage.

Beyond simply racial differences, Kathryn's parents have drastically different family backgrounds. Kathryn's mother was born in Portland and raised in a small town called Oregon City. Her mother's side of the family lives in Oregon and Canada, and are very connected to the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Kathryn finds her mother's side of the family "very strict, it's just weird to be around them. It's not that they're white, they don't feel comfortable." The family has never taken to the two mixed children, a direct result of their not favoring the marriage from the beginning. "It wasn't even like they're my family." Part of this distance surely stemmed from her grandmother blaming Kathryn's mother for "deciding to cut herself off from the family like she had," by marrying Kathryn's father. A clear demonstration of the family split came in church. When Kathryn was younger, her mother would go to the church "because that's where she had grown up," yet her father never would have felt comfortable there, and as such, never went.

Her father was born in Alabama, but grew up in Chicago. Most of his family has since relocated to Georgia and Louisiana. Kathryn's father was one of eleven children, raised by her pastor grandmother. Raised poor, Kathryn's brothers and sisters have since done extremely well financially; all of them have built their lives from the bottom up. Even though she rarely sees her father's side of the family, Kathryn talks very fondly of them. "Everybody is so wonderful and so warm. I'm so much closer to them...." Her father's side of the family was very supportive of their interracial marriage, and welcomed both children and her mother into the family from the outset.

The first two years of her schooling were at public elementary school, while second through sixth grades were spent at a private school. In seventh grade she switched back to a public school, but then immediately went back to the same private school in eighth and ninth grade. In the private school, Kathryn was treated "differently," yet it took a year in public school to recognize the extent of it. While she was supported and considered bright at the public school, when she returned, she felt the exclusion she had been previously been unaware of. "Teachers wouldn't include me in a lot of things, but I didn't realize until probably junior high that I wasn't favored as much as these girls." Kathryn looked forward to returning to a public school: "I think by eight and ninth grade, I just wanted to get out of that school and go to a public school. I was tired of the private school. I didn't want to even deal with it anymore." In tenth grade she got her wish and the remainder of her high school years were spent in a more racially and socio-economically diverse, though still predominantly white, public school.

As Kathryn progressed through the K-12 system, her family slowly climbed the economic ladder. While she described her elementary days as being "lower middle class,"

by the time she graduated high school, her family was "upper middle class." Most of her friends, indeed much of the Silverdale community, were already upper middle class. Going to her friends' houses "was always like Laura Ingel visiting town (from Little House on the Prairie)...they were always so rich to me." While her family never quite compared to many of her friends, her family was firmly entrenched in the middle class. Even though Kathryn grew up with little direct family involvement with higher education, college was the only real viable option after graduating from high school. This is mostly due to her attending private schools and a small high school, where most of her friends were clearly going on to college. Her mother had completed two years of college, while her father received his Associates degree in Real Estate. Her older brother, however, graduated with a Bachelor's degree in business, and paved the way for her college experiences.

Towards the end of her freshman year, or in the beginning of her sophomore year at the University of Washington, Kathryn took the Sociology of African Americans with a popular African American professor. The course had profound impact on Kathryn. "I remember in my high school, all through life I hated history. I hated it....And then in this class, I just ate everything up. I read the books he gave us and then I'd look for other material." She had finally found her academic passion, one that had eluded her throughout her K-12 schooling experiences. Kathryn is a 21 year old junior, majoring in sociology, where she finally has access to understanding history and experiences never addressed in her K-12 education.

Chris Wong

“People usually can’t tell what I am. If you saw me coming up to you, you’d think I was white. Most people seem to think that I’m white.”

- Chris Wong

After the first meeting with Chris, he asked if I thought he was racist. After the second, he asked if I had thought, upon meeting him before the first interview, that he was white. Certainly that was a difficult question, because I knew before the interview that he was half Chinese and half white. Yet when compared to the rest of the students in the sample, Chris is certainly the only one who can pass without question. His thick frame suggests correctly that Chris is physically active; the fact that he is in the ROTC may not be immediately apparent, but his hair cut and clothing style might suggest military. His tightly cropped dark brown hair, round face, and big grin create an interesting paradox: Chris dresses fairly conservatively (and has been known to wear suits to class), yet rounds out his serious appearance with his belly-deep laugh and southern charm.

Born in California’s Bay Area, but raised mostly in Portland, Oregon, Chris Wong’s family blend together China and Minnesota. He is the eldest of three children; his younger brother was born in the Bay Area with him, and his younger sister was born after the family relocated to Portland. His parents met while working at the Northface factory in Berkeley, and were married about a year after his mother graduated from UC Berkeley.

His mother, and much of her family, emigrated from China after the communist takeover. While they grew up in China, “when the communists came, they sent their dad

off to a labor camp and beat him all up... "Because they were rich and had done a lot to support the villagers in town, "they were allowed to live. And then they kind of bought their way out of the country. They moved to Hong Kong," and then on to the United States. The details of what happened during the takeover and of the family's move are blurred because Chris' mother "doesn't want to talk about the situation....Because its very hard for her to talk about this." But they made it to the United States, yet their struggles here were just beginning. "They lived in the dingiest, ratiest, dirtiest little apartment above the fish market in San Francisco....they had literally no money." His family quickly learned to get by, however, and his mother "became fluent in English in a year and applied for Berkeley and got in."

His father's family has had a much less drastic experience. With the exception of his father, most of that side of the family has been in Minnesota for several generations, and never even considered relocating. Chris is actually not that close to his father's side of the family, largely because "they don't have any kids. Their family has very few kids." Essentially, when they were young, there was no reason for family visits because there were no children for Chris and his siblings to connect with. "You just hang out with the people that you have kids with."

His parents' marriage did not come out of a supportive environment. His father's family members and friends repeatedly asked if he really "married a Chinese girl." The underlying message sent to his father was essentially, "You can't find any nice white girls?" His mother's family was equally unenthusiastic about their union, as there was a "clear expectation that you marry someone Asian." What added to this lack of enthusiasm was that:

“After my mom graduated, my dad wasn’t going to school. That was another big deal. Because he had only gone to school for two years, and hadn’t finished his schooling. And my mom’s parents didn’t like the fact that their kids, one of their daughters’ people wasn’t going to school.”

Essentially, her family was not happy because he was white and because he did not appear to have made it, especially given that they had come from difficult circumstances and yet all of their daughters were attending college. “But they came around,” and the family now completely accepts Chris, his brother and sister, and their father.

After living in the Bay Area, Chris moved to Portland when he was four. He lived in a suburban area until his family relocated during ninth grade to a much more racially diverse area about eight miles outside of Chicago. He lived there for two years until again his family relocated, following for the third time his father’s employment. This time, they relocated to Spokane, Washington. With the exception of living in the Chicago area, which Chris described as about half minority, Chris spent most of his life living in suburban predominantly white areas.

The moving had a negative impact on Chris. “I moved during high school, and then I moved again. I was just really mad at my parents for a while and I didn’t understand why we had to move. I had a really bad attitude.” Chris was a good student up until his freshman year in Portland, but his approach to school and his peers changed when he relocated to Chicago. “My sophomore year of high school, I got into probably thirty fights....It was a rough and tumble crowd, not like in Seattle or Portland...I mean we were just mean....we would skip school and go drink and stuff.” Shortly after his arrival, Chris’ family moved again. “And then I moved to Spokane, which is an even

smaller city, and it was like, woah.” Moving from Chicago, Chris was seen as a problem in school, “Cause I came from a big city and I was a troublemaker at a big city.” He still fought a lot, although the atmosphere was less supportive of his status as a violent troublemaker. By his junior year, he started focusing more on academics, and then by his “senior year, I calmed down a lot. Started getting really serious.” He attributes much of this switch to the influence his parents had, as they essentially got him refocused on academics instead of fighting.

When Chris was born, his parents had relatively little money, but upon growing up, his parents increasingly made substantial amounts of money. Chris’ friends and neighborhoods resonated with wealth, however. He grew up in Portland around Nike and Intel executive families. In Chicago, his family lived in a well-to-do neighborhood, and when he moved to Spokane, his family and neighborhood were in the top one percent of wealth in Spokane. Such wealth has spread throughout his mother’s family, as her sisters (his aunts) also all graduated from competitive schools such as UC Berkeley or Stanford. “Now, my mom is the worst one off, out of all of them. And my parents are by no standards short of anyone I know, poor. Not by any means. My parents have a good amount of money.”

Chris followed his mother’s footsteps and attend a selective institution of higher education. After high school graduation, Chris moved to Seattle to attend the University of Washington. A third year junior, Chris demonstrates his political nature through frequent letters to the school newspaper editor. A 20 year old economics major, Chris is also heavily involved with the ROTC program. Upon graduation next year, Chris will be commissioned to serve in the Air Force.

Robert Daniels

“A lot of times you’re forced to pick one. Pick one. So its harder to be not black, not white, but both. And when those guys over there look at me, those white dudes, they’re going to see a black dude, in most cases. And also, black people accept me. Full black people accept me as a black person as well. But if I went to a group of black people and said I was white they wouldn’t accept me as white. They’d be like, ‘that dude is black, whatchu talking about?’ And if I went up to them (the group of white men), they wouldn’t accept me as white, either.”

- Robert Daniels

Robert has been a fixture in the black student community since he came to the University of Washington. He has worked in outreach, activism around racism, and has worked in numerous local high schools working to support students of color. All this work has earned him the respect of fellow activists, educators, and upper levels of administration, and it is through these efforts that I have come to know of Robert. His short, stocky frame supports his considerable loose afro, which he complements with his baggy oversized hip hop apparel. Robert’s light skin suggest parents of mixed racial heritages and most people might guess his parents’ race (black and white). Upon looking at Robert, however, because of his clothing styles and the way he wears his hair, most people instead assume he is black.

Robert was born and raised in an “upper middle class” predominantly white community in Eastern Washington’s Tri-Cities. Robert grew up as an only child, although his father had a previous marriage to a white woman, so Robert has “three half

brothers and a half sister." all of whom are significantly older and live in Tacoma.

Robert's extended family is mixed, as well. "I have a couple of brothers who married a white woman, and my sister married a black dude, so I have nieces and nephews who are three quarters white and three quarters black." So while Robert grew up in a different community than much of his family, most of his family is in Tacoma and in South Seattle, so he had regular access to a fairly large, racially diverse family.

Robert's parents met when while his mother was in college. While living in the residence halls at the University of Washington, his mother was playing ping pong with a friend. Robert's father, a UW police officer patrolling the residence halls, came by and began talking with the two of them. They soon started dating, and before too long, the chance meeting had lifetime implications. Initially, her mother's family was not too supportive of their marriage, although they have since welcomed his father's side into the family.

"My mom's mom originally didn't like the idea too much. 'Cause my dad's quite a few years older than my mom, too. I'm not sure if she didn't like it 'cause my mom was dating a black dude or if it was because she was dating a dude who was fourteen years older than her. But now they get along just fine."

Robert's father's side of the family has always been welcoming of Robert's mother and her family.

His father spent the "first eight years of his life in Oklahoma." And his father's "grandfather was a sharecropper in Oklahoma, so he grew up picking cotton there. And then his dad moved to Tacoma to work some of the wartime, World War II, factories."

His father's family moved into segregated housing projects in Tacoma, and his father spent most of his life living in such conditions. His father, born in 1935, had the first of his four previous children (Robert's eldest sibling) when he was eighteen. "That's still pretty early in life and also in race relations in this country." Robert's father used to tell him stories about his experiences being interracially married in the pre-civil rights era. "When they were in high school, [his first wife's] parents shipped her off to Montana to her uncle's farm to keep her away from my dad."

His mother was born in SeaTac and grew up in South Seattle, going to the same high school that Robert now does educational outreach in, although the racial background and economic status of the neighborhood and students has since changed significantly. When his mother attended the school, it was predominantly white, yet her experience as a white woman would be drastically different today. "At that point they had one Asian person in the whole school and that was it...and now [that high school] is one of the most overall diverse high schools in the area. Of all cultures and races." Robert's mother was active during the "turbulent sixties and seventies" and this activism shaped how she interacted with and viewed people of color and her experiences growing up in a predominantly white environment.

Robert had a difficult time citing positive experiences that occurred while he was in public schools. During his elementary and junior high years, people would tell racist jokes and his third grade teacher actually appeared to take particular issue with him. "I hated her and she hated me....But I always just felt like there was something in the way she treated me." Such experiences continued: "One time in seventh grade, I was just really having a hard time in this math class. And so I had a meeting with her and with my

parents.” In the ensuing discussion about his performance in class, his math teacher actually said “he’s probably just not smart enough right now.” His parents, both well versed in conversations about racism in education because of their prior activism, immediately challenged the teacher. But were it not for Robert’s active parents, his experiences might have been much worse.

Most of Robert’s friends growing up shared his family’s middle class status. But that did not mean that his family would be accepted in the community. “Some of our neighbors still don’t talk to us...we’ve lived there for seven, eight years. That’s a long time for a neighbor to not even say hi to us.” With this backdrop of non acceptance in schools and in the neighborhood, “[I] went through my little hardcore gangster phase. I was a thug brother. And I started growing my hair out....” This image was in reaction to the “conservative white people around me. ‘Cause Tri-Cities is a very conservative, very white area. So I think I wanted to scare them a little bit.” While Robert’s rejection of the non-welcoming environment was initially limited to music, dress, and trying to “look hard,” he ended up reacting violently to his peers. “But I didn’t try to do any of the real gangster things. The only time I ever fought was when people would try to call me nigger....”

Robert’s father attended college, but never actually attained a degree. His mother, on the other hand, has a law degree from the University of Washington. In light of growing up in a highly educated community, and despite his negative experiences in K-12 schooling, college for Robert was not an option, but the only way to go. He enrolled at the University of Washington through the Minority Science and Engineering Program and initially connected with a number of students of color. He joined the Black Student

Union and took an intro to African American Studies class his first quarter. "So I really jumped right in." 21 year old Robert Daniels is a fourth year senior majoring in political science with a minor in history. After graduation, Robert is considering pursuing a graduate degree, most likely in education.

Emiko Tanaka

"I don't want to identify anymore

I don't want to not look Japanese

*I don't want my face or my body or my hair to be picked apart for
racial features*

I don't want your pity

I don't want to be fragile anymore

I don't want to be adopted anymore

I just want to be me and have you be okay with it"

- From Emiko's Creative Writing

Like Simon, I met Emiko at the multiracial student organization's first meeting. Emiko is at first glance probably fully Asian, though to get more specific than that would require admitting a blind guess. And you have to get to know her before you may learn that she was adopted and does not know the ethnicity of her birth parents, though clearly this has not stopped many people from assuming what race or ethnic group she identifies with. Emiko's short stature reflects her limited willingness to patiently wait for others to think about and include transracial adoptee issues into discussions of race or even multiracial people; indeed, she's been waiting all her life. Emiko has shoulder length long

black hair, and her slight dimples belie her frustration and anger: she often appears playful and happy.

Emiko was born in Hawaii, though she has never known her birth parents, much less where they came from. Two and a half weeks after her birth, she was adopted by two Japanese American parents who then raised her just north of Seattle, in Lake City.

“It wasn’t through any company. I just found out this summer, my parents never told me, and my aunt had to tell me...my dad called a doctor down in Hilo, Hawaii....There was a woman, she was nineteen years old and she went to the University of Hawaii at Hilo, and for some reason had to give her baby up for adoption.”

Several years later, her parents adopted again, although this time they went through an agency. Her younger sister, then, knew who her birth parents were: she’s half-Japanese and half-Filipino raised by Japanese American parents. The family of four have lived in the same neighborhood ever since, while both daughters have gone off to college within the last few years.

Emiko lives just outside the margins of people of color because she identifies, at some level, as transracially adopted. For this reason, she has connected more strongly with multiracial and mixed race peoples, yet because she does not know her birth parents, she does not fit within that traditionally excluded group, either. Perhaps what best demonstrates her racial identity while complicating a clear understanding of even hybrid categories of race is what Emiko refers to as her TRA shirt: a long sleeve black T-shirt with a large hot pink question mark centered in front, facing the world. Concentric circles

radiate outwards, perhaps indicating the significance of the unknown: Emiko lives with the permanent reality of an unknown racial identity.

Both of Emiko's adoptive parents, however, have had clear racial identities. Emiko's mother was born in the Japanese Internment Camps. Before the Internment, her family lived in Alameda, California. But her family relocated to Spokane after being released with no belongings, unable to return to their former homes. Though neither parent really talked much about their time before or shortly after the Internment with Emiko, her father appeared more comfortable discussing his family. Emiko's mother used to discuss Japanese Internment in Emiko's K-12 classes, but that did not translate into intimate conversations with her daughter.

"Before the camps, my father's family lived on a fishing island named Terminal Island, which was a part of Long Beach, California. It was a large community of mainly Japanese Americans living there who were either fishermen (like my dad's dad), or fish canners (like my dad's mom). After the war broke out, all of the men on the island were taken to prison camps because the government thought that they were spies because they worked on boats all day, and they were thought to have contacted the Japanese on the Pacific Ocean and collaborate with them. So, my grandfather was the first to go of my dad's family; he left his wife (my grandma) and two sons; my dad was one, my uncle was five. They did not see him until almost five years later, when the war ended. So, my grandmother went to her brother's place which was in Indio, California, to be with them while they waited out their inevitable move to internment

camps. I don't know how long they stayed there, but they were transferred from Indio to a camp in Poston, Arizona. My grandfather was somewhere in Montana in the prison camp. At the time they were not told where he was and all of the correspondence letters were blacked out so little information was known. After the camp, the family moved to Post Falls, Idaho, where my grandfather worked as a gardener and then worked on the great northern rail road in Spokane."

In the large recently relocated Japanese community in Spokane, her parents met while both were in college (at separate schools). A friend had set up a blind date, which was clearly successful. They dated throughout college, married and moved to San Jose, California for Emiko's father's medical school internship. They eventually relocated to Seattle so her father could finish his pediatrics schooling. Her mom "got a job with the school district where she still [works]," and the family finally settled in Lake City, Washington.

Emiko spent her entire life living in that predominantly white suburb north of Seattle.

"I was really sheltered. I grew up in a bubble because I had a nanny until I was seventeen years old...and so we'd go out in public, me and my sister and my nanny. And so there'd be this white woman with these two Japanese kids that don't look like each other, but people would assume that we should because we were sisters. And so she had to deal with a lot of people asking, 'Where did you get those?' 'Whose are those?' 'Are those really yours?' "

Growing up, many of Emiko's friends came from white middle class families. This provided Emiko with limited access to other adoptees, much less to those who did not know the identity of their parents. In such a predominantly white, middle class environment, though, she was clearly seen as Japanese, which was deeply reinforced by her mother's involvement with her school. Her best friend since sixth grade, Jaya, however, did share in Emiko's background: she was abandoned on a doorstep of an orphanage in Korea and was then adopted by white American parents.

Emiko's experiences in public schools were drastically different from many of her classmates. Starting in kindergarten, Emiko's mother would make guest appearances in her classes.

“Throughout my whole entire life, at different points she'd come in and talk about the Japanese Internment Camps and teach about Japanese culture. So in kindergarten, it was the first time that I found out that I was different because I had this mom who did this Japanese dancing and people were so shocked. And even when I was a senior in high school and they saw my mom at graduation, they'd be like, 'you came to my kindergarten class.'”

Being culturally Japanese set Emiko clearly apart from the majority of her white peers, who would remember her being “different” and “cultural” for the rest of their lives, particularly because the rest of their education barely touched upon anything having to do with Japanese people.

Some of her teachers were also shocked at the severity of treatment of Japanese Americans at the hands of the United States, and would attempt to initiate conversation with Emiko.

“Teachers would try to talk to me about it afterwards, and I’d try to open up a little bit more and they’d just be like, ‘Woah! Oh my god!’ I just remember that and that they acted so interested and so curious. And so I’d tell them but then they would just get freaked out. And they’d be like, ‘Okay, you can shut up now.’ ”

Other times, the teachers would just be overwhelmed and not know how to discuss Internment or racism with the class or with Emiko.

“One of [her teachers] cried. Started crying because she had no idea.” Usually, after such a response, the teachers would simply say, ‘Let’s thank Emiko’s mom for coming in,’ but they wouldn’t exactly have open dialogue.”

Emiko’s involvement in school culminated in cheerleading, and she ended her high school experience knowing she was heading straight into college.

Emiko’s exposure to higher education came early, as both of her parents have graduate degrees. Her father is a pediatric cardiologist who received his Ph.D. from the University of Washington, while her mother received her Master’s in Teaching from the University of the Pacific, in Stockton, California. Her younger sister has followed in their father’s academic footsteps, and attends Occidental, a private liberal arts college in Los Angeles, a stark contrast to Emiko’s experience in higher education.

After graduating high school, Emiko went off to attend Linfield College, a small private college located in an isolated rural town in Oregon called McMinnville. Towards the end of her first year, Emiko contracted mono and came back home to stay with her parents. While there, she developed fibromyalgia, and had to stay in Seattle, so ended up transferring to Seattle Pacific Lutheran University. Her stint at SPU lasted only a quarter, as the conservative religious campus did not provide the support she needed. Not knowing where else to go, she moved back to McMinnville and re-enrolled at Linfield. Emiko decided, again after a quarter, that Linfield was also not the right place for her and took a quarter off. That next fall she went to North Seattle Community College and began working on a direct transfer to the University of Washington, where she has been for the last two years. At North Seattle Community College, Emiko took a migration class, which had a dramatic impact on her. She set her sights on a degree in international studies, and is now a 23 year-old graduating senior.

Shay Hurley

“For someone like me, when people just come up to you and not even ask your name, what do you do, where are you from, nothing, just be like, ‘What are you?’ Its kind of like, ‘damn, is that all I’m worth?’ And then they ask you and they just walk away.”

- Shay Hurley

I first heard about Shay through one of her community college mentors, whom I have also worked with. But I did not consider including her into this study until someone I did not know forwarded her name as a possible contact for other multiracial students. After talking briefly, I knew that her voice would be powerful; indeed, when we first met,

she talked on and on, passionately sharing stories, perspectives, poetic anger. Perhaps it is impossible to know with absolute certainty what race anyone is, but Shay has embodied such ambiguity her whole life. Taller than average, Shay carries a sense of importance about her, likely due to having to overcome so much throughout her life. She dresses sharp, almost refined, and accentuates what she repeatedly refers to as her "exotic" look: her skin tone blends black and brown into a darkened auburn hue.

Shay was born in Korea, but a few months after her birth, her father's military term ended, and the family moved to a small military community called Fayetteville, in North Carolina. Most of Shay's childhood and adolescence were spent in constant motion. As a result, Shay does not really have a place where she calls home. She moved from parent to parent to relative to family friend to foster care, and ultimately moved in with a boyfriend in order to escape her situation. She has a half-brother, though she has never spent much time growing up around him. Throughout her living arrangements, there were other children around, but she has never been in continued presence of any of them. Throughout her growing up, Shay was essentially an only child with a different adults coming in and out of her life, fulfilling a parental role at different times.

Shay's mother was born and raised in Korea, and while she has been living in the United States for about twenty four years, she has maintained her Korean citizenship. Her mother grew up on a rural farm, and after the Korean War, "the economy just went to hell, so they moved into...Seoul." For the most part, Shay's mother grew up without a father, and in the city, the work was much less substantial.

"So my grandma wound up working in factories and stuff, doing sweatshop shit, and then my aunt started working at a bar serving soldiers

‘cause there was a strong military presence still. And mom, she got a job working at a pawn shop.”

It was at this pawn shop where she would meet Shay’s father.

Shay’s father was born and raised in Warm Springs, Georgia. He came from a poor black southern family, which still reside in Georgia. His family lived amongst a mostly black community, and his high school did not integrate with the nearby white community until his senior year of high school, in 1976.

“Dad had just got out of high school and he just decided to join the military. That was the only option he had being a poor, not really educated black man. So he went into the military and got stationed in Korea.”

Once stationed in Korea, it was only a matter of time until he met Shay’s mother.

“My dad would go to the pawn shop and look at this guitar that he couldn’t afford. But he would come in and play it. So my mom was intrigued because she had never seen a black man before. And to her, he was an American....So she couldn’t speak a lick of English, he couldn’t speak any Korean, and so the only way they could communicate was for him playing the guitar. And then she would just sit there listening to him.”

Eventually, they started dating, “and he would teach her English and she would teach him Korean.” Despite their age difference (he was 27 while she was only 16), they ended up moving in together, and soon enough, Shay’s mother was pregnant. “Her belly started getting big and she wasn’t sure what was going on. She didn’t really take care of herself, she explained to me that she was such a little kid still....” Just after her mother’s eighteenth birthday, Shay was born.

Not too long after moving to North Carolina, her parents "wound up divorcing." After the divorce, she lived with her mom and endured a series of boyfriends, some black, some white. She lived for a brief stint with her dad when she was in kindergarten, but "his wife didn't like me because I was half Korean. He took me to foster care and was about ready to give me up for adoption and my mom came in and grabbed me and that's when I went to go stay with her friend and then four years later, I went back to my dad." Before going back to her dad's the second time, Shay's mother lived in New York while she lived with her Aunt, who she "found drunk one time in the bathtub." After that incident, Shay's mother moved her in with her "other aunt who really was her (mom's) friend for 3 or 4 years."

Her tumultuous early childhood moving from parent to parent to her Aunt's to her mom's friend certainly had an impact on Shay, yet this pattern continued throughout her adolescence. In sixth grade, she went to stay with her father, who "had to get stationed in Germany but couldn't take his family with him." For that year she stayed with her step mother's family, an experience that turned out even more negative than her already troublesome youth. "She was totally abusive, beat the hell out of me, could not stand me." Eventually, her father returned, but he was to return to Germany shortly.

"I was like, my dad's about to go fight in this war and he might come back to a dead kid. Because this lady's psycho and I'm not even safe with my dad in the house, let alone I can imagine what it's going to be like when he's gone. So I told a counselor I wanted to go into foster care until I was fourteen and then I wound up moving back in with him when she passed away. Her last year of junior high and first year of high school were also

transition years as she moved with her father to Tacoma, Washington, but she moved back to Georgia until “I just moved out my senior year, just hooked up with some guy I’d been dating. I was like, ‘okay, let’s move in together.’ and I graduated early from high school just to get away from it all.”

Growing up, Shay had very limited access and exposure to thinking about college. “The kids I hung around with were all broke. Had broke parents, too.” College was not only not an option, it was not something that people even talked about. Shay, however, decided to attend college as a way to get out of her situation, and is still the only person in her family to have gone to college. “I was going to go to college there, but financially it didn’t pan out, so I just worked for a couple of years and then moved up here (Seattle).” She had to wait a year to gain residency, and then enrolled at Shoreline Community College. She immediately became heavily involved with student organizing on campus, and was the “president of the Asian Pacific Islander club, the vice president of the black student union and the editor in chief [of the school newspaper].” She ended her community college career by speaking at graduation about overcoming hardships.

Schooling for her has progressed from learning about how “MLK was a great man and Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves.” in K-12 to her excitement and desire to study the history of the oppression that people of color face. At Shoreline, “we learned more about the thought process, the economic stratification. What’s happening now has an effect of what the past brought on. We looked into deeper things and that’s what I liked.” Shay transferred to the University of Washington as a communications major, but quickly shifted to American Ethnic Studies. Now 24 years old, Shay typically took about twenty

credits a quarter and graduated this June. Shay will teach on the East Coast next year, perhaps through Teach for America, and ultimately plans to pursue a Ph.D. in education.

Michelle Davis

“I am really struggling with separating out being bi-racial as opposed to being black. I am really having a hard time in distinguishing especially when we talk about how I react or respond in social situations. I guess the only time I really consciously make the distinction in my mind (through the eyes of biracial Michelle) is when I am in a setting with mostly black people.”

- From Michelle's Creative Writing

Michelle and I first met at the children's clinic she was interning at. Housed in Seattle's Central District, the clinic serves predominantly communities of color, and Michelle appeared right at home. As I entered the clinic, I was warmly greeted by the mostly African American staff, and welcomed in. As I waited for our interview to begin, one of the staff assistants talked briefly of Michelle; the admiration in her eyes was apparent. When I first saw Michelle, I recognized that that admiration came out of a deep sense of respect; respect that Michelle demanded with her mere presence.

Born in Eastern Washington's Tri-Cities, Michelle spent the first half of her childhood in a small farming community just outside of Kennewick, Washington. Michelle has a younger brother and three older half-sisters, from her mother's previous marriage. This created a racially mixed family; while Michelle's mother is white, her father is black. Yet the father of Michelle's half-sisters was also white. Michelle, then, grew up with her biracial brother, three white half-sisters, whom she still has close

relationships with, her white mother, whom she spent all of her growing up life with, and her black father, and later, her black step-father. Her older sisters actually babysat her and her younger brother as they were growing up.

Michelle is a single mother, raising, with the occasional help and consistent support of her older sisters and her mother, her ten year old son and four year old daughter. Born under different fathers, both her children have somewhat regular contact with their respective fathers, yet the burden of child rearing rests solely upon Michelle's shoulders. She raises both children with very clear values surrounding their self-worth: "I want them to feel as if they are equal and valuable in this society and that they are a vital part of it." Raising two children (currently in fourth grade and at preschool) takes its toll on Michelle, and when not going to school or working, she spends time with her family.

Michelle's white mother grew up in the midst of a Hispanic community in a small Eastern Washington community called Toppenish. She ended up owning a bar in a predominantly black neighborhood, so spent a good deal of her childhood and early adult years in communities of color. After her first marriage, she lived with her three daughters in the upper middle class neighborhood located on Mercer Island. Michelle's father was born and raised in Arkansas before relocating to Eastern Washington. "He's Southern. Just BLACK....He is very, just southern." Most of his family lives in the Tri-Cities, in the predominantly black neighborhood. But he has always lived differently.

"My father lived and still lives in a rural part of Tri-Cities. I know its hard to imagine a rural environment in a not so big place anyway, but I mean this is way out in the sticks. There were pastures everywhere and the closest thing to neighborhoods in this town were these plots of land that

were grouped together where people planted their double wides. My dad must have been the ONLY black person around, period. Why he moved out there still baffles me to this day.”

Not surprisingly, her parents’ respective families were drastically different.

“Being around my dad’s people and being around my mom’s people are two totally totally totally different experiences. ... They are just two different worlds. My mom’s family is a little bit more uptight, a little bit more conservative. And I think she had a lot of racist people in her family, too. And my dad’s family...they’re all just laid back.”

Michelle’s parents met through her mother’s bar.

“Pasco has this westside and eastside. And the eastside is where all the black people live, on the eastside. So she had a bar on the eastside back in the sixties. And it was this big political controversial place. The Black Panthers came and did stuff.... They actually were supporting her bar because most of her customers were black. So I think that’s how she met my dad.”

Shortly after meeting, they began to date. Michelle’s mother then moved out to Pasco with two of her daughters, and began living with Michelle’s father. Moving from predominantly white upper middle class Mercer Island to lower middle class racially diverse community had a dramatic impact on Michelle’s older sisters. “My sisters hated my mom and they hated my dad. My older sister, she had no friends and she went from being around all the white girls to just nothing, being around nothing but black girls.”

Despite their similar political leanings in the sixties, Michelle did not think that her parents could have lasted. "I would never ever think that my parents would have anything in common. At all." Michelle's parents were actually married for longer before they gave birth to Michelle and her brother than they were after they had them. "They got divorced when I was. I had to be younger than five." Michelle spent the rest of her growing up years living with her mother, though after sixth grade, the family moved to a suburban area south of Seattle called Maple Valley.

"My mom got married again to my step-dad, who is also black. We moved to Maple Valley to a little housing development. To a cute house and they just thought it was going to be great. In the suburbs, and this is just going to be nice, but of course, it was just awful."

She moved when she was ten. "...so it was traumatic. And I was really oblivious. I was just nervous that I was going to be the only black kid in the class. Even before I got there...." It turned out that her senses were correct: in comparison, Kennewick was diverse, and Michelle's best friend, who was also mixed, lived across the street. In Maple Valley, however, Michelle stood out: "I'm not even in their realm."

Michelle did not talk fondly of her school experiences. "School was a really weird experience for me. I think that a lot of classes and a lot of teachers had no idea how to handle me...." For example, in seventh grade:

"We were just getting to the slave chapters, and my teacher, she pulled me out of class and she was like, 'We're going to start talking about the slavery chapters, so if you want, I can put your desk out here in the hallway and you can have some other kind of work that you can do while

we're doing that and you can come back into the class when we get done with the chapters, however many weeks its going to take."

Throughout her schooling, Michelle felt like she stood out. "I would think that all eyes would be on me for some weird reason."

Upon graduating high school, Michelle went straight to Highline Community College, then took a year off to get certified to become a nurse. She then re-enrolled at Highline for a bit more, then switched to North Seattle Community College, where she took classes for two quarters before finally being admitted to the University of Washington ("I can't honestly tell you how many times I applied to that school before this finally happened, but it was A LOT!"). In the past few months, Michelle has worked at an children's clinic set in the racially diverse central district, spent a month at a medical internship position in Anchorage, Alaska, and is culminating her Physicians Assistant bachelor's degree program by interning at a large urban hospital.

Conclusion

These students' experiences, while impossible to represent all multiracial students, present diverse, varied perspectives. While the sample does not include a number of perspectives that more than warrant further analysis, this sample does present valuable insight. These students have had drastically different lives, perhaps best demonstrated by their distinct paths to college. In what comes next, I extend each student's story by compiling their words, thoughts, emotions into overall themes that demonstrate how these students have come to think of themselves in terms of race, racism, and multiracial identity. Not surprisingly, their family contexts continue to play a significant role in such development.

CHAPTER FIVE
WHAT AM I?
MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY AND
STUDENT CONCEPTIONS OF RACE AND RACISM

“God, if I could die and come back, I want to come back white just to see what its like not to live worried about this crap.” - Shay Hurley

“When I was younger and trying to identify as white, I honestly thought that life would be so much easier.” - Michelle Davis

“Cause people try to be so PC now. Like what’s your nationality? I’m like, I’m American. And they’re like, no no, you know what I mean.” - Shay Hurley

Introduction

Recall that part of the purpose of this study is to understand how these students conceive of race and racism given the contexts within which they grew up. While what follows outlines both this context and how these students define race and racism, this chapter also places how these students grew up within a framework of racism; for it is not enough to merely study these students’ thoughts about racism. Indeed, how these students

came to think about racism came out of a context of racialized exclusion that helped to shape their familial, peer, and educational experiences. In the end, this chapter should answer the question of how these students think about race and racism and help clarify the nuances of growing up multiracial in America.

This chapter does not discuss each and every influential factor that may have had a role in the development of each student, but instead develops a fuller understanding of how these students think about race and racism. Before demonstrating what these students think about race and racism, I show, in Part I, how various influences have helped to develop and support these ways of thinking. I connect these students' experiences and thoughts into a framework for understanding how they have developed their multiracial identities.

This framework rests upon two main themes. The first theme is racism and its influence on each individual student. I begin with these students' first incidents of racism, often an experience that became their first clear memory of their racial status not being the norm. Beginning with their first memories of race and racism positions the rest of the chapter within a context of racism, since many of their first memories are rooted in racist experiences. I then present the social context of monoracialism that each student articulated through their own experiences. An overarching monoracial bias has made it more difficult for each student to develop a multiracial identity. The second theme was more of a reaction to this racism and monoracialism, and centers on the variable amounts of support each student experienced. I begin clarifying how these students reacted to their context by presenting how they grew up identifying. I then use their voices to illustrate the variable support and often negating influences their families provided. This is

followed by a section called the peer mirror, where students clarify the impact and influence their social peers had on their multiracial identity. In Part II, I blend the how these students grew up and came to identify, their reactions to racism and monoracialism, and their familial and peer support into more expanded definitions of race and racism that consider the experiences of a wide range of multiracial people and resonate with the previously discussed dynamics of racism.

PART I – SOCIAL CONTEXT AND MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY

First Incidents of Racism

Early interviews began with the simplistic question, “when did you first become aware of your race?” This led participants to share one or more stories of their first and subsequent encounters with racism. Before discussing how these students identify and conceive of race and racism, it is essential to understand how each student began to see race and racism through negative experiences. Indeed, how they make sense of their own lives is rooted in how others see them, and this became apparent at a very young age. These examples of racism highlight something that each of these students share: They have all, at some point, been considered people of color, and not white.

Shay articulated this point:

“I think every person of color can testify to that one time when somebody pointed out to them that they are very different from everybody else. And that one time was when I was five years old. My best friend was this white girl. And then, you know, you’re not really thinking about it, but she got mad at me and called me a nigger. And I was like, ‘What’s that?’ ”

Robert’s parents filled in a memory he had lost when he was two years old.

“One time we were at a rest area on a highway and some girl a little bit older than me, a white girl, and came up and said, nigger nigger nigger. And her parents were just standing there watching. They didn’t do anything. And my parents just took me and got out of there. They knew the people probably had guns or something.”

Both Shay and Robert’s first experiences with racism are not unique among this sample. Michelle had a similar experience when she was four.

“I was in preschool, and I was at my dad’s house in the outskirts of town, in this small small small kind of little town-place, out in the fields. There’s kind of some farming kind of lands around there and me and my brother were playing outside. We we’re in this guy’s yard ‘cause he had these big bulls in his yard and we would taunt his bulls. It totally pissed him off. He opened the door and yelled, ‘Get out of here you little niggers!’ So [me and my three year old brother] took off running. I didn’t know what it meant, but I knew that it had something to do with my skin color.”

Every student of African heritage in the study had a similar awakening to their racial status as “black.” Konomi had learned about racism before coming to America, demonstrating the global nature of racism.

“Going to school [in Japan], I remember being called a chocolate girl. I was three years old. And they were like, *Chocolato Chan. Chocolato Chan. Chocolate girl.* And stuff like that. And I went home crying to my mom.. And my mom didn’t know what to tell me. A three year old. I mean

what are you going to tell them? That's the biggest thing I remember about being in Japan."

Konomi had similar experiences in the US. In third grade, her friend told her that she could not come to visit her house because her parents "don't like black people."

Chris had a similar experience, and the fact that he could later pass as white had no impact on the teasing he would receive growing up.

"The first time I ever felt conscious was this stupid song. Its this little kids song and its in elementary school. Its like 'Chinese. Japanese. dirty knees.' And I think that was the first time I really became self-conscious about the fact that I wasn't white."

Kathryn's first memory of being made aware of her race was much less direct, but also happened when she was very young (she could not recall if she was four or five).

"I remember sitting in the little bible study thing with other kids and you would pick kids up to say hold this sign so you could sing songs. I remember always thinking that they wouldn't pick me because I was black. I knew that they would pass me. And every time they would pass over me, I'd be like, 'I bet its because I'm...' I always thought they didn't pick me because I was black."

These negative experiences all resulted from others pointing out that each student was not white. Yet Emiko had two contrasting experiences. Although Emiko did not embrace having differences pointed out at the time, her mother demonstrated in a positive manner, that she was different from her peers. Her mother's school visits did validate her

identity at some level. Her peers, however, still provided her with a racist awakening similar to the experiences of others in the study. In kindergarten,

“Kids would come to school and be like, ‘Your people bombed our people.’ And I’d always get the squinty eyed thing. Always. ALWAYS! And I just remember this one time we were playing ponies and one of my closest friends had long blond hair, it was almost white. And she just said that she was Snow White and I had to be dragon queen or something like that because I had black hair. And so it was just like woah, do I look that different?”

Even in the exceptional case when a parent did have positive influence in first experiences with racism, this was muted by negative peer reaction. Although being pointed out as different continued to be a experience for Emiko, in reflecting, she realized that “it made a big impact on people and I think that’s good in a very white setting.”

Aside from Emiko, everyone else had a negative first encounter with recognizing their race. Their race was pointed out by others in order to demonstrate how different they were from the white norm. Perhaps most importantly, these incidents occurred when these students were young, and set the tone for how they would grow up within a social and educational context of racism. In answering how these students think about race and racism, it is essential to understand that these students were immersed in racism from birth, but also that this racism has been steeped in monoracialism, for none of these students had their complex racialized identity pointed out.

Social Context of Monoracialism

While the next two chapters discuss these students' schooling, I first present an overview of geographic and social influences on these students' racialized identities. Most of these students, indeed, most people within the United States, grew up within a predominantly monoracial social and geographic environment that discouraged a multiracial identity, even if the family supported one (which, among these students, was rare). In what follows, these students discuss the immediate geographic and social environment and its relation to how they have come to think about themselves and race and racism in general.

Most of the students in this study grew up in predominantly white neighborhoods and went to predominantly white schools. Ultimately because of this environment, they were treated as if they were monoracial, and in most cases, monoracial people of color. Robert "lived in a very white, pretty upper, not upper class, but upper middle class area in the Tri-Cities, Washington. In the most educated community in the Tri-Cities per capita, so there weren't very many black people around in the Tri-Cities in general." This predominantly white area was not neutral on the subject of race. "Some of our neighbors still don't talk to us. Like we've never said hi to the guy across the street from us. This old white dude. His wife will wave hi to us and stuff, but he's never waved or said hi or anything." Robert clarified that while they would initially try to befriend this particular neighbor, the feeling of not being welcomed in his own community was not an isolated incident.

That feeling would change when he would visit areas with large black populations. "The only time I ever got around large groups of black people was when I'd

go to Tacoma to be with my family. And then that was kind of a family visit, it wasn't like everyday life." But even those rare exposures had a dramatic impact.

"I could see huge differences from Tri-Cities to when I would go visit my family in the Hilltop in Tacoma, an almost entirely black neighborhood, or mostly black neighborhood. All of my family was black, so I could see the difference in terms of how white people interact, lived, went shopping, and everything was just different from the black community that I saw."

With the similar exception of when she went to visit her father's family in Georgia, Kathryn also "grew up only around white people." Visits to Georgia had a more dramatic impact, perhaps due to the longevity of trips: she would often stay for much longer than Robert, given his family's closer location. The contrast between these social environments was immense and had a strong impact on how Kathryn conceived of her predominantly white, small town environment. Visiting an extended black family, one that welcomed and validated her in ways that her mostly white environment could not, raised her awareness of how she stood out as black, rather than as biracial black and white.

When I asked Emiko if her family connected with the nearby Asian community despite her growing up "really sheltered in a bubble" in predominantly white North Seattle, she explained that her parents had limited interactions with the Japanese community.

"They were scared to go into the International District because they thought it was dirty and crime-ridden. We never really went downtown

because they just thought we were going to get shot or robbed or kidnapped.”

When Emiko traveled to Hawaii over winter break in 2001, she was amazed because it was her first experience interacting with Asian people who had a positive Asian identity. The exposure gave her the idea that “[she could] be like that, too!” Prior to that trip, however, Emiko had not connected with an Asian peer group that validated her experiences.

While Emiko, Kathryn, and Robert all have spent their growing up years in predominantly white geographies, Chris, Konomi, Simon, and Michelle all spent time in predominantly white areas as well as in racially diverse areas. Remember that Chris’s family started out in an upper class neighborhood in Portland, moved to an upper middle class neighborhood in a racially diverse suburb outside of Chicago, and then relocated to an even whiter neighborhood in Spokane. Konomi was born and lived in Japan and then moved to predominantly white middle class suburbs. Simon’s childhood was spent in racially diverse West Seattle, then switched to a private predominantly white environment, and finally ended up in a more racially diverse, but still predominantly white area. These students all shared exposure to differing populations of people of color, yet all have spent significant time growing up in predominantly white areas.

Michelle, on the other hand, spent the first half of her childhood within a geographic context of people of color, though she ended up in an environment similar to Kathryn’s. Whereas Robert grew up in the Tri-Cities section where more white people lived, Michelle’s early years were spent in an area that housed more people of color.

“We moved to Maple Valley to a little housing development. To a cute little house in the suburbs, and they just thought it was going to be just great. But of course, it was just awful.... I had lived with my mom in [Eastern Washington]. And that was much better. Its just a lot more diverse. And I had a best friend Jennifer who lived right across the street from me and she was mixed, too, and we were the same age.”

When I asked Michelle what was it like when she moved to the suburbs, she told of the impact of moving from a racially diverse neighborhood to a predominantly white one.

“When I moved? Oh my god! I was ten at the time, so it was traumatic. I was just nervous that I was going to be the only black kid in the class. Even before I got there. I think you just pick stuff up that you don't really realize from your environment. You just really internalize it. [Being the only black kid in class] was my number one biggest fear.”

In addition to losing her best friend from across the street, Michelle lost her connection to people who looked like her.

“I was really isolated then. I was in the middle of suburbia. I lived in a housing development, but it was basically farm country. And I had no way of getting out of there. We had a couple of mixed kids in my school and they were the same way. They were very assimilated into that little culture, into that little town.”

Michelle would later have issues with her almost forced assimilation and would eventually jump at the chance to be included in a black community as soon as she could drive to where black teenagers would hang out.

Shay was the only student in the study to have grown up mostly in racially diverse environments. Her early childhood was spent in military communities in small towns in rural North Carolina and Georgia, and Shay spent most of her life shuttling between family members and friends in a way that did not allow her to appreciate the community in any town. Because Shay grew up in these broken homes, the impact of her social geography may have been more muted, though that does not mean she was not aware of the influence of her geographic region.

“Race has a lot to do with geography because I think my life would have been different if I grew up in Seattle, Bay Area, Hawaii, or New York. But to grow up in the South, it's just very real to hear people say derogatory slurs. At least here, they'll say it behind your back. But there, they'll say it right up in your face and it really hurts. So that's why I think race is fluid, too, because when you are in that black and white environment, they can't comprehend that there's such a multiethnic Asian background and that you're not just Chinese. There's more than just Chinese, black and white. It just never crossed their minds. And it's all about playing into stereotypes and media images because all they got was what they saw on TV and what people said about their backgrounds. I had to defend myself on that so many times. It's like, ‘No, we don't eat dogs!’ ‘NO! We don't!

Where did you get that from?' I think it had to do with where I grew up, what I had to grow up with and what schools I went to."

Regardless of whether or not these students grew up in predominantly white social environment or not, all have spent time in one, and all have grown up in monoracial environments. This monoracialism shaped the way in which each student thinks of race and racism and positioned each one of them to have complex identity issues precisely because none of them were validated as multiracial by their immediate geographic context. These monoracial contexts added to their initiation into the world of racism through their first incidents. As we will continue to see, this overarching racism filtered into each aspect of these students lives. Understanding the family context, peer relationships, and schooling under a framework rooted in racism provides insight into why these students think the way they do about race and racism.

But this racism also influenced previous and continued processes of racial identification. Identity choices, especially those at early ages, can be seen as a direct reaction to monoracialism and exposure to racism, as individuals come to identify with something that helps make sense of the increasing chaos of rejection felt while growing up. After demonstrating how this social context interacted with these students' identity development, I consider family and peer influences in light of early identity choices.

Growing up and Identification

While these students had fluid racialized identities growing up, there have been relatively concrete times in each of these students' lives where they identified as a particular monoracial category. While identifying as a particular racial category or ethnic cultural group may depend upon social, familial, and educational contexts, it is first

important to understand how each person has identified differently throughout their lives. This understanding illuminates the complexities of how these students have developed their very conceptions of race and racism. In this manner, as educators, we can begin to understand our roles and better conceive of schooling as but one part of a social context that shapes student thinking.

It is also important to consider that several of these students presented examples that contradicted their explicit answers. For example, while I asked Chris how he had identified throughout his life, his reply led me to believe that he never thought of himself in racial terms:

“I never really associated myself as being Chinese. I never associated myself as being white. In fact, and even then, like I am today, I’m really against this whole idea of race.”

Yet Chris did appear aware of cultural norms associated with race.

“I think before I was a little bit more conscious of the differences whereas now, it seems to be a lot more blunted. I can be pretty much the same person anywhere. If for some reason I wanted to sit down stairs and eat pizza with chopsticks, I wouldn’t feel self-conscious. If you asked me in third grade to do it, I’d be embarrassed because its weird. But now I just don’t care.”

When I asked how Chris would have responded to being asked what he was in third grade, he responded by saying that “my mom was born in China and I’m half Chinese and half white.” Chris was conscious of being racially different, though he clarified: “You don’t want to be different. Whoever’s different gets made fun of in junior high.

You don't want to be different, you just want to be normal." By normal, Chris later said he meant "not drawing attention to yourself." Culturally, Chris may have grown up with certain aspects of Chinese traditions, but that has not translated into thinking of himself in racial terms. This may have more to do with his appearing white than with his identifying culturally as Chinese.

Shay also could claim to be racially Asian, and she grew up with a similar exposure to cultural traditions, though in her case, she grew up around Korean culture. As with Chris, throughout her life, she, too, did not think of herself as a distinct racial, ethnic or cultural group, but instead identified as biracial and bicultural. While Chris had light skin privilege and was able to pass, the opposite held true for Shay; she was always considered 'of color.' Yet both parents were clear about treating Shay as more than just Korean and more than just black.

"[My mom] sees me as a mixed-race person because she recognizes that, in addition to being an immigrant, she married a black man and had a black child. So she recognizes that and she never told me to choose being black or being Korean. She knew I couldn't be Korean, but she knew that I couldn't be black, either. The only thing they ever told me was to be both."

Shay has taken her parents' advice throughout her life, and has consistently identified as Korean and black.

Kathryn, on the other hand, spent much of her childhood and adolescence shifting between conceiving of herself as black and as black and white.

"I knew that I was [black] but if you're in school with all the little white kids and I was a little white kid, too, I mean I wasn't, but that's how I saw myself 'cause that's all that I was around. I don't think it was until junior high that I realized I wasn't."

With the exception of a Martin Luther King, Jr. rally in elementary school, Kathryn typically saw herself as white, if she even considered herself a race. Yet Kathryn began a transformation in junior high. Her father would assert that she was black and Kathryn would retort:

"I'm white and black, dad. He'd be like, 'No, Kathryn.' 'Cause that's what I'd say when I was a little kid. If you asked the question, 'What are you?' I'd say 'I'm black and white.' And he'd say, 'No Kathryn, if you have any black in you you're all black.'" "I would say I was both."

Kathryn actually went through a phase in sixth grade where she began to act out, as best as she could, being black and white.

"I forget what grade it was, but I wore all black and white. Those were my two favorite colors, so I'd wear like a black shoe and a white shoe. And then black pants with a white top. I don't know what it was. I looked like a clown. But I did that for a while."

She gradually grew out of her black and white phase and began to see herself as black.

"[I would] tell people I was black and white, but I'd mark on things that I was black. I was black, and I would just say my mom's white and my dad's black. But by seventh grade, I'd identify myself as being black."

At that point, going back and forth between being white, and being black and white became a thing of the past. "And then high school, ever since then I would say I was black for sure." But that was only when she was thinking about her racial status, which typically, was rare. "I swam in high school all the time. That was pretty much, I was a swimmer, so I didn't have to worry about being anything else I guess. I know I didn't talk about it with anyone, really." Her identity as a swimmer took on new meaning and rather than adhere to a multiracial or monoracial identity, Kathryn tried to take on a race-less identity. While this approach was similar to Chris', she never could pass as white.

