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Forced to Choose: Some Determinants of Racial Identification in Multiracial Adolescents

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This paper categorizes multiracial youth ($N = 1,496$) ages 14 to 19 and compares them with each other and with monoracial youth on identity development measures. The multiracial categories used here are derived from youths' reports of their own and their parents' race(s). Comparisons are made within groups of multiracial respondents who make different choices among single-race categories. Results show differences between subgroups in strength and importance of ethnic identity, self-esteem, and perceptions of ethnic discrimination. Multinomial logistic regression shows further that physiognomy, ethnic identity, and race of coresident parent(s) are significantly associated with reported race. Also related to racial identification among part-Hispanic youth are the racial distribution and socioeconomic status of their neighborhoods and the racial distributions of their schools.

Carlos Petterson (not his real name) was in his ninth-grade English class when he filled out a survey that asked him, among other things, about his race: ''Select the major ethnic group that best describes you.'' This request posed a problem because Carlos's mother is part Filipino and part Mexican, and his father is White. Carlos marked the box to indicate that he was White, thus raising a number of questions: What factors motivate a biracial adolescent's self-definition? How does Carlos differ from other White-Filipino-Mexicans? from ''pure'' Mexicans, Filipinos, and Whites? These questions introduce issues that are becoming increasingly relevant in the study of adolescent development as more interracial unions produce children of multiple races.

This paper attempts to answer these and related questions by describing aspects of racial identity in a sample of multiracial adolescents and comparing them with monoracial peers. Interest in multiracial adolescents and their developmental dilemmas is growing because of changing demographics in the United States. In the 1970s, 1 in 100 children was born to parents who were of different races. Thirty years later, that ratio has become 1 in 19 (National Center for Health Statistics, 1999). Despite a recent policy change on the 2000 U.S. Census allowing respondents to check multiple boxes on the race item, other surveys and many life situations still force multiracial individuals to choose a single race category. The Educational Testing Service, for example, asks examinees to report a single race when taking the SAT. For people who consider themselves monoracial, the request ''please check the [one] box that best describes you'' is completed without a moment's hesitation. But multiracial people wonder, ''Should I report just one part of my heritage? Ignore the question? Give multiple answers? Report something that does not really describe me, like 'other'? Report only part of my heritage?'' Although multiracial people are aware of the difficulties and ambiguities of defining and categorizing race, there is a dearth of empirical research on the topic, particularly concerning children and youth, who constituted 42% of the American multiracial population in 2000.

The multiracial research that does exist is equivocal in its findings. Some of this variance can be attributed to differences in research designs and samples. Most of the research, especially studies of clinical samples, suffers from one or more methodological limitations such as small sample sizes, lack of randomization in sampling procedures, lack of

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control groups, lack of longitudinal studies, or a focus on a single biracial category (e.g., Japanese-African Americans). Many of these studies have used ethnographic and interview data to generate theories of multiracial identity development (Collins, 2000; Jacobs, 1992; Root, 1996) or to comment on the psychological adjustment of multiracial individuals as compared with monoracial individuals (Gibbs, 1998). Several studies have focused on how mixed-race adolescents are identified racially. However, there are no large-sample studies considering the antecedents of racial self-identification across many different biracial groups.

An important reason for this paucity of research on multiracial identity is that racial statistics, both locally and in national government samples, are typically gathered using a forced-choice questionnaire item. Three notable exceptions are the 1995 Current Population Survey (CPS), which examined parent reports of their own and their children's races (O'Hare, 1999) and the 2000 Census, which gave citizens the opportunity to ''check all that apply.'' However, information from the CPS sample was provided by parents, and the 2000 Census did not collect information on identity or development. One other source, AdHealth, allows respondents to check multiple boxes but has only a small multiracial sample. In contrast to these sources, these race data were collected from 1,492 multiracial youth along with a broad range of items assessing many dimensions of psychosocial development. In expanding the literature on multiracial youth, this paper has two primary goals: (a) to describe differences in racial identification among multiracial and monoracial youth and (b) to explore which factors are associated with the race a youth reports on a forced-choice survey questionnaire. Although the study is based on questionnaire data, I hope that the participants' self-identification responses are associated with how they identify in some naturally occurring social situations.

Adolescent Identity, Racial Identity, and Multiracial Identity

The topic of racial identity among multiracial adolescents comprises three major subject areas: identity development, racial identity, and multiracial identity. I address each of these from historical and current perspectives.

Adolescence is a time when awareness of identities and belonging increases. Identities are the meanings that individuals acquire through social interactions and as such are crucial to understanding a person's sense of himself or herself (McCall & Simmons, 1966; Stryker, 1980). Identification with an ethnic group represents a feeling of consciousness of kind that incorporates two types of commonalities: cultural (e.g., language, religious beliefs, and styles of living) and physiological (Weber, 1961). Ethnic identity crucially shapes self-identity and exists as a master status, one that dominates all others when judging the self (Stephan, 1992).

The process of forming a stable identity is marked by establishing autonomy from parents, learning to relate to same- and opposite-sex peers, and developing a sense of uniqueness by comparing and differentiating oneself from others (Erikson, 1966). For some adolescents, particularly minority youth, these comparisons leave them in a low-status position because of social status norms regarding race. Functioning as a low-status person means having more social and economic obstacles to overcome, which in turn requires a greater effort to derive a positive self-identity (Erikson, 1968).

More recent theories of identity development focus on ethnic and racial aspects of identity development, describing stages (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991; Helms, 1990; Parham, 1989; Phinney, 1989, 1993) types of identity development (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998), and racial self-schemas (Oyserman, Kemmelmeier, Fryberg, Brosh, & Hart-Johnson, 2003). The most widely accepted of these theories explains how adolescents become aware of the ways racial designation and physiognomy affect social interaction.

In addition to studying stages of development, there is a long tradition of psychological research into self-concept among monoracial minority youth, much of it debating ideas such as whether Black children have a positive ethnic identity based on a preference for White dolls over Black dolls (Clark & Clark, 1940; Jacobs, 1992; Porter, 1971; Spencer, 1985). This self-concept research has built on Piaget (1954) and later Kohlberg (1966), who argued that the consistency of young children's identities develops over time. Most of the research on ethnic-identity formation suggests that identity development can be a challenging yet positive experience. Unspecified though important in this literature is the idea of developing a fixed or stable identity, which may make sense for gender identity development and for monoracial identity development—but not necessarily for multiracial identity development.

Jacobs (1992) proposed a model of multiracial identity development that allows for a fluid identity. He described the stages as being (a) a precolor constancy stage where children experiment with

different racial identities and understandings of color; (b) a racial ambivalence stage where children have a fuller understanding of color and the social meanings attached to skin colors; and (c) a biracial identity stage where children understand that racial group membership is correlated with skin color but determined by parentage, social norms, and personal choice. Garcia-Coll and Magnuson (1997) also recognized the changing nature of identity in their study of the psychological impacts of migration on monoracial children's ethnic identity at different developmental stages. Their work showed that bicultural children have more ambiguous ethnic identities than children who have only one national affiliation or status.