In contrast to Kathryn, Robert has consistently thought of himself as monoracially black, at least until recently. "What I've thought about myself as being black has not really changed since my racial awakening or consciousness or whatever in like fourth through sixth grade time period." Robert had periods in his life when he did not think about his own racial status or identity, but those times he was not racially conscious, as opposed to identifying with something other than black.

"I can remember even at eight, nine years old hanging out with my dad and his friends who were black and not thinking anything, truly any different than my mom and some of her white friends. I didn't, I don't think, start to feel race until I guess, or identify myself with a certain race until probably fifth or sixth grade."

Once racially conscious, however, Robert emulated what he thought was black.

"There was a phase there when doggie style was coming out and Snoop and Dr. Dre were big, I went through my little hardcore gangster phase. I

was a thug brother. And I started growing my hair out, that was the only other time I had a fro in my life, until now.”

Michelle spent most of her life thinking that she was black, “...because that’s how I grew up and identify myself.” Michelle shifted between thinking she could be white and feeling like she was black. For her, racial identity was a choice between “white or black.” and since she could not pass as white, she thought of herself as black. But she continued, “I’d say I’m probably more in the middle now. Or just more like Michelle versus more like a culture.” For a time, Michelle would hold up her white mother as an indicator of her whiteness, but she quickly let go of that strategy, finding out soon enough that it simply did not work. “I think I’ve gone through life being a black person, except for that small period of time...But I still was [black].” Her junior year of high school, Michelle would call herself a ‘very militant black,’ demonstrated that she was much closer to the black side of the racial spectrum.’ “You go way one way and then you go way the other way. And then you kind of end up somewhere in the middle.”

Konomi never knew such a middle ground, and in fact, never was able to identify with a one-or-the-other continuum. Konomi was “raised as a Japanese child. I grew up eating Japanese food, I grew up speaking Japanese, and I grew up with Japanese traditions.” But Konomi also grew up with a lot of people thinking she was black. She did not have the luxury of a single spectrum; Konomi has identified as a person of color, Asian, Japanese, black, Grenadian, Afro-Caribbean, and Japanese and black. But for the most part, Konomi has identified the same ways throughout her life.

“Sometimes I’ll say I’m Japanese and Grenadian but then I have to go into the whole, ‘Well, what’s Grenadian?’ So then I just simplify it and say

black. But then I don't like being called an African American, because I didn't grow up with the same values as African Americans who were born and raised here. 'Cause I'm the only one in my family who was born here. Everyone else was born outside. My mom was born in Japan, and my dad was born in Grenada. So a lot of things you'd think a typical African American would know or do, I don't. Because I was raised as a Japanese."

Emiko was also raised culturally Japanese, though unlike Konomi, she does not know her racial heritage. Being adopted and not knowing her biological parents' identities⁷, Emiko has never had a stable racial identity.

"I grew up knowing that I was Asian, or they would say 'You're Japanese-American.' As I got to my teens, I got like, 'Are you sure I'm Japanese-American?' because my sister somehow knows that she's half-Japanese and half-Filipino. I was like, 'If you know about my sister, then tell me about me.' So I asked about my birth father, and they would tell me he was Asian, too. Then I got more guts, and asked 'What kind of Asian?' They're like, 'We don't know.' I'm like, 'Okay, so I don't know what I am?' They're like, 'You're Asian. You're Japanese-American.' I'm like, 'You don't know.' "

Such racial ambiguity has added to the typically confusing context that these multiracial students grew up in, yet Emiko had an even more complicating twist. "Before kindergarten I was just all cool with everything...I didn't even notice that people were looking at me weird. Just identified as Japanese 'cause that's what I grew up with." At that time, Emiko had no idea that she was not Japanese. "In fourth grade, Emiko "learned

that they didn't know what my biological parents were. And I was like, you need to find them." In response to inquiries of her identity, Emiko would reply, "I'm adopted but I'm Japanese. And then people would be like, you don't really look like you're Japanese. And I'd be like, oh really? Well, I am." Emiko then reacted to her lack of a clear racial identity by rejecting being Asian and Japanese. "That's when I was like, 'I am not Asian!' I was totally a banana. White on the inside, yellow on the out." Yet others clearly saw her as Asian, especially since she was one of the only Asian students in the school. But she simply acted like she "didn't know what anybody was talking about. I'm not Asian. I don't know what you're talking about." Not until her junior and senior years in college did Emiko accept the fact that while she did not know her biological heritage, she clearly was of Asian descent.

Simon spent most of his adolescent life identifying as Filipino and white, but unlike Emiko and Konomi, he did not grow up culturally Filipino. Race was not apparent or seen as relevant throughout much of Simon's life, and it was not until recently that he more consciously identified as half-Filipino. Much of this lack of thinking and articulating a racialized identity has to do with growing up poor. Simon stood out in his all white, middle class environment, but he argued that was because he could not pass as middle class. Similar to Chris, Simon has, at times, been able to pass as white and his experiences growing up seem to reflect this often unconscious capability, leading him to surmise that part of his exclusion might have been to do class, whereas Shay could not isolate the impact of being poor from being not white.

Each of these students have traveled a unique path towards the racialized identity they now articulate. Each has held onto different racial categories and identities as they

have grown up in their own contexts of racism. Yet all have had similar experiences that span their individual racial, ethnic, and cultural groups, family structure, socio-economic status, and gender. Given these meandering paths, it is essential to consider how current racial identity choices are more like a bucket of water taken from the stream of life than fixed decisions. Another bucket, taken in two, twelve, or twenty years will likely yield an altogether different consistency and taste, yet the stream will continue to flow fluidly and be seen and judged according to those who use its shores.

Understanding the ways that these students have identified racially throughout their lives complements and reflects the contexts within which they have come to think about race and racism. Their individual processes of coming to identify demonstrate the complexity of identity choices and give rise to questions of influences: How do the various influences shape identity choices at different times in each students' lives? And further, what do these identity choices mean to these students? While these deeper questions beg further analysis, these students clearly illustrate the complexity of thinking about race and racism from a multiracial perspective.

Perhaps more important is that while other children and adolescents grow up with identity issues of their own, few will be forced to make life-altering and life-shaping decisions such as how to identify racially and culturally to the outside world (clear exceptions are transgendered people and those who come out as gay, lesbian or bisexual at an early age). That these students are all but forced to make such decisions on a daily basis is a direct result of the larger social context of racism and monoracialism in the U.S. This adds to the intensity of growing up with racial, and often cultural, ambiguity, and does so by continually making these multiracial students feel inadequate in whatever

choices they do make. Indeed, as we shall see, these young adults made identity choices and almost immediately had those choices invalidated by their peers, family, and/or schooling. Yet despite these negating pressures, most of these students have come to embrace a multiracial identity. They do this in the face of ambiguity, racism, alienation, and rejection. And in these students' cases, many made these difficult decisions prior to learning any relevant historical information, taking any classes, or even having formal "conversations" about race and racism. That these students have put up with so much alienation and still held on to a strong sense of racialized identity attests to their individual strength, and leaves educators to ponder what sort of impact an inclusive form of schooling that validates multiracial identity can have.

Influence of the Family on Identity Development

While other research delves more specifically into the influence of other factors, such as family, peers, and society (Korgen, 1998; Miranda, 2000a; Miranda, 2000b; Rosenblatt, 1995; Zack, 1993; and see edited texts by Root, 1992, 1996), I present an overview of general themes extracted from these interviews to show how individual students were influenced by their family contexts to identify multiracially, monoracially, or ambivalently. These influences were not the sole determinant in these students' choices of racialized identity. Indeed, many students have done quite the opposite of what their parents may have intended. Yet as with understanding how these students have identified throughout their lives, it is essential to understand the family dynamics of these students in light of their processes of coming to develop definitions of race and racism.

As a whole, as these students grew up, their parental and familial support for a multiracial identity was consistently absent. Up until this point, along with Robert's

parents, Shay's mother has been the sole exception. But both Shay's parents, while not present in terms of her daily life, were clear about supporting a biracial identity.

"My dad never said I was just black. My dad always made it important for me to know that I was half Korean. And I think the reason why he did that was because, well, just the history of black Americans in this country and their history being robbed from them and the fact that he doesn't know where he's from or what tribe or what language his original people spoke or anything. I think it was important for me to hold onto my Korean heritage because I could trace my ancestors and I knew who my mother was and what village and everything. My dad was really good about keeping me in tune with Korean culture the best that he could. He taught me how to use chopsticks, he took me to Korean restaurants, tried to take me to Korean church. Just to keep me within the Korean culture. And with my mom, her daily life is so Korean that it made me so much more Korean."

Such support, however, was largely symbolic, since neither parent had anything near a positive, consistent presence in Shay's life.

"It's different if you're mixed race and you have a stable home environment – it makes it easier because, even though your parents aren't mixed-race, they kind of get the whole gist of racism and they can talk to you and you have something loving to come home to. When you're dealing with the fact that you're mixed race and your home environment is psycho, too, you're very isolated. You're like, 'Damn, I can't even talk to

anybody about this!' I remember talking to my dad before he left about how the kids picked on me because I was mixed...[In his advice to me] he was trying to uplift me, but he was such an absent part of my life, he would only come in once in a while. That's nice he said that but we never really talked about it."

Other adult figures had a negative presence in Shay's life. Her father lived with a black woman for some time during her early adolescent years.

"She was totally abusive, beat the hell out of me, could not stand me. If I took one breath wrong she would be like, 'What the hell?' She was psycho. It was all because I was my dad's kid and I was mixed-race. It was painful to hear—because she would call me more names than anybody's ever called me in my life about the way I looked."

Shay's biological parental support stood out in a context of monoraciality, yet even their limited support must have been tempered by the presence of other less supportive (and more negating) adults. And this negative presence surely added to the fact that Shay's biological parents never provided a solid, supportive home to begin with.

Konomi's parental support came in the form of being challenged when she made racist comments growing up.

"When I was younger, we were watching something and I was flipping the channel past a Chinese show. And I started going 'Ying Yang' or something stupid like that and my dad yelled at me. He was like, 'Konomi, what would you feel if someone did that about Japanese people?' And I learned from a young age not to do stuff like that."

Both parents saw Konomi as partially what they were not, so they balanced out each other in that way. While her mom would acknowledge that Konomi was black, especially because of the racism she saw while the family lived in Japan, her dad was also clearly aware that, like him, she was not seen as fully black. This certainly stemmed from his own personal experiences.

“My dad’s a big black man. You see him, you know he’s black. And he said black people ask him, are you black? Because the way he talks. And he’s from the Caribbean, he still has a strong accent and stuff like that.”

Such ambiguity because of his Grenadian background surely led to his awareness of the dynamics that his daughters would face.

Emiko’s parents, in direct contrast to Konomi, supported a very clear Japanese identity. They adopted two children from different or unknown racial backgrounds yet chose to raise their daughters (with the help of a white nanny) to be culturally Japanese. That Emiko’s schooling experience, beginning in kindergarten and continuing until college, included her mother coming to speak about Japanese Internment, meant that from the beginning of kindergarten, Emiko was ‘outed’ as Japanese to herself and her predominantly white classmates. This outing, while complemented by her parents’ efforts to raise her as Japanese, had a negative impact on her developing a positive identity as an adoptee with no clear racial background. Emiko essentially was raised without a biological racial identity. She was, however, raised with a strong cultural identity, one which she has consistently rejected.

While culturally Japanese, Emiko’s friends would not think of her as Japanese until they came over to her house. “And then all the Japanese culture, the chopsticks and

rice. And my grandparents, they would be different, so I didn't really like it when [my friends] came over because I would be found out." Her grandparents spoke Japanese in the house, so her (and her friends') exposure to the language served as a reminder of her differences. While her parents saw both Emiko and her sister as Japanese Americans, Emiko has never been comfortable with that label or identity. "They (her parents) don't understand that [I struggle with not having a clear racial identity]. They just think that I should be grateful, and that I'm Asian, so it doesn't matter."

Emiko's parents decided that she should be Japanese and the implications have extended beyond her social identity.

"My whole life, my health hasn't always been the greatest, so going to doctors and stuff, they would always ask me questions and my mom would talk for me. And one time, the doctor was like, 'Why don't you let her talk for herself?' And so, I described my symptoms to him. And then he came to family history, and my mom's like, 'We don't have Parkinson's in our family. We don't have any of this,' and I'm like, 'Excuse me, I was adopted, so I don't know.' My mom just had this look of absolute shock. She just couldn't [believe] I silenced her. She didn't know what to do."

Her mother's reaction was typical of her response to inquiries about her daughter's racial background. "And then people would just come up and be like, 'Your kids—they look so different. What are they?' And my mom would be like, 'They're Japanese American.'" Such an attitude made it difficult for Emiko to consider who she

was in light of racist comments coming from her peers. When I asked Emiko why her parents adopted in the first place, she gave a negative response:

“They’re always like, ‘Your father and I had a really great home and money, and we have a lot of love that we wanted to give to people, and so we decided that instead of having our own, we should adopt and bring other people into our world.’ That’s one thing she always tries to put on us, just like, ‘We’re such good people, and you should be so grateful that you’re adopted, but you’re not and you are ungrateful.’ I get it all the time. I get it all the time. Whenever I have identity things, they’re just like, “Stop being so ungrateful and overanalyzing it.” And so, that does not help. I think they really don’t...they didn’t expect us to have, me especially...they didn’t think it’d be such a problem.”

Complicating Emiko’s childhood and adolescence was the presence of a white nanny until the middle of her senior year of high school.

“So when I wasn’t with my parents I was literally with my nanny. And so we’d go out in public, me and my sister and my nanny. And there’d be this white woman with these two Japanese kids that don’t look like each other but people would assume that we should because we’re sisters. And people would ask, ‘Where did you get those? Whose are those? Are those really yours?’ That was really weird. ‘Cause I had this Japanese woman (her mother) that I’d go out with and it’d be like ‘oh yeah, they’re the Japanese kids but they don’t really look like it.’ And I’d go out with my

nanny's family sometimes and then we were just the token Japanese kids.

And people would just stare."

Emiko had a variety of influences from her parents, nanny, and the reaction that others had to all of them. Her adopted parents would treat her as if she was Japanese, which may have helped build up a positive sense of being Japanese-American, but also denied her a chance to build up an identity as an adoptee without a clear racial background.

Emiko was not the only student whose parents built up a monoracial sense of identity. Kathryn was also told, throughout her life, that she was monoracial and should adhere to a black identity instead of a biracial or white one. "My dad was very, he would tell me as I was growing up that I am black. If you have any black in you than you're black all around." While her father clearly had a preference for how Kathryn was to identify, his preference was rooted in an understanding of how society would see her. After reading Nathan McColl's Makes Me Want to Holler, Kathryn had a rare discussion with her father.

"I read the first page to my dad, where they talked about beating up the kids who were riding a bike. And I was like, 'DAD, DAD, read this!' And he told me a story about how he grew up in Chicago. The worst. He wont even take me back to where he grew up because you can't even go there anymore. And he said when he was playing basketball one time he saw these two little white kids, a girl and a boy riding through the neighborhood and everyone on the basketball court stopped 'cause they wanted to watch what happened to them, 'cause they don't usually make it that far. And he said they watched them and they rode all the way out to

the end of the neighborhood and nothing happened to them. And he was just shocked that they had made it through without getting beat up. And when I try to bring up topics with him like that, or read other things from the book, he didn't really want to talk about it because he grew up in it. Its not like a big thing to him. That's what he knew and that's how life was."

Her father would argue that Kathryn was black, even as she argued that she was black and white. Her father would say, that according to society, "if you have any black in you, then you're all black." But this one-drop rule was present in their family, too, and his insistence may have reflected her mother's white side of the family, and their preference. Kathryn's white side of the family would not talk explicitly about race, much less about Kathryn being white, black, or biracial, but instead had treated her whole family different because they saw them as black.

"My mom, her mom was totally against the marriage. But she was also against the first marriage, too. 'cause it wasn't a doctor. She wasn't so great. But she didn't want her to marry a black guy. So I'm sure that was an issue for her. I know her brother-my uncle, wouldn't come to the wedding when my parents got married."

Such a context of racism within the family was certain to impact the ways in which Kathryn thought of herself. The rejection by her mother's white side of the family, coupled with her comfort with her father's black side, led to a predictable outcome.

"[My father's side of the family is] really cool. I love them. And its so different from my mom's side of the family. Whenever I'd go visit them, it wasn't even like they're my family. And my half-siblings, I'd always

think of them as related to my uncle. but never me related to him. And then maybe two years ago. it dawned on me that I was just as much his niece as they were his nieces and nephews. I was shocked because I never ever thought of him that way at all. We had to go to a family reunion in Canada with my mom's side and I couldn't even comprehend the fact that they were my relatives. too. It didn't even dawn on me. But then when I go to Georgia, its totally a different story. Everybody is so wonderful and so warm. I'm so much closer to them even though I rarely talk to them or even see them."

Aside from being welcomed into her father's side of the family when she visits, Kathryn's white side of the family had rejected her in multiple ways.

"I never liked [my uncle] very well. Just because he didn't seem like my uncle. He went to the same church mom went to. And he's a well respected guy in the church. But I just never liked him. I don't think he liked me. I didn't see him very much. just when I went to church. And they'd always say hi. I think. But he wasn't like a relative. like how you'd think a relative would be. And I'll go there once and a while now to see my siblings sing, 'cause they all still go there. and you'd see him and its like, 'Hi.' 'Hi.' But what else do you say?"

Kathryn went to a family reunion on her mother's side of the family. and was the only non-white person there. Her brother and father did not want to go. leaving her alone. feeling uncomfortable. trying to build up her familial bond. The tension between sides of the family, clearly present since her parents' marriage. was clear to Kathryn growing up.

“When I was little, I knew [my grandmother] didn’t like us. She died when I was four, and I remember going over to her house because I knew she didn’t like me. I think that bothered me a lot. Last year, I was looking through a diary that I found of hers when she was older. I think she kept it the last couple of years of her life. I was looking through it, and she made such terrible comments about my sister, who is white. And I was looking through the dates and my brother and my birthdays weren’t in there. And all the other kids were. And I don’t think my mom and dad’s anniversary was in there. My mom’s birthday was in there. But not ours. I was reading about how she went for Christmas to visit my uncle. And she commented that it was such a shame Judy, who is my mom, had decided to cut herself off from the family like she had. And she was so sad that she wished she could be part of the family, too. And obviously she wasn’t that upset because she was the one who made that decision. But I was amazed to read that. It was really disturbing. That bothered me for a while because I didn’t realize how much of an impact that had on me. I think I had a dream, that night or the next night, that she came back and I was trying to show her all these things, like ‘look look, I’m good enough.’ And it was ridiculous because I never thought I even cared at all. But, I guess I did.”

Michelle had a similar experience in that the two sides of her family also differed dramatically.

“They’re just two different worlds. Like my mom’s family is a little bit more uptight, a little bit more conservative. And I think she had a lot of

racist people in her family, too. And my dad's family, I have about 800 cousins and they're all just laid back."

Chris and Simon, on the other hand, both grew up in family environments that supported the development of a more vague racial identity. Part of this could be due to the fact that both of them have been able to pass as white at certain times, but their parental ambivalence certainly created a context for not feeling a need (or ability) to identify racially. In Chris' case, there may have been less racial ambivalence than a focus on other aspects of their lives. In particular, Chris' mother's family was well off in China, but once they arrived in the U.S., they were very poor, and appear to have focused much more on rising above poverty to economic independence (the family has long since moved past independence to the upper economic class). Perhaps this is best demonstrated through his mother's identity: "My mom considers herself American. She's Chinese, but she's not from, she really doesn't want to be considered from China because she got her citizenship and she wants to be American."

Chris grew up with exposure to Chinese culture, from his mother and her side of the family. "My mom speaks four different dialects, Cantonese, Mandarin, and then two other smaller dialects." The rest of her side of the family identifies strongly with being Chinese, and joke about Chris not sharing that with them. "And my relatives, it's nothing really serious, but they all tease me about being white." His Chinese cousins, in particular, tease him because of his light skin. "They call me Twinkie. Light yellow on the outside, white on the inside." This teasing has had some impact on Chris, who, in turn, teases his mother.

“Now I call my mom a big chink all the time. <Laughing> But see, its different. I never call her that in public. And she always gets mad at me....My mom always teases me. Or she says ‘Stop that. I hate that.’ But I just do that to bother her. <Laughing> Just to goof around. Its your mom, you’re supposed to. My family would always tease each other.”

When I asked him about it in a later interview, Chris explained the nature of his teasing his mother about being a ‘chink’:

“Its just because she’s the most Chinese out of all of us. So its just something just to poke at her. .It was just because that’s what made her a little bit different from the rest of us...and she laughs. If she’s really down or something, I might just call her that. If I know she’s had a bad day or something, I might give her a call...Give her something to laugh about. ‘Cause she knows its so stupid. I know I shouldn’t do it. But I don’t always think about it....But somehow, when its with your parents, you have a level of comfort with your own family behind closed doors, when no one else is around, that you don’t normally have with other people. And there’s just this certain level of comfort that you’re kind of used to from your family when you’re at your house and no one else is there. But I wouldn’t ever say that to her if we were around anyone. I probably still shouldn’t even say it because if someone else called me that I’d be pretty offended. I’d be pretty pissed.”

When I asked him about his parents thoughts about who he dates, he replied, “My mom could care less. My parents couldn’t care at all.” He then relayed yet another

example of his family's jovial approach to racial issues when his mother initiated the teasing by telling him that his brother "had some black girl in his room 'til two in the morning." While half of Chris' family is culturally Chinese, all of them appear to consider the context of racism lightly, if they acknowledge it at all. This may have more to do with the clear reality that his entire family has pulled themselves up from their bootstraps and are economically well off.

Juxtaposed with Chris and his family, Simon's family, on the other hand, has not escaped the poverty and racism that they grew up in, nor do they light-heartedly laugh off the oppression that they faced. Yet regardless of the presence of racism within the family, Simon's dad appears to have tried to escape it by not addressing it.

"Although my dad is Filipino, he's second generation. His dad told him not to speak the dialect. 'You're in America now, no more of this Filipino stuff.' We cook a couple of dishes, but that's about it. So, my dad's trying to tell me, 'Don't worry about being Filipino.' And I'm like, 'I want to be Filipino.' He's like, 'Don't worry about that.' He doesn't like to hang around with Filipino people at all."

In hindsight, Simon's father presented a clear example of what not to emulate, though of course much of this influence has already had an impact on Simon. While Simon has reached out to his father as he sees room for a connection around race and racism, he does not see the same capability with his mother.

"I've tried with my dad. He'll listen, and I can tell he empathizes with me and he has stories that he could tell if he were more in touch with dealing with things. But with my mom, I don't think she really gets it."

Simon's mother was perhaps even less supportive of building up a Filipino or biracial Filipino and white identity. After seventh grade, Simon lived with his white mother, who has yet to accept the racism that her children and father experience. "When we were growing up in high school, she'd say why do you guys like that black music?" Simon would challenge her by asking, "Why can't it just be hip hop?" Recently, Simon tried to expose his mother to a film:

"Its called 'American Love Story.' Its about a black dude and a white woman and they're married and they have biracial kids. It's a documentary showing their lives and you can totally tell they're a loving, functional family. And the dad loves his kids. I think that's the point of the video, to show people that have these notions of black men being womanizers—to break down that stereotype by showing this perfectly loving father. And my mom was watching it with me, and she really identified with the woman. There were some emotional parts and she got a little emotional, but then when the dad would do stuff that would show his kindness, she'd be like, 'Not all black men are like that.' "

Robert's family approached race very differently than did Chris' family, yet they both joke about race and racism.

"Sometimes when I'm at my grandma's house, I have my hair in braids. I'll be talking to my parents on the phone, and I'll say I got my hair in braids right now, and my grandma will say I like it better when its out. And my dad will say, 'Tell your grandmother you are a hanigger.' That's

what he calls it. Half black, half nigger, hanigger. Just like a joke, you know. 'Tell your grandma not to forget what you are.' "

The difference between this joking and Chris's family appears distinct, however. Robert's father is jokingly reminding his white grandmother that her grandchildren are black and face racism. Chris' family, however, jokingly remind each other that Chris is not white but acts it, or that Chris is not Chinese like them. In Robert's instance, there is a clear purpose of not forgetting Robert is black within a context of racism, whereas Chris' joking seems more about denying racism as he denies being Chinese.

The previous discussion of parental influences highlights an important tension: parents may support, negate, encourage, or deny the development of a racialized identity in many ways, and in two parent families, parents might not always agree on the same tactic. Through these students' testimony, it appears that some parents prefer to support a particular identity, while others take a more hands-off approach. It is important to consider the varying degree of influence that parents have and the varying ways parents provide support for identity development. Not only is how these students learn of race and racism from their parents something to consider, but so too is how their parents support or deny particular developmental processes at different times and how these students respond to such intentions. The complexity of the family influences that have helped shape how these students think about race and racism are dramatic indeed.

Yet not all of our time as children is spent with our families or by ourselves. Indeed, we spend much of our childhood and adolescence surrounded by and interacting with other children. The students in these interviews demonstrate the dramatic impact their peers had on their identity in Chapter 6, but in what follows, they articulate the ways

their peers have thought of them. I present the way their peers think of them in racial terms in order to come to more fully understand how these students come to think about race and racism within the peer context that has in part, along with family, geography, social class, and other factors yet to be discussed, influenced the development of their racialized identities.

The Peer Mirror – Peer Context and Identity Development

“I don’t think that I really look half Chinese. A lot of people don’t even know. And I think that’s good because they just don’t think about it.”

- Chris Wong

Some of the biracial white and black students in this study were seen, by many of their peers, as black. Yet this was not always the case. Typically, black people would see them as black, yet there were occasions when their ‘blackness’ was in question. And typically, while white adults would see them as black, there would be times when their white peers would question them on this point. Yet this questioning was different for those who are biracial black and Korean or black and Japanese than it was for those who are biracial black and white. Regardless of how their peers saw them, however, white people typically had a drastically different approach to their racial appearance than did other people of color or multiracial people. The biracial Asian and white people in the study were also typically seen as people of color. The one exception to this was Chris, who often passed as white (Simon very rarely has passed as white).

The tension that each student continually had to deal with is that many of their peers, some of their family, and much of their school experiences appeared rooted in a monoracial context, yet they do not necessarily identify monoracially. In most cases,

regardless of how these students come to identify in the face of monoracial pressure, they were not seen according to each student's self-identity. In essence these students were typically seen by their peers as 'others,' regardless of how they have identified throughout their lives (be it as white, black, biracial, multiracial, transracially adopted, or any combination of things). The overarching monoracial bias has not allowed for, much less supported, their continued acknowledgement as being more than simply white or a person of color. Despite this context, these students have developed alternative multiracial identities. That these most of these students have come to identify, at some level, as multiracial in and of itself challenges monoraciality and racism. Their processes of identifying thusly provides a glimpse into how education could provide support for their marginalized identity by providing a forum for thinking about their experiences as part of a historical or contemporary framework of racism.

Before I discuss these racialized identities, however, it is important to consider how these students think about racial identify in relation to their peers. Chris was an exception because he simply did not believe his racial identify mattered that much, and as such, did not have many conversations with his peers about how they see him. Instead, he believed other factors had a more dramatic impact on his identity. When I asked Chris what makes him who he is, he replied, "What I think. What I'm involved in. Where I like to hang out. What I like to do." When I asked for clarification, he added:

"What kind of cars I like. I'm not a big fan of huge monster trucks. Some people are. They are a certain type of person. You can call it stereotyping, or whatever, but that's a fact. Certain people like big monster trucks. So

they'll be friends. Whatever it is. I like to play tennis. I like to drink, but I don't like drinking all the time."

Chris gave as much importance to race in shaping an identity as he did playing tennis, drinking, or hobbies like monster trucks.

Kathryn, on the other hand, asserted that her racialized identity is only just part of her entire social identity. "I definitely see myself as a female first because no matter where I go that's what I'm going to be, whereas if I go somewhere else I won't be seen as black. And that's always the most dominant feature in a person: their gender." In Chapter Six, Kathryn leads into a more full discussion of sexism and its impact on racialized identity development, but for now, let it suffice to say that how others perceive these students has not been limited to race. Indeed, other variables, such as gender, class, skin tones, and family contexts shape how others see these students and none of these students exist within a vacuum where only their perceived racial category is responded to.

Robert initially asserted that "people generally knew I was part black or mixed, or considered me black." But many of the people that Robert grew up with saw him as black first. "I have some friends who come from very conservative families, where I'm like their only black friend." Not seen as their only mixed or biracial friend, Robert further demonstrated the popular stereotypes that accompany being thought of as black. While in a bar last summer, Robert asked a "guy who had UW shorts on" if he liked the University of Washington. The man responded by asking Robert if he was on the football team. Robert clarified, "I get a lot of people assuming that I play sports because they see me as black first, and that's their stereotype of black students."

When I asked Michelle how people define her, she replied, "They define me as black first, and then whatever else next." She continued, "But I think it means that I don't get acceptance as readily in the same way as I do from the white perspective—me being black. I think that a lot of other black people don't really necessarily identify with me saying I'm white." Michelle showed here that while she may not be able to pass as white—especially to black people, she can pass as black to white people. Throughout the interviews, Michelle argued that "[black people] just look at me as just a black person." yet would also demonstrate that some black people did not fully accept her as black.

"I get lots of side cracks. Like this darker skinned woman Sara, she will crack all the time. She'll say, 'I don't want no white skinned baby.' 'Cause we always have this discussion about interracial dating. 'Would you ever date this? Would you ever date that?' And Sara's like, 'I want baby to look like me. I don't want no light skinned confused babies'. I know she means well, but that's a little rib shot to me."

Michelle's black friends joke about not wanting to be mixed, and imply a hierarchy that positions biracial people beneath monoracial black people. Yet Michelle gets an altogether different reaction from white people. One time her uncle on her mother's side took her to a concert.

"We met some of his friends and I can tell they were trippin'. They were like 'That must be his date.' And he's like, 'This is my niece Michelle.' I could tell they were just trippin', 'cause they didn't really expect him to say this is my niece. That's just not what they would have expected. And people don't expect that I have white sisters, either. Or if me and my mom

are together somewhere, people won't just automatically assume that we're together. But if I was standing next to someone who is black, they'd assume we were together. I guess it's understandable because people have ideas about things that make sense to them. But when I was younger I didn't really like it as much."

Kathryn had a similar set of experiences, yet in her case, while her father was clear that she was black, her white friends were much more conflicted.

"The girls that I live with are the people I hang out with and there's one girl who's Vietnamese and another girl who's half Hawaiian and half white. But they all grew up in a white community, too, so they're in the same situation. It's really interesting to be around white people now that I have this awareness and I'll bring up issues with them now and talk with them and my one roommate, she grew up in Sumner—there was one black kid who went to their high school—and she doesn't know anything about anything. And she'll make comments like, if I have my hair down, she'll be like, 'Wow Kathryn, you actually look black today.' She can't even grasp the concept that I am black, and that I consider myself that. And she's like, 'No you're not, you're only half.' "

Perhaps a result of being seen as only half black, Kathryn did not want to tell her friends or white family that she was taking the Sociology of African Americans at the UW because then they would have to consider that she was half black.

"I didn't want to take it because I didn't want to tell people I was taking that class because they'd be like, 'Of course you're taking the black class.'

But I took it anyway. I would tell my full brother, but not my siblings.

‘Cause that would bring to their awareness my ethnicity, whereas usually they don’t even think about it.’

Kathryn, in this case, demonstrated that many of her friends and family thought of her as a race-less being. Yet when Kathryn tried, throughout high school, to identify mainly as a swimmer, she came to realize that she ultimately could not be race-less. ‘I would never see myself as white, whereas I’d always see myself as black. And I think that’s what my dad was trying to get across with saying, he’d say when I was little if you have any black blood in you then you’re black all over.’ Perhaps her father was providing this perspective to counter Kathryn’s present and future peers.

‘‘And my [white] roommate, who’d be like, ‘you’re only half so it doesn’t count. You’re not really black, Kathryn.’ Or ‘you don’t act black.’ I hate that. ‘You don’t act black so you’re not really black.’ And I want to ask, ‘What do you have to act like?’ If I’m black, then I don’t have to act any certain way to be this way. I’ll use the example with her that people will look at me and say ‘oh, see that black girl over there.’ But they’ll never look at me and say oh that white girl over there. Of course. So I don’t even take that. I grew up with white people and that’s what I’m around all the time and who I feel most comfortable with, but then I also feel like I’m not black enough, like I should be with black people, and I should be associating with them more than I do. And I’m kinda betraying that half. Even though that’s who I would identify with.’

Konomi's experiences in Japan and the U.S. further demonstrate this tension that others heap upon biracial people. In Japan, Konomi was referred to as *chocolato chan*, yet in the U.S., she has not typically been seen as black. So while she was rejected in Japan as being too black, in the U.S., Konomi has been rejected by some of her black peers for being too white. "Even though I'm half Asian and stuff, they don't recognize that. They never ever recognize that. Even if I tell them, it doesn't matter. They still see me as black." When I asked her who 'they' were, Konomi replied "everybody."

"I got called ugly a lot when I was younger because I didn't look like everybody. Since I didn't look like anybody, I was ugly. I learned how to do my hair, but my mom would do my hair in certain ways, which was cute for a young girl, but it's not how everyone else did their hair. And in Federal Way there weren't very many biracial people. And if they were biracial, they were black and white. I don't really remember anybody being Asian and black. So I was just made fun of a lot. I was always aware that I was different from everybody else. It was frustrating, too, because the Asian kids didn't recognize me as Asian. And then I had some black people telling me 'Oh, you're not black.' And of course, white people just plain old don't accept me either. [They usually saw me as] black or Polynesian."

At this, Konomi erupted in laughter at the ridiculousness of people attempting to identify her. "But usually people don't know what I am."

Typically lighthearted, Konomi did get upset at thinking through the many times people have tried to define a racialized identity for her. "The only thing that makes me

mad is when people try to tell me I'm just Japanese or I'm just black. Because I'm just as much Japanese as I am black." Yet even when her peers were not in the picture, other random connections would remind Konomi of her status on the margins.

"It'd be me, my brother and sister and my mom going out. And they'll be like, 'Do you guys want separate checks?' My mom's like, 'These are my kids.' And I'll be with my dad, and my dad's kind of big, but he looks young. And people think we're married. Ahhhhhghk! I hate that. That's so gross! It just makes me feel so gross. And I think its just because they see me as mixed or they don't know what I am, and then they see him as obviously black. And they just don't assume I'm his daughter."

While Konomi experienced other people assuming what she was in Japan and the U.S., she also faced being different when she went to her father's homeland.

"My brother has really Asian eyes. And in Grenada, the only Asians they really know about are Chinese people. And so they call everybody who looks Asian 'Chiney.' 'Oh look at that Chiney over there.' So they'd talk about my brother like, 'Oh look, that boy over there has Chiney eyes.' And when my mom went to Grenada, this lady was like, 'Oh that Chiney woman is really pretty.' She didn't mean it as an insult, but my dad was mad. 'No, she's not Chinese, she's Japanese. And she's my wife!'"

Shay also spent time outside the U.S., yet few people she comes into contact with take this into consideration.

"I'm part black, so people don't tend to factor in the fact that I'm an immigrant, my first language wasn't English. To deal with the

complexities of my mom being a non-U.S. citizen, and her being an immigrant, and plus she's Asian, and then I have to deal with the whole black thing, my dad from the south. Jim Crow segregation and him having to fight for all these civil rights because he was born in the fifties. So its these radical strong, very strong racial poles and I have to deal with them. but yet the only thing that gets factored in is the black part as the most important one. Its very tough to hear people criticize my mom's English or talk down to her like she's stupid. I think that's racism and for my being biracial I guess its difficult because people don't take into account that other things might bother you. like talking about, 'Koreans eat dogs.' 'You know how to read that?' when its in Chinese. and you're like, 'No.' and they're like 'Oh, they're all the same.' Little comments like that we have to deal with being biracial."

Shay demonstrated that even within a different geography, the same issues take on just a slightly different form. Rather than being considered on a black and white continuum in the south, Seattle offered a different forum for guessing her racial background.

"So I moved up [to Seattle] and I was like, I really like it because I saw more people like me. It was just very diverse. Strong Asian communities, strong black, you know everything. I could see everything. First time I ever met a Samoan person in all my life. And it was just like Filipinos? What is that? So it was just exciting. And that also enhanced my fluidity

when it came to race because then I got mistaken for Hawaiian, Filipino, Samoan....”

Shay's experiences bring to light how the contexts of racism, personal processes of identifying racially, social geography, familial situations and influences, and peers come together to shape identity development. That these students came mostly from predominantly white environments steeped in monoracialism has had variable influence, showing how even similar situations may result in drastically different ways of thinking and identifying.

Yet it is clear that each student grew up within a context of racism and monoracialism and was at least partially aware of this context. All of the students grew up with some clear identity during part of their childhood. While most of the students had parental and familial support for a monoracial identity, only a few had support for a multiracial identity, and this was often contradicted by peer monoracialism. Each student was rejected by their white peers as well as peers who shared the racial group the whites typically assigned them to. These themes were present in each student, and ultimately suggest a framework for thinking about how multiracial children grow up and come to racially identity.

Briefly, this framework begins with a multiracial child born into the U.S. social context of racism and monoracialism. This young child is immersed into the world, immediately experiences racism, and is typically excluded at some point and made to feel inferior because the child is not white or monoracial. In most cases, as the child grows up, the parents begin to exert a monoracial framework just as the child is rejected by peers as being either not white enough or not black, Asian, Latino, Pacific Islander, or

Native American enough. Typically the child faces this rejection from both sides and comes to realize that she or he will rarely be considered as someone with multiple racial and cultural backgrounds. In such a light, the child often feels pressure to choose an identity, rather than to develop a fluid, dualistic or combined identity. This framework, while perhaps not present for all multiracial children, illuminates the types of pressures that many multiracial children face, and demonstrates their unique form of exclusion.

As I explore how these students define race and racism, it is essential to bear in mind the previous discussion and each student's brief biography in Chapter Four. Understanding how these students think of race and racism must be connected to the social context which has shaped their thinking. Regardless of whether or not we can fully understand the impact of family and peer influences, such influences are visibly connected to these students' conceptions of race and racism.

PART II – UNDERSTANDING RACE AND RACISM

Definitions of race

When I first asked these students how they defined race, the typical response was "that's a really difficult question." This was usually followed by laughter and then a broad response, exemplified by Michelle: "I guess it means a lot of different things." While each student was eventually able to articulate a definition of race, they often gave deeper answers to this question when talking about racism or relaying experiences growing up. The mere pressure of having to articulate a definition seemed to have a silencing affect. An example of what happened in most early interviews can be seen in Emiko and my interchange.

CK: You were talking about racially conscious, right? So what does race mean?

ET: An awareness of somebody's racial makeup and sensitivity, understanding, and acceptance of it.

CK: Of it?

ET: Yeah, of race.

CK: So what is it? What is race?

ET: Wow! Oh my god! <Laughter> That's hard. I guess race means, maybe its more of an anthropological type thing, like being Japanese is like, being the Japanese race or, I don't know, and then you get into Africa it just gets mixed up because it can be that you're either Somalian or South African or whatever.

As we continued to talk, Emiko (and the other students) were able to articulate themselves a bit more. Her definition blended ethnicity, nationality, and racial groups into a system of categorization used to distinguish groups of people. But her (and the other students') hesitance and lack of comfort in defining race was telling. Simply put, these students had a difficult time defining race. What follows are both their answers and how they have talked about race throughout the interviews. Perhaps most relevant is that, given their varied backgrounds, the definitions are actually fairly similar, and center around social construction, fluidity, and being context-specific.

After our first interview, Emiko reflected on her difficulty in being able to define race.

"I thought it was really weird that I couldn't define what I thought race was. 'Cause I'm working with race! And I talked to [my friend] about it. He was like, 'But it's a changing thing, so you can't define it.' So I felt like I was a loser because I couldn't define it. I should have some sort of definition when people call the office [at the multiracial organization], and I should be able to talk about that. But I think it's a hard thing to define in general. So I think everyone has their own concept of it. And I've always had problems with it my entire life so I think that adds to it."

Shay already demonstrated how she thinks race is fluid, in part because "when you are in a black and white environment, most people cannot comprehend race beyond black and white." In her experience, multiethnic Asian backgrounds and "the fact that there is more than just black and white never crosses many people's minds." For Shay, then, conceptions of race are rooted in a monoracial framework. "I've learned that being biracial is very fluid with me. And that I can easily change my identity to fit the situation. So race means to me being able to fit into a certain situation at a given point in time."

How people end up classifying each other based on race makes a definition problematic for Shay, precisely because:

"The mainstream definition depends on perceptions, how people see me, the way I wear my hair, what clothes I wear, what I'm eating, drinking, who I'm hanging out with, it all plays a factor in what they'll perceive me as, as either I'm going to be this race or that race. I think it has a lot to do with the geographical and other factors, other people's exposure to other cultures and their intelligence, really."

A key aspect of how Shay thinks of race is that it is a system of classification that loosely defines people based upon context specific social norms, so that geography, the food we eat, our styles of clothing all become indicators of race.

But what exactly is a race? Konomi explained:

“Race is more of a broad categorization. Race has more to do with your physical characteristics. I see you look white, or I see you look black. It doesn't matter if you're from Cuba, you're white or black. Its more like first impression, I think. So that its easier for people to categorize you based on what you look.”

Konomi's definition centered on a black and white dichotomy that categorizes all people into black, white, or other. Her definition reflects her status as an 'other' her entire life.

Simon's definition echoed Konomi's: “Its just the way people classify other people based on their phenotype or what they look like. That can be people of color, white people, black people....” Simon did, however, make his definition slightly more complex:

“In countries where there's more miscegenation between the so-called races, I don't think they view it so much as stratification. It's been there for a long time and in some countries it's like, what position you hold in society will depend on how light you are. But it's a lot more fluid. It's not so much like just this or that.”

In his definition of race, fluidity was rooted in skin tone, social class, and multiraciality, and Simon ultimately argued that what you look like has more meaning than racial group.

Michelle saw race as initially having more to do with personal identification.

“The thing that stands out for the most part is just how you define yourself and how people around you define you for the most part, first.” Michelle talked about how she uses race.

“I use it to identify other people. If you were describing somebody to another person, that’s the very first thing that comes up, unless they are maybe your same race. That’s like the very first thing that you always say about somebody. Unless they are the same as you in which case, it’d be like that girl over there in the pink shirt, versus the Asian one.”

Michelle had a difficult time defining exactly what specifically she meant by race, other than by saying Asian. Once she went beyond how she uses race to identify others and talked about what she actually used to determine someone’s race, she became less clear. “I guess how I identify people based on race I guess would be, maybe skin color at first, but I mean, I don’t know. How they look? I don’t know.” While her guesses appeared rooted in skin tones, Michelle hinted that regardless of how we identify people based on race, there is a deeper purpose.

“I think that people need to differentiate themselves from other people. And people need to collectively belong to something. Because I know, as Americans, I know that we do that for those two reasons. ‘Cause we have such a diverse range of races. I don’t know that other countries kind of differentiate in the same way, but they might use other factors to distinguish themselves from the other.”

Michelle argued that other factors we use to differentiate “could just be lighter or darker skin. living in the north or the south. Or this village or that.” Chris also considered other factors as having shaped his identity, though he referred to characteristics or interests rather than cultural or physical appearance, and gave race little to no significance.

“One of my friends, his parents are particularly well off, so we always call him the rich boy. I mean it’s just whatever sets you apart, but I don’t really identify myself as a race. It’s just a color. It’s just the place my parents are from. It doesn’t make *me* who I am.”

Chris also saw race, in part because of the limited relevance he placed on it, as something we should not be using to distinguish people.

“I don’t think anyone should. I don’t think we should refer to anyone that way. I think that’s just garbage. Because you know what, in 100 years, we’re going to be so intermixed that the idea of being a pure breed, or whatever, it’ll be like, you’re weird. Its like, what do you mean you’re only white? What do you mean you’re only Chinese?”

As Chris clarified that race to him is irrelevant not just because personally he believes it has been, but also because of the increasingly multiracial population. Yet he still rooted his definition of race in singular categories.

“How do I define race? Well, you know, because I kinda am both races, and by my Chinese friends, I’m a Twinkie. I’m a white boy. And with my white friends, I’m the Chinese, so it depends. Whichever group I’m with, it’s always I’m whatever they’re not.”

Race, clearly, has a political role for Chris, where his identity shifts depending on the ideological stance he chooses to take. So while he chooses to identify as Chinese around his white friends, he chooses not to identify as white around his Chinese friends. Yet he also sees race as rooted in distinct ethnic and racial categories. "Well, actually I'm like 8 different races...all over Europe, Eastern Europe, and China. I'm a dirty mutt."

Kathryn argued to the contrary, that "there really is no race—well, the human race. So there are different ethnicities and whatever, but race, as far as that's concerned, there's not really different ones. So now whenever I hear people say that, I'm like okay whatever." When I pushed for clarification between the human race and just race,

Kathryn explained:

"Of course I knew it wasn't biological. I mean I knew we were all the same, but still the term of race, we were different. I was in a class last year, and our professor went through the argument that we're different races and separated out how that can't be possible. She talked about how animals can be of different species or races and humans have no components like that at all. I just thought that was interesting how she pointed out that there's really no difference as far as biology is concerned. There are mainly ethnic differences. She also talked about how people like to categorize people by race."

Given this biological refutation of race as a construct, however, Kathryn still demonstrated that race had a social meaning that shaped her experiences. "I don't know what race means to me. Of course it's like the main part of my life, I guess. I mean there's not really anyway I can separate it from who I am or anything."

Robert combined this biological perspective with a socially constructed version that included culture, history, and geography. "I think it just means, the basic scientific way. Just people's skin color, where their ancestors originated from, what part of the world, whatever." What separated Robert's thinking about race was that he saw skin color and differentiation based upon physical attributes as only a small part of race.

"People of a certain race, whether that be Native American, black, whatever, they grow up in a family that generally has that culture and that history, the shared experience. So culture can be anything from my dad loves hamhocks, greens, and chitlins because he's black, or it can be when I run into some black people, we understand that we have some of the same experiences whether its just dealing with people at Nordstrom's or walking by a police officer. Or how it feels sometimes if you're walking behind a white woman and you feel like she's scared of you, so she crosses to the other side of the street. That kind of stuff. But culture is a lot more than just the bad stuff. Music, dance, forms of speech, all that kind of good stuff."

While Robert tied race with culture, he also connected this culture to racism, where people who share the same race also share in the same system of oppression. In this light, thinking of race, for him, means thinking of the way in which race is used.

"In the world we know today, race is something that's been used against people, just as seeing American Indians as savages, blacks or Africans being brought here, Latinos....It's a social construct used by people to keep other people from getting power. But race also brings culture and

ideas and backgrounds and heritage, which people of all races can be proud of and celebrate, but at the same time, when it starts being used in a negative way, then that's what we're trying to deal with right now."

These students articulated a fairly complex definition of race based upon their personal experiences. From these students, we can take race to mean, as Simon asserted, a way of classifying people based upon a white/black and occasionally white/people of color continuum. Konomi and Michelle extend this by observing that this classification is based more upon what others think you look like than on what you may actually be. While Chris saw race as equally important to social class and hobby interest, Kathryn directly contrasted this by arguing that race is "the main part of my life." A number of these students clearly articulated that race, regardless of its importance in shaping their lives, is situated within a context of monoraciality that does not adequately allow for their own classification. Ultimately, these students demonstrate that race must be thought of as a broad system of categorization based upon skin tones, personal and cultural styles of dress, food, social and cultural norms, peer perspectives, and geography.

Given this complex definition of race that reaffirms the summation of the literature in Chapter Two, Robert's voice comes in powerfully as he argued that race is also situated within the context of racism. Race, he asserted, would be irrelevant if it wasn't used to oppress people of color and multiracial people. "I tie race into racism, because race has been used in that negative manner. And I think we wouldn't have to be discussing what race is right now if it wasn't used in a racist form."

These students each defined race in a unique manner, yet the themes that echoed throughout their conceptions reflected the literature that, as we shall come to see in the

next two chapters, few of them have been exposed to. Yet taken together, these students powerfully answer the question, 'How do multiracial students think about race?' Rooted in their experiences, these students articulate a vision of race that is richly complex, fluid, and dependent upon the situation and social context. These students also conceived of race as an outdated means of categorizing people, which unsuccessfully represents an increasingly multiracial population. While all asserted that race has outlived its usefulness because it is a poor proxy for understanding and categorizing multiracial people, some also noted that its usefulness unfortunately best serves white people, and in this light, is likely to remain regardless of its actual relevance or connection to culture. That race will remain a cornerstone of U.S. society depends, according to most of these students, upon the nature with which race is used. Currently, most of these students assert, race is used to privilege white people at the expense of people of color and multiracial people, and in that sense, support the continued prominence of race.

Definitions of racism

"Racism smells like burning flesh and fire

Racism sounds like southern drawl and those little twanging instruments

Racism tastes dry, dirty, and bitter,

and gets stuck in your throat when you try to swallow it

Racism looks like old, worn out, torn up overalls with grease stains and a red hanky sticking out of the pocket

Racism feels like anger, rage, hurt, embarrassment, shame, frustration"

The purpose of this section is to clarify how these students define racism, given the previous definitions of race and the contexts within which they grew up. As with the term 'race,' definitions were solidified throughout the interviews, and entail specific answers to direct questions as well as stories and other related responses. These students define racism in much the same manner as outlined in Chapter Two. Taken together, these students offer up a fluid, historical understanding of racism, though most of these students alone offer more simplistic definitions. This is not to say that the students would not eventually outline the dynamics of racism, but that not all of these students had demonstrated a critical understanding of the dynamics of racism at the time of this study. In what follows, I explore how each student defined racism based upon the previous exploration of race. How they have actually learned about race and racism is more fully addressed in Chapters Six and Seven.

Konomi was clear about the historical and contemporary presence of racism, but also thought the way racism is transmitted was an essential part of racism.

"A lot of things pass on generation through generation. They say that slavery is so far away, but its really only a couple generations, three generations back. That's your grandparents parents. 'Cause my grandma was born in 1930. But family values are always passed along, there are always traditions. And along with traditions, your mindset and the way you think of people kind of gets passed along, too. If your great grandparents think that black people are stupid and ignorant, they're going to teach their kids that. And their kids are going to teach their kids that and

it just continues on. Unless you're actively trying to reverse that, you're going to grow up to be just like your parents."

Her definition of racism began with the transmission of overtly racist attitudes, but also connected institutionalized pressures to assimilate with negative treatment by other people of color.

"I think [it's the same] for Asian people who are born and raised in this country. I know Asians in general still look at white people as this ideal race. And so when a lot of people come here, they want to be totally immersed into the white culture. So they try to take on what they see white people doing. If they see white people acting this way towards blacks, they feel this way towards black people. Most Asian countries, like Japan, for instance, are very racist. Very racist. Its almost a universal thing to think that black people are the enemies and they're just stupid and they're half human. I think its also just fear of the unknown. But now in Japan, black people are cool. But they probably still wont get jobs. But then here, black people are cool, too. They want to listen to our music, follow in our styles of clothes. But at the same time, if we move into your neighborhood, you move. White people don't want to live there anymore."

Racism, for Konomi, can be individual or institutional, . overt (parents transmitting negative thoughts) or covert (e.g. assimilation). Konomi was also clear that racism negatively impacts life opportunities:

"Basically, racism is power plus prejudice. White people have the power to impact you as far as where you go, how you live. Basically impeding on

your education or your climbing up the social ladder. Whether its in your job or stuff like that.”

Emiko shared Konomi’s conceptualization of racism as an institutionalized form of oppression, transmitted, in part, through our families. Yet Emiko placed responsibility at the individual level, and began by talking about hate groups:

“Racism is really not being conscious of what you are saying towards other races. Insensitivity, ignorance, its just not accepting, or just not understanding and talking about a different race. I just think of the KKK and just how they are so, they just don’t have acceptance. They’re weird. They’re crazy.”

Emiko did not only define racism as blatant hate groups, but argued that racism has a culminating effect on institutions:

“I think that they’re based in the same thing of white supremacy. But the KKK is more overtly out about it. And they actually go out and kill people. But the institutional is more subtle and you don’t know it when you’re growing up because you have no idea. You have nothing to base it on. But it ingrains in you that there are no important Asian or Arab people in society. And it just makes you look up to white people as these leaders. You know, all the presidents were white males. And 80% of the congress are white males. So it makes you look up to these white male figures. And then by not seeing minorities in public leadership positions in history then you tend not to trust them when they are today. And that’s institutional.”

Emiko's definition also explains some of the pressures to assimilate; it is difficult to emulate groups of people if there is no exposure to that group, and part of racism results in people of color not having exposure to much that is not white.

Emiko also connected racism to capitalism, similar to Derman-Sparks and Phillips' *Dynamics of Racism* (see Chapter Two). Regardless of the overt or covert nature of racism, its purpose, for Emiko, is to promote an economic interest, and one of the ways this is done is through mis-educating the mass public by hiding or glossing over what might be considered racism by minority populations.

"I'm reading about capitalism, the information society, and how the governments and the book publishing companies are big huge ass conglomerates and they're all connected. They all cater to their commercial interests. And the government gets most of the money from the commercial interest and so its not in the government's interest to talk about the bad things that we did to all the minorities. So in order for the books to become published and not get silenced, they do whatever the government says. And that's like in Japan, they don't talk about Korean comfort women."

Her example of Korean comfort women and Japanese resistance to discussing that atrocity connects with the notion that many white people are simply uncomfortable discussing racism (see Clark, 1999; McIntyre, 1997; Tatum, 1997). Like Konomi, Emiko conceptualized racism as a system of oppression based on individual perceptions, but her definition also called into question institutional processes that support white supremacy by not educating about the perspectives of those negatively impacted by white people.

Michelle saw racism as less about an extremist attitude, and more directly about having the power to oppress people that one has prejudices about.

“Racism is classifying somebody based on their race and discriminating against them because of that. Or having judgements about them because of that. Its using race to oppress people. To not allow them to be all that they can be. Not allowing them to have the same opportunities.”

When asked who has the power to shape such opportunities, Michelle responded: “I think it depends on environment. But if you wanted to use the United States of America as the environment, then I would say that probably the whites have the power.” Michelle evoked images of South Africa and their apartheid era when she noted the demographic shifts do not necessarily mean shifts in power. “Even though the numbers are shifting to where there are more and more and more and more people of color, whites still have the power.”

Racism, for Michelle, was rooted in the use of racial prejudices as a means of oppressing people, and in the United States context, that meant white people benefiting at the expense of people of color. But Michelle also saw racism as something that shows up in personal interactions.

“I think racism, as I experience it now, is a lot more subtle and is more of a feeling that you get when interacting with someone. It’s really hard to explain, it’s kind of a sixth sense type of thing that makes your mouth tighten up, yours eyes narrow, and your heart rate speed. You know when you’re standing at the counter ready to buy something and everyone

around you gets helped first and then. 'Oh, I didn't see you standing there.' "

Shay also conceived of racism as personal, but saw it as shaping her everyday reality.

"As a person of color, it's just a daily occurrence. It's just reality to me, and so, what it means to me is just, something that's a fact of life. Sort of like how you learn how to tie your shoe right or something, I just have to navigate through throughout my life."

When pressed further, Shay explained racism through the treatment her mother faces.

"It's very tough for me to hear people criticize my mom's English or talk down to her like she's stupid. So I think that's racism."

Shay clarified the difference between the social status of white people and people of color and demonstrated how white people may think lightly of racism, in part because of their limited exposure to it.

"It's different when you're white, part of the majority group and you date someone in the minority group. 'Cause this girl, she was naïve. She was white and her boyfriend was black. And she was like, 'When I have kids I want to teach them to love and respect everybody and that they're who they are, they're black and white.' But that's not reality. And I think it comes from the fact that she's part of the majority group and she doesn't recognize that yeah, you might have a black boyfriend, and you might hear his stories, but you haven't been through it yet. And when you start having kids and you have a kid, and you start walking around with that kid people

are going to treat you way differently. And you can tell them all this happy good love stuff. but that ain't going to work."

Simon also noted the institutionalized nature of racism, and made the connection to a shifting nature of racism, where power and privilege have become more covert.

"Racism also has something to do with having power or being in control of something. I think it has become less easy to spot. It's not so much like in the cartoons, somebody who's blatantly drawn Japanese and made fun of. I think now its more about people satisfying the law. Like up until a certain point we're going to do this and we're going to run a showy campaign where on our posters we're going to have one person of African decent. one Asian person. one white person. maybe two white people. a kid. an old person. A person in a wheel chair. and we're just going to create this awesome image that we're user friendly in every way. And then you look at who is making the decisions in companies and schools. and its still mostly white males."

When asked about the purpose of racism. Simon replied that it is "used as a tool now. It's used to keep people of color complacent. not willing to speak out or take a chance. In that way. racism continues. in terms of the power structure being in the hands of the few." Simon had already clarified that those few hands tend to be white. but he also considered the negative treatment he has faced from communities of color. though he was less articulate about whether or not people of color could be racist.

"If a white person discriminated against me. I'd say that's racist. Or if a person of color told me I was too white. too. I've heard the term reverse

racism. and I don't really know what that means very much. but somehow that gets associated with people of color versus racism with white people.

I think that goes back to the power thing."

Yet Simon was clear that while the "mainstream is sadly still divided on black and white and maybe Asian now," there still was no room for multiraciality.

Though Simon was clear about racism as a system of oppression, he had a more difficult time explaining racism on a personal level. "Racism is just basically acting on your prejudice based on what somebody looks like. And now that I think about it, that doesn't really make sense, because race isn't, you can't say somebody is ugly, and I don't want to go out with them, that's racism." Racism, in Simon's mind, was clearly more about treating others differently because of their race.

Robert also took issue with mainstream thinking of racism.

"Mainstream definitions don't give racism enough importance. People said racism is over, or with affirmative action, race doesn't matter any more. It used to matter, but now nobody has an excuse to bring up racism. So I think mainstream people deny that racism has an effect. They recognize that racism still occurs in most places, they just don't think it has any importance any more. So I think both me and mainstream agree that racism occurs, its just about the importance of it that we disagree."

Robert offered up a more extensive definition of racism, though he also stated that the mainstream probably would not agree with his definition. Racism, he argued, is:

"Treating a person differently in any way solely because of their skin color, what they look like, or their race, especially in a negative way.

Whether its harming people by not giving them a job or just giving them the cold shoulder in class, or it can be cross burnings and lynchings. Very active ways of keeping a group of people subservient or second class in order to serve the higher classes of people. the people who consider themselves to be the master. Especially white men in general. but white women. too. they kind of feed off of it, they benefit from it as well.”

As with Simon, Robert recognized that people of color also treat people differently based on race, yet he more clearly articulated the difference in power.

“People of color can be racist, too. I think that you find racism even inside one racial group. Whether its skin color, whether its ‘That dude acts like he’s white,’ or ‘That dude’s a thug,’ or whatever. They can be racist, but I don’t think the effects of racism towards other people of color or towards whites is nearly as strong because the people who have the power today in America are generally white men. So a black dude who is on the streets can talk all this shit he wants about the CEO of Time Warner, but that’s not going to hurt that dude. And the CEO can decide. ‘Well, I’m not going to give him a job now.’ And he has the power to give him a job or not. He can help feed his kids.”

Robert tied this negative treatment to a historical context of colonization, demonstrating one of the dynamics of racism.

“Racism has been in America since the first contact between Columbus and what he called the Indians. And they used race or savagery or non-Christianity in order to provide the justification for killing thousands of

them. taking their gold. making them work almost as slaves in gold factories. killing their Tenochtitlán, the Aztec king. And for blacks in America. its been used to justify slavery. to justify bringing them. to justify the mistreatment, and 'They're not real people like us. they're doing better here then they were in Africa.' And in today's world. it's been used again. like *Plessy vs. Fergusson*. it's separate but equal. Racism has been used by whites. especially in the South. to keep black people from trying to vote. to exercise their rights in the constitution. Racism was used in the twentieth century in order to keep the others from attaining the position in life or in society. that whites. and especially white men have."

Part of Robert's conception of racism was rooted in his thinking of multiraciality. While he recognized the historical presence of racism. its overt and covert nature. he also saw racism as having a monoracial bias. which put multiracial people. as people of color. in a difficult situation.

"People who are mixed race have certain experiences that are different than people who are all one or the other. But I think it could become dangerous for the minority side of people if they stop connecting themselves to racism and say I'm not black. I'm mixed. Which is the truth. but at the same time. people are still going to use the fact that you're black and part black to oppress you. to segregate or discriminate against you. So when you start talking about I'm not black. I'm half black. but to people who want to use it against you. you're black. You're just another nigger.

So I think people need to be proud and realize exactly what they are but at the same time realize that other people may not see them that way.”

The connection for Robert rested with skin tone. Regardless of someone’s actual racial heritage, he saw skin tone as determining one’s side in the dichotomy created by racism. Ultimately, Robert saw racism as depending upon how others see you.

“In white society, the darker, the more scarier it is. Especially for African Americans, light skinned people of color bring about less fear from whites. Most whites still see mixed people like me as black. But I think they are a little bit less afraid of us as opposed to a very very dark skinned dude who looks like he just came from Africa. And inside the black community, it plays a role with some people, but I think most black people feel if the person is a quarter black they’re still a part of the family, they’re still black. But I also have heard from black people, ‘Oh that sorority only likes light skinned girls.’ So there’s a little animosity there, but I think they still understand that those light skinned girls are still black. And in the past, light skinned blacks have used the dark skinned-ness of darker blacks against them, too. Those light skinned blacks would consider themselves superior because they had that white blood in them.”

Similar to Robert’s definition, Kathryn saw racism as not merely white on people of color, but also impacting how people of color interact with each other as well.

“I think there’s a lot more hostility from the white side, of course. If I go somewhere where there’s black people, I’ll be more accepted than if I went with white people. But I act white, I guess. So I would also feel like I

wasn't acting black enough, which is terrible, because what do you do to act black? So I'm dealing with all this contradiction."

While Kathryn saw her personal contradiction as common, she also saw racism as institutionalized, with deep historical roots.

"I think everybody is racist in some way. Maybe favoring your ethnic group over another. There could be institutionalized racism, where some people say that minority groups can't be racist because they can't do anything to enforce it. In that sense it would be denying people privileges or opportunities based on their race. That's what racism is. I can't say treating people different because of their race because we all have to treat everyone differently according to how we categorize things. 'cause that's how we work mentally. So I would say institutional and you can deny people opportunities."

Kathryn saw racism, this system of oppression rooted in favoring the ethnic group an individual belongs to, as something that depends on how one identifies, which in turn, depends on "where you grew up and your environment." When asked why Kathryn ultimately identified as black instead of white or biracial, she replied, "being in a predominantly white environment pointed out that I was different. Looking at myself and looking at them, made it even more apparent to me. So I would not identify with being white." Racism, according to Kathryn, impacted, and in fact shaped, her decision to identify as she does. In contrast to Robert, then, who saw racism as how others see him, Kathryn saw racism as dependent upon on she identifies.

“If I grew up in a black environment, I would definitely feel more black. I don’t think any environment could have made me feel more white than I already feel. I mean that’s just how our society works. If you’re different, not the majority, then they’ll point out everything different about you.

Whereas if you’re a minority, you fit in with the other minorities.”

Kathryn’s sense of racism remained rooted in a system of oppression that ultimately shaped how she, and others, identify multiracially. It is important to revisit the difference between her definition and Robert’s. While both agreed on the institutionalized nature, they disagreed on whether or not racism depends upon how you identify or on how others identify you. While both recognize that each plays a part, they raise an important tension. How important is personal identity versus how others identify you? Complete definitions of racism must address this tension, for certainly both are relevant to how an individual is affected by racism.

Conclusion

The previous seven students defined racism in ways that fit under the model created by Derman-Sparks and Phillips (1997). Again, their dynamics of racism (see Chapter 2) asserted that racism is: (1) overt and covert; (2) based on a politically constructed definition of race; (3) rooted in capitalism and colonization; and (4) connected to sexism and classism. All seven of the previous students outlined racism as overt and covert and touched upon the political nature of race in the previous section. Through discussing their first incidents of racism, these students also placed their experiences within a peer context of overt racial teasing. Only a few demonstrated the historical connection to colonization and capitalism, yet all articulated some

understanding of the historical roots of racism. Several students will make the connection to sexism and classism in the next section, though it is important to note that when defining racism, Kathryn was the only student to actually tie in her gender to racism. Yet many of these students demonstrate the connection between racism, sexism and classism in the next chapter.

These students also further extended the dynamics of racism to include a context of monoraciality. Such a context is important given that these students have been excluded by both white people and people of color. They did not, however, define racism in a way that addressed many of the points they have already demonstrated. While these students told stories of members of their families excluding them, none mentioned their families as having any role in racism, except Konomi, who talked of familial roles in passing racism down from generation to generation. None of the students directly cited familial pressures to identify a particular way as an example of racism. Yet these students, individually and collectively, provided full definitions of racism that further extend the dynamics of racism and illuminate the complexity of understanding family contexts in institutional forms of exclusion.

Before moving to explore these students' experiences in K-12 schooling, it is essential to discuss the case of Chris Wong, who defined racism in a way that departed from the dynamics of racism and from the rest of the students in the study. As demonstrated in the previous discussion about race, Chris argued that race is not socially relevant, and as such, he approaches racism in a very different manner. While he would argue against the existence of the dynamics of racism, he did present several exceptions to his seemingly rigid thinking about race and racism that contradict his statements

regarding the irrelevancy of race. Taken as a whole, Chris confounds thinking about race and racism, but also presented the possibility that he is perhaps more connected to race than he might articulate. Chris is the only student in this study who, at times, denied being multiracial, and this appeared connected to his belief in the overemphasis on race and racism. In contrast, while Kathryn responded to her monoracial context by attempting to create an essentially race-less identity as a swimmer, she failed because she simply could not pass as white. Chris, on the other hand, can pass as white, and in this sense, has the option of adopting a race-less identity as do many white people (see Clark, 1999; McIntosh, 1993).

Chris began the first interview with a warning: "If we talk about my experiences here, I might offend you." When I asked why, he continued, "Well, as of yesterday's [edition of the school newspaper], I was called a racist Nazi." He went on to defend that his comments were taken out of context and did not reflect what he really thought. "I'm not racist or anything." When I probed to see what had happened to bring out such charges against him, Chris replied:

"It was basically because of a disagreement over a racial issue. It wasn't necessarily the fact that it was a racial issue, but it involved people of different races. Whenever there's a racial issue, someone will play the race card. Guaranteed. Someone's gonna play the race card. Either someone's gonna play the race card or they're gonna call you a fascist Nazi. Those are the generic race things. As soon as—if there's ever—any dispute on any racial issue, someone will call you that."

Chris asserted that racism is a tool used in arguments: "Whenever there's a conflict between any groups of people of a different race, someone will play the race card. 'You're racist.' 'You don't agree with me, you're racist.' "

Chris regularly discusses racism in public, typically through written letters to the editor. Yet when asked to define racism, Chris struggled:

"It's really hard to define racism, because there's a difference between racism and just saying the facts. There's a complete difference. As a whole, Asian people like to look for sales. I don't know why that is, but they're big bargain hunters. They also like to be engineers and doctors. That's not racism. I'm categorizing them by race, but the fact that they're bad drivers and like sales, me saying that, in my opinion, does not make me a racist."

When I pursued further clarification of why Chris stereotyping Asians in general was not racist, he replied: "I would say that classifications as a group, as long as they're general and something you can back up, isn't necessarily racist."

Chris continued to argue that he was not racist, without ever clearly defining what he meant by racism:

"It's a lot harder to be racist when you're categorizing a group, because a group definitely has tendencies. But if I were to assume and hold that against an individual without knowing them, then I would consider that racist. Just because someone's a part of a group, groups as a whole are always certain things, but just because you're part of a group, a group you didn't choose to be a part of, doesn't mean that you are that group."

Chris's definition of racism, though cloudy, was more telling by what he did not say. He typically evaded direct probes asking for clarification as to what exactly racism meant. In later interviews, Chris mentioned an exception to racism not existing: "I think [Native Americans are] the only real group that's been oppressed." When asked to explain why they were an exception, Chris presented more stereotypes:

"Native Americans seem to have a big problem with alcohol. And that's not racist or anything, that's just the whole fact. They have a real problem with [alcohol] and with education. And groups that have real problems like that are at real risk for dying out. So we should help them out. I don't think we have any American Indian senators. There not a group that can really fend for themselves. And we shouldn't repress them, but it would be easy for them to be forgotten about. And easy for their needs to be forgotten about. A lot of the other racial groups have a lot of people speaking for them and they have a lot of success. Maybe not everybody, but there are people who have money. The only reason I even say American Indian is just because they just seem like they really need it. They really need someone to look after them. They really need someone."

While Chris talked of Native Americans as victims of oppression (see Ryan, 1971), he was careful to not apply the term racism to their situation. Yet his discussion was rooted in stereotypes of Native Americans. His continual assertion of racial stereotypes led to a dilemma. Was Chris perpetuating racism through these stereotypes, or was he merely more comfortable airing his non-politically correct views than the rest of the students in the study? At the end of the first interview, Chris asked me if I thought

he was racist and in many of the responses to his letters to the editor in the school newspaper, he is referred to as a racist. According to several of the other students, Chris' stereotyping of Native Americans and even his own ethnic group fits within their definition of racism. But the possibility remains that Chris was simply more comfortable and in touch with his feelings of racism, and the others were being politically correct.

Yet Chris demonstrated that, with the exception of his victimized Native Americans, his conception of racism was rooted in individual perceptions. He simply did not see racism as a system of anything.

"Most people on this campus have grown up in a fairly non-racist era.

We've all grown up with tolerance and diversity, and we might not all believe that, but this isn't the 1950's or 1960's. No one's going around saying, "you chink," "you jap," or "you nigger."

When asked about the history of this name calling, Chris discussed legal forms of racism and clarified that his conception of racism does not include institutionalized actions like Japanese Internment because such he saw such governmental actions as justifiable.

"Back in the 50s, we had segregation. That doesn't happen anymore.

Something that did happen back then was the internment camp thing, which a lot of people think was racist, but a lot of the Asian people I know and talk to don't think it was racist. When you actually looked at the facts of the segregation issue, and it's become very politically correct to say, 'Oh, well, that looked bad.' But really when you look at the facts and our lack of technology, our lack of knowledge, and the lack of any realistic way to....I mean, it wasn't handled very well. But the actual fact that we

did that wasn't necessarily, I mean, it's...there are a lot of complaints about how it was handled, but I wouldn't necessarily think that was an unjust thing to do."

Chris defined racism as classifying a group, and relating those group stereotypes to the individual. Yet he was not able to see Japanese Internment as fitting within his own definition, even though all individuals of Japanese heritage were rounded up based upon a group classification, not individual traits. That Chris did not apply his definition of racism to any of the examples he provided throughout the interviews is perhaps not surprising given his belief that race is not that relevant. Yet he clearly separated himself from the rest of the students in this study, but not because he defined racism so differently; indeed, his definition was about overt racist acts, which the other students also noted as a quality of racism. Yet instead of conjuring images of the KKK rally, Chris' conception of racism brings to bear for him visions of people of color 'playing the race card.' That Chris denied the existence of a system of oppression based on race may be more connected to the way in which his family came to the U.S. poor, but have economically pulled themselves up from their bootstraps. Through his minimalist conception of racism, it is important to reconsider that Chris can and most often does choose to pass as white.

For Chris, racism brings up immediate defensiveness. While he is adamantly against racism in the form of name-calling, remember that he jokingly calls his own mother racist slurs. While he acknowledged the oppression that Native Americans have and continue to face, he bases this oppression on their alcoholism and minimal numbers, never making the connection to why their numbers may be small, what may have driven

them to alcoholism, and why there are so few public leaders and highly educated Native Americans. He denied that other groups have faced such oppression, and cited Japanese Internment as an example of 'playing the race card,' since, in his view, no racism occurred. Yet he asked me repeatedly if I thought he was racist, just as he defended himself in the school newspaper as not being racist. Whether or not Chris subscribes to the dynamics of racism, he certainly is impacted in some way by racism, though it may be more because he tries so hard to not be considered racist.

Chris is fairly knowledgeable about the historical situation of communities of color. His awareness of how Native Americans may struggle demonstrate his knowledge about contemporary racism. Yet he completely denies a systemic nature to the oppression that he briefly mentions. His denial of his own mother's experiences possibly serves as a shield, protecting him from the very harmful rejection he has faced growing up. Yet Chris also demonstrates where these students may have all come from. Chris' gratingly challenges political correctness and conceptions of racism as rooted in our individual and cultural perspectives. He is not politically correct, nor does he appreciate surface level attempts to not offend.

Yet he brings to light an essential aspect to racism: Whether or not we think it exists depends entirely on how we define it. And how we define racism depends to a large degree upon how we have come to interpret systemic historical actions that have negatively impacted particular racial and ethnic groups as well as how we make sense of our own familial, geographic, and peer context. Defining racism also depends upon how these students make sense of overt racist acts and racial teasing that occurred when these students were growing up. Ultimately, this suggests that educators have dynamic

opportunities to connect the racial teasing multiracial students (and students of color) face, with the historical treatment of racial and ethnic groups in the U.S.

Chris demonstrated the importance of varying interpretations of 'facts,' and tied his definition of racism to an altogether different set of interpretations than did the rest of the students in this study. His different set of interpretations is precisely what leads educators to consider the role of education as more than simply presenting facts, stories, history. Rather, educators must consider the social and personal context within which each student comes to interpret the information they interact with in schools. Ultimately, Chris presents an ideal case for higher education. In this case, the mere presenting of information is certainly not enough for the development of critical awareness of the dynamics of racism. The question then becomes, how has K-12 set him up to succeed or fail? And if not K-12, then how does higher education help Chris develop his critical thinking? In the next two chapters, these students' experiences help to map out routes that worked for each of them. In Chapter Six, I explore their K-12 schooling experiences, while in Chapter Seven, I expand into higher education.

CHAPTER SIX
MULTIRACIAL STUDENTS
AND THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF K-12 SCHOOLING

"It would've been great to have the opportunity in high school to talk and think critically about race and identity and the systems of oppression in America."

- Robert Daniels

"You don't learn about race at all when you're growing up. Not in school, at least."

- Emiko Tanaka

"If [teachers] are not going to talk about anybody in school, they're definitely not going to talk about mixed people."

- Kathryn Moore

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the social context within which these students grew up and came to think about race and racism. I then outlined how they think of race and racism, given their previous experiences. Departing from this background, in this chapter, I explore how each student has conceived of their experiences in K-12 schooling, and highlight how their experiences have influenced their thinking about race and racism and their processes of coming to identify multiracially. Their educational stories highlight racism and monoracialism just as they illuminate the missed opportunities throughout K-

12 to educate these students positively about race and racism. Perhaps most importantly, these students' experiences unanimously testify to the almost complete lack of any intentional education around race and racism. What they did learn was neither taught by their teachers, nor reflected in their curriculum. Understanding these students' experiences in K-12 not only illustrates how their family, geography, and social groups come together, but also lays out an understanding of how they were socially and academically prepared for higher education.

In what follows, I present each student's experiences in public and private K-12 schooling, connecting their stories through several core themes. Each student has grown up with racism that has manifested in unique, but also extremely similar ways. Each student was rejected by their peers of color and by their white peers for not being either white enough or dark enough. This peer isolation added to an already present lack of teacher support. Most often these students' teachers even overlooked or ignored the blatant racist teasing these students faced. As these students turned away from their teachers, they often looked to their curricula, which was similarly removed from them precisely because there was so little mention of people of color. They had no academic or intellectual framework through which to view their personal experiences, and the students in this study went into higher education searching for what was clearly lacking in their K-12 schooling.

Emiko Tanaka

Emiko had a unique schooling experience because her mother, while not her teacher, made guest appearances in almost every class Emiko had from Kindergarten through high school. Her mother would educate about Japanese culture and Japanese

Internment, which had both a positive and a negative impact on Emiko. That Emiko did not necessarily share that culture by birth was not addressed by her mother, much less her peers or her schooling, yet no other student in the study had a parent with such a continued commitment to teaching about the culture of their children. From the beginning, however, Emiko's schooling experiences were couched in her cultural upbringing and her family's intimate connection to her education.

"Having my mom come to school was awful. I hated it. I begged her not to come. Pleading. I told her to go to my sister's classes. Just don't come to mine! She'd say, 'You hate your culture, you hate your race, you're awful that you think this.' So that just perpetuated her having problems with me having problems with [being Japanese]."

Even with the negative memory, Emiko still recognized the benefits of having her mother come to educate about Japanese Americans.

"I think it's great that my peers learned about that. I just wish it could have come from someone else because it pointed me out. 'That's Emiko's mom. Emiko's from this culture and this is her legacy. This is Emiko.' And I was like, 'No!' And then I'm adopted, so I'm like, I don't know if this is my legacy. Like I was born into the legacy and I didn't want it."

As Emiko struggled to accept the Japanese culture her mother strongly desired her to grow up in and identify with, her extended family only enhanced her status as Japanese to her schoolmates.

"One of my grandmas spoke only Japanese, so they just always talked about her like 'Oh, she's Japanese and she only speaks Japanese. Oh my

god!’ It was just something that they had never seen before. And we’d have ‘take your grandmother to school day.’ My parents made her come, and she felt really uncomfortable. And I was like, ‘You don’t need to do this.’ But they made her and she wasn’t received very well.”

Even with the family pressure to identify as Japanese, Emiko struggled to be accepted as Asian because she was so different from the other Asians in her school.

“That was really hard to be the only one that didn’t have English as a second language. ‘Cause people expected that. I got so confused. I didn’t know what to do. It just made me not want to be around other Asians ‘cause it was like, then I’d be identified as the other Asians were. Growing up in a white society made me conscious of my own race. And then trying to fit in a white culture and just blend in because I didn’t want to be Japanese. I wanted blond hair and blue eyes. And look like everyone else and not have a weird name.”

In rejecting being culturally Japanese, Emiko also rejected being seen by her school peers as not white.

“I think I took every little trend, at least that I saw in my school, and I did it up. And I think it was just me trying to figure out my own identity. Because I didn’t identify with the Asians, whites didn’t really accept me. And when my friends came over they would freak out and I’d be like, ‘Yeah, I’m different.’ So I was just trying to deny that I was Asian. People would tell me that I was Asian and I would be like, ‘What are you talking about?’ And there were some other girls, including Jaya, that perpetuated

the I'm-not-Asian madness. And there was another girl who totally did not identify as Asian, too, and we just hung out. We were the non-Asian posse that was Asian, but didn't identify as that. There were five of us, but two of us were first generation. So they didn't quite get us. They played along, but I don't think they felt this. Underneath they were probably like, 'What the hell?' But I think they just went along with it 'cause they were trying to fit in, too. It was not okay to be Asian. And then most of the Asians besides myself and Jaya and this other girl, most of them had straight A's. And played the violin in the Orchestra and were stereotypically quiet and laughed with their hand covering their mouths. And Jaya and I, oh god, no no. When we laughed it was, well, you've seen me laugh."

Emiko, and her peers, tried desperately to not be identified by others as Asian. This impacted Emiko's not wanting to identify culturally as Japanese, yet her mother was not okay with Emiko's rejection of the family's cultural heritage.

"My mom heard me talking on the phone, joking with my friends how we're not Asian. She yelled at me while I was on the phone: 'Do not talk like that!' And it would just go in one ear and come out the other. I'd just be like, 'You don't understand.' And she grew up in a Japanese community, too. So that was a lot easier for her. And I'm like, 'There are no Asians here.' And she'd be like, 'There's so and so and so and so's kid.' and she'd name off these five Asians, and I'm like 'that's all great and everything, but they're really culturally bound.' And she would get

mad when I would say I wasn't as culturally adept as these people because she really tried to push it on us."

Although her mother's classroom visits reminded her peers that Emiko was Japanese (even if she was not), Emiko continued to build up a non-Asian identity. She found a niche in high school with a racially diverse cheer squad.

"I was really very grateful that there were other Asians on the cheer squad because I did not want to be the only one. My best friend was actually half black and half Norwegian and she was looked at as a freak in school, too. You know 'You're not black, you're not white, so what are you?' And there were a few people who were Filipino and then me."

Emiko's peers on cheer squad joined in on her self-defeating humor, and together, her small group of friends created an identity that challenged being seen as Asian.

"We made fun of ourselves, too, though. Five out of twelve girls were minorities. And the Asians in our group, we called ourselves the Monchichis. I couldn't figure out why people were uncomfortable with us saying that and wouldn't call us that back. Instead of Asian power we'd do Monchichi power. I think we were really uncomfortable. We were just totally out of control about it."

One of the reasons for Emiko rejecting her Asian identity was because she did not feel connected to other Asians, much less to other Japanese students.

"I didn't feel like I fit in with the Japanese community because they're more Japanese than I am. I was rejected and I didn't want to deal with it. And growing up in grade school, the other Asians were typically first

generation so they were very cultural. Extremely. And I rejected it because I wanted to be American. So I didn't get along with them at all. I would always compare myself. like I'd say at least I'm not as Japanese as her. I'd do my hair all whacked out and wear tons of nasty makeup to try to be not Japanese."

Her rejection of being Asian and Japanese came to a crescendo in her junior high years.

"In seventh and eighth grade. I was the biggest spaz in the entire world then. I had bangs that were six inches tall. Off the hook! One time my teacher stopped class. he looked at me. and he was like. I just need to do this. And he brought out a ruler and measured my bangs."

Such a contorting of how she looked continued until Emiko's entire identity became about defining herself as 'not Asian.'

"It just became this joke. like. I'm not Asian. I'm not Asian. And it continued until high school. until I had a few Asian friends who were more comfortable being Asian. And that's what started me being okay."

Emiko's younger sister had a very different experience. in part because her racial identity was clearer. but also because she went to a more racially diverse school.

"My sister went to a private school for highly capable kids until her fourth grade year. So she grew up around tons of different races and was oblivious to the kind of stuff that she would have to face when she came to a public (school)."

Unlike Emiko, such schooling experiences supported Emiko's sister in developing a positive identity.

"My sister identified with being Asian. She would always say, 'that's so messed up that you'd say that. That's not okay.' And I'd be like, 'What are you talking about?' She was so confused that I could think that way."

Her school peers had a clear impact on how Emiko came to identify and reject being Asian and Japanese. What could have become a positive outlet for coming to think about race, racism, and being rejected because of a non-white identity actually reinforced Emiko's negative self-identity and esteem. Her parents, not knowing how to deal with their eldest child angrily rejecting her identity, sent her to counseling.

"I had a lot of anger. I was a pretty happy kid, but I just had this anger that would just click. And that freaked my parents out. It just always felt like I was a freak. So they made me go to the counseling, from kindergarten until sixth grade or something like that, which was just not okay. They got so confused when I would have identity crisis and they'd haul me away to counselors and all this stupid stuff. They would make me do weird things. Make me even more, like, 'Oh my god, I'm so weird.'"

When asked what kind of counselors, Emiko replied with annoyance at having to relive the memory, "Oh god. Oh god. Child development counselors. None of them were aware of any of the issues I was dealing with."

Other than what her mother was teaching her and her peers, Emiko was learning nothing about other Japanese, Asians, or transracial adoptees, much less about how to deal with identity issues. "This school made me just really not know what to do. And then

reading in the history books you don't have anything to be proud of. You don't. There's no one to be like, yeah, he's Japanese, too." Not seeing herself in the text books or outside of her family created the need for Emiko to begin to question herself.

"Just to see other Asians in the media would have been absolutely incredible. 'Cause you see whites in the media, and you see whites in your school. But you don't see any Asians in your school or in the media. So it's like, 'What am I? What am I doing here? How do people see me?' But then you find out because of how they treat you. And then it's not overt and it's not direct, but you figure it out eventually. It's like, 'Oh, I don't fit in. I'm not going to be invited by all the quite popular dudes to dances.' Then you find out and you figure it out for yourself. And it's a slow process, but it sucks. It totally sucks."

Her academic experiences just reaffirmed what her peers and the media asserted. Emiko was totally invisible as a Japanese or Asian person who did not identify, much less act, stereotypically.

"Looking back in the text books, it's only white people, and then some black people, like Harriet Tubman. And I was lucky. I actually got to read about her. And then I remember in my text books there was one paragraph dedicated to Japanese Internment Camps and that was it. And I was like 'Oh my god!' 'Cause I had obviously always grown up knowing about it. But it's institutional because the books leave out so many races. And how they talk about slavery and make it seem like it's just something that happened and it was okay. And it was just how it was. And I remember

thinking. 'God, isn't this wrong? But the books are not even say anything.' It just shocked me. And then later on I learned more about it and I couldn't believe it. And then there were no Asians; all the leaders were white. The black people were the ones that did the crazy, outlandish, weird things, like Martin Luther King. Like 'Oh my god, he stirred up society' and that's why he got into [activism]."

Emiko's teachers reflected this lack of acknowledging her conflicted identity and perpetuated the lack of education about people of color. "My teachers thought I was just crazy. They just thought I was crazy." When asked how her teachers would respond to her mother's presentations about Japanese culture and Internment, Emiko talked about how her teachers had no idea what to do.

"My mom would come in and she'd talk about the Japanese Internment Camps. And teachers would try to talk to me about it afterwards, and I'd try open up a little bit more and they acted so interested and so curious. And I'd tell them but then they would just get freaked out. And they'd be like, 'Okay, you can shut up now.' "

Emiko's teachers would ask questions of Emiko once her mother had left. They would ask questions like, "How long did your parents live in it? What happened to them afterwards?"

Rather than affirm her status as an historical expert, her teachers' lack of knowledge about the subject matter reaffirmed her invisibility and isolation.

"Usually they just wouldn't really ask about it. Or talk about it afterwards. The next day they would say, 'Let's thank Emiko's mom for coming in.'

But they wouldn't exactly have open dialogue. And my advisor tried to do that after the presentation, but she couldn't really get things out. It was different with my friends who had known about it so they felt a little bit more comfortable than my teachers."

One time Emiko's cheer squad advisor was exposed to a presentation by Emiko's mother. Afterwards, she "started crying 'cause she had had no idea." Emiko had been working with her all year, and felt the level she could confide in her advisor diminish dramatically.

"It wasn't like she was a teacher, but she was my advisor, so when we needed counseling and guidance or if we had problems, she was supposed to be the one. It was like, 'Did that just really happen?' 'Cause I thought we were tight, but maybe not.' It shocked me."

Even when her mother was not in the picture, Emiko knew that something was missing from her educational experiences.

"In the classroom of my first government class, there were all the presidents, and they're all white. You're just surrounded by all these white dudes. And then you never learn about black people, or any minorities, or Asians, or Native Americans, nothing. And history is all white people. Just maybe a sentence on someone. I was like, 'Are these the only people that did anything political in the country?' I was so confused. And then with the civil rights, we hardly learned anything about the black side of it."

Emiko's teachers typically responded to her in disbelief, yet at least sent the message that she was recognized.

“They just kind of shook their heads, most of the time. I don’t know if they respected me for being me, or if they just thought I was a freak. But in my annuals, my principal said that I had really made a mark on this school. I had no idea that they might think that. They would always say something about my being loud, that I’d always make class interesting.”

While Emiko left a lasting impression as a student, she did not recall her K-12 education in a positive light. Her schooling did not provide her the tools to make sense of being an adoptee growing up in a monoracial, monocultural environment. Throughout school, Emiko was extremely isolated, and wound up rejecting being Asian and Japanese even while being constantly reminded by her mother of the box she was supposed to fit into. Aside from her complex identity issues, her schooling did little to teach her about the issues that Japanese people, Asians, or other people of color, face in a predominantly white society. Not having her identity as Asian or Japanese affirmed, Emiko tried to pass as white, a futile effort for someone who physically cannot pass. Her education supported her only in her efforts to deny who she was, though as a transracial adoptee, she was determined to find out despite her teachers, the limited curriculum, and the context of her schooling. Emiko internalized the rejection by her peers, and her teachers’ lack of support. This internalization merely compounded a curriculum that avoided people who she might have shared any sort of historical context with. With this framework, Emiko headed off to college, not expecting anything more than the same irrelevant curriculum and well-meaning, though less-than-engaging teachers.

Michelle Davis

While Michelle fondly recalled her elementary years, she hated all the schooling beyond that. What separated those two sets of experiences was a geographical difference that she felt was insurmountable. Moving from fairly diverse Eastern Washington to the almost entirely white suburb south of Seattle had a negative impact on Michelle, which she did not recover from until she finally made her way to college. Similar to Emiko's experiences, Michelle did not learn much about the experiences of people of color throughout her schooling. But Michelle did articulate a much stronger sense of sexism that directly permeated her experiences while in school, and ultimately led to shaping her racialized identity.

In her early years, Michelle had only positive memories of schooling.

"I had way too much fun cutting and pasting to notice if the environment was not ideal for my well being. But, the very first time I remember somebody asking was when I was in third grade. And this girl was like, 'There is no way that your mom is white.' She tried to just tell me that I was adopted. I was upset that she didn't really believe me. But then it didn't really come up again until I moved. I cannot recall any particular events that occurred during these years that noticeably impacted my education. But it all went down hill after junior high. I swear to god that is where all my problems in my whole entire life originated from. And then I had to explain that to every single person. Because people were like hicks and stuff. They kind of were the same way. 'Oh, were you adopted?' I'm like, 'No, I'm not adopted.' "

The shift from her previous school to Maple Valley was clear to Michelle even before she moved. Somehow she knew that her diverse environment was about to change.

“Nobody ever said all the kids are going to be white. I just knew that was how it was going to go down for some reason. Before I even started my first day of class. I remember thinking ‘God, I hope I’m not the only black kid in my class. Please! That would just be horrible.’ Because you don’t know anybody and you just want to make friends. And I was just praying. ‘Please god, just don’t let me be the only black kid in the class.’ And I was.”

Having her fear of being the only black kid in class become a reality was troubling enough, yet the impact grew as Michelle drove around her new neighborhood.

“My family moved to Maple Valley right before the start of sixth grade. The first day of sixth grade was absolutely nerve racking. ALL of the people in my neighborhood were white and since moving to town, I had yet to see any blacks, minus my family, Asian, Hispanics, anything. So I was really nervous about how school was going to go. We fortunately moved into a nice upper middle class neighborhood, so I didn’t have to worry about being poor on top of everything else. Everyone wondered who I was, what I was like and they all wanted to feel my hair. I did well in school and didn’t get into any trouble. That was the honeymoon year.”

After her first year, things got much worse. From then on, Michelle was teased about being black, and her teachers began to treat her very differently than she had been treated up until that point.

“My junior high experience I wish I could totally erase from memory. I hated it. The classes were stupid, the teachers were stupid, and as far as I was concerned this was the biggest waste of two years. I was often ignored by my teachers or ridiculed. There were at least three known racist teachers at this school while I attended, one of which publicly called Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, ‘nigger day’ and the school did nothing. I got into a fist fight with a boy in my class for saying that he was going to dress up as a KKK member for Halloween. I was continually made to feel like I was dumb. Not as smart as everyone else. I was always started off in the lower math classes. No one ever outright said that I wasn’t as smart, but I felt it. I soon learned to compensate for this by becoming the class clown and there I stayed for the rest of my educational career. Any smart-ass comment that fit in with what was going on I would say it, even if it meant having to sit in hall for the rest of the class.”

Michelle’s teachers appear to have dismissed her and treated her as if she had absolutely no academic potential.

“My teachers didn’t care that I wrote notes in class either, as long as they didn’t have to talk over me, it was cool. I rarely turned in homework, frankly, because I didn’t have to. I was generally bored with the work but I liked biology a lot and did okay despite the fact that I never studied. I always knew that I wanted to do something in medicine, and signed up to take an anatomy class that had limited enrollment space. The only time I

had really shown interest in a class, but it was given only to the higher achieving students. which I had proven was not me.”

The lack of being seen as a high achieving student put Michelle on the easy track through high school. Rather than challenge what seemed like apathy, her teachers instead seemed to foster Michelle’s turning off of school.

“I was allowed to take stupid and easy classes that I could pass without ever cracking a book and going to the class fifty percent of the time. Like business math, where you basically just used a ten key to add a bunch of numbers. I even made a deal with a teacher and was allowed to take Band, even though I did not play an instrument and taught myself, with a little help from the band teacher, to play the trombone just so he could get more of a horn section and I could get an A. I’m kinda proud of that though. While everyone else was preparing to go to college, which is something that I wanted very badly and obviously was not prepared for. I was typing on the ten key and blowing spit out of a spithole.”

Michelle’s teachers typically did something to make her feel uncomfortable, either by treating her as if she was a bad student, or by singling her out. The practice of singling her out began shortly after she relocated to Maple Valley.

“I would always cringe whenever we would talk about slavery in school. ‘Cause all eyes would be on me. I would always be like, ‘Oh shit, here we go again.’ Whenever we would talk about slavery, the teachers would get really tense. And we were going to talk about slavery, we were just getting to the slave chapters and my teacher pulled me out of class and she was

like, (whispering) 'We're going to start talking about the slavery chapters, so um, if you want I can put your desk out here in the hallway and you can have some other kind of work that you can do while we're doing that and you can go back, come back into class when we get done with the chapters.' It made me feel weird and embarrassed. She was really targeting me. Or she had the conscious thought to bring that up in a private moment, which was probably worse than anything. You never want your teacher to take you out of class to tell you something. Nobody really knew how to deal with me in a way that they wouldn't think was going to be totally offensive. And I'm just a kid: how am I going to tell you how to do your lecture and class? I'm in seventh grade, what do I know? I don't know shit. You tell me, 'Am I sitting out here? Am I comfortable enough to listen to the slave drivers?' "

The teachers never answered, and as such, Michelle was left to deal with the ramifications of being targeted as not a 'regular' student. Yet not every teacher treated Michelle like she was destined for failure. Positive reinforcement, however, was too rare to sustain a positive academic esteem.

"I did have a few teachers who inspired me and had expectations of me and my work. I felt that I had to perform and meet these expectations to escape their disapproval. My Spanish teacher was one of those teachers. There was also a science teacher who basically kept telling me that I was smart and important. When I believed it, I achieved it and actually enjoyed the class. I also worked hard because I wanted to not only prove that to

him, but to myself. And it was not easy to believe this hype that I tried to create for myself. Most of my teachers at the time didn't buy it and really neither did I. Despite my, for the most part, 'unusual' performance in my science class, my 'scholastic self esteem' was too low to really totally believe this."

When asked what she was learning in school, Michelle responded that she was learning from a very white perspective and sharply critiqued her education.

"I just think what a horrible education I received. Especially being in such a sheltered environment with the kind of things that they choose to teach and choose not to teach. I didn't know that there were free blacks that lived in this country in 1492. But I had no idea. I think my whole education and my whole life up until then has been bombarded with white imagery. You have to dig more to get the black side of the things. 'Cause white is everywhere. I think you learn all about the white experience. It's just been really difficult for me. And that's partially because all I've learned is about white people."

Up until late in her high school years, many of Michelle's peers were also white. Yet even when she was in a racially diverse group, Michelle would be teased and excluded because of her biracial background. "I was on the cheer squad my junior year and we went to go cheer at this football game in Tacoma, or some other place. And I think I must have overheard some other little black cheerleaders say that I was white." Yet even though initially excluded by other black students, Michelle's peer foundation shifted from white to black when she was able to escape her isolation.

“The summer between my junior and my senior year, that’s when I was really ghetto fabulous. And then the whole senior year I didn’t talk to anybody at school. I didn’t have very many tight friends at school.”

This transition of peers began a new phase of racial identity for Michelle as her status as black was affirmed by an increase in black male attention, yet was also under new assault by black women. Throughout her growing up years, Michelle was seen by her white male peers as outside the dating realm; she was simply too dark for them, or so it had appeared to her. Yet when she was finally exposed to black culture, her newfound black peers led her to a more positive sense of identity.

“When you’re just getting into adolescence, and you’re really interested in boys and it’s just like, ‘Oh the boys don’t like me!’ It was horrible. It was really damaging to my self esteem. I would like all the white boys in my class. And they’d be like ‘Whatever.’ So that was bad...because my type of person is not really in their realm. They probably had their blonde ideal. I’m not in their realm. And they’re not really mature enough to look at other aspects of a person. It’s all about how you look. That’s all it is.”

This white beauty norm had a detrimental impact on Michelle. “Growing up I always thought I was so ugly. It was horrible. It was horrible. Like I thought I had a really big butt compared to everybody else. And wow it was horrible.”

Perhaps most demonstrative of the impact of sexism and the conflicting nature of heterosexual attention came during Michelle’s transition years.

“I know what changed. I started going out and hanging out in Seattle. I started going to the Oz. That’s all I needed. I started going clubbin’ at the

eighteen and over clubs. I had a fake ID, so I'd get in. That changed everything, 'cause all of a sudden there were [black] boys that thought I was cute. I felt like, 'Wow, there's a bunch of people who are like me.' In the same token, there was a lot of unacceptance as well. Like, 'You talk like a white girl. You're the girl who has all those white friends.' "

Yet even with the negative responses, Michelle had finally been exposed to a group of people that validated her 'black' features. "That probably had everything to do with my identifying as black. 'Cause I totally felt acceptance. Like, these are my people. And I think at that point in my life, I totally totally needed that." With this affirmation of her racial identity, however, Michelle has still struggled to overcome not being considered in the mainstream 'realm'. When asked what it means to be half white, Michelle demonstrated the impact growing up in a culture of heterosexism with strong adherence to white beauty norms.

"To be half white, what does that mean to me? It probably means that I have better hair than I would if I were all black. Which is a really bad thing to say. Hair is such a focal point in black culture. Obviously my hair is straight. Like if you look at videos now, if you look at videos in the early 90's, girls were just coming with their finger waves and they had a French roll, or they just had some short little braids. But now, all the beautiful women, it's all just really long and straight. Just Alliyah. That's exactly what it is. I think that's something that's impressed upon, that we've adopted into thinking that is good hair. So I think this is a real...it's kind of like the light skin—dark skin thing. Hair is definitely way up

there. It's what sets you apart. People automatically know that you're not quite on the bus by looking at your hair and the texture of your hair."

But Michelle was not always proud of her hair more closely resembling that white norm because for a time, her hair was more thick. "Back then, I had very curly hair. That totally destroyed my self-esteem. A little continues onto my life now. I still have issues. I know I do." This uneasy feeling came out when Michelle thought of her daughter, as well.

"My daughter, she colors pictures of herself. And sometimes she'll have purple hair. But sometimes she makes yellow hair on herself. And I'm just like, 'Oh my god, please tell me that you don't think that's what is best.'"

Michelle had two drastically different sets of experiences in schooling, though of course what would have happened had she stayed in Eastern Washington can only be surmised. It is clear that she moved to a community and school that did not support her development as biracial or as black. Her schooling experiences after relocating removed her from a racially diverse community that appeared to support her. Her schooling did not support the development of a positive sense of identity, and that was reaffirmed by her jumping headfirst into the first sense of community she had access to as soon as she could drive. The sexist nature of the increased peer attention she received further diminished her self-esteem while it also supported her development as a young black woman. Her process of coming to identify positively, though all the negativity, was not only ignored by her schooling, but also stymied by it.

Ultimately, Michelle was rejected by all the peers she encountered, both black and white, just as she was treated by her teachers as if she was less intelligent than her peers.

This negative treatment, combined with a curriculum that did not reflect her experiences, made it difficult for Michelle to develop a positive sense of academic, intellectual, or personal self. She eventually headed to community college with a vague notion that school could be better.

Shay Hurley

Because of her tumultuous family life, Shay shifted from school to school throughout her education. Poverty, divorce, and constant relocation took a heavy toll on Shay's education, as she never really settled into any one school. Experiencing so many schools provided her insight into many types of communities, and because of her constant moving, Shay was able to later reflect on the differences geography played on her schools and peers. Shay echoed Michelle and Emiko in that what she did learn about race and racism in schools was extremely limited. Shay also reaffirmed Michelle's experiences growing up with sexism and showed how that greatly impacted the racism and classism she also faced.

What first stood out to Shay was her family's poverty. Though she was friends with other poor families, she knew that being poor was one of the worst things to be.

"[Growing up], my parents couldn't afford anything. And then when I did live with foster parents, they were actually more well off to give me certain things. I just went to work. I thought that was how everybody did it. Even though I know now that's not how everybody did it, at the time, I saw other kids working, too. And that was what we did. We'd go put stuff on lay-away and wait 30 days and get it then. And those others was mostly people of color, 'cause I didn't hang out with a lot of white kids. I noticed

that they had all the cool stuff first, or that certain people of color, whose parents were well off, they had the cool stuff first, too. But the kids I hung around were all broke.”

The pressure to fit in by consuming the newest products took its toll on Shay, who worked consistently throughout her schooling years.

“We didn’t have a lot to feed and clothe a family. We were either bagging [groceries] or stealing. You get creative. The things you want, you just...it puts a lot of pressure. Especially how things are marketed towards kids and just all that pressure to consume all these products. I’m not saying my life would have been easier if we were upper class but it was just another hurdle to deal with. I mean, I learned so much about pawn shops, check cashing places. Because these are the things my dad was going through. I was working at Kentucky Fried Chicken when I turned sixteen, and my dad would have to borrow money from me to pay bills because he didn’t have enough money. He would just be like, ‘Can I borrow a hundred dollars?’ I’d just give it to him.”