As they develop, multiracial children become aware of the differential status accorded the various race groups, their differential opportunities, and the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to each group. Some learn to negotiate the intricacies of more than one social group and become more skilled socially as a result; others resolve their conflicting loyalties by identifying only with one group or by adopting a fused biracial or bicultural identity (Chuang, 1999). Scholars have debated the relative health of multiracial peoples' identities: Some argue that multiracial youth develop a stronger and more richly complex identity as a result of having to negotiate multiple social contexts (Brown, 1995; Chiong, 1998; Corrin & Cook, 1999; Kich, 1992; Wrathall, 2002), whereas others maintain that negotiating racial or ethnic identity represents a burdensome and problematic addition to the already complex process of developing a healthy identity (Cauce et al., 1992; Gibbs, 1987; Hall, 2001; McRoy & Freeman, 1986; Nakashima, 1992).

Racial Self-Identification

Thus far I have reviewed the literature on how ethnic identity develops among adolescents. It is important, however, to distinguish ethnic identity from racial self-identification. Ethnic identity refers to the strength or importance of one's identification with a particular culture and is not exclusive because one can identify with more than one cultural group. Although ethnic identity typically has a physiological component (Weber, 1961), it has many other components as well. Developing an ethnic identity, like developing other forms of identity, requires the ability to categorize, make intergroup comparisons, and hold a social self-concept (Tajfel, 1978). In contrast, racial self-identification refers to the genophenotypical ancestry groups one names when asked to identify oneself racially. The list of racial groups and the criteria for membership are socially constructed, but an individual's designation of one over another does not a represent a choice in the way ethnic identity does (Daniel, 2002). For example, Teja Arboleda, multiracial author of *In the Shadow of Race* (1998), is a mixture of Black, Filipino, Native American, and German (Caucasian), but he grew up in Japan. Ethnically, therefore, he identifies as Japanese even though he has no biological Japanese ancestry. Racially, he identifies as Black, Filipino, Native American, and White—the categories that make up his biological ancestry.

In understanding the ways multiracial youth identify racially, then, we must consider their biology as well as their prospects of being fully integrated into a social group, something that varies by skin color, surname, language facility, and social norms regarding mixed races (Johnson, 1999). For example, many Native American tribes require that mixed-race people prove their membership by demonstrating blood quantum (percentage of ancestors who are tribe members). In contrast, part-Black people are subject to the social norm of hypodescent, a system by which a mixed-race person is assigned to the group with the lowest social value. Part Blacks and part Native Americans in this country thus have had less choice in asserting a racial identity than part Asians and part Hispanics. Indeed, Xie and Goyette (1997) found that racial identification of part-Asian children (by their parents) is somewhat arbitrary and that both assimilation and awareness of Asian heritage affect the identification. O'Hare (1999) showed that parent categorization of multiethnic children varies significantly depending on the categories presented on a questionnaire, particularly for Hispanics. Stephan and Stephan (1989) found that the extent to which an individual is exposed to ethnic customs, religion, and the relative status of the various racial groups contributes to ethnic identification among part-Japanese college students and that percentage of father's heritage was a factor among part-Hispanic college students.

Skin tone can also be a formidable factor in determining the racial identity of a multiracial person. There is evidence that phenotype affects the level of ethnic discrimination individuals experience, particularly in the job market (Espino & Franz, 2002; Gomez, 2000; Hill, 2000). Minority group members also show a marked general preference for lighter skinned individuals (Hill, 2002; Thompson & Keith, 2001). Brunsma and Rockquemore's (2001) study indicates that the racial identity choices of biracial adults are influenced not just by skin color but by the

individual's assumptions about how others perceive his or her appearance.

An individual's social environment clearly has an impact on racial classification and on individual racial identification, regardless of appearance or personal preference. Which social contexts most strongly affect racial categorization and identity formation? Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological systems theory suggests that different contexts have both disparate and joint impacts on many aspects of human development, including identity. Peer group, family, neighborhood, school, work, and religious contexts all have significant individual and combined effects on the lives of adolescents (Cook, Herman, Phillips, & Settersten, 2002). Root's (2001) work on multiracial youth organized contextual, demographic, and psychological factors into an ecological model showing how identity development is affected by a combination of inherited influences, traits, and generational variables within a framework of class, gender, and regional history of race relations. Her model helped show how identity can change across contexts and over time, leading to different category labels, or self-identifications. A light-skinned, mixed-race adolescent may be asked, ''Why don't you try to *pass* as White?'' by his White friends and, ''Why don't you *admit* to being Black'' by his Black friends. Because both racial groups want to secure the youth's loyalty, multiracial youth reduce cognitive dissonance by self-identifying differently depending on context (Root, 1997).

The work of Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) similarly argued for understanding racial identity as characterized by a protean capacity to move between and among cultural contexts and established identities, to accommodate different forms as necessary. Their research showed how phenotype, social network composition, and family and peer socialization factors explain the various racial identity choices biracial people make. Although they argued for the primacy of the protean racial identity, Rockquemore and Brunsma acknowledged that social pressures to identify with a single group push many multiracial people to choose a singular racial identity. It is this forced choice that I find most fascinating.

Hypotheses

Given the developmental task of differentiating and identifying oneself during adolescence and the proclivity of Americans to group people by race, it is likely that multiracial youth self-identify as being predominantly part of a single race category. When they do, it is logical that their experiences are similar to those of the group they choose. Thus, my first hypothesis was that multiracial youth would report experiences similar to those of peers from the race group with which they identify. For example, I predicted that the perceptions of ethnic discrimination among Black-White students who self-identify as White would more closely match those of monoracial Whites than monoracial Blacks, whereas such perceptions among Black-White students who report being Black would more closely match those of monoracial Blacks. Thus, Black-Whites who report being White perceive less ethnic discrimination than Black-Whites who report being Black. My second hypothesis was that part-White multiracial adolescents for whom ethnic identity is important would be more likely to report their minority race group rather than White. Finally, ecological theories of development suggest that multiple social contexts affect an adolescent's developing identity. Therefore, my third hypothesis was that multiracial adolescents who experience predominantly minority contexts (school, family, peer group, and neighborhood) are more likely to report a minority race group than those who live in predominantly White contexts.

Method

Participants

My survey population consisted of all students in nine high schools in California and Wisconsin in 1987 except the few students who refused to participate, whose parents prohibited participation, or who were absent on the day of survey administration. Surveys were administered in classroom groups, though the specifics varied from school to school: In some schools, it was always the same subject area (e.g., English classes), whereas in others it was always during the same class period (e.g., second period). Surveys were administered by the research staff, but classroom teachers were present. Although there was no reason to think that the context had a significant effect on respondents' choices of race categories, I have no way of determining this with certainty.

Usable questionnaires were obtained from approximately 80% of potential respondents. Of the 10,275 respondents who completed a survey, 8,732 (85%) reported a race for themselves and for both biological parents. The item for respondent's race forced a single choice by asking respondents to ''select the one major ethnic group that best describes you'' and offered the following categories: Black, Native American, White, Asian, Hispanic, and

Pacific Islander. In contrast, the items for the race of each parent asked respondents, ''What is the ethnic background of your mother and your father? If a person has a mixed ethnic background, darken more than one answer for that person.'' This asymmetry was accidental on the part of the survey designers, but I delighted in exploiting it to understand the complexities of forced choice in race identification. Based on respondents' reports of their parents' races, a sizable number of respondents could logically claim biracial and even multiracial status. However, analyzing these respondents required that I develop a method of categorizing them.

Procedures

To determine which cases were multiracial, I designed a categorization method that captured differences between a respondent's parents' races and yet represented the intricacies of multiracial parents. The method needed to be both statistically precise and parsimonious. Because these are qualities that do not necessarily go together, I created one categorization method for each of two purposes. The first method allowed all of a multiracial parent's races to be recognized. Called the precise method, it fit students into 1 or more of 10 biracial categories: Black-White, Black-Asian, Black-Hispanic, White-Asian, White-Hispanic, Asian-Hispanic, other-Hispanic, other-Asian, other-White, and other-Black. By this categorization method, there were 1,989 cases across the 10 biracial categories, but cases with a multiracial parent were counted twice (or more). For example, if a student's mother was part Black and part Hispanic and the father was White, the student was placed in the ''Black-White'' category, the ''Hispanic-White'' category, and the ''Black-Hispanic'' category. Thus, this precise method allowed us to see how many respondents of any given racial mix existed in this data set.

The precise categorization method worked well to provide certain descriptive statistics about developmental outcomes among biracial groups. However, conducting regression analyses required a categorization method by which each respondent was counted only once in a single category, albeit a biracial category that ignored the multiracial aspects of some respondents. Thus, I developed the parsimonious method in which I retained my original 10 biracial categories but fit each multiracial student into a single biracial category. For a decision rule, I relied on the norm of hypodescent, which states that mixed-race people are assigned to the group with the lower social value. Although these norms are no longer used explicitly, individuals in American society nonetheless tend to be treated as if they were a members of the darkest skin group to which they might conceivably belong (Root, 1997). Because treatment by others contributes to one's self-reported identity and the U.S. Office of Management and Budget uses a similar rule (Persily, 2000), I concluded that there was good reason to use hypodescent norms in my statistical analyses even if they are distasteful. Thus, if a student's parent was part Black, I considered the Black part of the student's racial makeup to be dominant and therefore placed the student in a part-Black category. Of the remaining biracial students, I first labeled those with at least some Hispanic ethnicity as Hispanics, then Asians, and finally others. This decision yielded a single biracial category for each respondent. Using this categorization method, 1,496 (14.6%) of the respondents in this sample were biracial.

My sample was drawn from California and Wisconsin; therefore, it would have been ideal to compare it with the U.S. Census data for the California and Wisconsin populations. However, such a comparison was problematic for several reasons. First, the Census with the logical comparison year, 1990, did not allow respondents to check multiple race categories. Second, the question on the survey I used differentiated between ''White (non-Hispanic)'' and ''Hispanic'' as two separate race groups whereas the Census considered Hispanic as an ethnic group to be chosen along with a race category. Although they were gathered 13 years apart, it is informative to compare the 2000 Census data with my sample because the 2000 Census allowed multiple responses to the race item. Such a comparison showed that there is a greater percentage of multiracial individuals in my sample (14.6%) than in the whole non-Hispanic 2000 U.S. population (2.4%), in the non-Hispanic U.S. population under age 18 (4%), or even in the non-Hispanic California population under age 18 (7.25%). Including multiracial Hispanics brings the national multiracial youth 2000 Census figure up to 13.6%. This latter figure is comparable to Cauce et al. (1992), who found that more than 10% of students in a Seattle sample were multiracial, and Phinney and Alipuria (1996), who found almost identical numbers in a Southern California sample.

Measures

The demographic variables described in the following sections are listed in Table 1 along with their means, standard deviations, and group percentages.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables

		Percent or mean (*SD*)
Self-reported (mono) race		
	White	36.3
	Black	15.0
	Asian	11.7
	Hispanic	24.0
	Pacific Islander	4.1
	Native American	5.3
Parent race		
(at least one parent	White	80.4
is reported being	Black	22.6
at least partly	Asian	28.6
this race)	Hispanic	42.5
	Other	45.1
Sex		
	Male	46.4
	Female	52.0
Coded yearbook photo		
	Caucasian	33.0
	Hispanic	20.0
	Black	15.0
	Asian/Pacific Islander	11.0
Generation		
	Immigrant	13.0
	2nd-4th generation	82.3
Peer crowd affiliation		
	Ethnic crowd	10.7
	Reputation crowd	88.5
Race of coresident parents		
	At least one is White	50.1
	Neither is White	49.5
Race of same-gender parent		
	Partly White or White	37.3
	Non-White	67.1
Parent education (scale of 1–4)		3.1 (.78)
Age		15.5 (1.16)
1988 percent White in tract		77.1 (17.38)
1988 average household income		$42,000.00 ($9,600.00)

Student and parent demographic characteristics. Observers' assessments of respondents' race were generated by coding yearbook photos according to race. A binomial variable indicating whether the respondent's same-gender parent is White was designed to test whether there were racial identity connections between a biracial youth and his or her parent as a result of sharing gender. In addition to shared gender, however, I felt that family influences on racial identity might be transmitted by sharing a home. Thus, I developed a variable to capture the race of coresident parent as a binomial indicator of whether the parent(s) a respondent lived with were White. This information was derived from a questionnaire item asking students with which parents or guardians they lived. Response options were: "both my mother and father," "only my mother," "my mother and stepfather," "only my father," "my father and stepmother," or "other." A binomial variable, immigrant, differentiated respondents born elsewhere from those born in the United States. Socioeconomic status was constructed from answers to the instruction, "Indicate the highest level of education attained by [each coresident parent]," averaged across the two parents in cases of two-parent families. Response categories were "some grade school," "finished grade school," "some high school," "finished high school," "some college or 2-year degree," "4-year college graduate," "some school beyond college," and "professional or graduate degree." On a scale of 1 to 4, the mean level of parent education was 3.11, corresponding to some years of college.

Neighborhood characteristics. Two characteristics of students' neighborhoods were used in my analyses, both taken from the 1988 Current Population Reports. The first, neighborhood socioeconomic status, was based on average household income at the tract level. The second, percent White in neighborhood, was also at the tract level.