As Shay grew up, money became more and more scarce. The lack of financial security directly impacted her father.

“Later in life I found out that he was pawning stuff. ‘Cause the pressure of him providing me this middle class life and us looking like we had some money was a lot on him. He bought me the Nintendo when it came out. And one day I noticed it was gone. I asked him about it and he was like, ‘it’s in the shop.’ So I kept asking him about it, and then finally the

Nintendo shows back up. But not the same Nintendo. He had pawned it, lost it in the pawn shop, and bought another one. And then one time I went into his room and his TV was gone. And I knew he pawned it. It was just kind of hard because he was working two jobs when he got out of the military and he was trying to keep that same lifestyle. And it was just tough. You had to deal with that and being mixed."

Because she was poor, Shay had to work to support herself and her family. This extracurricular activity had a negative impact on her academics, as well.

"If I had some more money, if I didn't have to walk so damn far to go to my job, or if I didn't have to do this, of course when I was younger I thought about those things. 'Why do I have to do all this crap?' In a lot of ways, I think it would have been better because I envied all the people who lived that lifestyle, whose parents made good money and they didn't have to work and could concentrate on school and their grades."

While growing up poor certainly provided a more difficult environment for Shay to succeed academically, she was not teased extensively because of it.

"When I got into public school, it was obvious I didn't get too much heat about that because they pick your most obvious flaw. So it was bad enough that I was mixed. They kind of ignored that I had bobo shoes and K-mart clothes. I guess they could look past that."

The impact of growing up poor began to take on more significance as Shay grew up, and while her peers appeared to look past her class status, the financial burden took its toll.

“It got more prevalent in middle school and high school when those issues of wearing the Jordache jeans, the Chic jeans, and the Sassoon jacket with the little OK zipper, and Nike shoes. But I wound up working at fourteen at a commissary, as a bagger, so I was able to have disposable income to go buy those things.”

Her peers appeared to take much more issue with her being mixed rather than with her being poor and just barely catching the tail end of the newest fashions.

“When I transferred to a school in the south, it was still segregated, and it was still black and white. There were no other ethnicities. So when I went to first grade there, people were baffled. They were looking at me like, ‘What the hell?’ It was hard to fit in with the black kids because I looked so different. And then to the white kids, I was black. But I was a little bit better because I wasn’t black black. At the time I realized how isolating it was because that set the course for the rest of my life and how I deal with everybody talking about black and white issues and ignoring me because of the whole black and white community thing. ‘Cause we was very isolated throughout elementary. My only friends were my relatives. And then I wound up going to school with my cousin who was black and Korean. And there were other kids in school who were Korean and white.”

The difference between going to school in the South and going to school around Tacoma and Seattle was profound because for once, Shay did not stand out so much. “In the south I was always answering ‘What are you? What are you? What are you?’ That damn question. I swear it was like all the damn time. I got so sick of it. But [in Seattle

and Tacoma], it wasn't so much." The increased racial diversity in her later public school experiences led Shay to return to Washington the first chance she had, and Seattle would later become the most permanent home in her life.

How did school prepare Shay for the constant questioning she would receive for not looking monoracial? Like the others in the study, Shay was taught very little about people of color and racism.

"I learned that MLK was a great man and Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves. That's all I learned. I knew that black people were in slavery, and that was kind of around MLK, black history month time. It wasn't an on-going thing. So I really didn't know too much about other people and other movements. Like Marcus Garvey. Nobody other than Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks. From K-12 I didn't know anything about Asian Americans. I don't even think we talked about Chinese building the railroad. We did, but it was very negative. It was a cartoon picture. I'll never forget it. The dude had this long ass pony-tail and he was so slanted eyed, just so caricature-like. All we learned was that they *helped* build the railroad. I didn't learn anything about Chicanos, Asian Americans, much less the diversity of Asian Americans. Didn't learn about Japanese relocation camps, AKA concentration camps. So we didn't learn anything like that."

When asked how she learned most of what she knew about people of color, Shay revealed that many of her early memories of people of color came from television, even though she grew up in racially diverse communities much of her life. The one group of

people that she did not have any hands-on contact with was Native Americans, and the impact stayed with her.

“I learned about Native Americans when I was younger. I remember cartoons that depicted people of color in negative ways, like the Indian and of course the black people were nannies. Watching TV, you got the sense of this is how it is. I never saw a Native American. You just always thought they wore loin cloths and were going to chop your head off.”

The negative portrayals of people of color were only part of the social context that invalidated Shay and her experiences. She also was aware of the impact of sexism and of negative portrayals of women, especially women of color.

“There weren’t positive images growing up. Growing up with dolls, the images of what beauty was, and school was just the same. I just thought I looked weird because everybody made it seem like I looked so weird. They’d be like, ‘Why are your eyes like that? Why is your face like that?’ Just really dissecting me and making me feel like I was this freak. And at times I would stand in the mirror and try to see how I would look if my nose was smaller. Or what if my eyes weren’t slanted. I would push my face together: ‘What if I had more cheek bones or a different facial structure?’ I would play in the mirror and be like ‘What if I looked this or that way? What if I didn’t look like this? Would it be easier? Would I have been more accepted?’ I guess being black and Asian, you kind of fall into the Asian fetish thing. And my step mother would make me feel bad for

being part Asian. So I really learned from her and from other people. I got it at home and I got it at school.”

Shay eventually learned to dislike being Asian, and as she rejected being Asian, she held on tighter to being black.

“I learned to really hate the Asian part of me. I just wanted to be black so bad. I was like, I’m going to marry a black man. I’m going to make my kids marry black. ‘Cause it was easier to mix back to black than mix to white. So I was trying to be somewhat realistic. If I make my kids marry black, then I can get rid of this Asian part of me. I totally did not want to be Asian. I wore the “black” hairdos. I would get the fingerwaves and updos and try to be black black black. But you can’t escape it. You know it’s on my face. It’s so evident.”

Even as Shay struggled with identifying as black or Asian or both, she was rejected from both her Asian and black peers.

“What made me angry when I was younger, too, was here I am, getting knocked on cause I was so Asian according to these people, but yet when I would try to reach out to the Asian Americans, they were like, ‘You’re black. Oh I didn’t even know you’re half-Asian.’ I’m like, ‘How can you not see it? I look just like you except for my skin is brown! How can you not see it?’ ”

The alienation Shay experienced growing up has since changed, to where, similar to Konomi, she fits within the current black and Asian fad. How she is seen now

illuminates the depth of the impact racism and sexism had on her through her K-12 schooling years.

“My first boyfriend was black and Korean, and the next one was black and Japanese. So it didn’t hit until I started dating monoracial people, white guys, black guys, then it became apparent that I was fulfilling some kind of exotic role that they had bought into. ‘Cause it wouldn’t come out when you just meet, ‘cause the guys who would come up to me and just be like, ‘What’s your race?’ and try to ‘oooooh’ me, of course I’m not going to date them. But they come up normal and in the course of dating, it comes out still. Now, it’s even weirder because I get a lot more now that I’m in my twenties. I get a lot more stares and compliments. And I’m not saying that I’m ugly, I know I’m an attractive person, but damn! It really has to do with a lot of songs that are out there, and music videos. And it’s just really in-style. And it’s freaky.”

Dealing with that sexism only added to the racism and classism that shaped Shay’s schooling experiences. But even while things may be changing now, Shay still faces a different form of the combined racism and sexism that she grew up with.

“It’s changing now to where there’s more visibility. Especially in the media. But we can go on and on about the up play about the exoticness of being mixed race. I always joke with my boyfriend, I always say ‘you better keep me, ‘cause I’m in style.’ Right now, black and Asian is the hottest thing. I get a lot of attention from guys just because I’m mixed

race. They're like, 'oooooh!' totally exotic. People don't understand, they think it's a compliment to be called exotic."

Growing up poor, in a broken home, shuttling between schools, and moving between racially diverse or fairly homogeneous neighborhoods certainly impacted what Shay took from her K-12 education. She has been affected by a social context of media, family, extended family, peers, and schooling that has not affirmed, much less directly talked about, the experiences of people like her. She has never been accepted nor supported in schools, and her exposure to the racially diverse Seattle/Tacoma area has been the most positive influence in her adolescence. K-12 schooling, for the most part, played a minor role in her positive identity development.

Shay had negative experiences due to her family instability, and the larger context of stereotypical media portrayals, peer rejection, and a curriculum that largely ignored her forced her to reject, at times, her racialized heritage in favor of wondering how life would be if she was white. Like the other students in this study, her teachers seemed oblivious to the type of treatment and messages that surrounded her, and likewise did nothing to adequately address her almost total rejection from the mainstream. Yet through this, Shay found the strength to overcome, moved away from her family, and began to build up the confidence that she would need to proceed through a community college system.

Robert Daniels

In contrast to Shay, Robert grew up in a two-parent family and lived in the same house for most of his life. His family stability and middle class security, however, was not enough to ensure a childhood and adolescence free of teasing and racial exclusion. Robert developed a violent reaction in response to the teasing that he would endure

throughout his growing up years. The education he received in schools did nothing to counteract that teasing, and his teachers appeared to exclude him in similar ways as did some of his peers. The content of his curriculum was similarly disengaging, and as a result, his eagerness to learn about people of color and things he found interesting carried him into college.

“People would tell jokes in elementary, junior high school. They were racist jokes, so I would take issue with it most of the time. I remember teachers and being in situations where there was real racism going on. My third grade teacher hated me. She was very standoffish towards me and didn’t seem to care. When my grandfather died, I had to take a couple of days off of school to go to the funeral. And she never said anything like, ‘I’m sorry Robert. Sorry for your loss.’ Nothing. She just told me what to get caught up on. I always felt like there was something in the way she treated me. During recess I would fight or pretend to fight with students and I used to get in trouble a little bit more than everybody else did. So I spent a lot of recesses with my face to the wall or sent down to the principal’s office. I think they were a little bit quicker to punish me like that than they were some of the other white kids.”

Robert had one experience with a teacher that stood out in his mind as a clear example of how many teachers would typically approach him.

“In seventh grade I was really having a hard time in this math class. And me and the teacher just didn’t get along. So I had a meeting with her and with my parents and the principal or vice principal. And she’d never try. I

was intimidated by her. She told my parents that some people just aren't ready at a certain age to take certain kinds of math classes. And my parents were pretty mad. The way she said it was like, 'He's probably just not smart enough right now.' She was very hard to work with. She would belittle me when I tried to ask questions, or punish me. At a certain point we kind of became nemeses to each other. I would act out in class with my friend but I'd always get kicked out of class. I realized during that school year that I didn't like math."

Even through this tense experience with a nemesis teacher, at graduation, the teacher's husband gave Robert a scholarship for African American students. "That really surprised me." It also demonstrated the complex nature of racism, and that Robert does not know what her real intentions throughout the class and her interactions with him were. Typically, though, his teachers treated him as an anomaly, someone who sat on the border between bad student, good student, and sometime teacher. "Sometimes I was called upon to give the black perspective when we were talking about slavery in class or something like that."

That Robert could be called upon to discuss his experiences at some level testifies to the lack of depth his teachers would engage his classes in.

"We didn't really go into depth about that kind of stuff. We learned the stuff everybody learned in high school-through the history books, but we didn't ever really talk about race, class, gender, except for your obligatory Martin Luther King and Abraham Lincoln. And I was kind of interested in the civil rights. So I learned more than the others. I took it up on myself to

read Roots and The Autobiography of Malcolm X, and all that kind of stuff. So I knew a lot more than other people did, but I think in class we didn't really learn much except for Abraham Lincoln, the Civil War, 1865 slavery was freed. We didn't learn about anything like the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth amendments. And if we did, it was a sentence in the book about it. We learned about Columbus and the Indians, but we didn't learn anything about Latinos, and if there is a large minority population in the Tri-Cities that's what it is. So in terms of diverse education, we didn't learn much about any other cultures or what they went through or their experiences in America. We didn't learn anything in depth, just various snippets. Not anything that would make you think outside the box."

Robert had mentioned before that he attended an academically rigorous public school, but the only exposure he really had to race issues came from home.

"I went to a pretty good school in terms of academics and we had good AP classes. But at the time, I wasn't exposed to anybody who challenged me in terms of thinking about race, except for my dad. But not really in an academic way. Race issues just didn't come up in high school."

When race issues did come up, they would either be teachers treating Robert differently, or peers demonstrating their stereotypes to Robert.

"It wasn't until ninth or tenth grade when some of my friends would say, 'You know I was in the store the other day and this big black guy walked in,' and stuff like that. And I was like, 'Hey dude, why does it matter if he is a black guy? If he was white would you have said he was a big white

guy?' Around tenth grade I started actually having discussions and getting questions asked but before that it was more, just nigger nigger nigger."

Before his peers gained the ability to articulate stereotypes, they would tease him about being black or toss out racial slurs. Robert would respond to this racism violently.

"I remember fighting when I was younger because people would call me nigger. People would say 'You got watermelons in your stomach?' I remember in seventh grade two kids, that was the whole watermelon incident. And they were like, 'You like fried chicken?' So I hit them both. The teacher just separated us and made me move to the other side of class. I told her what happened, but I don't think she did enough 'cause the other kids didn't really get into trouble for what they did either. When she found out exactly the reason, she chose to forget about the whole situation. It was easier for her and the school."

From an early age, Robert learned that since his teachers would not do anything to stop the teasing, he would have to do something to make it stop. "When I was younger, even when I was in junior high or elementary school, when I got teased, I took action. And I think that was why I didn't get teased very much later." His violent reaction, however, remained, in part because he was surrounded by peers who had also reacted violently to their surroundings.

"I had a lot of friends who were trying to be like gang members. They had a couple of minor gangs in the Tri-Cities, mainly through the large Latino population from LA. I remember F13 from Firencias and F18, 18th street, Black Gangster Disciples, BGD's, and so I was hanging out with some

kids who were trying to be some of them. I remember my friend made his own tattoo. cut 187 with a knife into his hand and put yellow ink in it.”

Robert separated himself and his violent reactions from the reactions of his peers.

“I didn’t try to do any real gangster things. The only time I ever fought was when people would call me nigger. When the movie Malcolm X came out, all the black people were wearing X’s and the whites in our area came out with these shirts with the confederate flag that said ‘You wear your X’ on the top and on the bottom it said ‘I’ll wear mine.’ And so I remember at the country fair getting into fights ‘cause there’d be a lot of cowboy hicks with confederate flags. But I never got into any fights just to be a thug.”

Robert’s violent reaction to racist teasing or taunting slowly waned, though.

because the teasing at school gradually lessened as he progressed through high school.

“Part of that might also have been the kids who I was going to school with matured. They got older and so it wasn’t as important anymore to tease somebody. Although I grew up in a very conservative area of Washington, and a lot of the people there, including a lot of the students I came up with, are closet racists. Well, not even really closet racists, there’s a lot of racism in that community. So, although they stopped saying it and trying to tease me, I don’t think it ever stopped.”

Although Robert had a very violent reaction to the teasing and to the racism that he saw, he never developed a negative self-concept.

“I don’t think the teasing ever really made me ashamed to be black. I was talking to Tyrell and he said that for a while he was going by his middle

name, Brian or something, because Tyrell is obviously usually a black name. And I never had that. The teasing never pushed me to be like, 'I am not black.' I was actually proud of that part of me. It affected me because, shit, it taught me how to fight, so it actually built up confidence."

Robert reflected on the impact of this teasing when he was younger, and argued that race-based teasing was the most significant form of exclusion.

"I'm not trying to diminish what happened, but the kids tease you, what can they really tease you about? If you're fat, they're going to tease you about being fat. If you have lots of zits, you're gonna get it. But race is a whole another level than all that other stuff. Race has so much more background and a history of it, which all those other kinds of teasing don't have. I don't think I ever got into a fight because somebody just teased me about the clothes I was wearing. I think the message got out that they didn't say nothing about race 'cause I'll beat your ass."

Through growing up with such racial teasing, rejection by teachers, and through his violent response to this exclusion, Robert took it upon himself to learn what he felt he was not provided access to.

"We had to do a book report, so I choose Roots. But they didn't say read African American history books or anything, I just chose that book. So I read Roots for school, but I read The Autobiography of Malcolm X, 'cause I wanted to. School didn't really teach me or give me any sort of mindset aside from the experiences of fighting racism, fighting back at racism. If

my parents hadn't been so strong and been there taking it to the next level.

I think all these experiences might have had a negative impact on me."

Instead, Robert used the support of his parents and his own growing intellect to learn on his own.

"In terms of building up some sort of racial consciousness, school had actually no impact on me. All my racial consciousness came from my own exploration. The few little bits about slavery or the civil war or anything with depth, was pretty much all on my dad and mom. They were the major factors. I had hella cool parents."

Robert now does outreach work with local high schools and connects his education to the conversations he has with African American students. The lessons from his experiences greatly shape his work in schools.

"I was looking at my high school webpage one time and there's one black teacher there. And she's having an Asian and African Studies class now, which they didn't have before. But it's still not American, not related to America. But it's still a step in the right direction. You still can't take American history that includes Asian American history. It's like the choices you have to make in America between black and white. There's no real history class, just white history and then occasionally other."

Robert's recollection of elementary and junior high school are not positive. His first thoughts are of teachers who treated him poorly. At the time, he felt this treatment was because he was one of the few black students in his school. His high school experiences were not much better, though the negative peer influences gradually eased up

as he neared graduation. He consistently searched for relevant education, and found that in part because his parents supported his intellectual pursuit. Robert's K-12 education, however, did not prepare him to develop a framework for thinking about his experiences, much less the experiences of other people of color.

Robert faced the all too familiar response from his teachers, who appeared to him apathetic, at best, to his growing desires to learn about civil rights. At worst, his several teachers blatantly challenged Robert and treated him as if he were a poor student, which his experiences never indicated. In spite of his troubling experiences, teacher neglect, and lack of engaging curriculum, Robert headed off to a four-year university ready to dive into the very coursework he wished he had access to during his K-12 schooling.

Kathryn Moore

Kathryn has a similarly stable family and community environment, though she was in a more racially homogeneous environment. Her experiences were similar to Michelle's in that her experiences dramatically shifted after switching schools. Rather than her experience becoming more negative, however, the shift made her more aware of the negative treatment that she had been getting. Kathryn's educational environment made her doubt herself, largely because she was treated as if she was not as smart as other students, until she transferred to a public school setting. She never did fit in socially, and reflects back on her K-12 schooling as a sad time for her. During this time she also came to realize that school was simply not a social environment for people like her.

Kathryn noticed the differences in the way she was treated in the private school after she spent time in a public school.

“In the private school I was treated differently. And the teachers wouldn’t include me in a lot of things. But I didn’t realize until junior high that I wasn’t favored as much as these girls. I’d notice I wouldn’t get certain awards even though I would work as hard as everyone else. In fifth grade, everyone got some kind of award for academics. And I got some award for being the best puppeteer. And I was like, ‘Why would I get the best thing for the best puppet when everyone else is getting things for things actually relevant to class?’ My mom always had this feeling, too. That really bothered her. And I probably didn’t notice ‘cause it was the way it had always been so I didn’t know there was any other different way it could be. My mom felt as though I wasn’t getting the same treatment.”

As a young student, Kathryn did not have someone to talk to about her experiences. In her almost entirely white school and community, she did not see her experiences reflected in the curriculum or surrounding community. Her teachers appeared oblivious to the treatment they afforded her. “I don’t know what my teachers would think of my experiences. They would be shocked that I even had them. They’d be shocked that I’d even be talking about stuff that was serious.” Not being able to talk about her experiences led Kathryn to search for more people who looked like her.

“I went to public school in seventh grade, and it was almost entirely white. There was no one I could really talk to or notice the difference. When I went back to the private school, I really got tired of it. I wanted to go somewhere where there was a more diverse group of people. By eighth

and ninth grade I just wanted to get out of the school. I had a lot of close friends there. but I wanted to leave the whole environment.”

When she had returned to the private school. Kathryn felt like she was back home. but that feeling did not last.

“I think I just was so happy to go back because I didn’t want to go to public schools. So I went back to private school and I was just excited to be with all my friends again. But as time went on. I saw that the teachers didn’t treat me well. I had a problem with one English teacher. She gave me a bad grade on a rough draft. I did everything she told me. I rewrote it up. I turned it back in and I didn’t get a good grade again. And I went up to talk to her and she was like. ‘There’s nothing I can do.’ I got so frustrated. I had a good friend who was the good girl. everyone liked her. She got a really good grade but there wasn’t much difference from mine. It was blatantly weird. I was so frustrated I was crying in front of her. She was like. ‘Well. Kathryn. I’m sorry. I really like you and I’m sorry that this had to happen.’ She acted like she liked me, but didn’t think I was intelligent. It was a weird experience. And then the principal, he looked down on me. I saw him in the store one time and it was really awkward. He didn’t even talk to me. And it was a really small school. so it shouldn’t be like that. He acted like he didn’t see me.”

After being treated more respectfully in the public school. Kathryn built up hope that perhaps she could find a more supportive environment. She began to grow more

critical of her smaller private school, and switched back into the public environment, though what she found there was still predominantly white.

“I wanted to get out because it was all the same people with the same teachers. And once they get a favorite, they stay and they don’t pay attention to anyone else. And in social groups, the popular person stays and no one pays attention to anyone else. Then I went to public high school, and it still wasn’t that diverse. There was a big Filipino population, but still not anything compared to the white. And then black students, they came and went all the time. And I never really had any black friends, even in high school, because I had never really been raised around anyone else who is black. So all my friends were white.”

Spending time with family in Georgia had a dramatic impact on Kathryn because not only was she exposed to a warm community that her mother’s family could not provide, but she also was able to experience a large black community. In fact, the only exposure Kathryn had to a different racial mindset was when she spent time in Georgia.

“I realized growing up somewhere where there was minorities how much different my experience would have been. How much more I’d accept who I was and my whole social life in high school would have been different. And it would have facilitated me getting to know who I was a lot faster.”

Once she switched to the public schools for good, Kathryn’s grades and attitude towards academics improved.

“I think it’s just because I grew up in the private school. ‘Cause I had been there all along, and since I was a trouble maker in elementary they just

tagged me as that the whole way. The [public school] teachers thought I was smart and they put me in the good classes. I thought it was because I was working harder. It wasn't until I went to the public high school that I actually started getting good grades and teachers started saying how I was a smart kid. Whereas in the private school, I was never acknowledged as being a good student."

This newfound recognition impacted how Kathryn saw herself. Asked what encouraged her to see herself as more than the little white girl she saw herself as in elementary school, Kathryn responded:

"It probably was just going to junior high and not being around the same kids I always was around. And then when I went back to private school I still had that awareness with me. So I got it at the public school I went to for the year and I kept it even when I went back to school with all the kids who I grew up with."

This awareness did not translate into immediate academic success, but instead provided a foundation for Kathryn to think of herself in a much more positive light. Throughout high school, Kathryn continued to improve academically, yet she still struggled in history.

"In high school, all through life I hated history. I hated it. And I remember my history teacher, she was really cool, and she'd always say I was so smart. But I would never—I'm sure I got decent grades in her class—but I never could understand the material. And it was the only class that I couldn't comprehend. I could never grasp that history had to do with the

present. I didn't see the importance of learning it at all. History was a waste of my time."

Part of the disconnect for Kathryn rested with what the curriculum was lacking, though clearly the ways in which history was taught ("as dates, timelines, names") was not appealing to her either.

"I didn't learn about black people. I didn't. I don't think my teachers ever really addressed race 'cause they had no reason to, because all the kids were white, except for me. I don't think they really address stuff in elementary school or in junior high. I remember one time at school on Martin Luther King day, or that week. We had an assembly in the gym and we talked about Martin Luther King and his struggles. I don't know if I never knew that before, and it definitely made me really aware that I was black. Even in the school that I grew up with all the same people."

In high school, Kathryn remembered a general atmosphere of awareness about race, but that did not translate into direct instruction about race or racism.

"High school, though, there seemed to be a lot of race issues. I don't remember ever seeing them at all, but they would talk about them. We had somebody who did a play on talking about issues. And they'd call everybody all these names, like every name you could think of. All the different races were calling each other that. And everybody in the audience was getting all worked up. And we had two assemblies like that and people would end up getting up and yelling at each other. Of course the students would get all pissed off at each other and then the white

students would be like 'All you black students get a table and I don't get it.' It was just this big thing."

Kathryn responded to this lack of real discussion and relevant academic focus by isolating herself from her peers and the school environment in general. Her earlier experiences in the private school did not encourage her to connect with the school or her peers, nor did her immediate predominantly white social context. "I stopped going down to the lunch room and eating. 'Cause I didn't have very many friends or anything. And I had studying to do, so I just didn't get down there. I would study in the library and eat during classes." Kathryn did not desire to withdraw socially, but felt she had no other options.

"I remember the black guys, a couple of them talked to me and were interested in me. But, I never ended up hanging out with anybody. And then I met a girl. She was dark, as black as black can be. She was very quiet and shy and nice. She was in one of my classes and I was like, 'She's a lot like me. We could hang out!' And she wasn't like what my stereotypical view of black people were, or what the kids at my high school were. And I think she hung out with black kids. But she wasn't the stereotypical black person, so I thought if she could hang out with them, then maybe my whole idea was off. But because she looked black, maybe she didn't have to act a certain way to be able to hang out with them."

That girl was the only positive peer racial influence Kathryn had, yet she never actually befriended her and instead remained aloof throughout her high school years.

“I never went to a high school dance or had a date or did anything like that. And I think it was ‘cause I’m black, so no one wanted to date me or anything. So I was pretty much not involved with the social. I had friends, but I swam. I just swam, so I didn’t have to be involved with things like that. And I’d always look at the girls, the cheerleaders or whatever, and they didn’t necessarily have to be attractive, but I always knew they were more valuable in the social world. I guess it sucked, but that was life.”

The lack of being included in a social community eventually began to take its toll.

“My junior year was terrible. I just wasn’t happy. I think it was just my scheduling and a complete lack of any social life. I would just swim and then go to school and swim and then go to bed. Even my brother would make fun of me.”

When she did find someone whom she might connect with, what happened would reinforce the stereotypical norms that no part of her schooling or peer base would contradict.

“There was another kid who was black, who grew up in a black community. And he came to our school and I wished I could have become his friend more. He ended up dating a white girl. And I was like, ‘See, how everyone wants to date white girls.’ That’s what my whole experience is like. Everybody wants to date white girls. I couldn’t imagine a white guy being attracted to a black girl at all. I just can’t really conceive of it. And I’ve had white guys in the past who were attracted to me kind

of. But not people who are successful or anything. Like I don't see intelligent, successful white guys ever dating black girls."

Kathryn's exclusion from peer dating because of the combined effects of racism and sexism further alienated her, and set the stage for her continued low self-esteem.

"The black guys are dating white girls, and the white guys are dating white girls, so who am I supposed to date? I went on a date with a black guy; that was a bad experience. I don't date anybody, ever. And I think it's because I couldn't imagine a white guy being attracted to me, but then black guys, I don't know if they really like me or it's just 'cause they want to date anyone. So I'm like aaah! I don't know what to do so I just sit in my room with my cat. It's a sad story."

That sad story has continued implications on the way Kathryn sees others and on her self-esteem.

"And it's really bad because I don't really value black men the same way I value white men. 'Cause white men are the ones who are successful and this and that, whereas black men are the players. So if a black guy wanted to date me, I'm like, 'He's just a player. He wants to date everybody.' Whereas if a white guy did, I'm like 'Hallelujah! Wow!' I never realized that in high school, the white guys were the same way. Not all of them, but the ones who were popular would be dating everybody they could."

This rejection from both white and black men combined with the feelings of inadequacies Kathryn already had because she did not look like the typical "American."

“When I went back to the private school, the principal’s daughter was this athletic tall white girl. And she’s not even, she’s probably average looking, but she was an all American girl. And so everyone everyone liked her. I guess it was the image that the guys liked. And it’s ridiculous ‘cause people tell me now, guys tell me that there into anything, but I don’t think I would ever believe them. Like I can’t really even grasp that fact.”

Kathryn’s negative self concept was strengthened throughout high school and shape how she now conceives of romantic relationships, illuminating the power dynamics that shape her feelings of inadequacy.

“Even if I dated a white guy, if any blonde girl comes along he’ll just drop me in a second and go with her if she shows any attraction. And if I was dating a guy and he went off with another girl, I don’t really have room to complain. Because he must like it better, so why shouldn’t he just go with her? Why should I expect a guy to be faithful and want to date me because it’s my bad. And the guy who I kind of, he was a white guy in high school and we were really good friends. I don’t know if I could have seen myself dating him, but I really liked him. And he said white and black people couldn’t date. But then he also said that all black men cheated. So I’m like, ‘Where can I go?’ It’s not a lovely feeling, but that’s life. I just think that’s life. And that’s what I learned while in school.”

Kathryn’s schooling experiences highlight the connections between racism and sexism, resulting in a social context of exclusion. Her middle class background enabled her access to private schooling, yet she was excluded by her teachers and peers.

Switching to a public school was an improvement, but her predominantly white peers still largely excluded her. That her courses did not address historical or contemporary ways of thinking about her experiences certainly added to the broad array of exclusion that she faced growing up. Her academic and peer isolation led to a low self-esteem based upon ideal heterosexual partnerships that did not include her. These partnerships, according to Kathryn, are based in the same white beauty norms that Shay and Michelle noted. Despite not learning about the very reasons why she has been so thoroughly excluded, Kathryn has made the most of her K-12 education and peer interactions.

Kathryn's experiences illuminate the connection between K-12 and higher education by demonstrating how she is still impacted by the dramatic exclusion she grew up with. Throughout her adolescence, Kathryn was rejected by her white peers and by her heterosexual male peers, and she carried this rejection with her into college. She went straight into college in search of a framework for thinking positively about being black in the U.S.

Simon Gomburza

Simon, like several students in this study, came from a divorced family. His family was also poor, and he grew up more similar to Shay, though he did not relocate or switch schools nearly as often. Most of Simon's school experiences were negative, and his difficult home life added to an already unwelcoming situation. Simon demonstrated the impact of switching schools as well, but he went from a racially diverse school to an elite private school. While he eventually left that and attended a public high school, it was never as supportive as were his elementary school experiences.

Throughout this transition, Simon was dealing with family issues, making his need for school connections that much more important. When needed most, he was able to make friends with other students who appeared excluded as well.

“The divorce was rough. Seventh grade, when they got divorced, I went to private school. I was dealing with the kind of shoes you’re wearing. There were black kids there, there were people of color there, but they were rich and I didn’t get along with them at all. I had a few friends who were kind of the nerdy people there who didn’t really fit in. This one guy is part black, and he was also a scholarship kid. We’ve been friends ever since. But I could only deal with that for two years.”

The impact of being excluded and living with family turmoil took its toll on Simon, and his grades began to suffer.

“I went from being top of my class in public school to being one of the lowest scoring people. And I was putting in some serious time on homework. I was getting up at 4 am everyday just trying to stay up with it all. I just couldn’t handle it. Especially with all the emotional stuff at school. If it was a more receptive environment [I could have done better], but when I hated being around the people at that school, it made it difficult.”

Simon had hoped his switch back to a public school would result in a more stable environment, but he found the new school to be almost as racially homogenous.

Then I went to the public high school. I think there were less than ten black people in our whole school. There were Asian people, but they kind

of stuck together. They were just invisible. Like I go back and look at my yearbook and I didn't know any of those Asian kids. They were in my classes and stuff, but they never talked."

Not having strong peer support, still going through family instability, and not doing well in school created an atmosphere of exclusion for Simon. This exclusion came to a crescendo towards the later half of his high school years.

"In high school there was something that had to do with my ex-girlfriend's boyfriend. Since he knew that I was part Filipino, he got all his Aryan buddies together and they would put stuff on my locker. Like, 'Go home,' or whatever. Stupid stuff. They had these big ass 4x4 trucks, and I had to walk home from school with my sisters, and they would try to come off of the road on the sidewalk and drive with the big tires and yell stuff at us. I hated that school at that point because I was pretty much an outcast already. And then to have spent so much time with her and then to have lost that and then additionally to have all these people that hated me. I just couldn't wait to get out of there. And then I had to deal with my step dad. We never got along, really, so I had a lot of crap going on in high school. Which is why I was glad to get away to the Army."

Excluded because he was poorer than most students and harassed because he was Filipino, Simon looked to his classes as an outlet for his frustrations.

"I hated history until we got to civil rights or until we got to the Spanish American war. And then there would be one paragraph on the Philippines. And it was like, 'Yay!' But it didn't really say much. And I think it's

important to learn about George Washington and all that stuff, but the recent history is so much more what we deal with now. Yet none of my classes ever talked about race. Besides my American history class. We talked about it, but it was more like, these are the people, this is what happened. There was never a discussion about why. What led to this? What was going on that led up to that? There wasn't a lot of background, it was just, MLK, all these marches, bus boycotts. We didn't get a sense of how much shit people went through everyday. And how that could motivate an entire nation to stand up and drop their jobs and just change their personal plans. It wasn't easy to boycott busses and organize carpools and walk everywhere. It had to be bad, but there was no discussion about that."

Simon could not recall specific teachers that supported or directly invalidated him, highlighting that he was not engaged by his schooling. Simon experienced the same form of exclusion that the other students in this study cited. He was harassed because of his race, but also because of his low socio-economic status. His family environment was unstable, and the few times he would get excited about schooling, it would be the very rare times when history lessons actually addressed Filipinos or other people of color. Ultimately, his education was not related to him, nor did it capture his interest in other people of color.

Simon could not recall any specific teachers that supported him, nor could he recall specific positive memories from schooling. His peers often violently rejected him and his siblings, and the few friends he did have were similarly rejected by mainstream

students. Simon left high school longing for change, and went directly into the Army, which he soon found was not the answer. When he finally arrived at community college, three years after graduating from high school, he was excited, though ill-prepared for the academic and intellectual work ahead of him.

Chris Wong

Given that Chris defined race and racism so differently from the rest of the students in this study, I vaguely expected his educational experiences to be unique as well. Yet Chris experienced racial teasing and exclusion like the rest of the students in this study, and responded violently to his environment. He also did not learn much about people of color, or Chinese people in particular, though Chris did not think his lack of learning about people of color or people like him detracted from his learning. Ultimately, he was able to focus on his schooling, diminish his overt violent reactions, and he excelled academically his last years of high school.

While Chris also relocated several times, this was not because of family turmoil or low family income. Yet moving in high school did evoke a reaction out of him. "I was just really mad at my parents for a while and I didn't understand why we had to move." Through this relocating, Chris fit in well with his peers at each school, and, though he was violent throughout his high school years, he did not place blame for his violence on his lack of a permanent home.

Early on, Chris was aware he was different from most of his peers because of the racial teasing he endured.

"Third grade was when I became aware that I wasn't like everybody else. I remember, I know what the girl who sang the song ('Chinese, Japanese,

dirty knees') looks like. I know her name. I know where she lives. I really know. That was definitely the first time that I really became aware. 'Oh. I'm not white.' It didn't feel very good. <long pause> It didn't. I was pretty self conscious about it. Because kids are merciless to each other. They really are. I mean you want to talk about all this stuff about how kids get low self esteems. let me tell you how they get low self esteems. Thank god I got bigger really quick and I was able to make sure that my brother and my sister didn't get picked on."

While Chris eventually was able to stop the teasing because of his size and the threat of his violent reaction, his teachers never appeared to do anything to stop the teasing.

"And teachers, the teachers don't do anything about that stuff. They don't do anything. What would the teachers have done if they had heard that? But see, at the same time, I don't think it was necessarily that they were trying to be racist or that it wasn't an insult. It was just, it made me feel uncomfortable. But there has to be a time when you're going to feel uncomfortable."

While initially Chris argued that teachers could have done something to stop the teasing, Chris quickly backed out of this statement. Ultimately, he came to argue that feeling uncomfortable was part of growing up. Interestingly, at this part in the interview, Chris shifted his level of depth. He had talked previously about what the teasing he received felt like, and how he felt sad, but he seemed to sit up straighter and became less serious. Throughout the rest of our interviews, he would not come near the same level of

seriousness and ultimately joked off any sort of exclusion he may have experienced at the hands of his teachers, curriculum, or peers.

This was demonstrated shortly after by his dismissing his teachers who would use stereotypical terms in class.

“The teachers would reference the Chinese fire drill, not knowing that maybe for some of these little kids, that that makes them self-conscious. But I mean, Chinese fire drill. That shouldn’t be offensive to anyone. At least, it’s not offensive to me. I mean it made me feel self-conscious when I was younger. Now I make a big joke about it with all my white friends. So I wouldn’t change that because, yeah, I was kind of uncomfortable. And I felt a little bit self-conscious, but I mean, if we want to censor everyone and say that they can’t say Chinese fire drill, if we want to make this world perfectly like that, that’s just not going to happen.”

In school, Chris learned little about people of color or the systematic exclusion that shaped the experiences of many people of color.

“I learned that racism is bad. You shouldn’t judge people based upon the color of their skin. I have a dream that one day all men will be created equal. I mean basically like everyone else in our generation. Racism is bad, diversity is good. Don’t judge people based on the color of their skin. The color of their skin doesn’t make who they are. Who they are makes who they are. I learned pretty much what everyone else did.”

While Chris shared similar experiences with the other students in this study, he did not actually appear to be learning similar lessons. While the rest of the students in this

study noted that their race was the basis for the teasing they endured, they also noted that the curriculum their teachers used was not at all impacted by their race or their negative experiences. The experiences Chris had appeared very similar to these other students, yet Chris demonstrated the difference between what he took from such lessons and what the others got out of their negative experiences. Chris found it humorous that Chinese and Asian history were not seen as relevant to his high school education. Though he noted that Chinese make up a third of the world's population, he did not recognize that there are, like his family, Chinese Americans who have come to the U.S. and who actually had a major role in shaping the Western U.S. (see Takaki, 1993).

“We didn't really learn that much about China. It was this big country with a lot of people and they were communists. That's what I learned. That's why their flag has the hammer and the sickle. I didn't learn much about Chinese people at all. 'Cause there wasn't really a need to. I mean there are so many countries you can't learn about everyone. Even though they do make up a third of the world's population. <Laughter> But I took AP US history, and then AP European history. So I guess I did learn a bit about American Indians, but I didn't learn a whole lot about Asians. Just because, maybe if there was a war or something, but we've never really gone to war with China. So most of the stuff I've learned, I've learned just because I'm Chinese.”

Similar to Robert, what Chris did learn about being Chinese he learned from his family. Yet while Chris was not learning much about people of color within the U.S., he was learning firsthand about racism.

“In elementary school, they didn’t really know what [racial slurs] are. They don’t really understand. Whereas in high school, it’s more like, someone’s just saying it to get you pissed off. And guess what: it works! It works. So, in high school people [would call me racial slurs] just to get a reaction out of me. Just to get me pissed off.”

Eventually, such racial teasing would evoke violent reactions out of Chris, though he pointed out that he has since grown out of that violence.

“If I didn’t know the person at all and they just called me that out of the blue, I’m not going to walk over there and knock them on the ground and start kicking them in the head or anything. But very few people would I actually ever do that to, and I don’t really get into fights anymore, so I don’t think there’s really anyone that could really say something racist to me that would get me to fight. Back when I was in Chicago, yeah, I probably would. But that’s just ‘cause race was a bigger issue then. I was younger, I was more self-conscious about it.”

Chris clarified his rationale for reacting violently to being picked on, yet never distinguished between reacting to racist teasing and reacting to other forms of teasing.

“When I moved to Chicago, I was a small kid from the small city. And I learned that you get big friends real quick when you’re the new kid. I was small and I always got picked on in junior high. So when I got to high school, I got to be friends with the big kids right away. If you’re the small kid and you’ve got a smart mouth, it’s a requirement. So when I moved to Chicago, I got into a lot of fights just because I was new. And I wasn’t

going to be taking any smart comments because I was new. I grew bigger than all my friends in just a year. So I was on the other side of it. I was in this group and if we went up to a cafeteria table and if we sat down at one end, everyone else would just shift down a little bit.”

As Chris grew in size, so too did his propensity to get into fights, and reacting to racism became a less needed rationale to fight.

“My sophomore year of high school I got into probably 30 fights. It was like a rough and tumble crowd, not like in Seattle or Portland. We were just mean. We would skip school to go drink. When I was a sophomore, my main focus was all those people, all the type of people who picked on me. It wasn’t like we were trying to terrorize anyone. It was about having fun and, obviously there were the real gangsters, the real trouble makers, but that wasn’t us.”

Chris moved out of the Chicago suburbs, yet took his violent, confrontational ways with him.

“And then I moved to Spokane. I had never been all that popular ‘cause I was never one of the jocks. I was never one of the cool kids or anything like that, but when I moved to Spokane, if you have something to say you better say it to my face. I got in a lot of fights.”

Chris was not able to identify when the change began, but he was able to refocus on academics, and began, eventually, to cause less of a disturbance.

“But after a while, I was in all the smart classes. And yet my teachers would still treat me like I was a real trouble maker. And I could kind of

tell that. You know when you're in junior high and there's always that one ghetto kid and he's like, 'What's up, Baby?' And that's how he responds to the teacher. And I was sort of getting that feeling from my AP teachers. Mostly the end of my junior year and into my senior year. And I was like, that's not the type of person I want to be. I want to be one of those people who has all the money in the world and who can do whatever they want."

The main motivation for Chris to settle down and become more academically focused was his desire to be rich. He began to recognize that being violent and seen as a trouble maker were not going to get him to where he wanted to be.

"I was basically a brawler at a big city and then I moved to a small city and then I gained another 40 pounds. I was about 170 pounds then and I was definitely getting to be one of the bigger kids. And looking back on it, there wasn't any reason for [teachers] not to treat me like a trouble maker. I acted like it. That's what I considered cool. 'Yeah, I'm tough, I can walk down the hall and people get out of the way because, not because they think I'm going to beat them up but they don't know what I'll do.' The whole mistake of being 'the bad ass.' My senior year I calmed down a lot and started getting really serious."

Through becoming more academically focused in his pursuit of complete financial independence and the ability to do 'whatever he wants,' Chris overcame his shifting schools, the violence against others, and his trouble-making ways. But Chris also overcame the teasing and racial banter he would encounter by denying the relevance of such experiences. Throughout his schooling, he had little access to information or

histories that helped him think about his negative experiences in comparison to others. That he saw Chinese history as completely separate from U.S. history tells the story of how our schooling has failed to teach him that his family was not unique in their experiencing racism.

Like the others in this study, Chris was rejected by his peers, though his response to this rejection set him apart. Rather than specifically address the racist teasing, Chris gradually appeared to build up a wall that allowed him to deny the very reasons for his teasing. He came to deny that his rejection had any connection to his being Chinese and white, and ultimately came to deny any relevance to race, thereby making his, and others' racial identity something to laugh at. That he saw race as no more significant than hobbies calls into question how deeply he has reacted to the teasing and exclusion. Has he been hurt by such teasing and learned to shrug off and even join in on the teasing, or has he actually not been impacted by such teasing? Unable to engage in such a conversation with Chris, these questions remain unanswered.

He was clear that his teachers appeared apathetic about stopping this teasing, and the curriculum he progressed through offered little to help him think through his negative treatment. He never had to be fully responsible for his violence, and did not connect up his violent ways with the treatment he received due to racism, like the others in this study. Through such a violent, purposefully trouble-making background, Chris became more academically focused and was excited for the prospect of college so that he could learn to create more financial control over his life.

Konomi Holiday

Perhaps more so than any other student in this study, Konomi's schooling was mired in racial and gendered teasing. In contrast to Chris, though, she noted that her violence was a direct response to such incessant teasing. Her teachers appear to have done nothing to support a more positive response to the teasing, and in fact an early teacher added to the teasing by telling Konomi how to mispronounce her name. As with the rest of the students in the study, Konomi did not learn about people of color, nor was she afforded information that might help her build up a framework for making sense of the negative treatment she would face throughout her schooling.

In her early school years, Konomi learned that school was an environment that tolerated teasing. Seen as *chocolato chan* in Japan, when Konomi came to the U.S., she was still an outsider at school. "I could speak English, but I still had a major accent, so I got made fun of for that. Especially in kindergarten and first grade." The teasing was especially intense from other people of color.

"It's just the ignorance of African Americans. They have some racist stereotypes of what it means to act black. Act a certain way, and if you don't act that way, you're not really black. You're acting white. And so I got that a lot. And that was in elementary school. My best friend in elementary school was a Korean girl. And I don't really remember having any problems with her family, 'cause we were just best friends. And I used to stay there and she used to stay with us. I remember her grandfather was in World War II. But I know that he wasn't too fond of Japanese people because that was when Japan was occupying Korea and forced Koreans to

learn Japanese. so he spoke Japanese. And then one day right before I got off the bus a boy called me a nigger. He just called me a nigger.”

The transition from elementary school to junior high was difficult for Konomi, troubling as her early experiences were.

“Junior high school was really bad. I think it got worse. In seventh grade. I started school in Kent. ‘cause that’s when my parents got divorced. This one guy would make fun of me saying that I was a sumo wrestler. I used to get so mad at him. And people used to tell me that he just liked me. But in my yearbook he drew a sumo person. And wrote. ‘Konomi’ above it.”

Being teased because of her size and race throughout her schooling, Konomi had a difficult time finding acceptance from a social group.

“In eighth grade. I moved back to Federal Way. And that’s when I noticed people separating into groups in lunch time. So I used to try to sit with the white kids. But I’d just sit there. I wasn’t really in their conversation or anything like that. I was an outcast. just sitting there. And then I tried to sit with the black kids. but they said I acted too white. Or one girl, who ended up being my best friend later on, was like. ‘Why are you following us? Why are you sitting here?’ So I spent the rest of eighth grade lunch time in the library, by myself. And then I tried out to be a cheerleader and I made the squad. And they would just make fun of me, saying that I was too fat to be a cheerleader. Which really, when I look at my pictures, I wasn’t. I just wasn’t stick thin.”

Konomi, like Robert, responded violently to this teasing and rejection.

“I started fighting when I was in Japan. I remember I kicked a boy in between his legs. And I remember my teacher told me, ‘Don’t kick him there! He won’t be able to have babies when he’s older!’ And then in first or second grade, I got in a fight with this boy. He called me a nigger. He was older than me. I fought because of the teasing I got because of the way I looked. It’s like a defense mechanism. ‘Cause I never attacked anybody else. They always hit me first. So it was always defense. That’s what I remember most about elementary school was that I fought a lot.”

But Konomi would not immediately respond with violence. She typically would put up with racial teasing and try to ignore it, but eventually, if one person would continue it for an extended amount of time, she would become violent.

“And then in eighth grade there was a boy who always made fun of me. He called me a heifer. He was biracial. He used to call me all these names and made fun of me all year. I never had said anything because I was quiet. Then, towards the end of the year, he said something and I just got up and kicked his butt. And then ninth grade, there was a girl who used to hang out with us. And she’d always talk about Asian people, and call them kinks, and kook, or whatever. I don’t even know those names. And I’d always tell her to ‘Stop it. I’m half Japanese. I don’t like when you do that.’ And I never said anything but that, and then one day I just told her to shut up. And she got mad. I stood up and she stood up, and I got into a fight with her.”

This teasing, constant throughout her life, gradually became more about her weight. "My senior year in high school, I got into a fight with this girl. She was one of those bullies who liked to make fun of people." The girl had been calling Konomi names all year. "[She'd call me] a bitch. A fat bitch. 'Cause she knew that was one of the things that would get me, is calling me fat."

Konomi's attempts at dismissing the teasing did not work in the long run, as she would eventually explode under the constant barrage. Such explosions typically got her into trouble in school.

"I got made fun of a lot, and I think a lot of it had to do with me being so quiet. I didn't really say much for myself. 'Cause my mom always taught me, they can say whatever they want about you, who cares. So that's how I always looked at it. Who cares. But then after a while I just held it in so much that I exploded. And that's when I'd get suspended. It was always at the end of the year. I never got detention, but I got suspended a couple of times. I mean, no tolerance for fighting. Basically. Even though I was fighting for self-defense. They didn't care. It was like, you fight, you fight. It doesn't matter."

Konomi's teachers responded to the fighting, but never addressed the reasons why Konomi was fighting to begin with. "I don't know if my teachers ever noticed the teasing. Or if they did, maybe they didn't want to talk about it because they didn't know how to address it." One of the ways they would address Konomi's lack of engagement in school was to place her in specific classes. "I remember being in Special Ed. PE because

I refused to run.” That she refused to run should not come as a surprise, given the constant teasing about weight.

From the beginning, Konomi has memories of what felt like teasing coming from a teacher.

“I remember arguing with my second or first grade teacher on how to say my name. We were learning how to do syllables. <Laughter> We were doing syllables and we had to say how many syllables my name was. And I said my name was three syllables. I know this because in Japanese, everything is broken up into syllables. And I have three characters. And she’s like, ‘No, you have two.’ ‘Cause she said my name like Kno-mi. I was like, ‘No, my name is Ko-No-Mi.’ I remember getting into an argument with her, and she was trying to tell me how to pronounce my name. I couldn’t break down any other word, but I knew my name.”

Other than this incident, Konomi could not recall further examples of teachers teasing or treating her negatively, with the exception of simply not responding to teasing.

“I don’t really remember having really bad interactions with my teachers. I’m sure if I went back and looked at it as a bystander, knowing what I know now, I’d probably recognize more things. I didn’t know the difference. I wish I could go back and see how they treated me, and maybe I just accepted it just because I was used to it. Or I just thought I deserved it. I just remember more having problems with the students.”

With such peer teasing and a lack of teacher response, Konomi may have learned about race and racism in K-12, but certainly not because of intentional efforts by her

teachers. Indeed, while she did get into trouble for fighting, her teachers never addressed why she got into fights to begin with.

“I was in a group of students against racism in high school. But we never talked about racism. It was just more of a multicultural club, basically. And I was never really taught about racism, really. Other than bigotry being the same as the KKK. I learned about the KKK from my friend’s dad. In school they didn’t teach me anything. We watched *Glory*. We watched *Schindler’s List*. We learned about U.S. history, meaning the Revolutionary War. The Civil War. And we were taught that the Civil War was to free black people. And Abraham Lincoln was this great man who decided on his own that he was going to free slaves. Taught that he was just a wonderful man. And Ben Franklin. Thomas Jefferson, all these wonderful people. Thomas Jefferson, we never learned about him. I don’t know if it was before it was proven that he had illegitimate children, but we were taught that all these people were great people. And taught that, oh, by the way, Martin Luther King was really great, too.”

Konomi did learn about people of color, however, but found that what she did learn was extremely limited.

“We learned that there were slaves. And then we learned a little bit about the Japanese Internment Camps, but they didn’t make it sound that bad. They didn’t talk about taking away all their land and their businesses and how sick people were as a result of the Internment Camps. They never taught us that. What we learned about people of color were that there were

slaves. Native Americans were warriors. They fought a lot. We learned that Japan bombed us in Pearl Harbor. Anything real I learned was more from my own experiences than based on what was taught me.”