Ethnic peer crowd affiliation. The variable ethnic peer crowd affiliation was created from a questionnaire item asking respondents, "Which crowd would your classmates say that you belong to?" The responses were divided into two categories: reputation-based (e.g., jocks, brains, populars, rebels) and ethnic-identity-based crowds (e.g., Blacks, Mexicans, Vietnamese). Similarly, the proportion of student's friends who were his or her same ethnicity was derived from an item asking students to rate on a scale ranging from 1 (*none*) to 5 (*all*) how many of his or her close friends were of the same major ethnic group.

Ethnic identity. The first ethnic identity item assesses the importance of ethnicity. The survey asked respondents to rate on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*extremely important*) how important is it that others know his or her ethnic background to know all about the respondent. The mean score for the whole sample was 2.1, which corresponds to *somewhat important*. The second

ethnic identity item measures, on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly negative*) to 5 (*strongly positive*) the youth's overall feelings about his or her ethnic background. The sample average was 3.93, corresponding to *positive*. The last measure of ethnic identity was a composite of three variables tapping respondents' perceptions of ethnic discrimination by peers, teachers, and other adults. Respondents answered the question, ''How often are the following people unfair or negative to you because of your ethnic background?'' On a scale ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*), the sample average was 1.4, corresponding to less than *occasionally* ($\alpha = .76$).

Self-esteem. The measure of self-esteem was based on a scale of global self-worth adapted from Rosenberg (1965). Respondents answered 10 items on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Sample items included, ''On the whole I am satisfied with myself'' ($\alpha = .87$). The sample mean was 2.96, corresponding to ''agree that I am satisfied with myself.''

Missing Data

Some of the missing values in the data were derived from later waves of the survey filled out by the same respondent. Other missing values were imputed using the expectation-maximization algorithm (Little & Rubin, 1987) after finding that the values in question were missing at random. Descriptive statistics and regression models estimated using only the original values were similar to those using the imputed values.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

To assess the connections between racial identification and the experiences and emotions of multiracial youth, I began by examining how the multiracial respondents in the sample self-identified. Table 2 shows the forced choices of multiracial adolescents along with the way they were categorized by the precise and parsimonious methods. Because these respondents were only given a monoracial option when told to choose the ethnic group that best described them, I could not determine which multiracial respondents claimed a multiracial identity and which did not. However, I could compare multiracial respondents who made different monoracial claims with those who refused or failed to answer the question.

Using the forced-choice race question described earlier, I compared students in a given biracial category who made different choices. For ease of presentation, I combined the categories with small sample sizes, Native American ($n = 80$) and Pacific Islander ($n = 62$) into one category, other. Table 2 shows, for example, that of the 160 students in the Black-White category, 68% reported being Black, whereas only 16% reported being White, 7% reported a different race category, and the remaining 9% did not respond to the forced monoracial choice. The difference between choosing Black and choosing White was statistically significant, $\chi^2(7, N = 160) = 468.400$, $p < .001$. The Black-White students who chose a category other than Black or White had multiracial parents.

Table 2
Percent of Multiracial Respondents Who Self-Identify in Each Monoracial Category and Counts of Multiracial Respondents Using Alternative Categorization Methods

	% Black	% White	% Asian	% Hispanic	% Other	% No choice	Precise *N*	Parsimonious *N*
Black-Asian	57	15	7	7	7	7	60	30
Black-Hispanic	56	7	1	25	7	4	70	52
Other-Asian	11	14	23	15	37	1	89	27
Asian-Hispanic	13	15	15	40	12	5	101	55
Other-Hispanic	9	9	2	46	33	0	117	46
Other-Black	61	11	3	4	20	1	159	91
Black-White	68	16	1	2	4	9	160	160
White-Asian	4	33	43	6	10	4	298	250
Other-White	5	62	1	8	25	0	450	324
White-Hispanic	3	38	1	52	1	5	485	461
Total							1,989	1,496

Note. Precise counts each respondent in as many race categories as befit his or her parentage; parsimonious counts each respondent in only one category according to norms of hypodescent.

Looking at White-Asians and White-Hispanics reveals that the choice between White and the minority category was also significantly skewed toward the minority category, although not as much as the Black-White category, $\chi^2(5, N = 250) = 385.952$, $p < .001$, for White-Asians, and $\chi^2(5, N = 461) = 896.575$, $p < .001$, for White-Hispanics. The double minorities also favored the Black category, $\chi^2(5, N = 173) = 102.976$, $p < .001$. The large majority of part-Black students who reported being Black lends support to my use of the ''one-drop'' decision rule to categorize biracial groups using the parsimonious method.

Having chosen a categorization method, the next step was to describe how racial identity is connected to emotions and experiences for multiracial youth. I began with the measures of experiences of ethnic discrimination and self-esteem. Because these measures are important in understanding ethnic identity for minority youth generally, I compared the responses of the biracial groups with each other and with their monoracial counterparts.

Four graphs of biracial group means with 95% confidence intervals are shown in Figure 1. The first graph illustrates the relative importance of ethnic background to all groups $F(9, 8536) = 86.378$, $p < .001$, on a Bonferroni-corrected multiple analysis of variance (ANOVA) comparison test. The Bonferroni test, based on Student's t statistic, adjusts the observed significance level for the fact that I made multiple comparisons. The results provide one F test for each group of comparisons along with p statistics for each comparison. In this case, the results show that the groups attached similar levels of importance to ethnic background, except monoracial Whites ($M = 1.81$, $SD = .99$), who attached significantly less importance than all other groups in the graph ($p < .001$).

The second graph in Figure 1 examines how positively respondents felt about their ethnic background, showing that all ethnic groups felt positive

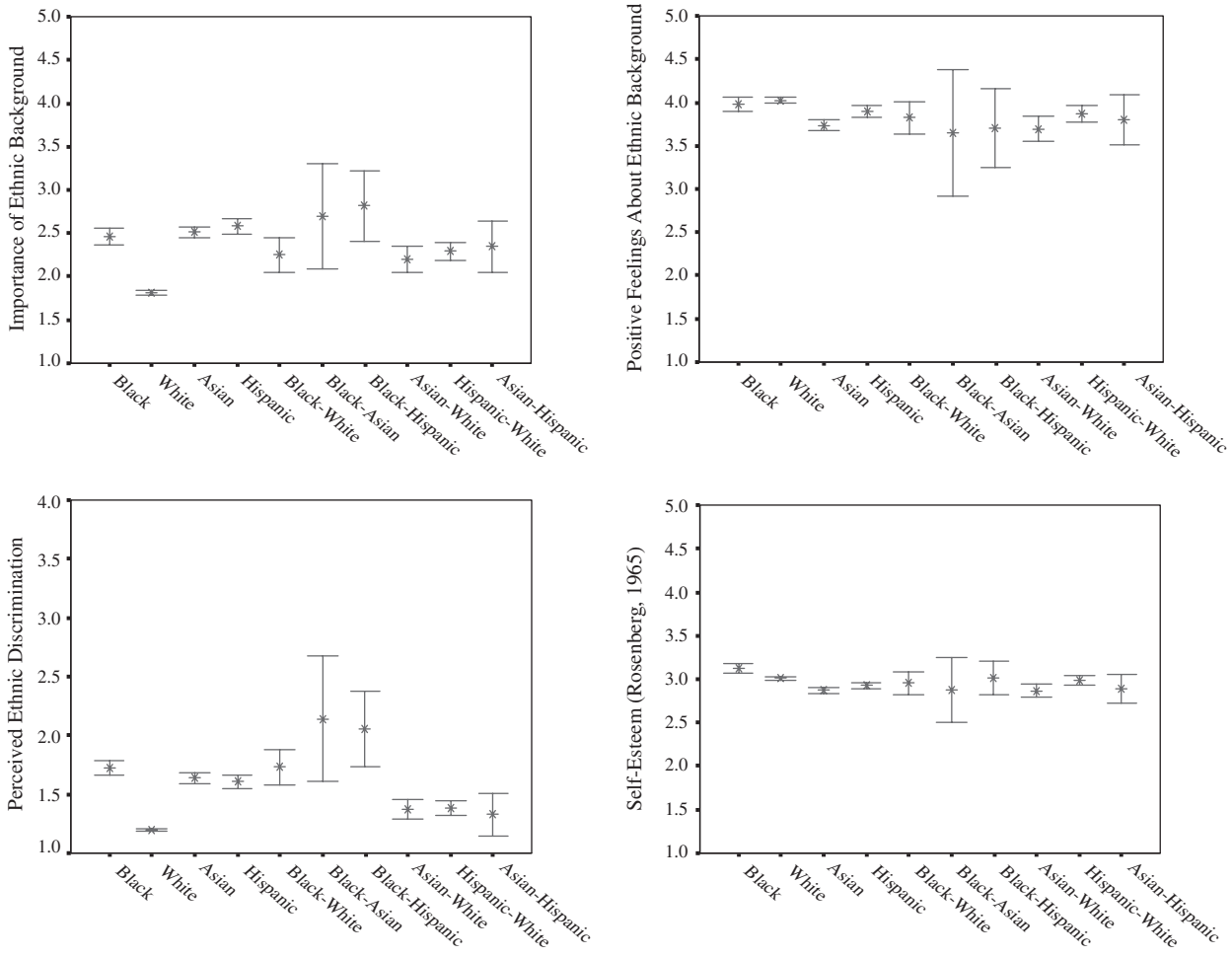

Figure 1. Connections between racial identity and the emotions and experiences of multiracial youth.

but that there were significant differences between the groups in the comparison test, $F(9, 8484) = 7.655$, $p < .001$. Compared with monoracial Asians ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .92$), monoracial Blacks ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.03$; $p < .001$), monoracial Hispanics ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .996$; $p < .001$), and monoracial Whites ($M = 4.03$, $SD = .84$; $p < .001$) reported more positive feelings about their ethnic background. Like monoracial Asians, Asian-Whites ($M = 3.70$, $SD = .98$) felt significantly less positive than monoracial Whites ($p < .01$) and monoracial Blacks ($p < .001$). There were no other statistically significant differences among the groups on feelings about ethnic background.

The third graph in Figure 1 documents self-esteem, showing that most groups were satisfied with themselves but that there were some significant differences, $F(9, 6709) = 12.543$, $p < .001$. Monoracial Blacks ($M = 3.12$, $SD = .53$) had significantly higher self-esteem than all of the other monoracial groups ($p < .001$). Among the other groups in the comparison test, Whites also had relatively high self-esteem ($M = 3.01$, $SD = .52$), and they were significantly higher than all monoracial groups except Blacks ($p < .01$). Asians had the lowest self-esteem of any group ($M = 2.87$, $SD = .48$), which was significantly lower than monoracial Blacks or Whites ($p < .001$), though not different from Hispanics ($M = 2.93$, $SD = .46$). The biracial groups were not significantly different from each other.

The last graph in Figure 1, which shows how respondents perceive ethnic discrimination by peers, teachers, and other adults, also shows some significant differences between groups $F(9, 8274) = 121.729$, $p < .001$. Monoracial Blacks ($M = 1.73$, $SD = .81$) and all part-Black biracial groups (range = 1.71 to 2.14) perceived significantly more ethnic discrimination than monoracial Whites ($M = 1.19$, $SD = .46$; $p < .001$) and non-Black biracial groups (range = 1.33 to 1.38; $p < .001$). Monoracial Blacks also perceived significantly more ethnic discrimination than monoracial Hispanics ($M = 1.61$, $SD = .80$; $p < .01$) but not significantly more than monoracial Asians ($M = 1.64$, $SD = .76$). Monoracial Whites perceived significantly less ethnic discrimination than any other group ($p < .001$) except Asian-Hispanic ($M = 1.33$, $SD = .64$). Monoracial Asians perceived more ethnic discrimination than monoracial Whites ($p < .001$) or any of the non-Black biracial groups ($p < .001$), though less than the part-Black biracial groups ($p < .001$). Thus, Blacks and part Blacks perceived the most ethnic discrimination, followed by biracials, monoracial Asians and Hispanics, and Whites.

As shown in Figure 1, although the differences were not statistically significant in all cases, part-Black biracials perceived more ethnic discrimination than monoracial minorities. Furthermore, with the exception of Black-Whites, part-Black biracials felt less positive about their ethnic backgrounds than monoracial minorities. Although non-Black biracials perceived less ethnic discrimination than part-Black biracials and monoracial minorities, they still felt less positive about their ethnic backgrounds relative to monoracial minorities. Thus, it seems that biracials, particularly those with some Black heritage, experienced the disadvantages but not the protective benefits of minority group membership.

Figure 1 also suggests that in contrast to monoracial Whites, monoracial Asians and White-Asians both had less positive feelings about their ethnicity and much lower self-esteem than monoracial Whites, even though White-Asians perceived less ethnic discrimination than monoracial Asians. Thus, White-Asians suffered from the same relatively low self-esteem of their monoracial Asian counterparts rather than the more average self-esteem of their monoracial White counterparts.

Hypothesis Testing

Having described this sample on these measures of ethnic identity, discrimination, and self-esteem, I turn to testing my three key hypotheses.

Multiracial youth will have experiences and emotions similar to those of peers from the race group with which they identify. These analyses compared students in the same multiracial category who reported different race categories in the monoracial forced-choice question. For example, consider the 160 respondents who were in the Black-White biracial category. Of these, 107 indicated that they were Black on the forced-choice question and 32 indicated they were White. What are the substantive differences between these two subgroups of Black-White students, who, in terms of their parentage, constitute one category?