While Konomi was not taught about a history that would have illuminated her experiences as not uncommon among people with similar backgrounds, she did learn, again from her peers, about the connection between racism and sexism. Initially her experiences were limited to Japan and the U.S., though she came to recognize that the reasons for her exclusion were not global.

“Being in Grenada is interesting. Because it’s a totally different culture. They appreciate bigger, thicker women. And my brother was like, ‘Gosh Konomi, people will stop what they’re doing just to look at you!’ ‘Cause my sister was always skinny, traditionally the pretty one, and my brother never thought of me as being pretty. Because my brother hangs out with all white people, so his ideas and all the girls he ever around, they’re all white. So he had his idea of what the typical pretty girl was, and I didn’t fit that. And so in Grenada, lots of guys would try to talk to me. I just remember this one time, this guy was like, ‘What’s your name?’ I said Konomi. He said ‘Oh, no speak English?’ ”

Regardless of where Konomi has gone, she faced some sort of exclusion, though like Shay, that exclusion took on an interesting form when the reasons for her exclusion become more fashionable. In K-12 Konomi was teased for being overweight and not traditionally pretty, but the current form of racism appears to have shifted, and she is now seen as more closely aligned with the shifting definition of female beauty.

“My mom wants me to go stay in Japan and stay with my grandmother.

But even though now being Asian and black is cool, I still am kind of scared. I mean, there’s all this Japanese rap, reggae, people dreading their hair. The African American culture is just really popular down there. So if I go down there, I’d be considered cool. But I feel like a fad. And that’s exactly how it is now because now you hear rappers talking about Asian and black. Whereas when I was younger people would tell me my hair was ugly, now they’re like, ‘Oh you have such beautiful hair. You have such nice features.’ But when I was younger they used to call me ugly. It’s just now that being Japanese and black or being Asian and black is cool, you see more in the videos and stuff, so now I’m exotic.”

While the vestiges of the sexism that positions Konomi as exotic, erotic, and in style may be spreading, white is still the most important feature in the U.S. “The only white guys that ever try to talk to me are drunk. White guys never try to talk to me. Asian guys never try to talk to me. It’s always black guys that will try to talk to me.”

Throughout her schooling experiences, the only limited acceptance Konomi received was from a black community that also teased her fairly often. “And so [my friend] used to make me so mad when he used to tell me that I’m not black. Because the experiences I’ve had here are more like a black person than a Japanese person.”

Konomi saw school as just one of many ways that people learn about race and racism, though what they learn is extremely limited.

“It goes all the way back to when they were kids, hearing their parents speak about black people or seeing how they were portrayed on TV and in

the media. And the only thing they learn about black people in schools is that they're slaves and they learn about Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King. And that's the extent of black history. And then they know there's a Black History Month, but most of them don't even know when it is."

Konomi is now able to reflect on the different ways of learning about people of color and black history in particular, but while in school, she was frustrated by the lack of intellectual access her schooling provided. She did not respond well to a curriculum that did not directly address people of color and that provided a limited understanding of history. While she did well enough academically, she did so in the face of the constant onslaught of teasing. She was excluded because she was not black enough, not Asian and Japanese enough, and because she was not thin enough. Her teachers completely overlooked such teasing, and she took matters in her own hands, responding violently to continued teasing. Through such K-12 experiences, she responded to outreach groups that supported her, and went into college expecting the same sort of experiences to happen.

In spite of her challenging experiences, Konomi conceives of education as a tool to educate about people of color and other oppressed groups, even as her experiences have shown her otherwise. Much of Konomi's schooling has not facilitated a positive identity development, yet Konomi recognizes that schooling could be altered to achieve more.

"I get frustrated, but then it's like, I say it's not their fault. They're the products of their environment, basically. They were raised to be like this. It doesn't necessarily make them a bad person. It's just their environment."

That this environment negatively affected her is clear, but Konomi sees room for improvement, despite the incessant teasing and constant negation of her K-12 schooling. Konomi offers a glimmer of hope that educators will be able to take from her (and these other students') experiences and begin to shape K-12 education in a way that more adequately supports these students' lives.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of the K-12 schooling within which each of these students developed. Their voices are not meant to generalize to all multiracial students or students of color, yet particular themes did emerge that speak to the experiences of both groups. These experiences served as the academic and social foundation for these students' experiences in college, and ultimately planted the seeds for many of these students to eventually search out information about the historic and contemporary experiences of other groups of color. The desire to make sense of their lives by being able to juxtapose their personal experiences with those of communities of color can be seen as a natural progression from what they noted was lacking from their K-12 schooling, and would be demonstrated as soon as several of these students began college. Essentially, these students were not afforded a framework through which they could interpret their personal experiences because they simply did not learn about other people of color or multiracial people in K-12 schooling. Whether some of the negative impacts on their self-esteem could be addressed by a K-12 schooling that provided the scaffolding to make sense of their negative treatment, racial teasing, early experiences of racism, and family contexts remains to be seen. That such support could have facilitated

these students thinking more critically about race and racism and their place in history. however, should be clear.

These students were often isolated by their faculty and peers for being different throughout their K-12 schooling. The students in this study responded to this rejection in several ways. Typically, they would isolate themselves from their peers, as did Michelle, Kathryn and Simon, or they would respond violently, as did Robert and Chris, though it was less clear as to why he was violent. Konomi, of course, did both. Emiko stood out because she turned her rejection into a dislike for what she was being rejected for (being Asian). While others, at times, expressed negative images of their racialized heritage, Emiko was most vocal about it. Shay, took this rejection in stride, partially because it appeared more muted because of her extremely difficult and torn childhood. These students testify that how they are classified by others ultimately influenced their day-to-day experiences. The creative responses developed to deal with this continued rejection was based upon those classifications.

In reacting to this peer and teacher rejection, these students conceivably could have turned to their K-12 schooling to provide a framework for understanding or even an outlet for this negative energy. Yet their teachers and curricula were not conducive to such an outlet. Teachers added to the exclusion, and the curriculum almost completely ignored the historical context of their experiences. These students did not learn about people of color, racism, or multiracial people, not because of a lack of interest, but because it was not part of their school curriculum. While several of these students did learn about historical significance of their specific cultural contexts, this was only because they had parents (or peers) who taught them about who they are and where they

came from. That many of these students were taught that Abraham Lincoln was the sole reason for emancipation, and that racism was limited to overt actions by the KKK (if they learned that much) testifies to their teachers' lack of understanding and perhaps ability to teach them relevant aspects that might encourage the development of a positive self-identity in the face of continual exclusion. Further, when issues of race and racism did come up in school, teachers would demonstrate their lack of expertise by asking their multiracial students to help teach the class.

Teachers appeared to have very rarely, if ever, addressed the teasing that these students experienced. That none of these students could point to incidents of harassment being stopped by a teacher sent the message to each student that the teasing was not only acceptable, but that it was ultimately supported by the school. This was reinforced by a curriculum that made people of color entirely invisible, except for being slaves and warriors. And through this, when the students responded violently, they were reacted to in equally negating ways. Precisely because he was responding to racism, Robert never got into trouble because his teachers simply did not want to address race. Konomi was frequently in trouble because of her fighting, yet her teachers never addressed that she fought in reaction to racist/sexist teasing. Chris, on the other hand, did not indicate that he was responding to racist teasing, yet he appeared to get into trouble very infrequently, sending a message to him that violence and racist teasing are not problematic. These students' teachers clearly contributed to an uncomfortable, even hostile educational environment. Taken as a whole, these students' experiences in K-12 schooling beg the question of what exactly are our teachers teaching, and are these the types of lessons we want taught about race and racism?

While I have attempted to understand race and racism, all of the women in this study brought up issues of gender and sexism when discussing their experiences growing up. That these five women do not separate the sexism they have grown up with from the racism is telling. Their testimonies further support the dynamics of racism, which also assert that race, class, and gender are all tied together to create a larger system of oppression. These women have experienced a negating peer climate centered on heterosexual norms that position white women as the ideal beauty standard. While there are exceptions to this rule, each of the five women have articulated that throughout their K-12 schooling, they had aspired to look more white or at least were teased because they looked clearly not white. While Konomi and Shay both noted that the shifting nature of racism and sexism positions them as exotic, both noted that this is probably temporary. Indeed, their memories of their adolescent years filled with rejection by heterosexual men will not fade even as their current "in-style" status does. Being non-white women held up to a white beauty standard excluded these women and added to their sense of inadequacy. While schooling cannot be counted on to account for every form of exclusion, that these students did not even mention the lack of learning about such sexism is further testament to K-12's lack of educating about their social realm.

This chapter did not illuminate the many success stories that K-12 education writes each and everyday. Instead, I gathered these students' stories into an overarching vision of how K-12 schooling has educated these multiracial students. The end result is that these students were not adequately prepared to deal with the extreme exclusion they have experienced from their peers, families, teachers, and communities. Whether or not that is the role of K-12 education should be up for public debate in a democratic society.

Yet, as we shall see, higher education has done a much better job of equipping these students with the tools to create a more positive sense of self. Highlighting how higher education has educated most of these students about the social and historical contexts within which their experiences have been shaped should inform the conversation of how best to educate students for a multiracial democracy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THEY ARE STILL ASKING THE 'WHAT ARE YOU?' QUESTION:

THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

"I think it's sad because they don't talk about mixed race people in Ethnic Studies courses when it seems like what they're trying to teach us is that all these things exist and we're all different, but yet we should come together. But this is what happens when you come together: US! Yet they don't talk about you."

- Shay Hurley

"I knew the basics of politics before I started coming to UW, but I didn't really think critically about politics or political things until I started coming here."

- Robert Daniels

"Two generations ago, black people couldn't even come to the University of Washington."

- Konomi Holiday

"You'd think race would play a big part because education is supposed to be this big thing. 'Cause they talk about society's problems all the time, right? There's a big class called murder. Big class called sex education. But there's no big class on race issues or race relations."

The purpose of this chapter is to explore each students' experiences in higher education, given the context within which they have come to attend and be prepared for college. In the previous chapters, I clarified an operating definition of racism and of a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism, discussed the social context these students grew up in, and analyzed their K-12 schooling in light of this context. I now answer the second set of research questions, which were designed to explore how higher education has supported these multiracial students in coming to think about race and racism.

This chapter addresses each student's personal experiences in all of the colleges they have enrolled in up until their final years at the University of Washington. Specifically, this chapter explores the impact of organizational structures, curriculum, the ways their faculty have structured their courses and engaged with them, and peer influences in shaping these students' thinking about race and racism. These different influences are explored as each student told their stories, explained their experiences, and reflected upon what college has meant to them. The chapter ends with a summary of the major themes presented through their stories, as I ultimately argue that the main influences on developing a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism come from peers of color and faculty teaching courses that explicitly address people of color (typically ethnic studies courses).

Before diving into each students' experiences in college, I wish to clarify that the first aspect of the second research question, which focused on organizational aspects of these students' higher education, was seen as relatively irrelevant to these students. None of the students cited their residence hall experiences, structured interaction, cohort

programs, or any other formal means of organizing their college experiences as relevant to their thinking about race and racism. In fact, more often than not, typical structures seemed completely irrelevant to their college experiences and to their thinking about race and racism.

What came through in most of these students was the dramatic impact some of their peers of color had on their thinking. For many of these students, college (not necessarily the University of Washington) was the first place they had access to large communities of color. Whether it be housemates, classmates, or other students they met in activist organizations, these students typically noted that the peers they would meet in college had the most significant impact on their development of a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism. More often than not, their white peers not only did not support them, but directly agitated them by sharing their ignorance and lack of willingness to discuss race and racism. The negative reaction they often received by some white students typically led them to further embrace their peers of color, who not only shared similar experiences growing up, but also echoed the isolation most of these students experienced in their predominantly white classes.

This exposure to larger groups of color combined with the desire for courses that filled in the gaps left by their K-12 education. Most of these students came to college ready for courses that they felt were relevant to who they were, and often enrolled in ethnic studies, international studies, or sociology courses to fill in their knowledge gaps. These courses, often historical in nature, combined with a much more supportive peer base to create a foundation for a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism, and ultimately helped shape in most of these students a sense of pride in being who they are.

Several faculty were supportive, but generally not a main influence. In rare cases, individual faculty stood out. In fact, a popular African American faculty member was mentioned by three students as having provided outstanding support. Each student generally had one or two faculty members or instructors with whom they could recall having their thoughts and experiences validated for the first time in an academic setting. With the exception of a few faculty members, however, these students articulated that most faculty were seen as irrelevant to their thinking about race and racism; indeed, most professors appeared to have been largely unsupportive if not downright negating.

An interesting question arose as I poured over these transcripts. Were these courses, and the faculty teaching them enlightening because they stood out as one of the few, and typically the first, academic forum where these students were validated? In these students' experiences, most faculty have not included the perspectives of people of color, unless the course explicitly said race in the title. Similarly, race rarely ever came up in other courses, and when it did, it was often in a negative manner, such as an offensive comment that went unchecked. Further, even some of the few faculty who did address race and racism in their courses tended to have simplistic operating definitions of racism that did not accommodate multiraciality. Yet with these caveats, six of these students had enlightening experiences (with Robert already having been critically aware, and Chris still not sharing such an awareness) in a course that reflected their experiences, testifying to the dramatic impact faculty and courses that address race and racism can have.

Table 6**Overview of Pathways to College**

Name	Year*	Major	Previous Colleges
Michelle Davis	Senior (6 th)	Pre-Medicine	Two Community Colleges
Robert Daniels	Senior (5 th)	Political Science; History	None
Simon Gomburza	Junior (5 th)	Biology	Community College
Konomi Holiday	Senior (4 th)	American Ethnic Studies	None
Shay Hurley	Senior (5 th)	American Ethnic Studies	Community College
Kathryn Moore	Junior (3 rd)	American Ethnic Studies	None
Emiko Tanaka	Senior (5 th)	International Relations	Two Private Colleges; Community College
Chris Wong	Junior (3 rd)	Economics	None

* Year at completion of interviews (June, 2002)

Before exploring each individual student, remember how each student arrived at the University of Washington (See Table 6). Emiko took the most circuitous route, and actually attended three colleges prior to landing at the University of Washington. She initially enrolled at Linfield College, got seriously ill, and then tried a quarter at Seattle Pacific University. After shuttling between these two small private colleges, Emiko enrolled at North Seattle Community College and eventually transferred to the University of Washington. Michelle took a few years off from school after graduating high school, and after also attending North Seattle Community College, transferred to the University of Washington. Shay and Simon took similar routes, though prior to enrolling at a community college. Shay worked for a few years, while Simon spent time in the Army. Robert, Kathryn, Chris, and Konomi all came directly to the university, though both

Robert and Konomi came in through outreach programs that targeted communities of color.

After presenting each students' experiences, I briefly discuss how each student conceived of the purpose of higher education, given their collective experiences. I then conclude by connecting the major themes in this chapter to those from K-12, and clarify how peer influence and some limited coursework ultimately supported these students for the first time. In Chapter Eight, I discuss the implications of these students' experiences, connect their suggestions for improvement with my own ideas and reflections and conclude the dissertation with several pieces of creative writing that leave us marching towards hope for a more inclusive educational process.

Shay Hurley

Shay's college experience has been a dramatic improvement from her K-12 schooling. This is not to say that she did not have significant struggles and negating experiences in the two colleges she attended, but simply that she had not been affirmed throughout her K-12, and her college experience began on a positive note. To be fair, Shay began college in a much more positive light, because she was living on her own, away from her troubled childhood, and in search of independence, intellectual stimulation, and validation. Perhaps most significant for Shay has been her exposure to ethnic studies courses, which she was sold on as soon as she took her first one. From then on, Shay became involved with school and began to search out courses that taught her about race, racism, history, and culture.

“At Shoreline, when I took my first Afram history class, I learned all these untruths that I've learned throughout high school. I was like, ‘Damn! I'm

just really ignorant to believe that Abraham Lincoln was such a great man, he freed the slaves.’ And I never really looked at it in-depth on how that affects our life now. And that transpired into taking Asian American and then I took Chicano [Studies]. It really inspired me to learn about everybody. And I think it really changed me as a person.”

The African American history class had a significant impact on Shay because it gave her a framework for understanding her experiences as well as all that which she never learned in K-12 schooling.

“I took that class because since I wasn’t considered black enough by everybody, I wanted to know what black was. What is it that I’m not? So I’d ask, ‘What is blackness?’ No one could answer it for me, so I took black history to see what it is. And I learned that the same stuff happened to every minority group. And after that, I took every multicultural class. Every one of them. And the fact that we got more deeper than just when this person was born, what he invented, and what he accomplished. We learned more about the thought process, the economic stratification. How what’s happening now was an effect of what the past brought on. We looked into deeper things and that’s what I liked. And I was like things really go back to race. Everything.”

Shay had not really thought about her identity prior to this exposure. “I really didn’t come into thinking about my identity until I got into college.” Yet even as she began to think about herself in relation to her newfound coursework, Shay soon realized that, as enlightening as these courses had been, even they had left her out. She finally

become socially connected to an academic institution, in part because she was searching for inclusion to counter the alienation from her classes.

“There was nothing really out there that talked about mixed race issues or being biracial or anything. You always feel like the only one and I didn’t want to feel so isolated. So once I started going to Shoreline and started taking multicultural classes. I became interested and then [the director of the Multicultural Center] dragged me in and made me start participating. And then the next thing you know I wound up in leadership. And it just kind of went from there.”

Shay jumped into campus leadership and activism her second year, partially as a way to learn more about the variety of experiences that monoracial people of color face. She still wanted to learn about mixed race people, but began to recognize that this was simply not an option.

“I was the president of the Asian Pacific Islander club, and the vice president of the black student union. Editor in chief. I did everything on that campus. I was trying to turn out to be the next militant. So I did Mavin for a year of my life for free. I was like a boogying woman. I was boogying.”

After jumping in, Shay finally had a negative experience that brought her back down to reality and demonstrated that while she found lot more support at the community college, some of that support was jaded and perhaps not as strong as she had allowed herself to believe. Shay was involved in the planning of a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

celebration, which ultimately created tension because her advisor was uncomfortable with her multiracial heritage.

“We put on the MLK celebration. I was trying to include all people, like the Asian Pacific Islanders, the gay lesbian group, everybody. We were having a hard time finding someone from the Asian American group to speak on how MLK affected Asian Americans. And since I was already the emcee, I was like, ‘I’ll do it if we can’t find anybody, but I don’t want to do it because I’m already the emcee, but since I’m president of the club, I’ll do it.’ And he was like, ‘No, we want someone more Asian to do it. Like someone who is Asian.’ ”

Shay was hurt by the racist affront and had begun to forget the context of racism that she, up until that point, had been constantly reminded of. She had finally become socially and intellectually connected, yet was still being alienated because of her multiraciality.

“It was just very hurtful. He was the advisor of the club. He had no problem with me being the president, but I couldn’t speak on Asian American issues because I’m only half? And I was like, here’s this white guy who only studied Asian American stuff and yet he’s telling me I have no right to speak on Asian American issues ‘cause I should be Asian, yet he can speak on it because he went to school and got a Ph.D., but yet I’m half Asian and I can’t speak on it? It bothered me so much throughout the week and I told [the director of the multicultural center], and everybody was very upset because he’s teaching multicultural issues and he’s saying

something so ignorant about that. That negative experience totally shut me down. And an accumulation of all kind of stuff started happening on campus that kind of shut me down.”

This accumulation started to unravel the supportive world that Shay had created, especially given that she had put so much of her energy into her newfound activism after finally finding something to focus her energies on.

“There was this other professor there that said that we shitted on MLK’s name at the celebration because we used the word brotherhood instead of including women. And I’m like get over it. We did lesbian, gays, bisexuals, transgendered people, too, we didn’t leave them out. It just hurt me because I admire her. She was a woman, Jewish professor. And then we had a transgendered professor who totally came down on our paper ‘cause we had an anti-abortion ad in there. There’s just so many liberal people that turn out to be not so liberal. So it was just disheartening. Because that whole year I dedicated so much of my time. And I felt like I was a part of something, but I got fed up and disappointed. Especially after that comment by that professor. And then Mavin, the fact that they’re not getting any money to do these projects, and I’m not getting paid. It just kind of burnt me out. How much more love I can give?”

Throughout this year of being totally immersed in school, community, and activism, Shay maintained her academic focus.

“I wound up getting good grades, but it was just so draining. I didn’t even have time to think, it was just bam bam bam. So I needed a break. You can

be doing all this great stuff but there's always going to be someone that's going to say something ignorant and it's going to offend you. 'We're into multiculturalism,' and then behind closed doors you find out that they really aren't. It disappointed me because I guess I was still brown eyed and bushy-tailed and just hoping that the world is going to change.

Even though Shay finished her community college experience on a low note, she maintained a positive image of the campus because of its size and caring atmosphere.

"If Shoreline offered a four year degree I would have graduated from there. 'Cause the people there are just awesome. And just coming from a community college where everybody is so caring. I wanted to stay at Shoreline as long as I could. Because it was very welcoming, very fostering. They cared about you. People would speak to you and you'd want to get involved. There were bad people there, but I have to look at it holistically, and all the great people there were just awesome."

The University of Washington, however, provided a different experience, and Shay never fully adjusted to the large class sizes and less welcoming environment.

"The UW is a totally different story. Shoreline was cool because it was so diverse. And then coming to UW, it went back to isolation because it's so predominantly white. When you sit in a classroom and there's 300 white faces and you're the only black Korean and you see one light skinned black girl in the back, and no black men, and it's just like, 'DANG!' And I count the Asian Americans in there as diverse but they're in their own

little cubby group. And so you're the only one again. My education would be so different if I never went to Shoreline and just went to UW."

Because she had been writing so much for the school newspaper and for her activism. Shay transferred into the University of Washington wanting to be a journalist. But that all changed when she actually looked into the courses she would have to take.

"When I flipped through the catalogue and I saw all the great courses in AES and I was going to have to take history of mass communications when I could be taking the history of Chicanos. So I decided to change my major."

Within American Ethnic Studies. Shay found her niche. and was able to surround herself with more people of color. Outside of the department. however. Shay found classes overwhelmingly white.

"In classes full of predominantly white people. I searched out that one brown person just so I could have that sense of belonging. And then in AES I feel so much more relaxed 'cause there's so many of us in there. It really is a big difference just seeing people like you. or at least knowing that they're going through the same stuff. That's why I changed my major. I knew that I would be just a number. and I really don't feel that closeness with other people on campus. Within American Ethnic Studies department. it's cool. But when I leave the classroom. I don't feel that UW is supportive of me."

As powerful as ethnic studies courses have been. Shay still felt they were not rooted in a critical definition of race and racism. and as such. did not address multiracial

people. Ultimately, they contribute to the same monoracial bias that Shay argued the rest of the campus perpetuates.

“Taking Afram history is important to me. And taking Asian American history is important, too, but I still don’t fit in and you’re not talking about how Asian Americans don’t accept other part-Asians. There’s a lot of issues they don’t address. American Ethnic Studies is talking about the history and how it has been. And we’re supposed to be the ones to change the future, but it’s just frustrating because you go into class and they don’t talk about you and when they do it’s short and brief, but yet we still spend so much time on the black-white dichotomy, and it’s like, there are other people in between. Some people in the department might feel that you exist and racial equality is something you should strive for, but they probably personally don’t feel that race mixing is okay. I’ve found a lot of professors who what they personally feel contradicts what they teach.”

Aside from contradicting what they teach, faculty typically do not even offer courses that get to the depth of what Shay is after. Ultimately, she would like courses to focus more critically on an expanded definition of race and racism that allows for analysis of distinct racial, ethnic, and cultural groups as well as different multiracial groups.

“They don’t even have separate Korean from Asian, much less Korean American. Unless it’s Korean Studies through International Studies. They don’t really separate the Asian groups in America, they just put them all together and you learn about everybody. Koreans aren’t really that popular

within the Asian American classes anyway. You mostly talk about Japanese and Chinese and a little bit about the Koreans. And I noticed lately that depending on what ethnic background our professor is, that's what they're going to tighten the focus on. So they must have gotten into this because they were trying to find themselves. And so most of their research is on that. But I think I would be more broad. 'Cause I've already taken Chicana Studies and that's why my degree is in Comparative Ethnic Studies, not just Afram or Asian. I took Chicana Studies and Indian and Asian American and Afram."

While Shay was clear about not saying a specific class would have dramatically improved her education, she also recognized the significance of not even having a course that specifically addressed being mixed race.

"It's just disturbing [that we don't have any mixed classes]. I'm not saying we should have a major in it, but at least a class. A class that talks about it because we talk about it a little bit, but there is so much ignorance about why people classify themselves as multiracial. It makes you feel like 'Why can't everyone get a good education?' Because if everyone had a good education, everybody would realize how stupid it all is."

Having access to a good education, in Shay's mind, meant learning about the experiences of people of color and understanding more than just the theory of racism. Yet one of her largest critiques of higher education in general is that white students typically do not take such classes, and as a result, typically do not have a deep understanding of the

every day experiences people like her have to go through. Not having that shared understanding has made it difficult for Shay to connect with her white peers.

“I’ve tried to talk to white girls here, but it’s hard to have a conversation when the things I like to talk about never come up. Me and my friends get into deep conversations, like about the Oscars and how it really isn’t a great thing that [Haile Berry] won those Oscars. But even with this one girl who went to Shoreline with me, she’s in American Ethnic Studies, too. And we might talk about those things in class, but we don’t really get any deeper. We start talking about other things, like shopping. I feel like I can’t be myself around certain white people.”

Even when these white people take courses that address at least the historical situation of people of color, such as ethnic studies courses, Shay maintains her lack of comfort. Ultimately, Shay argues that courses are not enough, and that in order to understand racism, white people need to be more directly involved with addressing it.

“Her parents are classic June and Ward Clever. She’s a very privileged girl. But she can talk to me about it because she’s had so many classes in it. And she’s like, ‘I just can’t believe that people are like this.’ But she’s very quiet, so I don’t know if somebody were to say something around her, would she correct them? If she was put in a situation where there’s a bunch of white people talking about people of color, will she call them out or will she just sit there? She plans on going into education, and I feel confident about her because I know she understands what people of color have to go through and stuff, but I wish she would get more active. She

hasn't been active outside of class, like getting involved with political or social things. And I think that's another step you have to do with things like this. You have to be involved. You can't just take some classes. You have to go into it."

White people, in Shay's experience, have not demonstrated an understanding of a core aspect of her identity: racism. This lack of understanding makes Shay uncomfortable because she does not know where white people stand with regards to racism. This has shaped who Shay interacts with, as well as the nature of those interactions. "Are they really going to be able to relate to me?" In Shay's experiences, dating back to her white advisor in community college, have shown her that white people, no matter how "expert" they may be on the subject of race, may still not "get it."

Part of not "getting it," Shay clarified, is also in the way her white peers communicate.

"You know how black people give you that responsive feedback, like, 'Um-hummm, girl, yes I know!' You feel it. Latinos, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, they do that, too. And Asian groups, they'll do that, too. But any time I was ever in a class and there was white people in the class and you're telling them how hard it is being a person of color, you don't know if they are even there. You don't know just by looking at them because there's no response. I'm glad that they take these classes, but I wonder, do they really believe it? 'Cause you can't tell by looking at them. And that's the thing, when you see a person of color walking down the street, you know that they've gone through some kind of discrimination or racism.

But with a person who is white, you don't know if they're with you or against you or if they are with you, will they switch sides if shit goes down? So it's hard to really feel yourself around people who are white."

In college, Shay's peers of color have not only been supportive, they have helped her think more critically about her experiences just as they have validated her earlier rejection.

"All my friends have helped each other because the friends I have now range from Mexican to Egyptian to black Americans, to real African Americans, like Ethiopian, Eritrean. We all bring different issues to the table, how every event affects us differently. Especially after 9-11. Me and my friend were on the phone and, people of color, you think alike. 'Cause the first thing that came out of both of our mouths was, 'Lord, please don't let it be no Arab Americans or Muslims, because you know they're going to start racial profiling.' Then my Muslim friend was telling me about how people are following her when she'd go to Mosque. So all these diverse issues, you see how people feel and they're people who are close to you."

Typically, her white peers and faculty also seem to have a lack of knowledge about race and racism, even on campus.

"The misconception is that there's a lot of Asians. This student was telling me Asians were 'like 60 percent of the campus.' I'm like, 'NO! 60 percent of the campus is not Asian. It's more like 20.' But I've had professors who think that way, too. It's just that idea that there's a massive amount. And then the other day I went upstairs and they had a welcoming freshmen class. Everybody there was white. There was not one Asian

American student, not one Latino, no blacks, everybody was white. And I was just like,

‘So this is what they mean by diversity and EOP recruitment?’ ”

Shay came to community college and experienced her first real intellectual freedom partially because it was the first time she could focus on academics and partially because she was finally away from the family turmoil she grew up in. She enrolled in ethnic studies courses, found her niche immediately, and began carving out an identity as an activist and campus leader. Though her experiences ended on a negative note because her faculty and advisors were overly critical and unable to deal with their own issues with multiraciality, she ultimately looks upon her experience very fondly. Shay has been constantly disappointed since she has come to the University of Washington, however. She had hoped that the university would support her developing critical awareness of race and racism. While her peer base provided such support, she found her professors and white peers lacking.

In Shay’s experience, ethnic studies allowed her insight into a world that supported monoracial people of color, and she immediately responded. She has never had her multiraciality supported academically, though she has been able to find limited support through her volunteer work with Mavin. Her peers of color have been very supportive and her conversations with them have both shaped and reflected her growing sense of consciousness. In contrast, Shay sees most of her college peers as using college as a way to make money: “No matter what higher education does sometimes, people are just here to get their degree and make that dollar. It’s like, I just want to make my money and go.” For Shay, this reason severely limited her ability to learn from her peers and

faculty alike, though college has certainly been the most positive form of support she has had.

Simon Gomburza

Simon headed into college just as he was escaping from the Army. He had just spent a miserable three years in the Army, been racially harassed by his roommate, and found little recourse or support from any of his officers. He came to South Seattle Community College academically unsteady and unsure of what he wanted to do. Three years later, he would transfer to the University of Washington, where, his first quarter, he would finally have his multiraciality validated. As soon as he arrived on campus, he enrolled in a course entitled, PINOY Teach⁸, which trained undergraduates to teach middle school lessons about Filipino history and culture. He also saw a film that totally shifted his consciousness by exposing him to multiracial communities and experiences. He began connected to Mavin, and ultimately started his own multiracial student group as a way of dealing with what he has perceived as peer ignorance and apathy. With the exception of his PINOY Teach course, Simon's courses and faculty have talked extremely little about race and racism, and most of his peers have not supported his thinking either, with the exception of those at Mavin and a few students in the multiracial student organization.

Coming straight from the Army, Simon was looking forward to a new environment. While at the private junior high, Simon was exposed to "big money" and "after seeing that, it's just like, why would you ever want to put sheet rock up when there's all this opportunity out there?" As his experience grew worse in the Army, his

recollection of the value of college grew. Simon came to college excited and ready to start all over.

“The first year I started out after the Army, I was a little bit hesitant about getting back in school. I didn’t know what the hell I wanted to do and I was scared about my past performances in high school, so I took a lot of sculpture and writing classes. And then I took a bio class and I liked that, so I took another one. Then I took the anatomy series, and I just kept going.”

Simon had not yet begun to realize that he could use college as a way to explore his identity and history, partially because there were no classes to take. “At South Seattle, there were zero classes that addressed race and racism.” This lack of course exposure led Simon to stick with biology, though he did try to take a Filipino English instructor. “but it was always full because he was a really good teacher.” Simon spent his first two years getting reacquainted with the academic side of things, though towards the end of his second year, he got involved with student government. “One of the reasons I stayed a third year at South Seattle was because I liked student government so much.”

Simon, at this point, was still not thinking about race and racism, partially because he was focused on getting back into an academic mindset, and partially because he simply had no exposure to such thinking in K-12, the Army, or in his first few years of college. What he was exposed to was limited, and generally did not spark his interest. “There was a diversity conference [for student government], but I didn’t go because I went to a national leadership conference. We had to pick one.” The closest Simon got to taking a course that dealt with race and racism was a “Native American art class. And the

instructor was Chinese, and she talked a little bit about it." The bottom line for Simon, however, was that "there was no opportunity at South Seattle." In fact, the little he did get exposed to "was all on [his] own."

After three years, Simon transferred to the University of Washington, though he did not realize at the time that he would have to take at least two additional years of schooling. "At the community college, I was taking other science classes I liked, but I didn't know that I had to take three years of chemistry just to be a bio major." Simon transferred to the university having completed his general education requirements, but still needed to complete several basic major requirements. While in hindsight, he wished he had more access to courses dealing with race and racism, he also wished he had more helpful advising.

By the time Simon transferred to the University of Washington, he was more than ready to delve into learning about race and racism.

"I was in the HUB, starting my first quarter here and I saw a table for the Filipino American Student Association. And I was just asking them all kinds of questions about their group and I wanted to be more involved with that because I felt like I had something to contribute. They told me about this mixer and this guy came in said I should do PINOY Teach, and he talked about how powerful it was to be able to not only learn yourself, but to go to your family, and then go to younger kids. It appealed to me because I didn't know a lot about Filipino culture. And I'd been interested in education."

Simon was immediately excited, and began searching for courses to take.

“I wanted to take a Filipino history class the first quarter that I got here. but it recommended that you take the general American Ethnic Studies class first. So I was like, ‘I don’t really have room for that, so I’ll just wait.’ And then I found PINOY Teach and I just dove straight into that. I didn’t care what I had to do. I knew I had to interview for it, but since I couldn’t take the other class, it worked out.”

In the PINOY Teach course, Simon began to study Filipino culture and learned to apply that to the teaching of middle school students. While his early exposure to PINOY Teach sparked his interest in Filipino culture and history, it was his exposure to a film put on by an anti-racist student organization that altered his personal outlook and thinking about race and racism.

“My first quarter here I found a movie, *The Way Home*, by Shakti Butler, that was playing in the ECC⁹. And I think that was the first time that I actually dealt with being multiracial. There were a lot of mixed people in the film. This lady was talking about being half Asian and half white, and then being accepted by the Latin culture, but not by white or Asians. And that was just totally rough. That’s what hit me. The lights were out. I was having my little movie cry. And then the lights came on and I was trying to hide it. And [the facilitator] was like, ‘We’re going to pair up and we’re going to talk about this.’ Well, I went there by myself. So here’s this total stranger I’m supposed to talk about something that I’ve never really thought about. Or not that much. And then I just couldn’t even talk. I was just crying the whole time.”

Luckily, Simon was paired up with a person who was supportive, and he was able to have his experiences even further validated for the first time.

“I was talking to this girl from Korea and I got one sentence out about how I had never seen anything like this before growing up in South Seattle, and then going to a mostly white high school. That feeling of abandonment and isolation. And she paired that up with her experience going back to Korea and how she doesn't feel like she really fits in there and it's a cross cultural thing once you've been in America and speak a certain way and dress in different clothing and you're treated a certain way because of that.”

This experience served not only as the first time Simon's multiracial experiences were validated, but also was the first time he was in an academic setting that addressed core aspects of his life.

The dramatic impact of such an occasion has stayed with him ever since.

“It wasn't until I could see it, go in a room, and talk about it and it just hit me hard. And from then on, I just broke. It consumed me. And I didn't want to be alone. I didn't want to be the only person. And I knew that there were other people out there. That's when I decided I wanted to form that group but I didn't know who to talk to. So I talked to some of my friends, my family, and I sent out this e-mail that was just rage. And one of my friends knew someone that went to his school, her little brother happened to be [the guy] who started Mavin. He was totally supportive.”

After enrolling in PINOY Teach, watching the film, and connecting with Mavin, Simon built up a base to start the multiracial student organization. His experiences in the Army and at South Seattle Community College had made him ripe for taking action because he simply could not wait any longer for emotional support.

“I created the group because it didn’t exist. And I knew that there were a lot of multiracial people in this area. And I knew they probably felt the same way I did. And so now we have this group, and it gives me a place where I can kind of relax a little bit. Think more about being me and not what I look like or who I identify with. It’s a place to take a deep breath and be among people who understand and are going through the same stuff. I want it to get people to come together, but I also feel like that’s a tremendous responsibility and I don’t know if I can expect that out of my members. Everyone’s at different places in their ethnic identity and their growing and how comfortable they are with everything. And my main goal is just to form a community so that there is that support and kind of promote awareness of it. We’re here. We’re not invisible.”

Having gone through so much schooling and negative experiences that invalidated his racial heritage, Simon broke down when he finally saw himself reflected in others. He used this opportunity to turn his life into a struggle to support himself and those around him in trying to make sense of their lives. When Simon returned home from watching *The Way Home*, he wrote in his journal.

“When you’re writing, it’s more of your inner voice. And that was something that had kind of been silenced. Especially about that. I am

reading this book called Half and Half and there was a person in there describing how if you don't explore certain parts of your ethnic background, that there are like beings inside of you that are there but they're shriveled up and half dead. I wrote something that was almost exactly the same that night. Just kind of how there was this part of me that I didn't feel had ever lived. And it just kind of gave me a sense of being new. I had found this other part of myself that was totally dried and withered and now it's replenished."

Simon did not need much support to replenish his thinking and self-esteem, demonstrating how ready he was for validation of his previous experiences growing up. Thankfully, that was all he needed, as his other courses did not provide a similar form of support.

"Outside of PINOY Teach, no class talks about race or even our own experiences, whatever they may be. But as far as in the sciences? Not really. Not even English. If you bring it up you can, but there's no hedging towards that discussion. With the exception of PINOY Teach, none of my classes dealt with race or racism. So, I've had two classes in higher education that discuss race and racism."

Remember that Simon has had three years at a community college and one and a half at the University of Washington, and in all this time only two courses have supported his thinking about race and racism. Even with this limited academic exposure, however, Simon found a way to create support for others on campus. This came in the form of

creating the multiracial student organization, a daunting task given that he did not feel welcome by his peers as soon as he arrived on campus.

“When I first got to UW, I felt like I was a fly on the wall. Classes are huge and I didn’t really know anybody. I met a few people through the [Office of Minority Affairs’] Instructional Center¹⁰. But still, the competition in science classes is blood thirsty, so people don’t really work together. I loved being at South Seattle Community College because we had our own little clique. But not at UW.”

Similar to Shay, the switch from the community college to the University of Washington was not a positive one. This was partially due to his peers not having the same sort of awareness raising transitions.

“People would ask what nationality are you? Even the officers in the mixed meeting last night were asking ‘What nationality is that person?’ And I was like, I think the term is ethnicity. But before I didn’t know the difference. I used to say that before UW.”

His being validated early on in his University of Washington experience supported him in a way that his peers simply have not been able to do. The lack of peer receptivity has frustrated Simon.

“On the student level, racism all about cliques. People aren’t really ready to branch out. They don’t have time to educate people about how they feel, they just want to get their degree and concentrate on getting good grades and not worrying about it. I think it’s a big risk, too. It’s like, for

you to talk about your experiences and then to have someone just sit there and totally not understand...that is so frustrating.”

In part because his peers have not become critical in the same way that he has. Simon has assumed the responsibility of educating his peers.

“I try to bring up issues and talk about my own experiences in classes, but people of color, it just seems they’re like, ‘What are you complaining about? If you’re mixed, you have it way better.’ Or they see me as just a tragic person that just has this sad story. I’m totally not like that, but you gotta tell it like it is. [White people] generally just think it’s cool. ‘Wow, you’re part that? That’s cool.’ ”

Simon asserted that “being involved with different student groups and talking to people about their experiences” has had the largest impact. He argued that academically, higher education has had about as much impact on his thinking as has television, with the sole exception being PINOY Teach. But when it came down to really learning to think critically, Simon slightly contradicted himself by noting the enormous impact of studying race and racism, which he had not done much of.

“I pretty much discover it myself. I’d always kind of had an idea of what I thought it was, but not until I took PINOY Teach did I really have it nailed down. Once I was able to teach it, and teach these concepts, then I felt like I had a handle on it. But before, they were these ideas that I thought I had a handle on. I could say ‘Yeah, that’s racist and that’s racist.’ But to differentiate between racism, diversity, and this multiculturalism, all these

different concepts that are just buzzwords, I think you really have to study it to be able to talk about it.”

Simon still felt that he needed to learn more in order to really “teach about race and racism.” but he certainly responded well to the limited exposure to such coursework. Because many of his peers have not been as supportive or critical, even those involved with the multiracial student organization. Simon has increased his efforts to educate about race, racism, and multiraciality. As part of his increased efforts, Simon performed a monologue this past spring on the university’s Filipino night with other Filipinos in the community, where he was to represent mestizos¹¹. As part of his monologue, he made fun of himself and the resounding laughter made him feel extraordinarily uncomfortable.

“It was a trip to perform in front of 700 people. To lay my feelings on the line. I almost didn’t do it. And then there was a part where I couldn’t say my next line. I had just blocked it because, my very first line was, ‘Yeah, yeah, I know what you guys are thinking.’ And then the rest of the people on stage were like, ‘What’s that white guy doing here?’ And the whole audience just cracked up. And they didn’t stop laughing for a while. So I’m sitting there, and I meant it to be funny, but to hear all that laughter, it was kind of a rush but it was kind of like, wait a minute. They’re laughing at me and that’s not cool. I was proud that I had written something that people could react to, but it threw me.”

The text of what Simon performed is below.

“Yeah, Yeah I know what you’re thinking:

‘What’s that white guy doing here?’

Or you could say, 'What's the Puti guy doing here?' and I'll pretend like I don't understand. Go ahead and ask me who I came here with. Or just come right out and say it, "You're not Filipino, you're a mestizo. And then once it's known that I'm Filipino people feel like they have to inspect my face to see if they can solve the mystery. Why do I always get these crazy looks from people?

Hey there's Delores. Hello over here, I'm waving at you! Dang not even a simple nod. I know she saw me. Oh well, it could've been worse. Last time I went to Filipino night some guy came up to me and asked 'Why are you here?' And when I responded to his brilliant question, 'Why not?' He was ready to kick my ass! So much for cultural understanding.

Being a mestizo or a mixed kid is a peculiar thing. I feel like I have to put extra energy into simple everyday situations. Am I going to profess my Filipino-ness today or just give it a day off. Am I going to go to another Filipino function and try to fit in, or am I going to go hang out with the Latinos and not worry about fitting in. I grew up in South Seattle where I had no problems being accepted as a person of color. But then once I moved north it was a whole different story. I was one of about thirty other students of color in a school and the racial divisions were much more visible. There was no room for someone like me who blurred their definition of friend or foe. The minority students thought I was too white and the white students thought I was too dark.

If I'm assumed to be white, by the white guy I sit next to in class, am I going to speak up and tell him that I'm one of those people that he constantly complains about? Or am I just going to SIT THERE and let him think that I agree with his ignorance?"

Simon's narrative laid out important tensions that he still deals with. His college peers, white, Filipino or other people of color, typically assume he is an 'other,' and regardless of his activism around multiracial issues, his racial status is still called into question. While some of his peers assume he is white, Simon has issues interacting with white people. Yet most of his classes have been filled with white students, especially his biology classes.

'I feel a little bit weird talking to Caucasian people about certain things. I feel hesitant because I don't want them to get the impression that I'm blaming them. And a lot of them, as soon as you talk anything about it, they're like, 'We'll that's not me! Don't try to put that on me!'"

Simon worries that white people will reject any attempts at conversation because they will feel blamed for racism. Yet he does not think this is only white people's fault.

"There was one Caucasian girl in that Filipino history class. And I felt bad for her because I don't think that class was run in a way that really facilitated her being comfortable being there. A lot of the stuff was like, 'WHITE PEOPLE!' I felt so bad for her. But I was also kind of scared of being grouped with her because I was the only other person that wasn't dark skinned Filipino in there."

Simon articulated this tension in his monologue, as he asserted that he was uncomfortable supporting white students because he feared he would be also seen as a white student. Since his status as 'Filipino' has been called into question by other people of color, his fears have been validated regularly, yet this severely limits his ability to educate or support white students. Given this tension, I asked him how white people on campus learn about race and racism.

"Shoot, you don't! Unless you are an international business major and you have to take Japanese, but even then, you only expose yourself to the comfortable parts, like the food, the language, and how you can make money off of it. But you're not really thinking about how people grew up and what their experiences were like."

Simon could only recall one white peer who seemed even remotely interested in learning about race and racism. "There is one person in PINOY Teach. She's awesome. But she probably knows more about African American history and Filipino history than most of the Filipinos in there." Unfortunately, she was rare, and in Simon's experiences, white people simply have not been interested in taking classes that address race or racism and tend to not frequent places on campus that specifically support students of color (such as the Ethnic Cultural Center and Instructional Center - see end notes for more information).

That Simon has shifted towards a critical consciousness of race and racism should be clear. How he has made this shift is equally clear: With the help of PINOY Teach, a film that supported multiraciality, and a multiracial foundation, Simon has become more aware of his own identity as well as others around him. He was not able to mention any

faculty as having provided support, and largely has done the academic and intellectual work on his own, reading and connecting with individuals on and off campus. Since he did not find a community that supported his multiraciality, he created a student organization to help foster such a community on campus. Yet even with these efforts, Simon has yet to deeply connect with a peer base. Ultimately, he has remained on the margins of the college experience, even as he has been involved with campus leadership and activism.

Robert Daniels

Robert came to the University of Washington in search of what he did not have access to in his K-12 education: black culture. He was seeking affirmation of his entire identity, and wanted to develop an historical understanding of racism. When he arrived, he immediately enrolled in African American studies courses and became connected to student leadership opportunities in student government and in the black student union. His peers were mostly students of color who shared his political views, and ultimately, their influence supported his developing awareness in ways that courses, faculty, and other aspects of his college experience simply could not. While he immersed himself in ethnic studies, sociology, and political science courses that overtly addressed race and racism, those classes helped his understanding, but could not compete with the conversations he had in political activist organizations.

Perhaps what set Robert most apart from the rest of the students in this study, however, was his initial desire to come to college to explore being black.

“The reason why I came up here and wanted to learn the black experience was because I had all these experiences with the white experience growing

up in a mostly white community. So I wanted the experience of living around and interacting with a black community. That was part of me that I hadn't really gotten to explore. I told my parents that I spent the first 18 years of my life learning what it's like to be white. now I want to spend some time being black for a while. Or being around and learning the black experience. And that's what I kind of did when I first got to UW. I jumped right in and got involved with BSU¹² and ASUW¹³. When I came here was the year that they voted out affirmative action. So I was part of that group that marched across the 520 bridge."

Robert had been eager to begin that exploration, and used the knowledge his parents had of the University of Washington as the stage for his immersion. That the University of Washington was predominantly white mattered little; he finally had access to a substantial black population. Since he immediately immersed himself into student activism, the rest of his campus experiences were seen through glasses tinted with peer activism, which led him to further ethnic studies courses.

"I couldn't wait. I finally had the chance to explore black culture, black history. My parents both attended some school at UW, and my dad worked here for a while. They knew about the Black Student Union, so I came in and immediately started going to Black Student Union meetings. I also came through the Minority Science and Engineering Program¹⁴, and was here two weeks early for the Bridge Program¹⁵, so I got to know a lot of different student organizations and the people in them. We had a large group of young students of color in my group that I became close friends

through that two-week program. So my first quarter, I took an intro to African American Studies class.”

That course, and subsequent courses that dealt with African American history and culture had a significant impact on Robert, though every time he mentioned the impact of his coursework, he clarified that his peers had more influence on his thinking.

“I didn’t learn about a lot of other authors and thinkers like W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T., Marcus Garvey, until I came to UW. I didn’t know what I was missing, with regards to a black community. But it was an even more eye-opening experience walking into a BSU meeting and seeing 30 black people who were in college. In a way it opened my eyes to people outside my family who were black and successful.”

Regardless of how Robert learned about race and racism, that he learned about it was clear, and that it had an impact on him was even more obvious.

“The more I learned about the politics and history of race in America, the more I felt like it became a part of me. I don’t want to say I identified more as black, but it made me feel more in tune with the black experience and more connected to the black society in America.”

While Robert’s African American-centered courses filled in the large gaps left from his K-12 education, he ultimately learned much more about race and racism through his peers. Often this learning came through his peer activists of color, but Robert also learned from his white peers, who typically reacted negatively towards him.

“Sometimes, even if I’m just going up and down the stairs, someone jerks back and is surprised to see a pretty thick black dude with an afro. I guess that can be kind of intimidating to people, for all the wrong reasons.”

Other white students tended to make the stereotypical assumption that because Robert appeared black to them, and because he was a student at the University of Washington, he must be an athlete. “It’s interesting in this UW community; a lot of people assume that I’m a football player. Or if I’m not a football player, then what sport do I play?”

These are not the only assumptions Robert has dealt with from many of his white peers. Similar to how others see Konomi and Shay as in style because they are both black and Asian, some of Roberts’ peers also see him in a positive light because of how they stereotype black men as being cool. So while Robert is confronted by white people who are uncomfortable with him, he also comes across those who think his being black makes him more appealing to be seen with.

“Sometimes I get white people who, whatever I do is cool ‘cause I’m black, as far as they know. Like the whole idea of black equals coolness. Blackness is coolness. Michael Jordan and the black style, so they want to be associated with me just ‘cause they think since I’m black, I’m probably going to be cool. So I get it both ways, you have some people afraid of me when they see me in the hallway and some people want to come up and talk to me when they see me in the hallway ‘cause they think they’ll be cooler if they’re associated with me, just ‘cause blackness is cool, not ‘cause I did anything especially cool.”

As a result of this presumptuous treatment by other white students, Robert does not interact much with white students, with the exception of those he grew up with.

“The only white people I hang out with now are people who I knew before I came to school here. I have a white female roommate, but I’ve known her since junior high school. And then when I go home most of the people I hang out with are white ‘cause most of the black people are locked up. But in terms of friends here, I can’t think of any, except for one of my old roommates who is half white and half Chinese. But most of the people I hang out with are black, Latino, or Pacific Islander.”

Heading into college, Robert knew he would make decisions that determined the types of people he would become friends with.

“College is a political place. If people are going to be political, college is often the part of their lives where they are going to be political. And I chose a very political student group to base myself in. And through that, just the people I started hanging out with had the same political interests. I haven’t really hung out with anybody who really differed widely from me in terms of politics. I think the people that I hung out with who were political were kind of self-selected because I’d go to these student group meetings and become friends with people who were already active because they’re in the student group.”

The sole exception was his white roommates his sophomore year in the dorms, whom he did not choose to live with.

“But even my roommates in my second year of living in the dorms, some of them were very political. They weren’t part of these student groups I was part of, but they had a political consciousness. And some of them joined other student groups, like WashPirg¹⁶, that were pretty political. They all kind of shared the same views. I mean, they knew that I was president of the BSU.”