I earlier hypothesized that the experiences and emotions of biracial students who identified with a given ethnic group would be, on average, similar to the experiences and emotions of the monoracial group with which they identified. This hypothesis was supported insofar as the group mean for each subgroup in most cases was closer to that of the monoracial group associated with that subgroup's forced identity choice rather than the other monoracial group making up the subgroup. To test this more carefully, however, I estimated differences in disaggregated biracial group means for the ethnic identity variables, presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Multiple ANOVA Comparisons of Race Groups on Ethnic Identity Variables

	Race		Mean difference		Race		Mean difference		Race		Mean difference	
	group 1	group 2	group 1 – group 2	Sig.	group 1	group 2	group 1 – group 2	Sig.	group 1	group 2	group 1 – group 2	Sig.
Perceived ethnic discrimination	W	A	– .418	***	B	W	.532	***	B	A	.114	*
	W	A-W-W	– .109		B	B-W-B	.060		B	B-A-B	– .627	**
	W	A-W-A	– .204	***	B	B-W-W	.039		B	B-A-A	– .178	
	A	A-W-W	.309	***	W	B-W-B	– .472	***	A	B-A-B	– .741	***
	A	A-W-A	.214	***	W	B-W-W	– .493	***	A	B-A-A	– .292	
	A-W-W	A-W-A	– .095		B-W-B	B-W-W	– .022		B-A-B	B-A-A	.449	
	$F(3, 6094) = 191.580$, $p < .001$				$F(3, 5580) = 222.609$, $p < .001$				$F(3, 1751) = 7.701$, $p < .001$			
Importance of ethnic background	W	A	– .658	***	B	W	.649	***	B	A	– .010	
	W	A-W-W	– .229		B	B-W-B	.104		B	B-A-B	– .007	
	W	A-W-A	– .422	***	B	B-W-W	.651	***	B	B-A-A	– .412	
	A	A-W-W	.429	***	W	B-W-B	– .545	***	A	B-A-B	.002	
	A	A-W-A	.236		W	B-W-W	.002		A	B-A-A	– .402	
	A-W-W	A-W-A	– .193		B-W-B	B-W-W	.547	.056	B-A-B	B-A-A	– .404	
	$F(3, 6199) = 126.90$, $p < .001$				$F(3, 5659) = 82.108$, $p < .001$				$F(3, 1788) = .306$, $p = .821$			
Feelings about ethnic background	W	A	.253	***	B	W	.065		B	A	.318	***
	W	A-W-W	.201		B	B-W-B	– .014		B	B-A-B	– .188	
	W	A-W-A	.398	***	B	B-W-W	.608	*	B	B-A-A	.827	
	A	A-W-W	– .052		W	B-W-B	– .079		A	B-A-B	– .506	
	A	A-W-A	.145		W	B-W-W	.543	*	A	B-A-A	.509	
	A-W-W	A-W-A	.197		B-W-B	B-W-W	.622	*	B-A-B	B-A-A	1.015	
	$F(3, 6164) = 21.7$, $p < .001$				$F(3, 5622) = 3.607$, $p < .05$				$F(3, 1771) = 9.3$, $p < .001$			
Perceived ethnic discrimination	B	H	.119	*	W	H	– .413	***	A	H	.005	
	B	B-H-B	– .298		W	W-H-W	– .014		A	A-H-A	.494	
	B	B-H-H	– .256		W	W-H-H	– .294	***	A	A-H-H	.242	
	H	B-H-B	– .417		H	W-H-W	.399	***	H	A-H-A	.488	
	H	B-H-H	– .375		H	W-H-H	.119	*	H	A-H-H	.237	
	B-H-B	B-H-H	.042		W-H-W	W-H-H	– .280	***	A-H-A	A-H-H	– .251	
	$F(3, 1498) = 5.3$, $p < .001$				$F(3, 6027) = 153.302$, $p < .001$				$F(3, 1926) = 2.9$, $p < .05$			
Importance of ethnic background	B	H	– .119		W	H	– .768	***	A	H	– .110	
	B	B-H-B	– .152		W	W-H-W	– .302	***	A	A-H-A	.073	
	B	B-H-H	– .589		W	W-H-H	– .576	***	A	A-H-H	.251	
	H	B-H-B	– .033		H	W-H-W	.466	***	H	A-H-A	.183	
	H	B-H-H	– .470		H	W-H-H	.192	.059	H	A-H-H	.361	
	B-H-B	B-H-H	– .437		W-H-W	W-H-H	– .274	*	A-H-A	A-H-H	.178	
	$F(3, 1534) = 2.1$, $p < .1$				$F(3, 6134) = 145.101$, $p < .001$				$F(3, 1983) = 1.9$, $p = .123$			
Feelings about ethnic background	B	H	.094		W	H	.029		A	H	– .224	***
	B	B-H-B	.077		W	W-H-W	.044		A	A-H-A	– .075	
	B	B-H-H	.524		W	W-H-H	.101		A	A-H-H	– .075	
	H	B-H-B	– .017		H	W-H-W	.015		H	A-H-A	.150	
	H	B-H-H	.430		H	W-H-H	.072		H	A-H-H	.150	
	B-H-B	B-H-H	.447		W-H-W	W-H-H	.057		A-H-A	A-H-H	.000	
	$F(3, 1517) = 1.3$, $p = .264$				$F(3, 6097) = .885$, $p = .448$				$F(3, 1971) = 4.9$, $p < .01$			

Note. W-White, B-Black, H-Hispanic, A-Asian; first two letters indicate parentage; the third indicates self-identification.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

The top left panel of Table 3 compares Asians, Whites, Asian-Whites who identify as Asian, and Asian-Whites who identify as White. The comparison of this set of groups, $F(3, 6094) = 191.580$, $p < .001$, shows that the group mean for perceived ethnic discrimination among Asian-Whites who reported being White ($M = 1.30$, $SD = .71$) was not significantly different from the monoracial White group mean ($M = 1.19$, $SD = .46$), whereas it was significantly lower than the monoracial Asian mean ($M = 1.61$, $SD = .72$; $p < .001$). Furthermore, the mean perception of ethnic discrimination among Asian-Whites who identified as Asian ($M = 1.40$, $SD = .60$) was significantly higher than monoracial Whites ($p < .001$) and lower than monoracial Asians ($p < .001$) but not significantly different from Asian-Whites who identified as White. Thus, Asian-Whites who identified differently were not different from each other, but they had different relationships to their monoracial components, with both groups being significantly different from monoracial Asians, at least as far as perceptions of ethnic discrimination were concerned. The results for importance of ethnic identity were similar. That is, the monoracial group with which an individual identified was suggestive of the individual's sense of the importance of ethnic background. The results for feelings about ethnic background were also similar but there were fewer statistically significant differences among the four groups, suggesting that racial identification was not as related to feelings about ethnic background as it was to sense of the importance of ethnic background or perceptions of discrimination.