When asked to compare experiences to his white liberal roommates, Robert argued that while politically they may have been similar, their experiences were drastically different because he chose to work with other people of color, while they chose to work with predominantly white student groups.

“A lot of the stuff that I’ve done has been people of color kind of things. Even liberal white students, they might have the same general views on stuff, but they do different programs. They might be doing Affordable Tuition Now¹⁷, or they might do WashPirg, or they might be doing Young Democrats¹⁸. We probably have a lot of the same ideology, but they hang out with mostly white student groups. The average white person on campus doesn’t really hang out at the ECC too much. The only thing that I’ve done that’s had a lot of monoracial white people is student senate [a branch of the ASUW]. But in terms of all the other stuff, it’s a majority people of color.”

Perhaps because of the self-selecting manner in which Robert connected and surrounded himself with his activist peers of color, the largest impact on his political consciousness came from the students in his organizations and peer groups.

“The people I hung out with helped me become more politically aware. Conversations with people, presentations, and working with groups. And also I’m a political science major, so I chose political classes. But overall, what had the most impact was organizations and conversations with people versus classes. It was the student groups more than the classes that really stretched my political thinking.”

When I asked specifically what types of students helped Robert become more conscious about race and racism, he clarified that it was both graduate students and undergraduate activists.

“I have had one or two classes that really pushed my thinking on politics, racism and the politics of racism. But most of that I would say was graduate students and undergraduate activists who talk about political stuff. And I work with pretty active minority people. So I became friends with several people I work with, and we get into conversations. But my way of thinking was affected more through student groups and friends than it was through classes.”

While Robert’s peers clearly had more of an impact, his courses also influenced his thinking, though that was limited more to supporting, rather than shaping his thinking.

“Classes had more of an impact on my intellectual thinking than on my political thinking. I’d still say both political and intellectual were affected more by outside of class things. I’m taking a political theory class right now, and it has been more of a history lesson than it has been actual thinking intellectually about politics. We’re learning about Aristotle.

Locke, and Rousseau, but we're not actually thinking about them. They ask us which we like better, but we don't discuss which systems work best with what ideologies. We just read what they wrote and then write about what they wrote. No comparing or contrasting to real life."

While his classes and peers had the effect of exposing Robert to being black, he also found that his peers demonstrated their racism in class. While he knew he had to challenge racist comments, he also recognized the difficulty of doing so.

"In classes, it can be intimidating to hear people say some of the stupid things. At least in the beginning it can be kind of difficult to say 'Hold up, I don't agree with that. That's not right. Listen to what you just said.' "

Robert tied the difficulty he has had in challenging white students' comments in class to an overall difference between the ways white students and students of color experience college.

"In class, 'normal' white students are supported a lot more than people of color. They say it's nice to have people of all different colors in class so people can say my experience is different from yours, but it is hard to do that. We wouldn't need all these diversity requirements if people would speak up, but it's hard to speak up when you're in class and you're trying to tell your life story. You don't really want to do that because there's not a whole lot of sense of community or friendship throughout classes. Everybody just goes to class, doesn't talk to anybody except for the one friend they come in with, and then goes home or to their next class. So they say that's the goal, but it really doesn't happen very often in classes

that are mostly white. And when I go to classes, I think it's set up more for the average student, who is generally white. And generally, it's set up for a white male perspective."

When I asked Robert what that perspective looked like in class, he clarified that typically, that meant reading almost all white male authors.

"In my political theory class, every single person we've read has been a white male. No women, no people of color. No non-western ways of political thought. Just all different forms of democracy, like Greek versus French versus English versus some other form of western European democracy. We haven't talked at all about native cultures or indigenous Mexican cultures or South American, African, Asian cultures and their politics. So a person who walks into that class who has grown up with a certain set of beliefs that conforms to all that is going to be cool in that class. But if a person comes from the reservation, and they have a whole different set of ideas about government or society, that's going to be very foreign to them, and it's not going to connect with where they come from. If they're from Mexico or even a mostly Mexican American community, it's going to be a lot different for them."

What makes these courses different for students of color is that they often have a more extended understanding of their historical circumstances than do many white people taking or even teaching the class. Yet even with this extended knowledge, calling ones peers, TA's, or instructors into question can be a daunting task, and the general climate of

white students not supporting these efforts only adds to the task. Yet Robert did have an occasion where a white student challenged a teacher on race issues.

“I was in the quiz section of my political theory class and we were talking about one of the political philosophers, I think it was Locke, who had slaves, or at least had some share in the slave trade industry. And the TA said something to the extent of at that time they truly didn’t consider black people or African people to be humans. I was about to say something, but this other girl, this white girl said, ‘That’s just a cop out. They knew these people were human beings. They knew they were equal to them, they just didn’t want to admit it because it was for their own personal gains.’ And I backed up her point with some more in-depth kind of stuff. But a couple of years ago, I’m not sure I would have been able to say that. Or if I would have had the guts to try to correct the TA. Cause if she hadn’t said that and I hadn’t said that, then everybody would have left that class thinking that slavery is excusable because they really didn’t think black people were human. They thought of them as farm animals, which wasn’t the truth.”

Robert had argued that part of the reason it has been so difficult to challenge comments in classes is because most of his teachers simply did not talk about race, unless the class specifically had race in the title. Otherwise, it was not only extremely difficult to bring up, but his efforts were largely ignored by the faculty, who would refer him to other courses that had race in their title. A more common example was when Robert recently took a speech communication class.

“It was ‘Intro to Public Speaking’ and the professor said he recognized that there are different forms of speech in different cultures and call and response is prevalent in the black community, and he’s like, ‘Well, we’re not going to be teaching that.’ And he went on to say that we’re going to be learning the more mainstream way, and I’ve spoken about race issues, reparations, black political groups in the sixties, but if I hadn’t done that, it wouldn’t have been talked about. But people gave speeches on whatever they wanted to and I was the only underrepresented person in the class.”

Experiences like this one are typical for Robert, and ultimately, he blames the university for not adequately ensuring that courses deal with race and racism. Robert argued that it is the larger responsibility of the university to insure faculty address race, racism, and culture in classes.

“The university isn’t doing it’s job in properly educating people if somebody can easily get a political science degree without ever taking a class that ever has to deal with any sort of race or race issues. I’m taking another class, a high-level political science class about politics. We do computer simulations about the way countries interact with each other in order to best achieve for their own country. And we haven’t talked about anything. All the countries that we’ve used in these computer simulations have been European countries. It hasn’t addressed culture at all. Period. It just assumes that every culture is the same as western European. And culture plays a very important role in how a country will do things or

interact with other countries or make political decisions. That hasn't even come up once."

Not only has Robert found little mention of culture, race, or racism in his classes that do not explicitly indicate a study of those aspects, but he also has found that his courses consistently do not offer readings by authors of color. In essence, his instructors, and implicitly the university, seem to convey that people of color are only interested and interesting when race and racism are brought up.

"I don't think I've ever read a book by a person of color that wasn't in one of those classes. That focused on people of color's issues. Same with economics classes, business classes. You can get so many different degrees without ever having to take classes on how this all impacts people of color. And part of that is because when we study the interaction between people of color and white people, we have to call it a race class instead of history, so people can opt out of taking them."

This lack of exposure to talking about race partially explains why Robert has not learned as much as he feels he should have in his courses. The one exception has been courses taught by the one popular African American instructor that Konomi and Kathryn also thought were outstanding.

"I don't think that racism is addressed a lot in classes that aren't this or that race class, or outside of classes that a major part of the class is race. I don't think race or racism is really addressed or discussed. I can't think of any other class where we got into a deep discussion about race. I remember my sophomore year, I was taking 'Sociology of Deviance,' and

we talked about race issues there in depth. And I was taking a writing link for my English composition credit for that same class. So we talked about the race issues we were talking about in my sociology class. But that was with an extraordinary teacher. But in general, classes that didn't have race in the title didn't talk about race in any major way."

This one faculty member stood out to Kathryn and Konomi as well, precisely because he addressed contemporary aspects of race and racism.

"Most of the classes that have been good was because it was a good teacher. And Dr. Black's classes are always really good. And I've talked to him many times outside of class about issues. He's one that I left out in terms of the actual institution pushing my thinking. He started the class with a historical context of race issues. And we moved on to talk about current issues, whether it's the police or institutionalized racism and how racism of 150 years ago still has an effect on people today."

This instructor, because he so clearly discusses the contemporary impact of racism creates a supportive environment for students often marginalized for trying to bring up race and racism. And as Dr. Black made people of color feel comfortable, he also made many white students feel uncomfortable.

"Dr. Black's class might make for an uncomfortable experience for some traditional white students who haven't really been exposed to that kind of class or thinking. And there are a few other classes, but there's not very many here. 95 percent of the classes aren't anything that's going to stretch

people's thinking or give people of color a place to come learn about themselves or vent about current issues."

What makes Dr. Black so rare is his continued focus on connecting up history to today. Most of the other courses that address race and racism, Robert asserted, only present historical perspectives, never contemporary issues.

"Racism was very much a part of some of my black history classes. And they talk about the history of racism, lynchings, slavery, the civil rights movement. So I learned about the history, but in terms of talking about racism today as it is today, we don't really. I've taken classes with Dr. Black and the Critical Race Theory class that addressed racism today, but in most of UW's classes, even in ethnic studies, classes that have to do with people of ethnic minority backgrounds, they haven't talked about racism and its effects today as much as I would like. Most of the discussion and learning I've had has been outside of class."

In Robert's experience, not only has racial identity been discussed in his classes, so, too, have mixed race identity and issues that correspond to different students' experiences. Yet, again, he learned more from the students than from the actual course readings or instructor, which largely only discussed monoracial people of color.

"In most of the classes, there was no talking about mixed races. In the critical race theory class, a lot of it was about identity and what you identify yourself as. One of the teachers talked about, 'I'm a black man, but I've grown up in Maine. I went to an all white college. So I have very little experience with the traditional black experience. So am I a black

person? Am I a black male? How do I identify?' And there's been some classes that have really stretched my thinking in terms of identity and being a person of mixed race. There are quite a few black people here who are half black and half white. So those conversations come up a lot in those classes. And even in African American history, we talk about the light skinned versus dark skinned black people. And the reason why there are so many. The rapes that took place on plantations that begot most of those mixed race people at that time. So, it's discussed in some of those classes, but not all of them. The idea of mixed race is discussed even less than race in general. 'Cause still, in the world, most people are either one or the other. One specific race or ethnicity."

Robert came to the University of Washington in search of a critical understanding of what it means to be black in America, both historically and contemporarily. As a result of that desire, he immersed himself into an activist community of students of color who studied and attempted to address racism. Conversations with his peers in student organizations largely shaped his thinking about racism and his role in ending it. His courses provided significant academic support for his activism, but this is mostly because he was also forming a framework outside of these courses, and because he chose courses that would further his understanding. With the exception of Professor Al Black, the rest of his instructors have been relatively ineffective in supporting his growing critical consciousness. He ultimately sees the purpose of college as teaching and learning about the social oppressions that shape our society. For him, this purpose has been met fairly

well, though most of this is due to his personal efforts to connect with activist peers of color.

Michelle Davis

Michelle's experience was unique because her route to college was so far from the traditional freshman experience. She had no idea of how to go to college after graduating from high school, had a low GPA, and had no connection to peers going to college. Once she began taking classes at community colleges, she gradually built up a sense of academic self-confidence. When she was finally admitted to the University of Washington, she was incredulous because she had been so thoroughly validated just by being admitted. This validation, however, did not mean she was academically confident, and she wondered how she could compete with her 'smarter' peers. Supporting herself through college and raising two children as a single mother, Michelle expected college to teach her what she had not learned in K-12. She did not expect, nor was she able, to engage socially. Most of her classes were in pre-medicine, which did not give her the flexibility to study race or racism. She had switched her major for a quarter, and during that time she took a sociology class by a female African American professor, which provided her with historical perspectives that she simply had never been exposed to. She learned more in that class about black history than she had in her entire life. She switched back to medicine, and at the conclusion of the interviews, completed a Physicians' Assistant post-baccalaureate certificate with an enhanced sense of self rooted in a confidence that was sorely lacking prior to college.

When Michelle graduated from high school, she had wanted to attend a four-year university, but had not really thought about how to actually do that. Her low GPA,

coupled with her lack of social activities during high school made her noncompetitive and ineligible for most local and state colleges.

“I wanted to go to college, but didn’t know how. My grades were SHITTY. I graduated with a 2.27 cumulative GPA, which in retrospect is surprising considering I never ONCE brought home a single text and was absent almost as much as I was present. My GPA haunted me for so long post graduation. It felt like I had a felony. I simply could not get into any university, period. No matter how creative my personal statements were or what I got on the SAT, the answer was no. I was devastated, defeated and embarrassed. Shit, this meant that I had to go to community college with all of the other losers of the world. That was so humiliating. I’m even embarrassed to talk about it now. I was doomed to community college, which was basically high school with ashtrays. Wasn’t I too good for this place?”

Michelle’s community college experience was tarnished because she came in looking to transfer to the University of Washington. She never planned on taking it seriously, but as she began to receive the highest grades she had in her life, her approach gradually began to change.

“Community college was surprisingly easier than I thought it would be. I would keep getting papers back with 4.0’s on them and soon I was transformed from class clown to an ‘A’ student. The material was actually interesting, thought provoking, and challenging. When I was able to rise to the challenge, I felt even better. The little voice of my high school teacher

that I had tucked away for safekeeping became a bigger voice and I started to believe what it was saying to me. I felt that my teachers looked at me differently. I started to feel for the first time that I was just as good as the other kids in class.”

In the midst of finding ways to validate her academic intellect, Michelle hit financial burdens and had to take time off so that she could get a job that would pay her enough to raise her child.

“During these years I took some time out from Highline to go to tech school to become an LPN. I wanted to give medicine a try and figured that I could go through this program pretty quickly and work as a nurse while I finished school so at least I wouldn’t have to be broke. because by this time I had a child and I’d be damned if I was going to be a welfare mom. going to school or not. So I got a job in a neonatal ICU and worked for about a year-and-a-half before heading back to Highline to earn more credits. I still had dreams of going to a university and applied to UW about two more times. At this point, I had no interest in finishing my AA and then applying. I wanted them to accept me based on how much I had improved and work my way up the index to become a desirable candidate versus any Joe Blow who can get in with an associates degree. That was important to me: I wanted to be better than good enough. Despite full-time work and motherhood, I continued to make the grade. This obviously added to my self esteem and determination.”

Even though she followed the advice of admissions counselors at UW and her community college, Michelle's applications were consistently rejected. She switched community colleges, and after taking more classes, was finally accepted into UW.

"I started taking classes at North Seattle Community college in the summer and eventually transferred to that school because I thought the classes were more challenging and the schedules were better for evening classes. After two quarters at North Seattle and 20 credits shy of graduating with my AA, I finally got into the UW. I can't honestly tell you how many times I applied to that school before this finally happened, but it was a lot! You have no idea how incredibly happy this made me. This relatively minor event in a lot of people's lives was such a big deal to me, and I mean a BIG deal."

Michelle captured the excitement of her acceptance, after having her resilience to waiting through denial after denial pay off, when she described the first time she was on campus as a student. She still felt she did not belong, but that merely added to the intensity.

"My first day on campus was actually at night, because I was an evening degree person because of work. I remember feeling so small standing in the middle of Red Square and being so happy. I know this sounds corny, but I felt so grateful to be there. Like this was not a right but a privilege and I was lucky to be there in this exclusive secret club. Which was wonderful and scary. I struggled to maintain my 'smart' attitude and tried to block out those old feelings that I wasn't good enough and everyone

else was going to be smarter than I. I worked in a pediatrics clinic with a friend who was attending the UW, and I begged her to come to my first day of class because I was petrified.”

Michelle’s friend did accompany her, but because she was so far from being a traditional student, she would not connect with her other peer students.

“I didn’t really identify with the other students in my classes for a number of reasons. I was quite a bit older than they were, which felt like a lifetime. I also had two children by this time, which I was reluctant to share with my professors because I was afraid of returning to the ‘labeled’ category. I also worked full time, which as far as I was concerned none of these ‘kids’ had really ever done except for summer jobs at Starbucks. I felt like the only one who was paying for my own education.”

Because of her financial need and resulting work schedule, and the time she dedicated to raising her children as a single mother, Michelle was unable to be socially involved in college.

“I didn’t have the time to become involved in organized student stuff or participate in study groups, and this perpetuated my isolation. I had other things going on that were of equal importance and demanded equal attention. So I basically came to school to learn.”

Michelle did not come to college to learn about race or racism, however, and because of her circuitous route to the University of Washington, she never had the flexibility or desire to take classes that she wanted to. She never realized she had the

option of taking courses that addressed race and racism, though she ended up taking two courses that addressed race and racism. The first was a psychology course requirement.

“I took a deviance class. As shitty as that is to say because that was my main exposure. But we talked a lot about race issues and deviance. All these statistics, like crime is this and of all the 6% of the black people that live in such and such population, this is how many of them are committing crimes. But that was the instructor’s thing to kind of disband that. So we talked a lot about race issues in that class.”

Later, Michelle changed her major to sociology (for one quarter before switching back to medicine). That quarter, however, she took an African American studies course that would provide a context for thinking about race and racism. Prior to reconceptualizing race and racism, she had a difficult time with the instructor, who treated her harshly because of Michelle’s race.

“I took African American political and social thought and the professor was a hard ass. She gave me the worst grade I ever got in college. I was really pissed. She wants everybody to be a great writer and thinks everybody is going to law school. But I wasn’t going to law school and I’m not a great writer. So I was doomed. I also had the experience, not the first I might add, with the black teacher who is harder on you than the white students because they are just trying to prepare you for the real world and they say ‘In the real world, you have to work harder than the white people to get to the same place, so I might seem like I’m harder on

you, but it's for your own good.' This is bullshit! That is just as bad as having lower expectations because of my color."

Not knowing that those expectations would be placed on her, Michelle took the class because she had wanted to explore more about black identity and history. And her need for exploration out-weighed the individualized treatment she would receive.

"I took the class because I thought it looked cool and I wanted to learn more and explore. 'Cause just walking around as a black person you have no idea. Especially with people asking questions. If somebody wanted some education on something, it looks really bad when you can't tell them anything about anything. And I had no idea. I was just in awe of her class. I probably learned more in that class than any other class."

In spite of having a professor who acted as if Michelle was totally unaware of differential treatment because of her race, the course had a profound impact because it provided her with an understanding of race and racism in a way that nothing else had.

"I realized what I had not been taught all these years. I learned more about black history and politics in one quarter of one sociology class than I had learned in my whole life. I mean basic things that everyone should know. Like blacks did not first come to America as slaves. At 25 years old, this was news to me. We were learning and talking about the things that no one I was ever taught by before had been comfortable talking about."

While these two courses helped give Michelle a framework for thinking about race and racism, only those two courses addressed race or racism. Her other courses would not cover race or racism.

“That was it. I switched majors, got into PA [Physician’s Assistant] school and that was that. You don’t have time for that kind of stuff. I only found time for that one because I had changed my major to sociology. I feel like there’s a lot I haven’t noticed because my course content is very scientific. My program has been very focused. No freedom. There’s been no ‘What do you think about that?’ and no ‘Let’s reflect on that’ None of that.”

When asked why she switched majors again, Michelle was clear that she had children to take care of and needed a major that would actually help her support her family. Not allowed to experiment with courses because of financial obligations to her family, Michelle never was able to explore intellectual pursuits, much less learn more about some of the things she realized her K-12 education did not address. Yet even though she was unable to take advantage of higher education’s strength of providing courses that allow for more exploration into identity and history (like many of the others in this study have done), Michelle has benefited from college because she believes in herself in a way that K-12 could not foster.

“Higher education has taught me much about myself and has made me into the person that I am. I know that it has been an absolutely positive experience with life long benefits. It has changed how I look at myself and subsequently how society looks at me. It means that I do more and achieve more. It has taught and empowered me to challenge and to change. It has given me a voice and credibility.”

Michelle’s experiences in higher education have been shaped by her low grades and constant need to work full-time to support her children. For the most part, her peers

and faculty have had very little influence on her thinking about race and racism. The biggest exception was her African American professor, and even then, she was treated differently and in a negative way because she was seen as black. Even with such negative treatment, that sociology course taught her more about black history and culture than all that she had learned in her previous college courses and K-12 schooling. After continually attempting to get into the University of Washington, Michelle has been able to build up a sense of confidence in her academic ability. This confidence has translated into more critical consciousness that has enabled her to challenge mainstream thinking and social isolation because she simply did not have the time and energy to socially engage in college. For her, higher education has served as a means to obtaining financial support to raise her family, and has also resulted in her increased intellectual confidence.

Emiko Tanaka

Emiko has also been to numerous colleges, though her reasons for switching have not been because of limited academic success or financial burdens. Because she was seriously ill her freshman year, she transferred to a local private college after attending Linfield College in Oregon. She headed back to Linfield after an uncomfortable quarter at Seattle Pacific University, then came back to North Seattle Community College prior to transferring to the University of Washington. While at North Seattle, Emiko took a globalization and immigration class, which she credits as having been her most eye-opening course. That course set the stage for her future academic focus in international studies. She has since focused her studies around race and racism, though she has taken a global approach to thinking about her identity and the oppression that surrounds people of color. Emiko has had difficulty with several faculty members, and her main form of

intellectual support around identity issues and multiraciality have come from her peers at the multiracial advocacy organization that she has increasingly spent her energy in.

Ultimately, Emiko's college experiences have helped her become more aware of race and racism, though her faculty and campus-based peers have had little positive influence.

Overall, her academic and intellectual experiences at the two private schools were frustrating and largely ignored her interests and background. She had already decided race was an important area of study, yet found no support at either college.

"SPU was so religious, so white. [Race] just never would have come up. And Linfield? In the middle of nowhere? They had an East Asian class where they studied social change in East Asia. And I had a bunch of friends who took it, but they only took it because it was a big friggin' joke. And the professor was so dumb. It was so easy. Everyone took it because it fulfilled a history requirement and the culture requirement, too. But we didn't learn shit."

Partially because of these private college experiences, Emiko came to North Seattle Community College in search of something engaging. Though it was her third college, she was only a sophomore, just getting over being ill for over a year. She immediately took a class that discussed multiracial people and the history of how people disperse throughout the world. The course shaped the rest of her experience in college and gave her something positive to focus on for the first time in school.

"I had a migration class and I read a book called the Age of Migration, that talked about how different people travel all around the world. And the Diaspora that form in different countries. And then the mixing of the

different cultures and races! I was totally shocked. I loved that class. It was everything I didn't learn when I was growing up. And I learned it in one quarter! It's what got me interested in international studies."

While Emiko was shocked, she was also excited to finally find school not only interesting, but validating. Her first "enlightening" course actually addressed mixed race children, making Emiko the only student in the study to have taken a course that directly addressed multiracial people in a substantial way.

"In that migration class, we were studying Indian diasporas in London and how they started marrying people so they'd have mixed race kids. And then those people had grown up adopting this new culture. And their parents had to adopt to the children being so different."

That course sparked Emiko's interest, and led her towards other ethnic studies courses. She ultimately wanted to major in something that would teach her more about people of color, culture, race and racism, but wanted to ensure she was not limited by what she perceived as a narrower academic focus.

"When I was at North Seattle, I thought I was going to be an American Ethnic Studies major, but then I thought I needed to branch out a little bit. And then I found that international studies did a little bit of everything: geography, economics, poli-sci. It was like, 'Yes!' I wouldn't mind another major as well. Comparative History of Ideas or American Ethnic Studies, but I don't see where [they] would go. And I see international studies having a little bit more room."

When Emiko transferred to the University of Washington, she continued her international studies major, and began taking classes that allowed her to pursue her intellectual interests. She noted the importance of beginning such courses at community college and then moving on to the UW, rather than simply enrolling immediately at the UW.

“I would have taken a lot longer to graduate if I went straight to UW. I think at the UW, I would have been more frightened to [take these types of courses]. Because at the community college, it’s a little bit of a step. Whereas at UW, it was a really big step. And I wouldn’t have felt comfortable making such a big step by going straight into culture classes. And telling people I was taking culture, ‘cause I was just not okay with it.”

Emiko came to the UW being more than “okay” with taking such courses, she had a passion for learning about all the things had never had access to in her K-12 or previous colleges. For one class, Emiko was able to sharpen her understanding of the treatment of people of color, specifically Asians, and how things happened that she simply did not know about.

“First quarter I was here, we had a 15-20 page paper due. We were reading about Japanese imperialism and there was a brief something on Korean comfort women. And I was like, ‘Wait a second. What is this?’ And I went and did some research on it. It was some of the hardest research I’ve ever done in my entire friggin’ life. It was so amazing.”

Learning about historical aspects that Emiko thought should have been covered in K-12, or even her previous three colleges was difficult, yet drove her onward. Her last

two quarters connected racism and capitalism to her academic work, and ultimately helped firm up her understanding of the dynamics of racism.

“I’m learning about communication and information technology.

Capitalism is just, it’s sick. Global media conglomerates are sick. And yet they get to control our minds? And they’re not sensitive to race so they’re not going to do anything. They’re controlled by what government wants them to do, so we’re screwed unless we do something about it.”

Yet even with the courses that Emiko raved about, she, too, has had her difficult moments in courses where she felt saturated with a white perspective.

“I read David Lander’s Wealth and the Poverty of Nations. Why did we spend so much time on that stupid man? And that was the main focus of our entire class. And every book around that referred back to that book. It was ‘States and Capitalism.’ You had to have it to graduate. And they were saying that the reason Europe is so great is because it was white. I was just like, ‘Are we really reading this?’ ”

Rather than her faculty support her critical questioning, Emiko’s instructors tended to challenge her efforts to expand beyond a traditional white focus. When she tried to do a report and presentation on mixed race people, she was strongly discouraged, yet other students seemed to have no problems doing what Emiko saw as clearly less related to the course and assigned topic.

“I did a report on the presence of mixed race communities on the Internet, but had to sell the topic to my professor. It was along the lines of what she wanted in our report. I mean, we were studying globalization, and mixed

race people are the result of the mixing of cultures. And she's like, 'I don't know.' And I'm like, 'But it's people coming together and these kids are it. It's the mixing of cultures and races.' I was trying to sell it to her and I couldn't believe I had to do that. She wasn't supporting me. Absolutely not. So it was hard. And then I had to give a one minute presentation to our section about it, and people had this completely blank dumb stare. And I'm like, 'What in the hell is going on?' Other people did really academic stuff. Like comparing this radio station to that radio station. One girl was Korean and she was comparing international media, and looked at MASH, but did not really address how white people depicted Koreans on MASH. Another person was comparing ABC to NBC. I had just thought it wasn't along the lines of what they wanted, but that's total bullshit, now that I think about it. Looking at what other people were doing, mine was at least that relevant."

This was not the only time Emiko had to push to be able to focus her assignments on people of color or multiracial people. Unfortunately, struggling to study what she felt was not only relevant, but missing from the curriculum took its toll on Emiko, and she began to resent what appeared to be her peer and instructor ambivalence.

"I've learned to not try to go outside the margins. Staying in the lines of the theorists and what they were doing concretely in the books. What the books or the course packets were teaching you. That way they don't take issue with what you're doing. In another class, I was allowed to study Pakistani relations, but it was never about race, it had to do with war. It

was always centered around war or some concept in the international studies school. So if you wanted to go off into your own tangent, you had to fight for it. The story of our lives, fighting to be considered relevant.”

When Emiko was not fighting to study aspects that were missing from her curriculum and faculty perspectives, she often had to deal with negative and one-sided portrayals of historical circumstances. Typically, such portrayals maintained the white European bias that she noted in her K-12 experience as well.

“In my colonization class, the Japanese were looked at as really bad. As really really harsh on China and Korea. Which they were, but the only reason they did it is because they thought that they had to make up with the Europeans. And it was so overshadowed by what the Europeans originally did and should be put in that [context]. Or when there are uprisings against colonialism, [the books] make huge deals about it. They had this uprising and it’s like, ‘No way!’ It’s called their figuring out that they don’t have to be ruled by your stupid ass!”

Rather than have her courses demonstrate that overthrowing colonialization was connected to race and racism, Emiko noted that her classes concealed race relations, if they even addressed race at all.

“Right now you have to search for courses that [address race]. It’s only in American Ethnic Studies classes. Asian American studies classes. It’s not even in my international studies classes. I took a colonization class, and it was there. But the teacher didn’t expose it as much. You’d think that it would be there. But there were these five theorists that we focused on. The

main focus was on why colonization happened. But in India, with Gandhi and the riots, how British soldiers would come into this big crowds that were being peaceful and they'd just shoot and kill hundreds. And we'd gloss over it. And I'd be like, 'Hello! Can we go through this?' And the teacher would be like, 'Well that's what happened. That's the awful truth, the ugly truth, but that's what happened. There's nothing else to say.' I was blown away and didn't know what to say. It was very disappointing."

Emiko cited other examples of when teachers would briefly acknowledge historical oversights, but would not further explore such critical moments as possibly connected to larger social systems of colonial brutality.

"Discussion about race in class is non-existent. We talked about it briefly when we were reading a book about the printing press and its impact in society. And my teacher was saying how people in the middle east invented paper, but the book doesn't even allude to that at all. It just says we started using paper. But that's all she said. [Race] did come up once in my colonization class, though. Me, this girl from Armenia, and this one Korean were the only ones talking and the teacher was white. He was fluent in Korean, but he didn't facilitate [the dialogue]."

Emiko corroborated Robert's assertion that unless a course actually has 'race' in the title, it will not address race, racism, or perspectives of people of color. Overall, Emiko began to think that, for either faculty or students, even bringing up race, could be seen as radical.

“It’s not going to come up in just a normal history class. ‘Cause they’re never going to talk about it. They hardly talk about race in general unless it’s an African American history class. But if it’s just the history of America, they’re going to talk about the white people. It’s there, but it’s not being talked about. And when you do talk about it, it’s like you’re overstepping some boundaries. And it’s this really gray area. If you do talk about racism, you’re seen as a fanatic.”

Emiko is among the other six students in this study who assert that people of color are relevant and should be incorporated into regular history courses. This assertion shows how those who structure curriculum and teach in college (and throughout K-12) typically have not included the perspectives of people of color. This is a key point and Emiko linked this up to how white people do not have a clear understanding of race and racism, much less their own identity precisely because we do not teach about it in mainstream courses. Racism, she argued, is ignored partially because white people do not know how to identify, much less do they know that they actually have an identity. Multiracial people also share not knowing how to identify, but this is often a reflection of their peers’ lack of comfort. Higher education continues this lack of comfort by not providing support for those who wish to discuss identity, and by glossing over race and racism in so many classes that purport to address history, culture, democracy, diversity, and multiculturalism.

“I’ve been learning how racism is avoided in society and how you just don’t talk about it. You just don’t talk about it. And if you do, then you’re perceived as weird. It sucks. It’s one of the reasons I got involved with

Mavin. I get to see how many people are helped by [talking about being mixed]. So many people are uncomfortable talking about their being mixed because their whole life they've been scrutinized and looked at as really weird. They see other people's discomfort when they are trying to assess what they are and then that makes them uncomfortable with themselves. It makes you not want to talk about yourself. If you're uncomfortable with yourself, then you're not going to want to talk about yourself. Especially not in an almost all white class with a white professor and those limited text books."

Even though most of her faculty have not supported Emiko, she connected their efforts to the development of her intellectual identity.

"My professors haven't helped me think about racial identity, at least not my own racial identity. It's my own intellectual identity they've helped me with. It's given me a lot of confidence, but it's been all intellectual. It's been really great being around really smart people. You know that they're smart. I always felt confident in them."

Emiko's confidence in her peers, however, has been less consistent. A huge shift in her peer base occurred when she began attending the University of Washington and built up connections to Mavin. Prior to being exposed to Asian and multiracial communities that accepted her, she was seen as a "drunk whiney Asian." This was partially because she drank a lot in her first few years of college: "it helped [her] deal." Her transition began at North Seattle, where she immediately noticed the difference in her

peer students because, aside from being the first time she had been in such a large school, it was extremely diverse.

“There were so many African Americans at [North Seattle Community College]. I was really excited because I could blend in. The large amount of people made you anonymous. That was so great. And there’s tons of Asians there. I didn’t expect that at all. I just thought I was going to a white college again. ‘Cause I didn’t know any better. And I loved it. I thought it was so awesome.”

The diversity after coming from predominantly white K-12 experiences and two even whiter private colleges helped Emiko’s comfort level with identifying as Asian, just as seeing all Asian peer groups intimidated her.

“I felt a lot more comfortable identifying as Asian. But then I got uncomfortable with that. It was like, I’m not in these little Asian posses that hang out over here. So I would go in between each of them and they’d be like, ‘Who is she?’ ”

Emiko was still uncomfortable interacting with Asians, especially Asians who identified culturally and racially as Asian, Japanese, or Hawaiian. After a difficult time being rejected by Asian peers, and internalizing that rejection, Emiko began to realize that as her comfort level identifying as transracially adopted grew, so, too, did her peer base of color.

“I think Asians in general don’t get what it’s like to not know what you are. Well, people in general don’t. But when I try to identify with Asians, they’re just like, ‘Are you Korean? What are you?’ I just don’t get

received very well. And it might be my paranoia, but I always feel like at clubs, when I went with my other friends, who aren't Asian, especially a couple of years ago I was the only Asian with a bunch of white people. And so Asian people would just be like, "What are you doing?" I would get the worst look from girls. And my friends would notice it, too. And that's another divisive thing I just don't get it. I don't get why I can't be accepted into this little posse that you got going on over there. So it was really weird for me to be accepted with my Japanese friend, her Japanese boyfriend, and his friends, too. It was like, "Oh my god, I'm being accepted by Asian people. Wow!"

Even as this acceptance gradually grew, Emiko felt uncomfortable around large groups of Asian people.

"I don't understand how they are able to get into a huge Asian posse and feel like they fit in. There's an Asian frat or Asian sorority here, and every time I walk by it they just...one time I tried to talk to them and they were like <puts up hand like blocking somebody out>, throwing me some "tude, and they weren't receptive to me trying to get information. I felt like they were looking down on me."

Rejected by Asian peers she has not known, Emiko's white friends have also rejected her because of her increasing focus on race and activism.

"They don't know how to take it. Whenever I talk about it, I get the vibe that they don't know how to react. So I just don't talk about it. I know not to bring things up. People ask me how I'm doing or what's going on in my

life. I'll tell them briefly, but I know that's all it's going to go. Or they'll ask questions, but it's not natural. They ask questions they don't know how to ask because they've never had to deal with this kind of stuff."

This lack of comfort when interacting with her white peers, coupled with the lack of comfort interacting with Asian peers has led to a shift in Emiko's life. The intimidation she felt was residue from being excluded because she did not have a clear racial identity. But after North Seattle, she became even more comfortable because she was not only used to the diversity of her newer campuses, but also because she was connected to a multiracial community.

"UW has also opened my eyes to different races. You can walk around the HUB and hear seven different languages being spoken on cell phones. It makes you a little bit anonymous. It's so great. That's really opened my eyes to a lot of diversity. Now, I'm way more comfortable. Just after I came to UW, I started working at Mavin, which opened doors, opened my entire world. Opened everything! I would not be the person that I am today without Mavin. Just being able to talk to people and have them have the same exact experiences that I did was so validating. This is the closest thing I've ever come to fitting in anywhere. It makes me more consciously want to hang out with people like me."

During one of the earlier interviews, Emiko was adamant that she did not make conscious decisions to hang out with Asian or white people. Yet as the interview went on, she increasingly contradicted this idea, and eventually clearly articulated a conscious shift towards peers of color.

“Ever since I got to UW, I’ve been gravitating more towards Asian friends. I don’t know where that comes from, but usually the people who I start talking to, it just happens that I have more Asian friends. It’s totally subconscious. One day I realized I have more Asian friends than I’ve ever had in my entire life. And I don’t know what in the heck happened.”

This realization was important, yet Emiko had not yet recognized that this was a conscious shift. She articulated the impact of that shift, but did not attribute it to a conscious choice to be around Asian or multiracial people.

“I realized that last year. ‘Cause Mavin, everyone there has the ‘what are you’ issue. And white people don’t get that. And that was so powerful for me to be with other people besides my sister that had that question. And it was like ‘Oh my god! You got that, too?’ I thought it was just me. So that was huge just knowing that there’s some kind of community out there. It’s empowering to know that you’re not alone. It’s priceless.”

At this point, Emiko began to get more and more excited, and as her voice rose, she began speaking faster and faster.

“A lot of people think that I’m crazy because I’m putting so much energy and effort into this. And it’s like ‘Why are you doing this?’ And most white people have no clue on that. So it’s nice to be around other Asian people who know the Asian culture in general and you don’t have to explain it every time you say something about your parents. And also just who look like me. And I’ve tried to look like other people, so it’s nice to be around people that look like me, for the first time in my life!”

She ended her point, and immediately began laughing hysterically because she recognized that she was making a very conscious decision to spend more time with people who looked like her. And it was the first time in her life she realized that. "I guess I never put my finger on it. I never really thought about why I do that." After the laughter subsided, she quietly noticed that "it's nice that it doesn't fall on deaf ears anymore."

After this recognition, Emiko relaxed and reflected on the impact of being newly aware of the conscious decisions she had been making, that were due in part, to race.

"It's better than being around a bunch of white people who have no idea that racism exists in society. Who just kind of look like me. I have a few friends, one who's half Japanese, half Puerto Rican, the other one is half white and half Vietnamese. So they know. And they get the 'What are you?' all the time. And when I ask them how they deal with it, they're like, 'I fuck with their heads!' They play around with it. And I didn't think that other people liked to mess with people's heads about it. But they do. They're like, they make up random stuff. And people don't know different. They can't tell. 'Cause I never really played with people's heads. I always internalized it. I look so different that people have to ask, 'What are you?'"

While Emiko has begun to undo a great deal of this internalization, she has attributed most of the support for her working through identity issues to her multiracial activist peers. Higher education has provided her with intellectual support, but that has not transcended emotional boundaries, and as such, has had a relatively muted influence on her positive identity development.

“College has not prepared me at all for the work I do now. It hasn’t prepared me at all. Everyone has to come to their own realization, like I have to work some inside stuff out here. And I think school does not do that. School does not work on that. It’s all about academic, not emotional stuff. It’s not at the emotional levels, it’s all academic. So it hasn’t at all. I haven’t found any teachers that are very supportive of it.”

Emiko’s conscious shift towards peer groups of color has been the direct result of her becoming more comfortable with her lack of a clear racial identity. She has also increasingly become more comfortable with identifying as a transracial adoptee, even though she does not fit nicely within that label, either. She has built her comfort throughout her college years, and while her courses and faculty have been supportive, they have also been extremely problematic. For the most part, Emiko’s courses have not addressed race unless they explicitly indicated they would from the beginning. She has had to struggle to even talk about race or racism in her classes, and has found relatively little support from individual faculty. That said, Emiko also had a course that served to illuminate the complexities of race and geographic boundaries, and this course seemed to initiate her dualistic movement. As she began to develop an academic identity as a ethnic and international studies major, she also began to search for multiracial peers who could acknowledge her complex identity.

Ultimately, her peers have been the most influential aspect of her college education, even though she would meet and interact with many of those peers outside of the college environment. Her need for interaction with other multiracial people demonstrates the importance of discussion, in a peer or academic setting, about who we

are. Such discussions appeared to validate Emiko, and this validation served as the foundation for her building up a positive identity. Yet while her multiracial peers and monoracial peers of color have support her in various ways, for the most part, her white peers have had absolutely no positive impact, invalidating both her activism and her identity. After graduating, Emiko jumped at the opportunity to continue her activism by working for a multiracial education and advocacy organization.

Chris Wong

Chris came straight to the University of Washington after high school. He immediately joined ROTC, and his subsequent college years have been spent planning out how he can make his first million dollars. After graduation next year, he will join the Armed Forces to finish out his three-year term, and then plans on working in finance. He views higher education as a means to an end, and thinks its purpose should be to help students learn how to have complete financial independence.

His peers have not helped his thinking about race and racism because they do not engage in serious discussion about identity, race, racism, or other forms of oppression. In fact, his peers have largely helped support Chris' identity as someone who does not think about or identify racially. His courses have had no positive impact on his comfort level identifying as multiracial, and the few times that race has come up in his English courses, he has simply seen it as 'white-bashing.' Clearly, the way in which race was raised was ineffective in his case, and his other finance and business courses have not even remotely addressed race or racism. Chris brings up an intriguing point in this regard: attempts to 'diversify' the curriculum do not necessarily result in raised awareness of the dynamics of race and racism because such efforts do not take into consideration the students'

backgrounds. Chris ultimately does not think “there’s anything intrinsic about being in college that makes you more or less racist. If anything, I’ve gotten more conservative since being here.” In the end, Chris has not been served well by education. He did not have a well-rounded education, and never was asked to seriously consider race or racism, much less reflect on his own identity in relation to the two. His peers have been almost all white, though unlike Emiko, he has not become aware that this is a conscious decision on his part: “Most of my friends are white, but that’s because 80% of America is white.”

Perhaps what best illustrated Chris’ experiences at the University of Washington was his reaction to other people of color during one of our earlier interviews. Midway through an early interview, after I brought up how he thought of Native Americans as an exception to needing institutional support, Chris grew very uncomfortable. Only after a black man and a Latina woman sitting nearby rose up from their conversation and walked away did Chris admit what was happening. Ultimately, he was extremely uncomfortable sharing his feelings about race when people of color could hear him, and this not only impacted what he was saying, but also how loud he would talk. As soon as the two nearby students left the room, Chris breathed a loud sigh of relief.

“Okay, now I feel much more comfortable talking. Why? Because I know my views offend people. People don’t like being offended. People don’t like having other views than theirs. Especially a lot of groups that thrive off a sort of victimhood approach. A lot of campus groups thrive on a victimhood approach. Especially in this area. Where we’re surrounded by all the different ethnic committees. I don’t really want to offend someone. Not because I don’t want them to hear my opinion, but I don’t want them

to hear part of something I say and then take it out of context. Or confront me because frankly, I don't identify myself with one race. I mean, I'm doing just fine in my life, I don't need the confrontation. I don't need to have the confrontation with someone whose views I'm not going to change and whose views aren't going to change mine."

I asked Chris if he would have reacted similarly if there were two white people sitting nearby. His reaction surprised me because he had clear feelings about a public area on campus that I had previously felt was predominantly white.

"White people? No. I would have felt comfortable speaking freely. I would have felt comfortable if they were Asian, too. But because one of them was black and there's a good chance they are probably one of the racial diversity groups because we're sitting on the racial diversity floor [2nd floor HUB]. I know their views are going to differ from mine because a lot of these commissions are the spawn of Satan <laughter>. I don't really think that, but they do a lot more to hurt the people that they're trying to help than they do good."

Chris further defined this public meeting space that housed the ASUW, student groups of color, WashPirg, and other environmental activist organizations, the "racial diversity floor." Less than half of the groups on this floor are explicitly racial or ethnic student organizations, and typically, there are a lot more white people than people of color. Yet Chris did not see it as such.

"Look at all the different racial committee groups that there are here. I'm just saying that the HUB [Husky Union Building] and especially this place

have a lot of public interest groups. I can hardly think of any public interest group on campus that I support. It's not that I dis-support them. I just don't agree.

Chris connected two strands of thought in his assumption that, because the two people were people of color, and on this particular floor, for his purposes, they were liberal and hypersensitive.

I reminded Chris of his previous definition of racism, and asked him to consider his actions in light of his own definition.

"If I act differently because of someone of a different race, then that's wrong. You have a right to do it because we live in America, but I sure as hell don't agree with that. I think that's stupid. I'll treat anyone the same way. Regardless of their race, it doesn't make any difference."

While Chris argued that he would not treat someone differently because of their race, he had showed, just minutes before, that in fact he was acting differently, though he was not directly interacting with the two students of color. When I asked Chris if how he had just responded to those two students was different or similar to his thinking, he replied that there was a difference. In his mind, acting differently because of someone's race is wrong, but he thought it justified if his stereotypes fit the situation.

"It's different. I'd say it's not racist just because of where I am. The severely increased likelihood, I can't think of a more likely place to find someone whose involved in the commission whose views are going to disagree with mine in here [2nd floor of the HUB]. And because I'm half Asian and half white and it's more socially acceptable, if someone who

was white or Asian disagreed with me, I'd just say get lost. I don't care. But other groups, I'm more sensitive because I don't want to offend anyone because I know how hypersensitive this campus can be. One-on-one, I would sit down with anyone anytime, of any background, in any situation, and have a discussion.

Though Chris did say he was open to discussion, and though he was clearly able to engage openly with a number of potentially controversial interviews, his views about his peer students who spent their time in ethnic or racially-centered student organizations were negative. Indeed, while he denied the importance of race, he also built up anger regarding these groups and courses that he had to take that addressed similar issues.

"I really hate all these racially centered clubs when I see them. Especially in the black, Hispanic, and Asian communities, they have all this Asian pride, brown pride, black pride, all that stresses is a schism between the rest of us. Whereas, I'm an American says, means I am anything and I am everything. If we really want to talk about fairness and diversity, you being whatever, whatever country, continent your parents happened to come from, your ancestors happened to come from shouldn't make a difference."

Given that Chris sees higher education as a gateway to future professions and ultimately, more money, it should not be surprising that he did not directly search for courses about race and racism. He recalled three cases where race had been talked about in class. The first was in his economics class.

“In my econ class. I learned about how there’s no real value in unskilled labor. I mean. how hard is it to push a button? We talked about how you might be discriminated against because anyone can do the job. But the companies that discriminate [because of race]. unless every company discriminates. are going to eventually lose. ‘Cause you can’t pay people more that aren’t worth it just because of their race. Because it’s just bad business. But generally. the econ people don’t really express any views about race or anything.”

The other two examples of race being brought up in his courses came from two required English classes. He recalled vividly those classes. and was clear that such courses had no positive impact on him. Rather, the attempts by the English department to diversify the reading lists only served to reinforce for Chris that racism. along with other forms of oppression. are not valid.

“I had a class about writing. and it ended up being like. ‘Damn the white man for how he’s oppressed homosexuals and women.’ Are you kidding me? This is English composition! But. the focus of the class was weird. It was talking about how businesses don’t care about people who are sick with AIDS and about how women are oppressed. That was the whole class. Forcing me to obviously not read anything. And the way they spin what happened. it’s like. somebody can’t just say something. There’s always deeper meaning. It’s like. they could have just said it because they said it.”

Chris had issue not only with the interpretive aspect of his English course, but with the content focusing so intently around issues of oppression. Instead of learning about his idea of composition, the course fulfilled what he saw as a "liberal agenda." His second English course had the same impact.

"The second English class. I hadn't heard anything about, but I had to take it for graduation. I tried to find the least like that class. But I failed. I looked on the course descriptions, tried to find one that had nothing to do with anything conflictual. I thought it would be more about grammar or styles of writing. But instead it was about how the white man wants to kill people and hold people down. It was like a class of victims. Like a victims anonymous class. Like let's talk about how bad we've had it."

These two courses served to further strengthen Chris' thinking of those who claim oppression as victims. He ultimately argued that higher education, when it tried to talk about race, sounded like "severe whining." That he perceived this from just two English courses makes a striking comparison to the others in the study who took specific ethnic studies courses, yet tended to agree that college courses have not taught much about race and racism.

"School teaches me nothing about racism. Being at this school has made me see that there's a large proportion of people who want to be victims. Everybody wants to be a victim. It's like, you're Jewish, you're bisexual and you're a woman? Wow, you've got three things, and you're black? You've got four or five different states of victimhood. How many victim checks can I collect? The general feel is that basically everyone who is not

a white protestant male is a victim of something. It's like a bunch of victims all trying to pull to get more money for their victim side. Give me a break."

Chris now believes that the English requirements are more along the lines of ethnic studies than composition, and as a result, has strongly rejected such required courses.

"All this diversity crap, that's what we have the English department for. We don't need an ethnic diversity class or cultural diversity classes. We've got the English department to help us out with that. Now, I don't take those classes because it seriously annoys me. I refuse to take any of that garbage."

Aside from forcing Chris to take courses that expose him to a "very liberal perspective" rather than teach him English, the overall campus environment, in his experience, has been far from the racism that the other students in the study have illuminated. The courses he has wanted to take have been available, and since he has no interest in taking courses in ethnic studies, or even any that remotely address race and racism, his academic focus in finance has been supported. Even so, Chris is still aware that other students believe racism exists. He just has not consciously felt it.

"Student groups argue that racism is there, but they're obviously not getting the message out because I still don't know what the black student union and the Asian student commission sees as being racist about this campus. You can look at things that have happened in the past, but what has happened now? You're going to point to statistics? A higher

percentage of white applicants or Asian applicants or this or that, get in instead of us? Well, there are a lot of other factors than race. And race is optional. You're going to tell me that people are discriminated, like they can't register for a class because [the on-line registration system] says, 'You're a minority. I'm going to discriminate against you.' You think a teacher's going to give you a lower grade because of that? On this liberal campus? You think the teachers are going to give you a worse grade because you're a person of color?"

Chris brought up an interesting point. While he felt his English classes were lacking and did not address his ability to write, he also felt that the limited history classes he took were insufficient, though not because they did not address the perspectives of people of color. Instead, Chris thought his courses did not educate him enough about American culture and history.

"I'm still confused about who wrote the constitution. Like who wrote it? Thomas Jefferson, right? I don't know our timeline well enough. But I hear these people telling me about ethnic diversity. Shut the hell up! I don't even know American culture. I don't need to know about another culture if I don't even know American culture and I'm an American."

With this statement, Chris demonstrated once again that he was not connected to much of the conversation around issues central to communities of color. Rather than see that American culture includes Americans of color, Chris simply believes that "those perspectives are in there." This partially testified to the failure of the limited approach to diversifying the curriculum that the English classes attempted. Had they focused more

intently on demonstrating that typically, the perspectives of people of color in the U.S. are absent, Chris might have had a different kind of eye-opening experience. Instead, the courses served only to annoy Chris.

Chris' college experiences have been rooted in his assumptions that those who are involved with racial or ethnic-centered groups promote separatism, rather than working to bring together communities. He sees his views as outside the norm of the campus, though he is supported by his white peers in ROTC.

"I don't think I'm that extreme, but I'm definitely not like a lot of this campus. At least the vocal campus. I know my views aren't popular.

They're not liberal views and we're on a liberal campus. But some of my friends share my views, and most of them are much much more conservative than me."

When Chris reflected on the purpose of higher education, and talked about its social role in helping students transition into economic independence through the workforce. His vision of college as such a transition ignored students who did not attend a four-year university directly after high school, but did show how, given his trouble-making ways in high school, college helped him mature in the way he had wanted to.

"College is a stepping stone between being at home, being around your parents and being completely on your own. It's like a stepping stone. It's a way to learn something, to find out what you're interested in, find out what's possible for you. Let's find something that you're interested in, that's something that you can get paid to do. That's the purpose of college.

Money and an interesting job. I can't think of a better way to make your life better. More money, more education."

Chris saw the purpose of college as providing students "a chance to learn whatever you're interested in." In this sense, college has been very effective for him, since he came in searching for college to help him gain financial independence and wealth. He argued that college is "a way to make money," and since he did not come in searching for information or experiences about people of color, he has not found such, either. What separates him from the rest of the students is precisely this difference: Chris came into college wanting to make money, while the other students, at some point, wanted to explore the historical and contemporary aspects of people of color. Michelle also conceived of college as a means to an end, though her reasons were more connected to her immediate financial need due to her family.

Given that Chris has not, at any time during his K-12 or college years, expressed a desire to learn about people of color, college has taught him very little about race and racism. He spends most of his time with other white students, and when he is around other Asian students, he identifies as white. In his mind, race and racism are completely irrelevant and invisible and his college experiences have reflected his ideology. His sole academic exposure to conversations about race came in the form of two English courses; experiences that had a negative influence on his thinking about race and racism because they strengthened his resolve to see oppression as in the minds of those who see themselves as victims.

Chris presents an intriguing case, particularly in comparison to the other students in this study. While the other students have all taken courses that specifically address race

and racism, Chris has consciously chosen to avoid such courses. He consistently contradicted his own definitions of racism throughout the interviews in a way that the others did not. He has the least informed understanding of the history of people of color in general and multiracial people in particular, partially attributable to the fact that he has had the least well-rounded education, especially since most of the other students have switched majors, or at least changed focus in later years. And in the end, Chris asserts a non-racialized identity, as much as possible, where he attempts to move as a race-less being, hoping that others will see him for the traits he wishes them to, rather than what they chose to (and have been conditioned to). The others, perhaps because they have had some peer and intellectual support during their college years, have chosen to accept their ambiguous identity in stride, learning instead to understand the systems in place that shape how others see them. Ultimately, the others in this study have used college as a way to support their identity development, whereas Chris has used it to support his race-less identity, making it so that he approaches courses and experiences that might challenge such an identity completely armed with the mantra that 'race does not exist.'

Konomi Holiday

Similar to Robert, Konomi came to the University of Washington under the Office of Minority Affairs' outreach programs for underrepresented high school students. She had almost completed her degree in chemistry, only to change her major midway through her fourth year to American Ethnic Studies. This switch had gradually built up, and as the number of peers of color dwindled as she continued on in her chemistry and math courses, so too did Konomi's faith that medicine was the only way to help people. Numerous peers of color have supported her throughout her college experience, by

pushing her towards student leadership positions, and also by engaging in thoughtful discussion about race, racism, and her role in educating others about oppression. She has not had positive experiences with her white peers, nor has she had many faculty, until she began taking ethnic studies courses, that have addressed race at all. When the faculty did address race, they typically dismissed incidents of racism, or ignored Konomi altogether.

While she has become much more critically conscious of race and racism through college, her experience clearly delineates between the types of influences her peers and courses have provided. Not until she had already developed a deep sense of racial awareness, supported entirely by her peers, did Konomi begin to take courses that provided her with historical insight into contemporary racism. Whereas for others in the study, they typically took courses in conjunction with engaging with peers (usually of color) who would help foster an understanding of the dynamics of race and racism. Konomi, on the other hand, developed that understanding, and then acted upon it, switching majors so that she could better help others by addressing racism.

Konomi came to the University of Washington focusing on medicine. The outreach programs that assisted with her application process and connected her to other peers like her were based in science programs, which she felt was very appropriate, given her interest in maintaining her economic status and desire to help others.

“I came thinking I wanted to go to medical school, so I did the Minority Science and Engineering Program and Bridge, two weeks before hand. And that was really good because it gave me a head start into school. ‘Cause I was really scared. And it also gave you a little group of people in your big classes. Especially math and science classes it gave me people of

color who you can kind of just know. And it gave me a place to go. MSEP became my place to go, where I knew people already. And from there I learned about the IC and the ECC.”

Even though Konomi had the support from outreach programs and began her college experience with a developed community of peers of color with similar academic interests, she soon began getting frustrated with her classes. By her third year, she was one of the only people of color in her courses, and certainly the only black person, a stark contrast to her peer groups, which were almost all people of color.

“In beginning chemistry and math classes, there were a good number of black people. Well, not a good number, but as good as you can expect here. And then the numbers started dwindling. And then when I got to [upper division], I was the only black person in that class.”

Being the only black person in her classes had an impact because her peers took issue with her. One experience stood out for her as typical of the treatment she would receive from her peers and the instructors.

“I got into an argument one time with my lab partner in physics. And I started yelling at her. And I wasn’t really yelling that loud. I was just telling her what she was doing was foul, basically. And nobody lifted their head. The TA wouldn’t even talk to me afterwards. I think they were scared of me. Nobody wanted to look at me. And the TA wouldn’t even talk to me afterwards.”

In science or English courses alike, her white peers would typically avoid her, especially when instructors would assign group projects. As the number of other peers of color quickly diminished, Konomi felt the isolation grow.

“In science classes, you feel alone because there’s no one in the classroom that looks like you. And you have a natural tendency to associate with people that are similar to you. And when you don’t have others like you, you just kind of sit there. Not to say that all white people have anything in common, but they can relate to each other better than they think they can relate to us. I don’t know if it’s just because there are so many premed people or what, but they don’t talk about anything outside of school. And I like to bring up race outside of school and find out about people.”

Though Konomi is a very open and friendly person, she had a difficult time getting with her peers in science. She realized that partially, this was because her peers thought she was not as bright as them, relying upon their stereotype of African Americans.

“I’m a very social person. I talk and get along with a lot of people. But I notice that other people have more group studies than I do. I’ve never even been invited to a study group. Ever. In my life. And I can’t say it’s because I don’t talk to people because I talk to everybody. I think they think I’m stupid. Seriously.”

When asked if she has been supported academically and intellectually in the sciences, Konomi replied, “From the science department? <Laughter> No. I mean, there are the study groups. But as far as the department? Not at all.” Konomi then shifted

towards the English department, where she noted that similar treatment by her peers occurred, though she was able to get more out of the coursework because of a supportive instructor.

“I always hated partner up because I’d be sitting there, and I’d ask someone if they wanted to be my partner. And they’d look at me like, ‘Yeah, I guess.’ I took an English class and they asked us to partner up and nobody would acknowledge me so I put myself in a group.”

The group was supposed to pick a topic to present on in front of the class. The rest of her group wanted to “do something about how to survive in space.” Konomi not only thought that was “stupid,” but also suggested instead that they “do something on race.” They were adamant about not focusing on race at first, though Konomi was able to convince them of the importance, something she realized she would never have been able to do in her science courses. The entire class ended up discussing race and racism, and her instructor, formerly a counselor in the Office of Minority Affairs, handled the ensuing discussion very well.

“It was supposed to be a half an hour presentation and we took the whole two hours talking about race. The teacher was really happy that I pressed my group. We just talked about Ichiro and how he totally was helping to break down the stereotypes of Asian Americans. And really lifting up their self-esteem. And that they’re not the model minority who only excel in math and science. They can excel in sports, too. And I brought a tape in from a 1980’s Oprah. And it was interesting because this lady comes in

and separated people with blue eyes from the people with brown eyes. And she talked about how people with blue eyes are stupid and they don't excel well in school, and so on. And she had people believing that there really was a difference between being blue eyes and brown eyes. This one lady was like, well, you know, I do have a daughter with blue eyes who doesn't excel as well as my daughter with brown eyes. And she had all the people with blue eyes sit on the ground. They had to wait longer while people with brown eyes were treated well. And they were treated well and the people with blue eyes were followed into the bathroom. And finally towards the end she told them this was not real. There's no difference between eye color. And for you people who are sitting on the floor, the people with blue eyes, now you've lived a day in the shoe of a person of color."

The Oprah segment had a fairly large impact on her peers in the English class, and the instructor could not have been happier to have a student actually *want* to focus on race.

"So everyone in the class was laughing because that's ridiculous. How could you ever think that eye color would equate to intelligence. And then in the end, they were talking about people of color and they were just like, 'Huh?' And that just showed me that it doesn't matter what they think of why you want to do it, as long as they get something out of it. 'Cause at first, I was kind of hesitant to say this is what I want to do. 'Cause the things they were talking about were stupid. They were just stupid. And we

were reading these books that had to do with race, but they still chose stupid stuff. That was one class that I really liked. And it was helpful to have a really knowledgeable [instructor].”

This type of experience, not surprisingly, was rare. Konomi typically felt that it was not only entirely up to her to bring up race, but also that the instructors will rarely support her like her English teacher did.

“It doesn’t seem fair that you have to take it upon yourself to learn something when you know it’s not incorporated into your everyday [class]. What happens if you have a class with no people of color? That means there’s never discussion there.”

Not having discussion about race, generally, meant to Konomi that the experiences happening during and outside of class would just not be talked about, and essentially ignored.

Konomi recalled an example of racism in her chemistry class where the professor glossed over an offensive comment, yet Konomi directly confronted the student who had made an offensive comment.

“We were learning about chemical warfare and the [professor] put up a structure and said, ‘This is for some kind of chemical [used in war].’ And someone said, ‘Make sure nobody is in here from Afghanistan.’ And I was like, ‘I cannot believe you said that.’ And I turned around and just looked at him. I said, ‘That was so ignorant.’ And he just sat there and looked at me and the teacher just kept going on. And there was a guy who was sitting right there who’s family is from Afghanistan.”

That Konomi publicly challenged the negative comment at least meant that the teacher had to say something to the student. Yet Konomi did not think she said enough, especially given that incidents like this occur frequently and are very rarely addressed.

“Afterwards she said that as soon as she said that she knew she shouldn’t have. And he was like, ‘I knew I shouldn’t have said it either.’ I was like, ‘If you really feel sorry, you need to apologize to the whole class for making us listen to your bigotry.’ But the teacher didn’t really do anything. Everyone just let it pass. But I couldn’t let it pass. When it’s ignored, it’s basically saying it’s acceptable. Which is why I thought I had to say something. But I was so upset afterwards, because people always say stuff like that doesn’t happen. And it’s just like, dumb ass, what just happened? So it’s frustrating because people don’t think it happens. And if it does, it goes right over everyone’s heads. They hear it, but they just immediately forget about it.”

Being the only person in large lecture classes who would call out incidents of racism, combined with peer exclusion, led Konomi out of the sciences. She went immediately towards American Ethnic Studies, and has begun taking courses that focus on African Americans.

“All this made me not want to do science anymore. Instead, I’m thinking AES ‘cause I was looking at their requirements and I can do it in a year. I’ve taken Intro to African American History and Sociology of Black Americans by Al Black. That’s it. Those are the two classes I’ve taken on

the experiences of people of color. But I want to take more classes and to learn more history, which is why I switched majors.”

Konomi has begun to learn a lot about the historical context of exclusion that people of color have had to live through. Indeed, the more Konomi learns about the experiences of people of color, the more excited she has become.

“Just learning about, from slavery to present, the things that blacks, African Americans, those who were born and raised here, have to endure, that my dad didn’t have to because he has a different background. I learned in Al Black’s class about the comparison of middle class black Americans and white Americans. And the denial of access to the labor market and how both parents have to work just to stay middle income and their middle income still isn’t the same as white families who are able to depend on just the father’s income. How they say that Asian Americans make a higher income on average. But then you have to look at how many people are in that household? ‘Cause they may have generations of people in Asian households. You have to look at how they came, the context of how they came [to the U.S.]. Just learning all that stuff, it makes so much sense that I want to keep learning more.”

Yet with these courses, Konomi has found that just as her science courses were mostly white, her courses that address race are mostly people of color. And typically, these courses deal only with race, whereas other courses in sociology, specifically do not address race.

“You have to go out and look for those classes. I had to find the Sociology of Black Americans. You can go through the whole SOC program without ever taking a class on minorities. Or you can go through political science without ever taking one. Unless you’re AES, where every class is about race. You can even go through history without ever taking one. To me, it says that people of color are not that important, and it sends this message to white people, too. If you don’t even take a class, if you don’t try to find faculty or try to structure your curriculum around or even to touch upon people of color and the things that they’ve done for this country. White people didn’t do everything in this country. But you can totally go through your whole college education without ever learning about people of color. That’s totally fucked.”

As exciting as courses that have explicitly addressed race have been for Konomi, she has not found any courses that have addressed multiracial people, much less their experiences. The one exception was Al Black’s class, which several students have noted.

“In any of my classes that I’ve ever taken, we never talked about nobody mixed. Unless we were talking about people whose mothers were slaves and fathers weren’t. So we talked a little bit about mixed white and black people in my SOC class, as far as the whole light skinned, dark skinned black. And how that became discrimination within black communities. So we talked about that, but as far as Asian and black, no.”

Being able to take such courses has freed up Konomi’s time, to where she now spends most of her energy on understanding and talking about race and racism. A direct

result has been that she no longer worries about the ramifications of calling people out in class because she feels like she has to.

“It’s happened so many times and I didn’t say stuff. And now I’m to the point where it’s like, forget it. If you say something ignorant, I’m going to call you out. I’m not going to be all mean about it, but I’ll just be like,

‘That was really ignorant.’ Like that guy in my chemistry class that made that comment about being from Afghanistan. I couldn’t believe he said that so I had to say something. But a few years ago, I would have never said anything. My mentality has changed to where I can and in fact have to challenge such ignorance.”

Part of being exposed to her ignorant peers resulted in Konomi becoming more interested in ethnic studies and in learning about the experiences of people of color. She wanted to understand how her peers thought, and learn how to alter such thinking. “That just really got me interested and made me really want to look more into it. Because it just frustrates me when people have that whole I made it, why can’t you attitude.” Such an attitude has been present among her peers of color, too, frustrating Konomi even further. Recently, Konomi got into a terse conversation with a friend of hers who “is mixed black and white.”

“We got into a debate about the problems in the black community. And he grew up middle class and he’s hella light skinned. The darker you are, the more you feel racism or feel prejudices and bigotry. I was talking about the historical aspects and he was talking about how black people need to

stop relying on the government to aid them and just lift themselves up.

You know, 'I struggled, but I was able to make it. Why can't you?' "

Konomi has had a difficult time with such peers because she did not have to struggle to get to college, though her road to the University was very problematic because of the intense racist teasing. Because she has been aware of her privilege, and because she has still had to struggle being the only person of color in her classes, she has a difficult time hearing peers of color talk not acknowledge the systemic nature of racism. Typically, though, Konomi saves her energy for her interactions with white people, though she surrounds herself first with peers of color who support her thinking about race and racism.

Konomi became connected through the outreach program that helped her come into the University of Washington.

"I was involved with MSEP [Minority Science and Engineering Program] and every year I've helped with the new class. And getting involved through NSBE [National Society of Black Engineers]. I think it's also the people I surround myself with. They are constantly spitting knowledge at me, so I just absorb it."

The people Konomi has surrounded herself with were largely found at the Instructional Center, where she would get a lot of tutorial assistance with her science classes, since the actual science departments were not helpful.

"I've been at the IC since I was a freshman. And I used to go everyday. Being there was good because it gave me the chance to hear about other people's experiences and it helped me to know that mine aren't just

isolated events. That it doesn't just happen to me. And just really talking to people and having a place to talk was helpful."

Konomi's peers that she met in the Instructional Center and through her outreach program eventually began to guide her into leadership roles. As Konomi was busy putting on an outreach event, one of the advisors for her outreach program asked if she needed a job. Since she did, she applied for the position without really knowing what it was. She got the job, and assumed the role of the director of the black student commission. The following year, some of her activist peers asked her to run for an ASUW officer position, and her foothold on student organizing grew as she became a more well-rounded student leader. Konomi connected her exposure to activism to her connection through the science programs. "I don't at all regret wanting to do the science thing 'cause it was through all of my connections that I was able to get into studying race and being involved."

Yet even in her more supported leadership roles, Konomi has faced different forms of exclusion from her peers of color.

"Being the director of the Black Student Commission [an ASUW position] last year was interesting because I'd be sitting in the office. People would come in: 'Oh, I was looking for the director of the Black Student Commission.' Because everyone kept thinking I was the director of the PI Commission."

Konomi also tried to get involved with the Japanese Student Association, but has never actually made it to a meeting because of her intimidation, and because of how white people have since "taken it over."

“I tried to get involved with the Japanese Student Association. And I e-mailed the president and we talked back and forth for a second. But I never went to a meeting because I was kind of scared because Japanese people don’t always accept me. So I was hesitant. I’ve talked to the new president and he told me to come, but he also said most of the people in JSA aren’t even Japanese. It’s a whole bunch of white people who are just really interested in Japanese culture. And that’s not really what I was looking for.”

While Konomi has not been looking for connections with white people, she has had to interact with them extensively, and has come to approach her white peers from the perspective of teaching them about race and racism.

“White people don’t like to talk about race and they don’t like to be reminded that they’re white. They feel like they should feel guilty or defensive, or that black people are too sensitive to talk about race. I did talk one time. When I did a forum with the BSC and panhellenic [campus sorority umbrella organization]. We broke up into little groups. And that was really good because there were maybe four white people a Native guy and me. And we went in circles and just talked about race and stuff like that. It was just really interesting to hear. Like a white guy was talking about how he feels hesitant to talk to people of color about race because he doesn’t want to offend them. He doesn’t want to say something offensive. And then the white girl was talking about I don’t get the opportunity to

talk to people of color. And I was thinking, you don't get the opportunity,

whereas I'm forced. It was interesting to hear their perspective."

Unfortunately, that experience was rare. Typically, Konomi's experience with talking to her white peers is more negative, where they usually do not listen to her, or will assume she is talking about *other* white people, but not them.

"[White people] don't want to talk about it. They'll listen to us talk about it, as long as we're not pointing out well, you are white and you are part of the problem. As long as that doesn't happen. But that's with anybody, you don't want to be called out like that. But then, I think in the back of their mind they think about the experiences I've had and that's what's bad about black people. They don't realize that they're just regular people who aren't necessarily bad. Those are their experiences and that's how it is. So they think they're enlightened and they know better when really, I could be talking about them."

Part of the reason for white people not wanting to talk about racism, much less acknowledge their privilege is due to the drastically different ways they experience campus. Konomi had an experience on the ASUW Board of Directors, which she was elected to last year, that pointed out how different she sees race and racism from her white peers.

"White people experience a totally different campus. The Board of Directors is changing [board positions and responsibilities] so that people run for specific spots. So each position has delineated jobs. Of course they wanted a Director of Diversity Efforts. And I didn't like the way it was set up because you have the director of operations, director of finance and

budgeting, director of special appropriations, and the director of diversity efforts worked with the [ethnic and racial group] commissions. Worked with the OMA, the ECC, the diversity fair. But why are they not involved with any committees within ASUW? They're being totally isolated and no one else will have to work with people of color. So [another member of color] was saying why don't we put special appropriations under diversity? And the white people didn't think we should do that because if we put it under diversity, people are going to think that it's only for diversity related groups and the diversity director will be biased."

The ensuing argument was split along racial lines, where the two people of color argued that to isolate diversity issues was to take away power from those attempting to address the inequities that made it so that efforts to address diversity were required to begin with. Instead, Konomi argued, everyone should be responsible for addressing diversity. This was especially important given that all the other positions would likely be held by white people, as they typically have been. The white people on the Board unilaterally agreed that diversity is important, but ultimately compared diversity and people of color to biased activists who only want to talk about race and racism, whereas the white people on the board apparently did not have biases.

"The assumption is that white people are unbiased and can think with a clear heart but people of color can't. We're always emotionally driven and we're not able to make good decisions. And they just tried to avoid the problem. I was like, avoiding the problem is not going to help. It makes it

worse. That's why we're where we are at right now. I was getting so mad."

This example highlights the tension students of color must face when working with their white peers. When Konomi would bring up race, she was met with hostility and considered biased. Yet she was also expected only to bring up race, because that was what her white peers have become conditioned to expect, partially because she, and other activists of color, feel they have to bring up race so often on campus and in their classes because it is so often left out.

"They don't understand what it's like to be sitting in a meeting with a whole bunch of white males who are college republicans and frat guys. They sit there and they talk to each other and they make jokes. I don't get their jokes. I don't know what they're talking about. Or they'll talk about their experiences, but I can't relate to their experiences. I can't relate to them. And just the same, when they come talk to me, they think they gotta be cool. 'Oh Yo, my bad!' I'm like 'You dumb ass, don't you hear me speak and don't you see that I don't speak like that?' But they can't get over the color of my skin to be able to see that I don't speak like that. I speak proper English. And I don't only talk about race, but that's all they hear me saying. They ignore me the other times."

At this point in the interview, Konomi was heated. She was feeling the intensity of how frustrated she gets when her white peers silence her, put her in a box, and limit her to conversations of race that they will not even listen to.

“That’s how disrespectful it is for me. And as much as I try to explain why I get upset, they just couldn’t understand it because they don’t understand where I’m coming from. They don’t know what it’s like to sit in a classroom or be anywhere and be the only person. I’m tempted to bring one of them to a BSU meeting. Just so they can sit in a room and be the minority. And let them feel uncomfortable. And let them listen to our conversations and not understand what we’re talking about. It’s common for most people of color, because for most white people, the whole issue of diversity and racism doesn’t necessarily pertain to you. You’re not directly affected by it so you don’t think it matters.”

Konomi was clear, however, that by simply looking around the university, racism was clear. Yet because her white peers do not see people of color, they have a hard time seeing the institutional racism that is spread throughout the university.

“Look at this university! Where are the people of color working at? AES, OMA, and custodians. Because you’re not going to have that many white people going for those kinds of positions. And how can you not see that? They think, well, we had the civil rights movement, we had affirmative action, everything’s okay. When in fact, I’d almost say, we’re not getting killed, for the most part, unless it’s the police. It’s a wonder why only black people are accidentally shot by the police. So we’re not being lynched anymore, but we’re being lynched in other ways. But because it’s not blatantly hanging from a tree, white people don’t understand.”

Konomi's frustration from years of trying to discuss race and racism with her white peers but instead being met with their denial and ignorance of what she saw as very clear was building. At that point, I shifted the interview towards how this frustration plays out in shaping people of color. Konomi then discussed the self-doubt and second guessing that many people of color have because their arguments are so often discarded.

"People of color have a second eye. We always have to step back and look at the situation. When people say we're sensitive, no, we're really not because we're not saying everything we see. 'Cause we're always stepping back and having to ask ourselves: was that an experience of...are they racist? Are they a bigot? Are they being prejudiced? Or are they just mean? I always have to second guess myself. Am I crazy? Am I imagining things? Am I being too sensitive? All these thoughts go through your head before you say something."

Through this self-doubt, however, Konomi has come to recognize that she is not wrong about her experiences, that really, she is the expert in understanding her experiences. Part of this recognition is because her peers have validated her and her recent coursework in ethnic studies has supported her by giving her a context to think about how other people of color share similar frustrations.

"I feel like I've matured in that way, partially because I have more experience in a topic. And I know that what I'm saying is right. Because it's my experiences. I know what I've been through. And then reading and talking to other people having that validate my experiences as being normal, for the most part, for people of color. And realizing that I'm not

some anomaly or some rarity in the world. This doesn't only happen to me."

Konomi has learned about race and racism through the same ways that most of the students in this study have. The majority of her learning about reality and the day-to-day life of being a person of color have come through her peers of color, many of whom have also been activists around race issues. But her courses have also recently added confidence to her arguments, because she now has a historical context to think about the contemporary issues she confronts.

"[I've learned] about race and racism through the organizations that I've been to, the people that I hang out with. I've been reading more on my own. And now I'm learning more history in my classes. Why things are. But as far as how things are now, it's by myself through my own initiative. I had to take the initiative to learn about those things. But by far, the most impact has been through my interactions with students."

Similar again to Robert has been precisely how what Konomi has learned from her classes fits within her understanding of contemporary race and racism. While both of them have learned more from their peers, what they have learned in classes has helped them think about the historical significance of their contemporary battles. Their coursework has supported their overall thinking about race and racism, but their critical development has come largely from their peers of color. White students have constantly annoyed and disappointed Konomi, precisely because most of the white students she interacts with know very little about race and racism and tend to silence her discussion, if she is even allowed to speak out. Her experiences highlight a recurring tension: most

white students appear to have very little awareness of the dynamics of race and racism. yet appear institutionally supported in maintaining that ignorance. In contrast, Konomi could not really take classes that address race and racism without changing her major, demonstrating that to make a commitment to understanding the dynamics of race and racism, students have to make life-changing decisions. Such decisions are likely rare for white students because there is simply no large white peer group that will help support such a dramatic shift, whereas many of the students in this study had large peer groups of color that they eventually found.

Konomi came to college through a minority science and engineering outreach program, and became connected to similar outreach programs immediately afterwards. Even with support from student communities of color, she was alienated from her science courses by her peers and faculty. She was supported by one English teacher, but that support could not compare to the intense support she would receive from peers of color, who guided her into leadership activities and further supported her critical development. She ultimately switched majors and postponed graduation so that she could study the history of race and racism in the U.S.

Kathryn Moore

Unlike the rest of the students in this study, coursework has had the largest impact on shaping a critical awareness of the dynamics of race and racism for Kathryn. She came directly to the University of Washington, took the Sociology of African Americans with Professor Al Black, and continued taking similar courses after that. Her peers have largely remained uninterested in her academic pursuits about race and racism, though she

does have a few friends whom she connects with around race issues. By far most of her learning, however, has been in coursework, and much of that has been with Al Black.

In her first quarter, Kathryn took a class that had race and racism as a fairly large focus, yet this class did not have that much of an impact until she was able later to reflect on the difference between white and black faculty talking about race. It took Kathryn about a year before she enrolled in a course that explicitly addressed race and racism in a way that made her reevaluate the way she had thought about race, racism, and her own identity. This 'enlightening' course, taught by Professor Al Black, served to set the stage for the rest of her experiences in college. She would move on to take a number of other courses that dealt with the history of African Americans, and would also develop a close connection to Professor Black.

"I don't know if it was the end of my freshman year or the beginning of my sophomore year. I think it was the Sociology of African Americans, but that was the class that started my awareness. Al Black showed us that there is a connection between the past and the present, that I could see, that it was obvious. In the other classes, it was not like that."

Kathryn could not remember why she took that class, but the impact was clear. She already talked about how the class changed her academic perspective on history and afterwards she became fascinated with history, whereas before that class, she had hated history.

"I hated it. I couldn't get through the material at all. And then in this class, I just ate everything up. I read the books that he gave to us, and then I'd look for other material. And I was just amazed by it. And I realized history was cool. And now I find out about

other types of history. And I watch the history channel, which I would have never liked before. Now all history is interesting to me, whereas before I couldn't even stand it. I liked it because it was pertinent to me. It was my history. And the other history was my history, too, but not that history that I would ever associate with."

For Kathryn, Professor Black was able to make historical connections to the present, and tied these connections to race and racism. Kathryn then began to understand her own life and pathway to college as connected to race and racism.

"I couldn't see how Vikings coming here had anything to do with what was going on today. Whereas I could see what Al was talking about made sense. He was talking about the systematic nature of all of this. The discrimination that black people face that causes them to be in the position they are today. And I was always of the opinion that if people tried hard enough they could make it. But this brought to my awareness the fact that people who grow up in ghettos or impoverished areas at all, why would they even have the desire to do certain things because they've never seen it anywhere in their life. Why would they even try to do something like [go to college]? Whereas my parents were always saying 'Go to college, this is what you're going to do,' so I would definitely pursue something like college."

Since that class, Kathryn has taken two other of Professor Black's courses, and meets with him somewhat regularly. Yet she has had other courses that have strongly influenced her thinking about race and racism. In particular, the course she took her first quarter at UW had deeper meaning after Professor Black's class because she could

compare how white students responded differently depending on a white or black instructor.

“I remember freshman year, the first quarter I took a class with George Bridges. And I was shocked. I mean I loved the class. That he was a white guy talking about black people issues. And it felt so great that...you know, with Al, I could see, he definitely makes sense, but I can see a lot of the white students in class saying well, he’s black, so of course that’s what he’s going to say. But when I was in the first class, I was so happy because all these white students were listening to a white guy say the same things. And so they had to listen to him ‘cause he wasn’t biased because he was white, too. So I was so happy that a white guy was talking about issues.”

While Kathryn echoed Konomi’s experience of white people assuming that people of color are biased, yet white people are not, she did not necessarily critique that assumption. Instead, however, Kathryn moved to more deeply consider the experiences of white people, and she had another class that helped her understand the notion of white privilege.

“Last year I had another one like that, the Sociology of America. And my teacher was a woman. And she talked about the same types of things, of course. And she’d always talk about how she was, grew up totally ignorant of the fact that she was just a toe-headed girl. She’d always say with her privilege. And she sounds like she was really well off, ‘cause she talks about how she would take her dog to day care before she came to class. She was really funny when she would talk about things like that. And

towards the end of class she'd always talk about her step-daughter, too. I don't think she ever had kids but she'd always talk about her step daughter. And then she said 'My step daughter's half black.' And I was shocked because she's married to a black guy. So I guess she knows what she's talking about."

Kathryn's course load did not stop at addressing race and racism, however, and unlike the other students in the study, she expanded to learn about sexism, as well. The course she took that addressed sexism connected up race and gender for Kathryn, and she was able to see how she faces two forms of oppression that come together in her.

"The Sociology of Women was good. She addressed race, too. She had us do a book report and we got to choose the group we wanted to be in. They talked about Chicano woman, and African woman, and the various types of Asian women and how their lives were different. What their lives in America have been like. And that was a double whammy for me, because I've been discriminated against as a black person and as a woman, too. So that was a pretty depressing class, but good."

Of course, not all was good with what Kathryn was learning. While some of the negative experiences she has lived through were being validated by the course on gender, the faculty member she was closest with, Professor Al Black, instilled in her the notion that Kathryn is black first, a woman second.

"After the Sociology of Women class, I realized I had it from both sides. I was a woman and black. So now I was screwed over from all aspects, all ends. But Al is always like you should see yourself as black first and then

a woman second. And I don't know if I agree with that. But it's interesting to have gotten the two perspectives from the different classes."

After learning about gender and sexism, Kathryn would talk more about her dualistic identity with Professor Black. While he was clear not to support her identity as black and female, she was able to come to understand how he might think that way.

"And he would say I'm not white, I'm black. And so he'd deny that other half of me. But in class, we'd get into this whole discussion about how people can only see black people in a small category. And if they act any other way, successful or they speak well or anything then they're not acting black, they're acting white.

Kathryn had never learned about what it means to be black until these courses, but she also never had reflected on what it means to be white, yet that was often the perspective that she was exposed to.

"In classes, what it means for others to be white always comes up. Or to be the norm, or to be the white male. And I had that class last year, and how a white male is the norm and everything else is different. And that was the first time I realized that. Like I knew that that was normal, but then I didn't think to ask, 'Why is that normal?' But I never explored what it was like to be white from my point of view."

Kathryn has yet to find such a class, and would likely be hard pressed to do so. Yet the impact of a course dealing with being white for those who are also considered people of color could indeed be profound for her (and others). In spite of not having

access to such a course. Kathryn has been learning to distinguish between being around white people, and being white.

“School has taught me so much. Especially lately. I think as time has gone on, I’ve realized more and more that I am not white. I mean I knew I wasn’t white, of course, but I’m aware of the fact that all my friends are white and that’s who I’ve identified with and hung out with although I knew that, too. But I just became more aware of it last year. That wasn’t even freshman year, maybe the end of freshman year. Then last year, I realized it more. And maybe I’m realizing the whole, you don’t fit into either, kind of thing. Where I didn’t realize that, or I didn’t think about that before, because everybody around me was white.”

For the most part, Kathryn attributes this change to her faculty and their pushing her to recognize her own identity within a context of societal racism.

“It was faculty, of course. Al and George Bridges. Of course. He made me aware of, that there really was a problem with the society as opposed to the people in the society. And that we, as a country, as a government, aren’t doing enough to fix everything, or really anything to fix it. And that all our school programs are aimed at fixing the individual. They made me aware of things like that.”

Professor Black will discuss how there are increased numbers of “mixed people,” but he also referred to biracial black and white children as “people who are raised by a white person.” Kathryn then corrected him by pointing out that her “dad is black. And he came from the ghettos of Chicago. So I have that influence on my life as well. And

that's something that is very dominant in my life." Unfortunately, however, Professor Black has not incorporated that into each of his classes, and apparently sees Kathryn as an exception.

"In Al's class, it's really bad. I took his race relations class. And he doesn't talk about race. He talks about black people and white people. And so all the other minorities who are in there are kind of like, where do they fit? Are they not part of this whole issue? So I always think about that. That's almost a source of whatever on my part. It's always black and white black and white."

While she has learned much from Al Black, Kathryn has also had to struggle with his own issues around multiraciality. He once sat her down and discussed her dating patterns, to make a point about how he sees her identifying as white.

"I sat down with Al one time and he was trying to point out the fact that I'm white washed. And he asked me if I date white guys or black guys. 'cause that's a good indication. And I said I don't date either. And he asked, 'Who are you attracted to?' And I said 'White guys, mostly.' And that's what he thought all along. And in class, he'll always say things. He'll make comments about mixed people or black people who maybe have white mothers."

Because of her classes, Kathryn has been able to progress on her own, even as some of her faculty have remained rooted in their dichotomous thinking about race and racism. But she has been able to learn from the content and apply that to the more limited thinking of her faculty.

“I don’t know what he sees me as. Maybe like a traitor. But, we’re close, so it’s nothing that I would take personally. It doesn’t even affect me because I know where he’s coming from and what he’s trying to get across to us and instill in people. And for him to do what he’s trying to do, he has to, that’s what his mindset is. And I think that’s, I don’t want to say as far as he’s come in the process, but, that’s the case.”

Kathryn uses what she has been learning to challenge her professors on their thinking of race and racism. In a recent class taught by Professor Black’s, Kathryn made a presentation to the class about the mulatto population during slavery. In the presentation, she directly challenged her favorite professor, and the next week, was thanked by another student, whom she did not know was biracial black and white.

“[Professor Black] had said “put them all in the same category, even though the mulatto people raised by the white father see themselves totally different. They don’t see themselves as black in the same sense that other people are black. And that was the point I was trying to get through to the class is that we keep categorizing by saying that blacks owned blacks, but it was really totally different. Many people who are mixed just say that they are black because they grew up in the community. But back then, they weren’t even in the same community. They wouldn’t have been the same, at all.”

Kathryn had one other class that addressed race and racism, though it was not a central theme of the class. It was a writing class, and the instructor had them read a very vivid story about a very racist character.

"I had English class last year with a black teacher who I don't know what kind of background he acted like. Me, I guess. And he had us read stories, and two of the stories we read dealt with race. I couldn't even read one of the stories. It was about this police officer. And it took place back in the thirties and forties. He was beating this black guy in the jail and was getting a sexual high off of it. It was really deranged. But then it jumped back to the origin of it. It was talking about how his family, his parents were like we're going on a picnic. And he got so excited. This little boy and they packed up all this stuff and they went to this place and all the white people gathered around and there was this black guy off in the distance and they were going to hang him. And I couldn't read the story."

When Kathryn told the professor she could not read the story, he strongly encouraged her to read it because he felt that she needed to know that part of her history.

"I e-mailed the professor and I was like, I can't get through this. And he told me 'This is part of your history. And it's something that you should try to read through even if it makes you uncomfortable because it's part of your history. So I ended up reading it all and it turned out okay. And I wrote the paper but I didn't go to the class discussion on that day. The whole class was white. I avoided it because I didn't want to be there for that discussion. I totally would have felt awkward."

Aside from these sociology courses and one English course, Kathryn's classes typically do not address race and racism. With the exception of the English course, the

other courses specified, at some level, study of race or racism. Kathryn's other classes, however, typically avoid any discussion about race.

"My other classes we don't really discuss this type of stuff. Those are the only classes that it really gets brought up at all. No one else ever addresses it. My other SOC classes, my social theory classes, or even in sections, it doesn't come up there, either. The TA's are probably not comfortable bringing it up and the students aren't comfortable speaking up about it.

Kathryn has also been convinced that bringing up race in a class that does not explicitly address race is indeed a radical notion.

"I usually won't bring it up. I'll talk about it if it comes up. But I'm not going to just pop up with race in a conversation that has nothing to do with it. They keep it away so it's not even close to that topic, so if I bring it in, it would just be ridiculous. I'm in a CHID [Comparative History of Ideas] class right now. And race and race issues come up in a class like that because it's not the topic of the class."

When I asked Kathryn to clarify the nature of the course and to explain how race is not relevant to the class, she came to realize that such a course actually glosses over historical considerations. She began to recognize that the way the course is structured overall actually shapes whether or not race is a topic, not what is under study.

"It's called Method, Imagination and Inquiry. And it's about philosophers, history, and the great minds. None of whom are black, by the way. I didn't think about that until just now. But a lot of them are from other countries in Europe. <Laughter> If that counts at all. But during that part of history,

African Americans were being enslaved, so they didn't really have a chance in America. See, as far as I'm thinking right now, black people must not have had anything interesting to say. Which obviously isn't true. I guess they could say a lot about that."

As a whole, Kathryn has learned a lot about race and racism through her classes, but just as not every class about race has covered all relevant aspects of her experience, not every class has even remotely addressed race or racism. Yet if you were to ask a white person on campus, Kathryn argued that they would typically think race is everywhere, just as people of color are everywhere. "I think it's just if there's any minorities somewhere, then it's totally apparent to [white people] that they must be everywhere if there's a couple." Yet, in reality, with the exception of courses that explicitly have race in the title, her classes have been almost entirely white. "I just expect here (UW) that they will be mostly white when I go into a class." The difference between the perception of large populations of students of color and the reality of small, isolated populations of students of color depends entirely upon the perspective of the student observing. While Kathryn used to see the campus as largely white, she has gradually come to notice more and more people of color, yet this may also be due to her circle of friends growing to include more peers of color.

To compensate for the limited peer community that Kathryn has always had, she decided to join a multiracial student organization. She was in search of a community that she could share more of her critical thoughts about race with, though she was extremely intimidated by the prospect of walking into an entirely black organization. Yet even as she joined a multiracial student organization and took on a leadership role, she still felt

conflicted about not joining the Black Student Union. Perhaps more conflicting are the pressures and assumptions Kathryn felt she would face.

“Even this mixed group that I joined, I’d rather join BSU. But I don’t feel like I’d be as accepted, so I think I’m just taking steps and I’m going to the mixed group first. But I feel like being in this mixed group, like say Al. or people would be like, ‘Mixed isn’t the issue, Kathryn, so you’re betraying us by even joining this group.’ But I don’t want to tell white people either, but that’s for a different reason. That’s just because they’ll be like, ‘Another minority group.’ So, I realize I’m hesitant to tell anybody. ‘Cause people will think we’re a whole bunch of people [whom] the group is therapy for, or we’re trying to exclude white people.”

With such pressures, though, Kathryn was still able to appreciate the different strengths of each organization, even as she has not been able to build up the confidence to join both.

“The people who are mixed are from such varied backgrounds. They could be half white and half Japanese or Korean and adopted into a different family, and even though we’re all mixed or half and have the same experiences in that sense, we have completely different experiences. The people from BSU, though, may come from African American backgrounds, which is a lot more cohesive than people from [the multiracial student organization].”

While Kathryn felt that her professor and perhaps others would challenge her in taking part in a multiracial organization because it addresses different issues than they are

comfortable with, her fear of taking part in the Black Student Union further encouraged her to seek the multiracial organization.

“The [multiracial student organization] would be safer, though, just ‘cause everyone has the same [issues]. I don’t know if I’d rather join BSU than mixed. But I’d feel like I was betraying the black people if I joined mixed instead of BSU. I think if I were to go to BSU and actually see that there are all types of black people, ‘cause in my mind I hold an idea of black people and how they expect me to be, which is not really true ‘cause there’s all kinds of black people who are just like me. So it’s my own stereotypes that I don’t think I’m going to be accepted because I act a certain way. And it’s different because, in mixed, it’s closer more to the experience I have. And not even because I’m mixed, but even people who are one ethnicity growing up in a different culture. And whereas people who are, African Americans, or even Asians, anybody who is raised with a strong identity of who they are, it’s not that confusion of who they belong to.”

While the multiracial student organization has been a dream of Simon’s, so that he could see the support he felt he needed, for Kathryn, the support has been more for others. Perhaps because she has felt so conflicted about not joining with her black peers, she has felt less benefits from the multiracial group. Instead, she feels that she betrays the black community that she has never been part of¹⁹.

“I think it’s there to offer that sense of community to people who don’t think they have it in other groups or feel uncomfortable. It’s just another option. A lot of people were saying that they’ve been wanting something

like this for a long time, so there must be a need out there for it. And I guess also to make people feel that they don't have to pick. That maybe they can still be black and still be mixed at the same time, and not feel like they're betraying one or the other, which. I don't know if that works. I mean, I still feel like I'm betraying one or the other, because I must be in the sense that I don't want to tell black/white people or black people that I'm in a multiracial group, so obviously I have some kind of apprehension about it."

In the next interview, we revisited this tension, and Kathryn had rethought out her hesitation in joining the Black Student Union.

"I was trying to think if I would have a choice to be in BSU or Mixed and be totally accepted in either one. I think I would join BSU because of the community and because of everyone being together. That's interesting. I've never thought about that before."

Part of her change in thinking can be attributed to the previous interview, where, because of my inquiries, she was able to reflect on her feelings in a way that she simply had not yet done. This reflection carried with her, and later that week, she saw a group of black students and thought about approaching them.

"I walked through to go to the bus and there was groups of the black students there. And I was thinking if I ever went to talk to them or something, I'd feel uncomfortable as though they were looking at me like, 'She's whitewashed,' and if I could be accepted there, that'd be so great. That'd be better than even being in the [multiracial student organization]

probably. I think I could be accepted there if I was more comfortable within myself, or if they knew me or if I met them one on one at a different time as opposed to going with the group and not being like them at first.”

That she had not reflected on the student organization she served in a position of leadership in demonstrates the lack of connection Kathryn has had with her peers outside of the group. She simply had not met many black students, even though she has taken a large amount of courses that address race and racism. When asked about if any of her other peers, friends, and roommates have helped her think about her own identity and race in general, Kathryn became silent. While she had talked about her roommates as generally not “getting it,” she also talked about having had a few conversations. Overall, however, conversations with her roommates have not provided support, but instead left her to ponder on her own.

One example of an all too frequent type of conversation came from a discussion about hair that Kathryn had with one of her roommates.

“My roommate from India was saying one time, ‘You’re so lucky you have good hair.’ And I was like, ‘What do you mean by that?’ She’s like, ‘It’s not the bad kind of hair.’ And I was like, ‘Think about what you’re saying. That these people who have this hair and you’re thinking of it as bad. And why is it bad?’ And she hadn’t thought about that before. And it’s really horrible, to just categorize a whole hair type as bad.

Kathryn’s peers generally have not been supportive of her thinking about race, racism, or her own identity as multiracial. Her white roommate has constantly called into question

Kathryn's racial identity in a negative manner, and her roommates of color tend to gloss over race in general, as Kathryn surmises, because they, too, struggle with how they grew up in predominantly white areas.

While her peers have not provided support for Kathryn to think more critically about race and racism, her courses certainly have had tremendous impact. Because she came to college ready to learn, Kathryn was able to take advantage of a few faculty who would push her towards a critical consciousness of race and racism. Ultimately hearing about different people and their issues, through books, class discussions, and to a limited extent her peer base, Kathryn was able to grow substantially in college.

"I'm a different person from when I came to college. When I came, I was a lot more closed off than I am now. But the fact that I was open a little bit, little things got in and that allowed a lot more to get in. Just being in classes with people who have different ideas and you're not in one little high school space. People talk about things that don't always get talked about. I've definitely grown. And just knowing other people, new experiences. I knew that people's lives weren't like mine, but when you actually experience that everyone has completely different lives and backgrounds. That alone developed me so much."

By far the largest influence on Kathryn's thinking about race, racism, and her identity came through her exposure to a handful of faculty. Yet the single most influential aspect of her higher education experience appeared to be Al Black. That Kathryn has come to critique Al Black and his approaches to race and racism are telling: she has heard his messages, taken in her surroundings, compared that to her other courses, and come to

develop her own sense of thinking about race and racism given her multiracial perspective. While Al Black has served as an unofficial mentor to her, she has surpassed his lesson plans, and moved to a deeper level of thinking about race and racism that positions her as a biracial black and white woman struggling to identify between a spectrum of multiracial and black. She has come to realize that identification as white is not only not an option, but too sharply denies a historical context of racism that she has only just become aware of.

The University of Washington has served her well, in that regard, though her peer base has been drastically less supportive than that of most of the other students in this study. While she has connected with the multiracial student organization, she has tempered that connection because she would rather be accepted into a predominantly black organization. Her increasingly conscious struggle between identifying as multiracial black and white, which she has been doing fairly consistently since sixth grade, and identifying as mainly black is coming to bear on her decisions to interact with multiracial and black students on campus. Regardless of how she chooses to identify and who she decides to accept as her peer groups, Kathryn has come to think much more critically about race and racism, and has come to embody a complex way of understanding the pressures facing multiracial people as a result of her education and ability to transfer what she has learned to fit her situation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented these eight students' experiences in higher education and demonstrated how they came to think about race and racism. While most of these students came to college in search of something engaging, only a few came in search of

further understanding of their own racial identity. For the most part, their peers provided the critical support for their increased understanding of race and racism. Their courses provided more historical background, while overall, their faculty seemed to ignore race in their curriculum and in their overall approach to education. While there were exceptions in terms of specific courses, a handful of faculty, and severe differences between white students and students of color, as a whole, these students have dramatically shifted their thinking of race, racism, and their own identity while in higher education.

In considering the influence of their peers, it is essential to revisit the differences between their white peers and peers of color. As a whole, white students not only did not support these multiracial students in coming to think more critically about race and racism, but in fact tended to treat these students differently depending on their comfort level. Whether it be treating Robert as cool because he is black, idolizing Konomi and Shay because they are black and Asian, or tossing out offensive comments in classes that each of these students have been in, there have typically been white students who did not know how to interact with the students in this study. These white students often misplaced their lack of comfort and put it on these students, who were made to feel “radical” or totally outside the norm for even bringing up race in classes that probably should have already addressed race. That each student (with the exception of Chris) expressed frustration in interacting with white students who were ignorant and often offensive suggests that some white students would benefit greatly from awareness raising efforts, and that such efforts would likely make these multiracial students’ experience much more comfortable and welcoming.

These students' peers of color, on the other hand, tended to be much more supportive, though of course, not all their peers of color were supportive. Typically, students faced rejection from their peers of color at one level, as in Emiko, Kathryn, Michelle, and Simon's rejection for not being "of color" enough. But each of these students also was validated by the same communities, and in several cases, by the very same students. With the exception of Chris, who did not want to connect with students of color, and Michelle, who did not really connect socially with anyone because she was raising two children on her own, each of these students sought recognition from their peers of color and eventually, through a difficulty process of rejection throughout K-12 and early college years, found some level of acceptance. The tension between these students' internalized rejection by peers of color and their increasing acceptance (ranging from near total acceptance in Robert and Konomi's cases to the beginning stages of acceptance in Kathryn and Simon's cases) will likely remain an issue for them to struggle through throughout the rest of their lives, as they will surely encounter more rejection as they move through life.

Half of the students in the study have, since interviews began, spent time in a multiracial organization (on or off campus). Indeed, Shay, Kathryn, Emiko, and Simon all have spent time in multiracial groups to support their own acceptance as well as to help educate others about the struggles of multiracial students. These organizations have provided the safe place that each of these students simply could not find elsewhere, just as they have validated their experiences by connecting them up with other multiracial people. The bottom line, however, has been that these groups are typically not activist oriented, and after a relatively short time of being connected, students tend to begin to

pull away from these organizations in search of more critical organizations. While Emiko and Simon have been the exception to this rule, both have been becoming increasingly conscious and critical, and have searched for outlets in other largely monoracial environments.

Perhaps what higher education has the most direct control over is course offerings, and again with the exception of Chris, each student has taken at least one course that has significantly helped support their thinking about race and racism. In most cases, the first course taught served as a catalyst, building up interest in ethnic studies type courses, and often serving as an experience in enlightenment, whereby the student becomes dramatically more aware of the dynamics of racism. These courses were usually taught in ethnic studies, but also were taught in sociology. Most sociology courses, however, that students noted were taught by Professor Al Black, the popular African American senior lecturer.

Three major issues arise with courses being a powerful influence in these students' thinking about race and racism. The first is that these courses operate within a vacuum, whereby other courses that address race and racism simply do not exist. As such, regardless of how great or terrible these courses are, in all reality, they are all the University of Washington has to offer undergraduate students. That these students testified to their importance, and also took many of the same courses with the same faculty, demonstrates how few courses really address race as a central component of the class. There are not enough courses that address race to adequately understand, through course-taking, the complex nature of race and racism, and because such classes are rare, they typically are not criticized as strongly as they might otherwise be. That such courses

gloss over gender, social class, and other forms of oppression should not be surprising, but instead should be taken as a sign for the need for more such courses.

Related to the lack of courses that focus on race and racism is the historical nature of many of the classes that are offered by the University of Washington. Though courses may be taught in ethnic studies, sociology, or English, these students noted that any class that explicitly discussed race also did so under the guise of discussing history. As such, students were hard pressed to find courses that dealt specifically with contemporary racism. That these courses, few and far between, had such a tremendous impact testifies to the importance of teaching about the historical perspectives of people of color, and also illuminates the importance of addressing contemporary issues.

The third issue that arises because courses have been such a valuable influence on these students' thinking about race and racism is the complexity of the faculty. Of course since so few courses address race, few faculty address race within their courses. When incidents of racist comments occur in courses, the faculty have tended to ignore the inappropriateness. When these students have tried to bring multiracial issues to the forefront, their teachers have generally not been supportive, and challenged these students as not being academic enough. When the few faculty who have addressed race and racism do facilitate discussions about race and racism, they typically operate on a simplistic definition of race that has not included multiracial people (much less other people of color). That the faculty can have evoked such a positive reaction also stands to demonstrate that they, too, operate within a vacuum of faculty who do not address race. This vacuum makes these faculty stand out, but does not create an environment where the faculty are challenged on their own development of their awareness of the dynamics of

racism. The bottom line is that if faculty do not dialogue about race, then they invalidate that talking about race is important, and this is especially apparent in math, science, engineering, business, and finance courses, where students do not even expect reference to race.

This chapter has illuminated the experiences these students have in higher education, as well as provide insight into how these students have become critically conscious or maintained their level of complexity of thought. While each of the seven students have grown substantially in college, Chris does not appear to have shared such growth. While he is academically successful, his level of consciousness about race and racism is minimal, and he is unable to articulate a coherent definition of race and racism. He had a difficult time discussing his own experiences, and felt more comfortable denying his racial identity. He has been able to do that, and in fact has been supported because he does not have a large peer base that will challenge him, nor will he have to take finance courses that address race and racism.