Looking now at the Black and White groups, $F(3, 5580) = 222.609$, $p < .001$, there were significantly more perceptions of ethnic discrimination among Black-Whites than monoracial Whites regardless of whether the Black-Whites identified as White ($M = 1.69$, $SD = 1.05$; $p < .001$) or Black ($M = 1.67$, $SD = .84$; $p < .001$). In contrast, neither Black-White subgroup was significantly different from monoracial Blacks ($M = 1.73$, $SD = .81$), and the two subgroups were not significantly different from each other, all of which suggests that Black-Whites were much like monoracial Blacks and dissimilar to monoracial Whites in terms of perceiving ethnic discrimination. For importance of ethnic background, differences were significant, $F(3, 5622) = 3.607$, $p < .05$; specifically, Black-Whites who identified as Black ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.24$) found ethnic background significantly more important than monoracial Whites ($M = 1.81$, $SD = .99$; $p < .001$), and Black-Whites who identified as White ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 1.03$) thought ethnic background was significantly less important than did monoracial Blacks ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.30$; $p < .001$). However, Black identifiers and White identifiers were not significantly different from each other, suggesting that Black-Whites held a full range of opinions about the importance of ethnic identity. On feelings about ethnic background, the significant differences were small, $F(3, 5622) = 3.607$, $p < .05$, but Black identifiers ($M = 4.05$, $SD = .87$) had significantly more positive feelings than did White identifiers ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.10$; $p < .05$).

Looking at two Hispanic-Whites subgroups, we see that they differed significantly on importance of ethnic background, $F(3, 6027) = 153.302$, $p < .001$, with the Hispanic identifiers finding it more important ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.21$) than the White identifiers ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 1.11$; $p < .05$). These two groups also differed significantly on perceptions of ethnic discrimination, $F(3, 6134) = 145.101$, $p < .001$, with the Hispanic perceiving more (Hispanic $M = 1.49$, $SD = .81$; White $M = 1.21$, $SD = .42$; $p < .001$). Hispanic-Whites perceived significantly different amounts of ethnic discrimination from the monoracial group with which they did not identify ($p < .001$ in both cases). In terms of the importance of ethnic background, those who identified as White found ethnic background significantly less important than did monoracial Hispanics ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 1.27$; $p < .001$), whereas those who identified as Hispanic found it significantly more important than did monoracial Whites ($p < .001$) and less than did monoracial Hispanics ($p < .05$). There were no significant differences on feelings about ethnic background. Thus, Hispanic-Whites fell between monoracial Whites and Hispanics but were significantly different from both monoracial groups in important ways.

There were few significant differences between double-minority groups, $F(3, 1751) = 7.701$, $p < .001$, possibly because of small sample sizes. The exception was in the relatively large amount of discrimination perceived by Black-Asians who identified as Black ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.37$) compared with monoracial Asians ($p < .001$) and with monoracial Blacks ($p < .05$).

These comparisons provide the background for an analysis of the factors that influence self-identification in a monoracial category. I used multinomial logistic regression to predict reported race category using demographic, ethnic identity, and contextual variables. The dependent measure is the log odds of a mixed-race respondent self-identifying as White compared with the likelihood of self-identifying as either Black, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, or Pacific Islander. Thus, a negative coefficient indicates a greater likelihood of identifying as White.

Self-reported race is not typically considered an outcome variable in regression analyses because race is considered an independent variable, not subject to change or opinion. However, for multiracial individuals, racial identity may change over time. All of the variables I used to predict race are logically prior to a multiracial person's decision to identify as one race or another on the survey.

I used multinomial logistic regression because it allows me to estimate simultaneously the coefficient for each predictor variable within categories (in this case, race groups) of the outcome variable. Thus, these estimates show which variables are significantly related to whether a respondent indicates that he or she is Black separately from those that are significantly related to indicating Asian, Hispanic, Native American, or Pacific Islander.

The model includes several sets of variables. First are demographics: gender, age, race of parents, physiognomy, race of same-gender parent, and generation of immigration. Presumably, with the possible exception of parent race, these variables are not swayed by the opinion of the respondent nor are they subject to change over time. Next are the ethnic identity variables: perceived ethnic discrimination, importance of ethnic background, and feelings about one's ethnic background. These variables may be affected by a person's choice of race category, but this model assumes that they are not. The third group of variables measures family and school context: race of coresident parent, parent involvement in respondent's education, proportion of friends from respondent's ethnic group, membership in an ethnic peer crowd, percent White in respondent's school and neighborhood, and median household income in neighborhood. With the exception of the racial composition of one's peer group, this set of variables is unlikely to be affected by an adolescent's choice of race category.

The coefficient estimates in Table 4 highlight the variables that are significantly related to race choice (standard errors are in parentheses; there are 912 *df* for all *t* statistics in the logistic regression). Thus, negative coefficients indicate a greater likelihood of self-reporting White. Marginal effects are reported in Table 5, where each effect represents the change in the probability that an individual will choose a particular race category given a change in the corresponding variable. For continuous variables, Table 5 reports effects based on a 2 *SD* change where the value of the variable varies from 1 *SD* below its mean to 1 *SD* above (holding all other variables at their means). For dummy variables, marginal effects are based on a change from 0 to 1 (again, holding all other variables at their means). Therefore, for example, .772, the effect size for Black parent, shows that among the significant estimates in Table 4, having a Black parent has the largest effect on how part-Black youth identify their race.

The combined results of Tables 4 and 5 show that many of the demographic variables are significantly related to racial identification. Parent education is negatively related to reporting Hispanic race, in contrast to White (the omitted category), meaning that part-Hispanic respondents whose parents are less educated are more likely to report being Hispanic ($t = 2.257$, $p < .05$) than White. However, parent education does not significantly predict the other race categories. Generation of immigration predicts Asian race choice: First-generation part-Asian immigrants are less likely to report being White ($t = 2.216$, $p < .05$), though the effect of generation is not as strong as the effects for other variables. In all race groups, having a parent of the race in question is a significant and positive predictor of reporting that race group. For example, having one parent who is Black increases the respondent's likelihood of reporting that he or she is Black ($t = 8.886$, $p < .001$). The last demographic variable, appearing White in the yearbook photo, shows that all respondents who appear White are more likely to self-identify as White (t range = 2.831 to 3.799, $ps < .01$), though this effect is strongest for part Blacks ($t = 3.139$, $p < .001$). The one exception is Native Americans, who were no more likely to identify as White if they appeared White in the photo. I reestimated this model using a binomial variable for appearing Black in the photo rather than the variable for appearing White, and the results were the same in direction and strength in each of these alternative models. The same was true if I used Hispanic appearance or Asian appearance.