The only exposure he has had was in his two English courses, and ultimately those courses simply made him even further reject efforts to think about race and racism. Because those English courses did not have a coherent plan, and instead sent the message that they were about writing when in reality, they were more about reading literature, Chris has deepened his sense of the unimportance of learning about race and racism, because in his case, that has meant that people of color can claim victim status, and in Chris' mind, have life easier. In contrast to the other students in this study, Chris demonstrates the importance of teaching about the historical and contemporary situation of people of color, because of all the students in the study, he alone denies fairly

commonly agreed upon definitions of historical events. That he is entitled to his way of thinking are clear, but that he has not learned from efforts taken by the University of Washington is also clear.

In Chapter Six, students clarified that their courses tended to be irrelevant and made no mention of people of color (even historically). These students' teachers tended to ignore their situations just as their peers of color and white peers thoroughly rejected many of these students because they were multiracial. This context differs only slightly from the college experience, where students now take courses that still do not address people of color, unless they take a course that only addresses people of color. While a small handful of faculty are supportive, overall most faculty are equally unaware of the dynamics of racism that shape these students' experiences in college. And lastly, the comprehensive peer rejection these students face in K-12 has begun to shift in college, where more people of color are supportive, many people of color are still exclusionary, and most white people appear just as ignorant as they were in K-12.

When these students are enrolled in higher education, they have come to think much more critically about race and racism. This is a result of numerous factors, but ultimately suggest that higher education can foster a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism, especially given that it currently does, but only haphazardly. The next consideration is what would happen if colleges thought out more clearly how to educate for a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism? In the next and final chapter, I summarize the lessons these students have taught us, and lay out a preliminary answer to this question.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MAPPING STUDENT PROGRESSION TOWARDS CRITICAL AWARENESS: THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

“Education should be about the things that happen in everyday life around the country and around the world that could affect each of us.”

- Robert

“College should get people to progress towards a common understanding of where people are coming from. That should be the role of all public education.”

- Simon

“The biggest thing higher education can do is just letting people know that racism and bigotry still happen. It affects people the same as it did 100 years ago.”

- Konomi

Revisiting the Study

This study had two major goals. The first was to understand how these multiracial students have experienced K-12 schooling and higher education in relation to their multiraciality. The second was to evaluate specific aspects of the college experience that influenced these students' thinking about race, racism, and their own identity while understanding how college has stimulated the development of critical thinking about race

and racism. I addressed these goals by utilizing a qualitative approach to understanding these students' experiences. I interviewed students, who also provided creative written responses to share their thoughts and emotions regarding formative experiences. I then formed educational and racial biographies that outlined each of the students' perspectives and solicited their feedback. These procedures ultimately shed light on the experiences these multiracial students go through as outsiders in the educational system.

In the first research question I asked how undergraduate students think about race and racism and to what extent these students have developed a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism. As a whole, I found that the students who consciously attempted to learn about race and racism developed some sense of a critical awareness. The one student who made no such attempt, Chris, has yet to develop a critical awareness because he chooses to not think about race and racism, nor how they have shaped and are reflected in his life. The others in the study, however, have come to see themselves within a framework of monoracialism that marks their identity as problematic and confusing, leading to their rejection by both people of color and white people. This rejection has helped them become aware of the dynamics of racism just as their experiences help us more broadly consider the overly narrow scope of monoracial thinking.

Ultimately, these students know about the dynamics of racism, even though they have progressed through K-12 schooling that completely failed to address race and racism. Despite the lack of intentional efforts to educate them about racism, they have learned about its overt and covert nature through their daily experiences. They have come to see racism as based upon a political construction of race that denies their very existence. They have learned, through higher education courses and their activist peers,

that the development of capitalism and colonialism is rooted in racism (though Chris does not share this view and Robert learned much of this through his parents). And lastly, the women in this study have recognized that they operate within a framework of sexism and heterosexism that further highlights that they are not seen as white just as those who grew up poor recognized how much classism and racism are intertwined. That race, class, gender, and sexuality are intimately tied together to form a comprehensive system of oppression has become clear to many of these students even though few have had courses that make this connection. Instead, their peers of color have helped them through extended conversation about their personal experiences.

In the second research question, I asked how administrative structures, organizational aspects, curricula, pedagogical approaches, and peers have shaped the development of a critical awareness of racism. Ultimately administrative and organizational aspects of college have had very little direct impact on these students' thinking about race and racism. Their faculty and courses, however, have had a profound impact on such thinking. Many of these students' courses tended to completely overlook race and did not allow room for student conversation about race and racism. Courses that explicitly addressed race and racism, on the other hand, had a huge impact on all but Chris, who never took these types of courses. Such classes had either an "enlightening" or a "supporting" role, where students became aware of, or had their awareness supported by, the historic and contemporary context of racism that their K-12 education failed to address. Overall, most faculty were inadequately prepared to address multiracial issues, if they attempted to address race and racism at all. There were few exceptions; most faculty acted unaware of race and racism, continuing the trend from K-12 that positioned many

of these students as race experts. Yet these students were often able to work through their faculty's glaring weaknesses to learn from their strengths.

Some of these students' peers, on the other hand, tended to be influential and supportive of thinking about race and racism. For many of these students, college was their primary exposure to large, intellectual communities of color. And while this was intimidating to some of the students at first, most of them were able to forge some educational community of peers, typically activist peers of color. For the most part, these students' white peers were not only unsupportive, but were also seen as ignorant and unconnected to people of color.

In answering these research questions, these students illuminated how their K-12 experiences negated their complex identity. Generally, their K-12 teachers were ignorant and unaware of race, racism, and their multiracial students. They did not address the racist teasing that all of these students experienced, nor did they support these students as they were excluded by their peers for being multiracial. Their K-12 curriculum ignored people of color, and when addressed, provided a superficial overview steeped in a white, Eurocentric perspective that glorified colonialism while portraying people of color as savage and uncivilized. With this backdrop of K-12 education, these students highlighted the glaring needs of an educational system that teaches white students not to think critically about race and racism and students of color to deny their racial heritages.

The Need to Educate about Race and Racism

Given this view of K-12 and higher education as continuing the racism that these students face by virtue of the narrow, white-glorified and people of color-negating curricula and educational approaches, something needs to change. Even as the interviews

were wrapped up, these students told of cases when their college peers and faculty asked them what they were. Shay highlighted a case when her classmates knew she was multiracial because she had talked about it after challenging a racist comment. Yet this knowledge is not enough to stop her classmates from asking. "We know you're mixed, but what are you?" Other incidents of blatant racism and complete ignorance of these students' experiences were occurring as the interviews were wrapping up, demonstrating the ongoing exclusion these students face because they are multiracial.

Clearly, educators need to do something new. As these students attest, we must begin to educate about race and racism, and our efforts should be based upon a complex definition that includes exposing the dynamics of racism and the monoracial assumption. As Shay argued, "even if you don't care for it, you've got to leave [college] knowing about racism and prejudice." Otherwise, as educators, we have to settle with knowing that we are not making strong enough efforts to ensure students graduate with a greater sense of the world's most pressing problems. Indeed, educators and students alike should be aware of the choices that Michelle makes on where to send her multiracial children: only then can we begin to address the immense social inequality of our educational system that is partially rooted in race.

"[My oldest child] is a fourth grader. Am I concerned that the population of the school is not diverse enough? Yes. Am I concerned that he may not be getting the right messages and that the environment may impact his self esteem negatively? Of course. Here is the dilemma: In my experience thus far, there is no perfect mix. There isn't even a satisfactory mix. You can send your child to school with a majority of black kids so they can be

around other children that they identify with and learn about their culture on a peer based level. but the school isn't great and the curriculum isn't satisfactory. Or you can send your kid to a school that is academically good and it just 'happens' to be all white leaving them with low self esteem, identity issues, and great math skills. So as a parent you find yourself weighing two very huge factors. So which one do you choose?"

Choosing between academics and a positive social identity is hardly a choice, yet this is precisely the problem most parents of children of color face when deciding where to educate their children. This choice only heightens the need to teach more than just parents of color about race and racism. Emiko highlighted public education's role in educating about race and racism: "Kids emulate their parents, and there are so many racist people out there. And if the parents are racist, they're not going to send their kids to cultural camps." How then, will students learn about race and racism, if not from their parents, like Robert, or if not from taking courses and learning on their own? Robert clarified: "If everybody took the time themselves to have those conversations and get educated, we probably wouldn't need those classes. But the simple fact of the matter is, most people don't." He went on to argue that the responsibility should rest with higher education:

"That should be one of the roles of higher education. Higher education is not doing its job in America. Because there are too many educated people that are still just as racist or sexist or classist as uneducated people. And these people have a bachelor's, master's, or Ph.D. A person can go from high school and get a Ph.D. and never learn about people. They might

learn about chemistry, engineering, or business and fulfill all the requirements, but they don't leave as a better person. They still never learn about people they walk by on the street everyday."

These students have shown that they can develop critical awareness if they so choose, and higher education must become more concerned with understanding what prompts such a choice. For these students, however, it is not enough that they made that choice, because so few others have. These students are frustrated because they know most students will never learn about the world around them, much less understand multiracial experiences. Konomi highlighted this frustration and echoed Robert's plea that educators begin to address racism. But she also was clear that higher education must take responsibility for those who do not want to learn about race and racism.

"It makes me frustrated and angry. The hardest part for me is to not hate them back, to not have their hatred or their ignorance. Because in a sense I know better because I know what they're thinking as far as that's concerned. So the hardest part is not looking at a white person and being like, 'You stupid racist!' I have to remember that it's not their fault they are that way. That's why we really need a requirement. Because unless you're actively seeking those classes, you're not going to get that experience. Unless you're actively seeking to interact with people of color, you're not going to. Whereas for people of color on this campus, we don't have to try. We're surrounded by white people and we're always talking to people outside of our race."

While this study illuminated some of how these students have come to think more critically, it has not dealt with how to ensure others can also learn about race and racism. Emiko succinctly expressed the need for approaches that would assist in educating about race and racism in poetic form:

*"I feel like I'm on a one woman mission
To educate the world about me and my people
Who have faces but can't pin down a race
Like it fucking matters anyway
But we need to be boxed in
Categorized so everything fits
Because it's all about fitting in and
If you don't you're a freak show
You're someone to tell others about
You're someone to shake your head at in disbelief"*

Emiko and many other students in this study want to address racism through educating about race and racism, yet their experiences lead to two interconnected goals. The first is their stated goal of addressing racism through education, yet this focuses only on teaching for acceptance, similar to Vogt and others who teach for tolerance. The second goal is to support a wide range of identities, so that beyond teaching mere acceptance, educators *demonstrate* acceptance by providing support for being different than the norm. Ultimately, this second goal moves educators beyond racial identity development towards a more broad way of thinking about students. These students demonstrated that racial identity development is limited because of its monoracial scope.

From these students' experiences, we can see that race, gender, class, and sexuality all play large roles in shaping students' lives, and to focus only on one aspect of identity development is to overlook the tremendous impact these other social identities can have. So while Konomi, Shay, Kathryn, and Michelle all argued that racism led to being excluded by their peers, they also noted the clear lack of male sexual attention. For them, being seen as multiracial or people of color could not be separated from growing up women in a heightened context of male-to-female sexual attention.

Mapping Students' Progression

These students have helped me articulate a progression of thinking and behavior that frames their experiences while providing an overview of how identity is supported individually and institutionally (see Table 7). In this model, I introduce an overview of increasingly complex ways of thinking about and seeing race, at the individual and group level as well as contemporarily or historically. This model could also be seen as following a progression of thinking about gender, sexuality, or even social class. Ultimately, as thinking about identity progresses, the capacity to consider (self and others') identity, as fluid, complex, and situational increases (similar to Perry's Theory, see Perry, 1968; and Kohlberg's Moral Judgement, see Kohlberg, 1984), and the model concludes with thinking about multiple identities as situational, historical, complex, and fluid. These other models tend to focus either on self-identity in relation to others or simply on level of thinking of others, yet what I propose here is a combined model that serves as both a way of thinking about the self and others (more similar to Kich, 1992; Poston, 1990). Importantly, regardless of where an individual identifies themselves on this spectrum, our society is still rooted in the beginning stages, where monoraciality

rules and assumptions are made and acted on based upon presumed monoracial categories. These are not rigid stages, but rather ways of seeing particular individuals or groups of people at particular times, which may deviate depending on the circumstances and individual comfort levels. The purpose, ultimately, is to consider educational entry points, where educators can focus efforts to encourage progression towards a more complex way of thinking about identity.

Table 7**Social Identity Model**

View of Race	Recognizable Racial Categories	Acknowledgement of Racism
Denial	Color Blind – None	None
Bipolar	Black and White	Historical racism (but no acknowledgement of contemporary)
Racial Category	African American Native American Asian American Hispanic/Latino White	Contemporary racism (but no connection to historical)
Ethnic and Cultural Group	Specific ethnic group and racial group categories (e.g. Afro-Peruvian, Hmong, Makah)	Historical and contemporary racism
Complex and Fluid	Multiracial	Racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism

The model begins with denial, where race is typically denied any social relevance. Typically, colorblindness is evoked, and, since race does not exist, absolutely no discussion of racism can occur. Once recognition that race may be relevant, individuals usually view race through a bipolar lens. Race here is seen as two polar opposites, black and white, though if white people are the ones framing discussion at this level, race is

synonymous with black, since white people often do not consider themselves a race (see Helms, 1993). At this level, people with other racial identities are overlooked and ignored. Progressing from bipolar, the next level of complexity is racial category, where race is typically seen as in five distinct, rigid categories (African American or black, Native American, Asian American or Asian, Hispanic or Latino, and White). Throughout the study, Chris vacillated between these three views, though he never progressed to a more complex vision of identity.

At the next progression, ethnic understanding is acknowledged, and racial categories are seen as broadly comprising a number of not-always-similar ethnic and cultural groups. Here, individuals may be seen as racially black, but also Afro-Peruvian, Afro-Caribbean, or African American. Participants' peers, teachers, and faculty appear to have rarely reached even this view of race. The most complex view is where race and identity are seen as complex and fluid. Through this view, race is seen as a social construct, similar to gender, sexuality, and social class. Racial identity is seen as fluid so much so that individuals may reside in a specific ethnic arena, such as Afro-Peruvian, yet may also reside in multiple ethnicities, such as Konomi, who identifies as half-Grenadian, half-black, and sometimes as entirely African American, while she also identifies as Asian, Japanese, and Japanese American. Identity in this stage is fluid in that it greatly depends on how different social identities were supported and negated as the individual grew up.

The students in this study, with the exception of Chris, have all come to articulate their social identities, including race, as complex and fluid, and ultimately wish to create educational arenas that support the development of their (and others') identities. But

these students also cited times in their lives when they thought in a less complex manner, either about themselves or others, demonstrating that they have, at some point, progressed towards complex and fluid thinking. One of the possible reasons for their progression is due to their unique social positioning. These students, because they sit between multiple identities, are able to see firsthand how identity is fluid because they have two drastically different sides of their families. Though often rejected because they were not enough of one race or another, these students' social positioning allows them a unique vantage point into understanding social identities because they belong to more than one identity group.

How Higher Education Influences Progression to Complexity

Given these sets of views, and the need for approaches that address both positive identity development and racism education, it is important to consider how this model presents entry points for higher education to use in its efforts. These students outlined numerous opportunities for educational interventions that fit within a model of supporting an increased complexity of thinking about identity. Emiko's vision of educating the world was shared by others in this study and led to suggestions for improving higher education. Perhaps not surprisingly, given that these students experienced college in similar ways, they echoed each others' sentiments. As a group (minus Chris) these students wanted educators to make courses more relevant to everyday reality, to include personal narratives, and increase student interaction so that white students utilized their access to students of color and so that their multiple identities could be acknowledged. These students also wanted an ethnic studies-type requirement and wanted their faculty to have more knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity to multiracial issues and people of

color. These suggestions indicate that higher education must be centrally concerned with the education of all of our students. must begin to act like our students are not all white, and must assume that many white students have no connection to people of color, much less an understanding of racism or the many social identities that students live with. In other words, educators must assume that many white students see the world through denial and bipolar vantage points.

These students' experiences suggest the need for a more relevant college experience that connects to their daily lives and reflects the world they see. Rather than continue to have courses that present history from a white perspective, that teach business, engineering, chemistry, or math as isolated subjects disconnected from how they are used to exploit people of color (among other groups of people), higher education must connect these disciplines to personal narratives and stories of everyday people around the world. These students' see the world through multiple identities, meaning that their educators rely upon a more limited lens to help them understand their experiences. This is not to say that students cannot learn from a more narrowly focused college experience, since clearly most students came to see through a more complex view than do most of their teachers, faculty, and peers. But it does call into question how educators can provide the catalysts for progression towards complexity when it operates at a more simplistic level.

For Shay, higher education must share a more complex view so that her white peers can progress. Broadening the overarching monoracial white perspective is necessary to foster a complex view, and this would mean incorporating the stories of other groups of people in all disciplines, resulting in a more realistic education.

“American Ethnic Studies has more people of color than white people. And I think it should be the other way around, because they’re the ones that really need to know. Isn’t education supposed to help you get along in the real world. Isn’t that a real world thing that you have to deal with? So incorporate more stories of ethnic people in math and literature. Get more broad with your viewpoints, besides the Eurocentric view.”

Simon was frustrated by an education that totally lacked personal perspectives in favor of an “objectified” perspective, which, in practice, meant white. “I can’t remember any personal narratives. If that was there, I think it would make it so much more powerful.” Simon suggested personal history research projects, where students would be required to research their individual identity. Such research projects would position knowledge within each student, since they would be the experts of their own family history and experiences, and could then make connections between their family history, present day issues, and the multiple identities that have shaped them.

“Each individual should research their cultural, ethnic identity and some of the traditions that have been in their family that may have been lost. Because white students don’t feel connected because they’re like, ‘I’m just white. That’s nothing.’ White is nothing if you don’t research it or look at your history. I always hear Caucasian people say, ‘I wish I were something.’ And I’m like, ‘You are!’ Research that. Be proud of that. Bring that to the table. Everyone has their own unique experiences. There’s gotta be validation of other people’s feelings.”

Simon's takes us deeper than considering simply whether or not to require ethnic studies. He ultimately asks us to consider what it is we attempt to teach, and begs the question: who will teach us about ourselves? If not our families, it appears no one, and his suggestion puts educators at the forefront of supporting students in coming to understand their identities.

Robert echoed this idea by also suggesting that college could offer a class that dealt specifically with a wide range personal narratives. Such a course would expose all students to diverse perspectives and upbringings. The power of such a course lies with connecting it to Simon's personal research project, where students are exposed to multiple identities, hear personal narratives about growing up, and complete their own research and write their own narrative.

"It would be great if there was a class that read stories of all different people, marginalized people, poor, rich, white, black, whatever. And invite people in class to tell their stories. It [could be] really powerful to have them tell their stories. That'd be a lot to try to pack into one class, but something like that in order to get people that much more of an inside understanding of how other people live."

Emiko cautions educators to ensure that such a course has an explicit focus on racism and oppression. Such a focus, through personal stories could ultimately make students disgusted at overt and covert racist behavior, which Emiko argued would help get people motivated to challenge racism.

"We need to go into depth about racism. Show how sick it has been. It needs to be raw, needs to be shocking, needs to make people pissed off."

Make people be like, 'I don't ever want to do that.' Like Hitler - people are like, 'Oh my god, I don't ever want to be like that!' It needs to be like that. 'I don't ever want to be racist like that.' "

Short of such a course, these students wanted to see at least an ethnic studies requirement that brought about an increased awareness of the historical context of racism. Yet such a course would likely still only progress towards an ethnic understanding lens. Even so, Simon argued that such a "cultural awareness class" has to be required because "people should not be graduating completely isolated." While the narrative course would focus on individuals growing up and on all people coming to understand different perspectives, Kathryn demonstrated how an ethnic studies requirement would address racism and focus on educating white people.

"Everybody should have to take at least one class dealing with racism. Because by the end of the class, even if they don't agree with everything, they'll have it in their minds. And there are so many white people here who just stay in their little circles because it's easy to do in a college like this. Or even if they do talk about it, they just reinforce their own ideas by only talking to other white people."

Robert argued for requiring another course that had a global focus. Ultimately educators could blend these suggestions into two requirements: a narrative course that focuses on raising awareness of the different ways in which people within the U.S. see the world; and a more globally focused course that addresses the situation of people throughout the world. This would not only move towards seeing identity as complex and fluid, it would also base such an approach in a critical awareness of the dynamics of

racism. Robert clarified that the second class could connect contemporary global issues to U.S. history.

“We need a class that addresses problems throughout the world, with so many people starving and civil wars. A world problems class where you can talk about why people across the world hate us. Connect how the U.N. and the U.S. didn’t step in when 800,000 people were killed in Rwanda. Or why there are so many Africans dying of AIDS, or the problems with Tibet and China. Different global problems so people have a worldview.”

Even though he didn’t know he was arguing for it, Chris could be seen as saying we need such a focus. While he clearly would not want to take an ethnic studies requirement, he did argue that we do not focus enough on learning about where we come from and what freedom really means. While in practice he may not agree with how such courses present where people came from, and how different people define and are defined by freedom, he did articulate that he was more interested in learning about the historical foundation of the U.S., and this foundation would be further exposed by such a two-pronged course requirement.

“If we spent less time on this diversity bullshit and spent more time on everyone learning about where we come from and why we’re allowed to do everything that we’re allowed to do, why we have the freedom that we have, maybe that would solve a lot of the problems of people feeling like they don’t fit in. Because you’d have something to fit into.”

Chris clarified an important point. Such attempts to illuminate the historical roots of freedom (however defined) in the U.S., would have to be done under specific courses

that connect these roots to particular disciplines. Chris argued that all students “should be required to take English classes.” But English departments should not be counted on to teach these issues: “A little bit more English should be involved [in English courses] instead of the history of lesbian oppression.” His distinguishing between English departments attempting to teach about oppression while teaching English is key. I argue that we should let those who know most about race and racism teach race and racism, while other departments can and should incorporate that into their courses as long as they connect race and racism to the purposes of the course. I argue that Chris actually could have benefited from more history of lesbian oppression, but it should have been taught under a framework of connecting such oppression to his academic studies. In other words, he should have learned how heterosexism and sexism are connected to finance and business, instead of learning about those topics only in his English courses.

Few of these students interacted regularly with their white college peers. Since these students already testified to the importance of sharing their stories and learning from diverse personal narratives, higher education could provide a opportunities for interaction if done in a forum that provided support for those speaking out. Kathryn argued that small groups would best facilitate this approach.

“Take people of various races, sit them down and have honest discussions. The fewer the better. The university could arrange it in classes where some people could get together and deal with issues that they like to keep quiet. And have people be able to say what they want to say in a safe environment. Tempers are going to fly and everything, but you can be honest and tell this black person as you see black people. And

have it be okay to be racist. You have to be able to be like that in order to overcome it. Yet even though it's feasible, it's not really workable because white people don't want to do it."

Kathryn wanted to create a safe enough place for dialogue where students can expose their true feelings, yet she also assumed that it would not happen because white people are too uncomfortable with such exposure. Requiring students to engage in such open dialogue may not be possible, but higher education should be able to provide such outlets for students who already see identity as somewhat complex. Simon suggested a more community-centered approach that connected the university to communities while exposing students to those not typically represented on campus.

"We could have programs where students and faculty are working with people in the community that don't go to school everyday. Instead of holding on to our separatists books-only type of stuff. Raising awareness about the issues that different people face is more important than getting people connected to communities. But getting people in communities can help get them aware. It's all about people interacting with each other and being exposed."

Shay also thought such service learning projects might raise awareness of students who would otherwise never even physically be in such communities.

"They have service learning options. Why not have the option to go to community centers for two hours a week just to get to know stuff, as part of a course. That can spark someone to be interested in something totally

different. They'll actually relate to people and it might cut down some of the stereotypes. It would just open their eyes a little bit more."

Such exposure should not occur without discussion about race and racism, otherwise the effort may backfire, where the university sends out privileged white students who merely see low income communities as victims of oppression, like Chris saw Native Americans. Konomi addressed this by viewing diverse interactions as an important life skill that higher education must teach, meaning exposure is only one aspect of the education; awareness raising about racism is the other.

"Race should be a major part because college is supposed to teach you life skills. They have all these programs where they want to teach how to survive once out of college. But they don't teach you how to survive in a multicultural environment. And you can go through four years here without ever having to interact with students of color. But most likely when you graduate, you're going to have to interact with people of color, and you're not going to know how to do it. That's when people keep on acting really stupid because they think that's how they're supposed to act."

While Konomi advocated for white people's increased awareness of people of color and racism, she has a deeper vision of moving towards an inclusive society. She ultimately recognized that many white people need more structured interactions with people of color because many white college peers do not interact with people of color. College students of color, on the other hand, interact with a white system of education and with numerous white peers. Konomi saw the benefit of interacting with white people; she articulated that everyone should connect with different types of peers. Yet Konomi

recognized that racism limits the number of students of color that attend college, meaning students of color will continue to be isolated, even if structured interaction occurs.

“White people need to go out and meet people and talk to them. You have to surround yourself with different types of people with different experiences and just talk. Faculty can facilitate dialogue in classrooms, so when we talk about race, one person of color in the class isn’t isolated. [White people] don’t hear about it so they’re just like, ‘I want to know what he’s saying! What do all the black people think?’ Everyone hates that. Nobody likes to be singled out.”

Such isolation will continue until colleges begin to admit more students of color, because there are many more white students at selective four year colleges (though such efforts might serve racially diverse colleges). This is especially problematic given that white students need such structured interaction because of their limited interactions with students of color. Shay stressed the importance of one-on-one connections, yet this idea falls into the same trap of not having enough students of color, making it so that not all white students would be able to interact with students of color.

“Pair up students with different backgrounds to intermingle. Pair up this girl from Pocatello, Idaho, with a girl from Compton and see what happens. So they can see what kind of person they’d never talk to is.”

The problem with this idea, of course, is that it assumes that students of color will agree to educate white students about race and racism. This assumes not only that all students of color have taken the initiative to educate themselves about race and racism, but also that they will volunteer their time to educate white students. While such

increased interaction could benefit all students, it is important to remember that these students of color already interact with white students. Even though these students expressed willingness to educate their white peers, it seems troubling that higher education would base an attempt to educate its students about race and racism through its students of color. Even though students of color are a powerful resource that should be tapped in the education of college students, efforts should not rely too heavily upon having students serve as teachers when they pay dearly to be taught.

How then do educators tap into students of color as a resource? These students have already been teaching some of their teachers since middle school. This is part of the problem, and ultimately, efforts to increase peer interaction, require courses, or infuse a curriculum with multicultural perspectives and histories must rely upon the faculty. While this can be seen as a strength because there are so many faculty with so many different perspectives, faculty also tend to be white and universities have no formal means of requiring teacher training of all faculty, especially around multicultural education or anti-racism. Ultimately, the previous suggestions require outstanding faculty to coordinate efforts, provide support for students of color and white students, and to teach the courses. Yet in all eight of these students' experiences with numerous faculty, only a small handful of instructors stood out as outstanding. And even these few had issues that might severely limit their effectiveness and ability to teach such sensitive courses, particularly if these courses addressed multiple identities.

Yet many faculty are a core reason why the students of color have not been supported. Just as faculty have not connected their disciplines to race and racism (or other forms of oppression), and just as faculty have tended to ignore the social context of these

students' lives. these efforts would not only require faculty to do both these things. but lead the way. Faculty connected to such efforts would have to be comfortable advocating for excluded students. and this takes training. energy. and support. These students highlighted a few of the ways in which faculty would have to provide support. but also demonstrated their limited faith in educators.

While Emiko argued that "any book that's required for class should have some sort of cultural understanding," she was also clear that college has to expose the core of racism. Such an exposé would not only require educators to deal with their own hesitation and lack of comfort dealing with race and racism. but also lead the way for the rest of a campus that has historically not wanted to consider race and racism as complex.

"Higher education should show more of the roles of prominent people of color and not so much white supremacy. College should be going to the root of it. Exposing the ugliness of it. Just making it raw and shocking and in your face. And saying. 'Look. this is what happens.' But educators. higher educated people aren't going to want to do it because it takes the emphasis away from all these white people.

Kathryn echoed Emiko's lack of faith by noting that most of the educational leaders are white. and thus will not want to challenge. much less lead the way in fighting. white privilege.

"I don't think they'll do it because it's not important in their lives. The white people. the people who are the leaders. they don't think it's really important. Why should they? They're [the ones] who benefit."

These students paint a bleak picture of reforming higher education into a more supportive and realistic endeavor that acknowledges identity as complex because faculty have not shown such initiative. This does not mean a loss of hope; but rather, we must be fully aware of what lies ahead if educators are to create and sustain efforts to educate for a critical awareness of the dynamics of racism and honor complex social identities.

Konomi clarified that faculty have to be intentional in their efforts to educate, and ultimately have to be very clear about the nature of racism. In educating about racism, people, especially white people, will become upset. Yet about this Konomi is clear. People of color have been upset because they have been the targets of racism, and educators have to work through such anger in order to address racial inequality. Indeed, social inequality leads to people being upset, and fear of upsetting those who have and continue to be privileged is not reason enough to maintain such inequality.

“The biggest thing is to be blunt. Don’t try to spare people’s feelings. The only way to do it is to be blunt. Be clear, your father could have lynched so and so. You could have done that, too. And when you call people out like that, some people are going to get upset, but I say ‘Who cares?’ I’ve been upset so many times because of racism.”

Working through such anger will be difficult, and again, this task lies squarely upon the faculty and administrators who structure education. Konomi offered a route that makes initial confronting of racism easier by addressing race and racism throughout college, not just simply in one course.

“First it needs to happen so that people are used to hearing about other cultures and other people of color. And then once they’re used to it, and

they're knowledgeable as far as facts, and know somebody other than Martin Luther King, then you break down that stereotype that blacks are inferior. But do it overall, not just in that one required class."

One of the ways educators can begin to "do it overall" is to mentor students thinking critically about race and racism, since many of those students will go on to educate about race and racism. One of the most frustrating aspect of engaging in this study was the clear reality that most of these students had absolutely no mentor, be it a faculty, graduate student, community member, or even undergraduate student. While I balanced my role of researcher, I also noticed the need, and saw how quickly the students tended to respond to their perceptions of my advanced knowledge about race and racism. Since they perceived me as an expert, they gradually came to want me to mentor them (especially since several of them are headed into education or teaching). These students expressed a desire for mentoring, yet there were simply no mentors to be found.

Given this increasingly bleak outlook on higher education, I found Simon's overall approach to college appealing. College, he argued, should be fun. We need to "get some music going and loosen people up a little bit." Part of the need to reform college into an experience that supports all students must be couched in the notion that the entire educational community is made up of individuals who respond to their surroundings. Much as Konomi does not want to blame white people for being racist, Simon wants college to accept and support that each of us also likes to play. There is no reason why college cannot honor multiple identities while providing a festive environment. This engagement does not only mean a difficult struggle through pain, anger, and inequality.

Bob Marley (1975) reminded us of the power of creative, artistic approaches to education with his lyric: "One good thing about music, when it hits, you feel no pain." The extent to which educators can address race and racism is intimately tied to creative attempts to support the identity development of all students. As such, higher education cannot place all responsibility for its efforts to foster and teach awareness of multiple identities in one department. Just as ethnic studies departments cannot be called on to carry the burden of educating all students about race and racism, educators cannot expect one method of educating all students to work. The social identities model provides entry points for educational interventions, and these interventions must be applied throughout the college experience. Addressing race and racism will happen only if educators consider how complex their students think about social identities and, in turn, tap our creative energies to design approaches that work through the immense anger, pain, and frustration that have built up from four hundred years of continued oppression. Music, art, drama, dance, and song are only some of the ways in which students can explore their own cultural, familial, and geographic heritages, and such artistic exploration could easily be connected to basic forms of systemic exclusion. The only thing stopping such efforts is our rigid academic thinking, and adherence to racism and other forms of oppression.

Educators must craft a new vision of race and racism in the U.S., especially in the face of the buzzword revolution based on terms with no context (e.g. diversity, equality and democracy). And while K-12 educators may be constrained by the daily reality of overcrowded classes, standardized testing crazes, and budget shortfalls, higher education has the capacity to pave the way for an increased focus on supporting our communities through the validation of individual experiences. In a rapidly expanding multiracial

population, where race is losing its effectiveness as a social category, now more than ever is the time to educate for an inclusive democratic society rooted in multiple identities. As this population increases, racism will shift to exclude people based on colorism (oppression and exclusion due to dark skin tones) instead of presumed racial status. This shift, already in the beginning stages, urges educators to take action now, because higher education holds the key to teaching our leaders to proactively think about social exclusion and oppression.

Yet before we teach for awareness of the complex forms of oppression based upon increasingly complex social identities, we must think beyond race. Social equality is not about multiraciality, or even race. Achieving social equality is dependent upon educators ability to support and teach about the complexities and richness of identity. Higher education, and education in general, must make the educational process more intimate, more personally connected to our immediate personal and familial contexts, more reflective of the daily lives of many students, and especially excluded students. This means educating for consciousness of our own family, social, cultural, and historical contexts.

These students' experiences beg the question: What role does educating about each students' own personal, social, and historical context have in a democratic education? The answer, I argue, also serves as the means for educating for a democratic society. Not only should educators teach each of us to delve into and understand our own personal identities and the factors that have shaped us, but this self-critical process also should serve as the foundation for a democratic education that has, as its fundamental

goal, social justice and equity. Only through understanding ourselves and how we see the world, can we begin to understand others and how they see the world.

My final thoughts, in poetic form:

Who Will Take the Weight

The inquisitive student began her trek in search of answers she had been told college would provide:

she asked about people of color in her history course, only to have the professor tell her the course was about those who have contributed;

so she took an ethnic studies course, and asked about women, only to have the professor tell her the course was about race;

she took a women's studies course, and asked about race, only to have the professor tell her the course was about feminism;

she took a course in sociology, and asked about black feminism, only to have the professor tell her the course was about the theory of inequality, not the practice of it;

she took a political science course, and asked about multiracial people, only to have the professor refer her back to ethnic studies;

she was required to take a math class, and asked about economic inequality, only to have the professor tell her that math was no place for politics;

so she took economics, and asked about domestic partner benefits, only to have the professor tell her that econ was about finances, not gay rights;

and she had to take a science class, and asked about culture, only to have the professor tell her that subjectivity led to bad science;

frazzled and frustrated, she kept on asking,

Who will answer my questions?

Who will teach me about the world as I see it?

Who will teach me what I need to know?

Who will take the weight?

In the college classroom, here you and I sit:

Oblivious to those with overburdened shoulders, babies crying, mother's milk running dry, picking cotton, cherries, tomatoes, grapes, strawberries, these are our

brothers and sisters working tirelessly for less and less while you and I work for more and more;

So go on, enjoy the fresh produce

The new keyboard, your large, thin computer monitor screen to take up less space on your desk so you can pile more work upon it so you can do more more more work. less less of whatever it is the lazy poor do.

Most of us educators/students/administrators hardly recognize those who mop our floors, shine our toilets, trim the ivy climbing these very academic buildings, empty our trash bins:

So I ask:

Who will take the weight?

We will not achieve equality when our everyday actions support inequality.
yet I ask:

Have our nicely trimmed, freshly manicured palates prepared us to advocate for those we do not even notice?

Are you prepared to pursue the knowledge that yesterday's reality passed us by while we idly sat by? Our lack of awareness is not new:

Who indeed constructs the knowledge we breathe?

The homeless woman begging for her two children's dinner?

Did you even notice her?

As doctor after doctor after professor after sociologist after anthropologist after biologist after economist, mechanical engineer, political scientist, educational administrator drove on by

Luxury windows rolled up high and tight

Her ratty cardboard sign, soggy from Seattle's dampness, calling into question your everyday: "Homeless family, will work for food, shelter"

And you drive on by, listening to NPR-like voices lulling you to quiet passivity something about economic productivity, and you vaguely wonder how her children go to school;

Who will take the weight?

When the random jealous white person, in search of group unity, asks innocently, "I want to know where my family is from"

as if African Americans know where their families are from
and in response colleges require western civilization

but nothing on the colonial marriage to racist capitalism,

Nothing on Chinese railroad workers, annihilation of indigenous peoples, continued slavery, nothing about the importation of Asian brides, women sold into

middle class slavery by white middle class men, some of whom are professors at this very university

And in chemistry class, the one student of color challenges racist comment after comment while the professor drones on and on, no one will talk about race in this course, yet outside the class, her TA's converse on and on about unionization,

"Did ya get that conference proposal in on time?"

"Hey what race is that loud annoying girl, anyway?"
and all she gets is a D.

Who will take the weight?

And the students chant loudly in their heads: WHAT ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU?

Like they really want an answer;

And today's faculty/professor/expert teacher silences the class, as they all turn their heads towards the one they just can't figure out:

Let's hear from the isolated student, enlighten us all about that which we don't really want to know

Curiosity blending into racism into sexism into elitism into ignorance into ignoring into:

Why are you not listening to me?

WHY can't you just leave me alone?

Much less learn about the impact of your actions/reactions/inactions/inability to consider someone outside your skin?

From high school dating, rejected from the senior ball/junior prom
and you ain't got no date no dress no escape from reality

But my history teacher never told me of the white masters who raped and raped
and raped

the black women they called their property

"But that was history. I didn't do that, how can I be responsible for that?"

The white students shout in proud unison, why talk about that now.

Let's instead talk about the damn Japanese, Communism, Castro, some cold war concocted in another white board room meeting, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan have no meaning in an unconnected reality that began tomorrow;

But I can tell you the capitals of idaho, iowa, indiana, can even spell them backwards, learned cute songs about the 50 states, the nation's presidents, I can even

Pledge my allegiance to the flag
Of the united states of america

But do not ask me about tuskagee, a-bombs, firebombing abortion clinics, protests over genetically engineered food;

Do not ask me about the School of the Americas. The American Indian Movement. Wounded Knee. forced assimilation. using Puerto Rico as target practice: Vietnam. Chile. Guatemala. Hiroshima. Nagasaki. Japanese Internment or the Drug War;

Do not ask me who trained the Taliban, the Shining Path or how yesterday's ally in a bid to overthrow another government became today's terrorist.

Do not ask me about revolutions unless they were against the british. french. or russians
DO NOT ASK ABOUT ANYTHING THAT IS NOT ON THIS LIST!

Our a-political schooling bent on selling bent on masking deeper connections.

STUDENTS: Do Not Look Deeper!

Who will take this weight?

Who will take this weight?

And will you take it upon your shoulders to learn what you truly need to know in order to craft your own critically engaging and supportive community?

Will you reflect on tuition dollars paying middle level administrators and professors to sit firmly in the upper middle class - rich - as homeless people struggle for food and another crack baby passes away while you're sitting in class listening to professor So-and-So philosophize about global debt and the need for the IMF and the WTO to spend blood money ensuring no one critiques the united states. imperialism. capitalism. or our short-sighted loss of history and all of this is still rooted in monoracial thinking.

Will you reflect on this. when all else tells you not to?

Will you take the weight?

In 7th grade I learned about race but no one told me I benefited because of it. No one told me you could be more than just black or white. more than heterosexual. more than feminine or masculine. more than just poor and rich and no one told me my poverty fed this / fed up / not enough feed to go `round.

Who will take the weight?

We learn about monoraciality through the one drop rule just as hitler taught us that any jew is all jew. just as any arab in you is reason enough for airport detention. reason enough to lock your ass into an anti-islamic post 9-11 cellar that grows as the united states' quest for power multiplies while we all fill our tanks with the blood from u.s. imposed oil wars so that we can get to campus in such luxury.

And so given our immense uphill battle. I ask. beg. plead:

Who will take the weight?

Who will admit we're all connected?

Who will connect sexism to the economics of exclusion from democracy, positions of power, images of objectified women, 5th grade girls on diets, and the reality that rape is still not considered a hate crime?

Who will connect heterosexism to the sociology of fear from masculinity, junior high gay bashing, Mathew Shepard, and the lack of domestic partner benefits?

Who will connect classism to the denial of medicine resulting in the misdiagnoses of this horrendous case of capitalism leading us to not question why the poor are poor and how we've forgotten that the middle class are rich?

Who will connect racism to a history of slavery, bondage, concrete jungles, college rejection letters, and the crack house across the street?

Who will make the connection that our hearts beat so that others may breathe?
Tell us, will it be you?

End Notes

¹ Two recent articles in the New England Journal of Medicine study race as a key variable in the administration of medical treatment. In both articles, the key variable under study, race, was based on self-reported responses and classified into distinct racial categories, such as black, white, or even non-black (Exner, et al., 2001, Yancy, et al., 2001). Biologically, of course, these categories have little relevant meaning, other than as a social construct, certainly a poor variable for a "scientific study."

² Interestingly, on numerous occasions I have been asked (or more correctly assumed) if I am a person of color. As a light skinned white man, I assume this is because of the nature of the issues I bring forth. Since so few white men push critically for the inclusion of people of color, and I can only assume that this leads to the subsequent assumption that I must be of color if I am to raise the issue of race and racism. However, this does not mean that I actually endure racism or any sort of comparative negative consequences. Indeed, I believe that it is because of my white privilege that I am able to advocate for addressing racism.

³ For a recent example, consider the Annual Conference on White Privilege (<http://www.whiteprivilegeconference.org>)

⁴ In high school, I remember thinking John Brown was black. I never knew of any white anti-racist abolitionists or activists until graduate school.

⁵ An Asian American student enrolled in a graduate seminar that I taught and was clear about this. She argued that if her role was to educate the rest of the white people in her academic program, then her tuition should be waived.

⁶ Mavin, a non-profit multiracial organization founded by Matt Kelly, is based in Seattle and has as its core mission the redefinition of diversity through celebrating multiracial people and families. Based on a Hebrew word meaning "one who understands," Mavin produces a magazine (also called Mavin), a Resource Book, and serves as a central link between multiracial organizations and community activists in their efforts to stop the cycle of disenfranchisement by increasing awareness. For more information, see www.mavinfoundation.org.

⁷ At the conclusion of the study, Emiko had a revealing and life-changing conversation with her parents, who told her that they had been in contact with the doctor who assisted with her birth since she was born.

Her search for her true biological heritage appears to be coming to a close, though as of this writing, Emiko had not yet written to the doctor in Hawaii to find out about her parents.

⁸ PINOY Teach is a University of Washington program (recently cut) that consisted of students taking a two quarter class designed to empower and instruct them in how to team teach a multicultural curriculum centered around Filipino history and culture to 7th grade students in social studies classrooms. Designed by Filipino community activists, the program brought together a number of Filipino students, who often then wanted to teach K-12. The program was well regarded on campus by student activists as one of the only programs that supported and engaged students of color around a ethnically and culturally relevant curriculum.

⁹ The Office of Minority Affairs, known on campus as OMA, provides a wide range of educational support services to students of color, and educationally and economically disadvantaged students. The office works to recruit and retain underrepresented students of color through numerous programs, including the Instructional Center, the Ethnic Cultural Center, and the Educational Opportunity Program, among other programs. Most university programs that specifically support underrepresented undergraduate students of color originate or are coordinated through OMA.

The Ethnic Cultural Center, or ECC, is one of the most heavily used offices that OMA coordinates. The Center promotes academic, cultural, recreational, and social needs of minority and majority students, staff and faculty. The ECC is comprised of four meeting rooms (the Black Room, Native American Room, Asian/Pacific Islander Room, and Chicano Room), a commons area and library, and computer lab. Most activist and social organizations that cater to or address the needs of communities of color are coordinated through the ECC, just as most conferences that address race and racism are put on in the Ethnic Cultural Theatre or in the ECC rooms.

¹⁰ The Instructional Center, or IC, serves as a comprehensive learning center for students of color and educationally and economically disadvantaged students. The IC considers itself a "special place where students come for special instruction not usually included in 'regular' classes. Students form study groups, are mentored by more experienced undergraduate and graduate students, and connect with other students across the campus in an intellectual and academic setting.

¹¹ Mestizos, a slang Spanish word, in this case refers only to multiracial people, but this highly charged term is often considered and meant to be a racist slur.

¹² The BSU, or Black Student Union, is a registered student organization at the UW (and many other colleges across the country). Its stated purpose is to provide academic, intellectual, and social support for students of African heritages at the University of Washington.

¹³ ASUW stands for the Associated Student Body of the University of Washington, and is the main political student organization that claims to represent all students. ASUW is recognized by the UW Board of Regents and lobbies the state and local government on issues of tuition, access, and other issues of the day.

¹⁴ The Minority Science and Engineering Program, or MSEP, is an outreach program that recruits students of color into engineering programs. The program offers mentoring, a computer lab, connects new students to a larger undergraduate group of engineering students of color and coordinates the efforts of other specifically targeted programs, such as the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and the American Indian Society of Engineers (AISES).

¹⁵ The Bridge Program is a summer program that students of color and low income students enroll in that helps freshmen with the transition into college. The program, coordinated through the Office of Minority Affairs and the athletic department, provides students with intense basic skills, and helps the students develop community and support prior to enrolling in their classes.

¹⁶ WashPirg is short for Washington Public Interest Research Group, and is the state chapter of the national organization dedicated to improving the lives of all people through advocating for a better world through education, health, social, and environmental improvement.

¹⁷ Affordable Tuition Now is a University of Washington registered student group that was set up in response to ever increasing tuition rates and has as its primary goal to make the University of Washington affordable to all students.

¹⁸ The Young Democrats, a nationally recognized student organization, works to promote the political agenda of the National Democratic Party and offers internships with local and state politicians.

¹⁹ What Kathryn had not known at the time was that three of the past four presidents of the Black Student Union have been biracial black and white (including Robert Daniels, whom she did not know).

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Appendix A**Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People**

I have the right

- not to justify my existence in the world
- not to keep the races separate within me
- not to be responsible for people's discomfort with my physical ambiguity
- not to justify my ethnic legitimacy

I have the right

- to identify myself differently than strangers expect me to identify
- to identify myself differently than how my parents identify me
- to identify myself differently than my brothers and sisters
- to identify myself differently in different situations

I have the right

- to create a vocabulary to communicate about being multiracial
- to change my identity over my lifetime-and more than once
- to have loyalties and identify with more than one group of people
- to freely choose whom I befriend and love

From: Maria P. P. Root (1996), p. 7.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

- *First Interview Sets*

Purpose:

- Develop rapport
- Demographic background
- Personal histories
- Educational histories
- Preliminary personal definitions of race and racism

General questions and informational probes:

- Describe the schools you have gone to (K-12 and higher education).
- Describe your family history, where you grew up, what home life was like.
- Compare the different sides of your family.
 - What do you identify as? What about your parents/family?
 - What have your educational/academic experiences been like?
 - Describe your academic interests and how they relate to your experiences at this campus.
 - What do race and racism mean to you?
 - How did you come to think about race and racism in these terms?
 - Does your definition differ from what most people think?
 - When did you first become aware of race? Of racism?
 - Did your family discuss race and racism? How so?

- *Second Interview Sets*

Purpose:

- Understand racial identity
- Influences on participant's thinking about race
- Personal histories regarding race and racism
- Reflection on how participants structure their personal lives with regards to race
- Understanding of K-12 schooling experiences

General questions and informational probes:

- What does it mean to identify as you do? How has that changed over your life?
- How does racism impact your life?
- How did you learn about racism?
 - What were you taught about race and racism?
 - What did school teach you about race and racism?
- Can you think of particular instances that helped to shape your outlook on race and racism? Particularly in school or at home...
 - How was school different or similar from home?

How does it feel to have to constantly have to explain?
 When did people start asking? When did you start explaining?
 How did experiences in school pressure/support you to identify as you do?
 In what ways did your parents pressure you to think of yourself?
 What role did your siblings play?

- *Third Interview Sets*

Purpose:

Critical reflection on influence university has in participant thinking about race
 Influences on participant's thinking about race
 Reflection on how participants structure their personal lives with regards to race
 Revisit definitions of race and racism

General questions and informational probes:

What is the role of higher education in shaping thoughts about race and racism?
 What is the role of higher education in educating about race? What should it be?
 What is the role of higher education in addressing racism? What should it be?
 How have your classes impacted your thinking on race and racism?
 What is racism like on campus?
 When is race and racism talked about in college?
 How much did you learn about biracial or mixed race people in college?
 How have you learned about people of color?
 When were your personal experiences talked about in school?
 How have you learned about people like you?
 What role did higher education play in your thinking about race and racism?
 What else may have contributed to your thinking?
 What role does race and racism play in how you structure your personal life?
 With your peers? Your family?
 How has your experience at UW shaped your thinking of race and racism?
 How did UW develop your sense of identity and self?
 How did UW shape the way you think about your own racial identity?

- *Fourth Interview Sets*

Purpose:

Deep analysis of experiences in higher education (at UW)
 Further analysis of impact of college on thinking about race, racism, and racial identity

General questions and informational probes:

Do you have a place to talk about your experiences and the things that shape you?
 Compare your experiences to mono-race people on campus.
 How do your experiences compare to white people?
 How has UW supported your intellectual growth? Your racialized identity?
 If you lived in the dorms, how was race dealt with there?

How have your peers (classmates, friends) influenced your thinking of race and racism?

Do your friends develop your understanding of race and racism? How so?
 How supportive has your advisor been? What about other faculty?
 Faculty within your major? Faculty in required courses?
 Have your classroom dynamics and teaching styles been supportive of who you are?

Have you had the flexibility to choose classes and study what you are interested in?

How has the level of racial diversity been in your classes? On campus?

Have you had access to people with expertise in mixed race peoples or racism?

Do your classes deal internally with issues of race/racism?

With mixed race people? With what it means to be white?

How have your classes impacted your thinking on race and racism?

How do your academic interests relate to your personal experiences growing up?

What would action that challenges racism look like?

How has higher education helped prepare you for that?

- *Fifth Interview Sets*

Purpose:

Check data validity

Clarify conflicting data

Assessment of overall interpretation of case studies

Appendix C

Analytic Steps

1) *Interviews*

- Open coding of transcripts to get themes
- Creation of summary notes
 - Analysis of summary notes and generated themes
- Creation of educational and racial biographies
 - Axial coding of transcripts to break themes into sub-categories (codes).
Analysis of codes to see how they fit under themes.
- Transferring of codes into follow up interview protocol

2) *Writing Exercises*

- *Assessment of writing and fit with previous codes*
 - *Own process of coding*
 - *Transferring of codes into follow up interview protocol*

Vita

Christopher Bodenheimer Knaus was born in Fortuna, California. He moved to Davis, California and graduated from Davis High School. He received his Bachelor's in Rhetoric and Communication from the University of California, Davis in 1995. He completed his Master's in Communication from Washington State University. He earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Education in 2002.