Part-White multiracial adolescents for whom ethnic identity is important will be more likely to report their minority race group rather than White. Coefficients from the ethnic identity variables lend some support to my second hypothesis: Having a stronger ethnic identity increased the likelihood of reporting a minority race. Importance of ethnic background was a positive predictor of reporting all minority race categories (t range = 2.012 to 3.341, $ps < .05$) except Asian. This effect ranged in strength, with part Blacks ($t = 2.455$, $p < .05$) and part Hispanics ($t = 2.879$, $p < .01$) being the strongest. Having positive feelings about one's ethnic background was only associated with reporting Pacific Islander ($t = 2.124$, $p < .05$). Finally, respondents who perceived more ethnic discrimination were consistently less likely to report being White than any other race group, and again,

Table 4
Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting Racial Identification

Variable (chi-square significance)	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Pacific Islander
Demographic variables					
Age					−.337*
					(−0.48)
Female			−.495*		
			(−0.232)		
SES			−.377*		−.455*
			(−0.167)		(−0.222)
Immigrant**		.884*			
		(−0.399)			
Same-gender parent White					
Black parent***	4.556***				
	(−0.513)				
Asian parent***		5.042***			1.405**
		(−1.063)			(−0.464)
Hispanic parent***			3.397***		
			(−0.466)		
Other parent***				3.671***	2.332***
				(−0.804)	(−0.46)
Photo White***	−1.284**	−1.108**	−.695**		−1.462***
	(−0.409)	(−0.354)	(−0.246)		(−0.385)
Ethnic identity variables					
Perceived ethnic discrimination*	.657*	.714*	.498*	.721*	.590*
	(−0.272)	(−0.296)	(−0.233)	(−0.305)	(−0.258)
Ethnic bkgrnd important to me**	.370*		.310**	.512***	.288*
	(−0.151)		(−0.108)	(−0.153)	(−0.143)
Feel good about my ethnic bkgrnd					.308*
					(−0.145)
Context variables					
Coresident parent White***	−1.087*		−.670*	−2.068***	−1.153*
	(−0.481)		(−0.287)	(−0.524)	(−0.478)
Friends from ethnic group***		−.328*	−.362***	−.978***	−.303*
		(−0.133)	(−0.098)	(−0.182)	(−0.139)
Ethnic crowd member**	1.649**	1.658**	.831*		
	(−0.574)	(−0.54)	(−0.405)		
Percent White in school**			.052**	−.039*	
			(−0.017)	(−0.019)	
Percent White in tract			−2.492**		
			(−0.855)		
Median income in tract***			−4.977**		
			(−1.538)		
Subsample *N*	178	122	226	51	57

Notes. $N = 1{,}026$; log likelihood = −821.123; $df = 114$; omitted category is White.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

this effect was strongest for part Blacks ($t = 2.415$, $p < .05$) and part Hispanics ($t = 2.137$, $p < .05$).

Multiple social contexts will affect a multiracial adolescent's developing identity. The contextual variables lend some support to the third hypothesis that living in more minority contexts increased the likelihood of reporting a minority race. Residing with a White parent significantly reduced the likelihood of reporting all minority races except Asian; this effect was strongest for part Blacks ($t = 2.260$, $p < .05$) and part Native Americans ($t = 3.947$, $p < .001$). Having a larger percentage of friends from one's own race group made respondents less likely to report being all minority races except Black ($t = 1.291$, $p < .05$). Being in an ethnic crowd significantly predicted reporting Hispanic ($t = 2.051$, $p < .05$), Asian

Table 5
Effect Sizes for Multinomial Logistic Regression

	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Pacific Islander
Demographics					
Age					−.038
Female			−.139		
SES			−.139		−.026
Generation		−.002			
Same-gender parent White					
Black parent	.772				
Asian parent		.090			.104
Hispanic parent			.721		
Other parent				.215	.140
Photo white	−.092	−.001	−.056		−.051
Ethnic identity					
Perceived ethnic discrimination	.049	.001	.064	.018	.016
Ethnic background important to me	.044		.081	.027	.008
Feel good about my ethnicity					.026
Context					
Cohabiting parent White	−.062		−.015	−.065	−.032
Friends from ethnic group		.000	−.117	−.083	−.007
Ethnic crowd member	.177	.004	.034		
Percent White in school			.262	−.054	
Percent White in tract			−.192		
Median income in tract			−.002		

Note. Only significant effects are presented.

($t = 3.070$, $p < .01$), and especially Black ($t = 2.871$, $p < .01$), but not Native American or Pacific Islander. There were no Native American crowds in any of the high schools, which explains part of that finding, but there were large Pacific Islander groups at two of the schools. For part Hispanics, having a greater percentage of White students in a respondent's school was positively associated with reporting Hispanic ($t = 3.068$, $p < .01$), and it was the second strongest covariate among this group. The same variable was negatively associated with reporting Native American for part Native Americans ($t = 1.996$, $p < .05$). Neighborhood variables were significant only among part Hispanics: The Whiter the neighborhood, the more likely part Hispanics were to report being White ($t = 2.913$, $p < .01$). In conclusion, ethnic identity, demographic characteristics, and context were all important in predicting the race category these respondents indicated on the survey.

Discussion

Hypotheses and Findings

Given the differing perspectives on how multiracial youth develop a racial identity, it was my goal to describe multiracial individuals as carefully as possible and to contrast them with monoracial individuals. Categorizing multiracial individuals is clearly a challenging problem that has not received much attention in the literature on race. This neglect is, in part, because most of the literature involving multiracial individuals is ethnographic and therefore does not require the kind of pigeon-holing that statistical analyses normally use. Another reason for the lack of attention to the issue of multiracial categorization is that the social norm in this country has been to classify multiracial individuals as monoracial according to the rules of hypodescent; thus, there has been no great interest in exploring or documenting the complexities of multiracial individuals. Many multiracial individuals resent and find it confusing to be classified as a member of a single race group but have nonetheless experienced and come to internalize the categories in which they are placed (Gaskins, 1999). Others find it confusing to represent themselves as multiracial when they feel like part of a single group and are treated that way socially. A third reason for the paucity of research on racial identity among multiracials is that it is challenging to study a moving target: Racial identity changes over time and across contexts for multiracial youth.

My research addressed the problem of social norms regarding racial categorization by documenting its effects on the racial group choices of multiracial youth. I addressed the categorization problem by developing methods for classifying multiracial youth. My subsequent analyses addressed the connection between a multiracial person's life circumstances and his or her racial self-identification. I found that biracial group averages for ethnic identity measures tended to fall between the averages of the two monoracial groups that make up a given biracial category. But being biracial does not simply mean being the average of two monoracial groups. The distribution of identity choices among biracial groups was different: More biracial youth chose their minority category rather than White, but this was particularly true among the part-Black youth in the sample. My findings on this matter are consistent with previous research: A study of biracial college students who self-identified monoracially suggests that multiracial students were more likely to identify with their non-White parent for several reasons: (a) they felt it was the ''right'' thing to do, given the history of oppression of the non-White races; (b) they found it simpler than claiming to be biracial; and (c) they had contact only with their non-White parent (Quintana, 1999).

In addition to making different racial identity choices, biracial adolescents in this study perceived different levels of ethnic discrimination and self-esteem. The part-Black biracials, in particular, perceived as much ethnic discrimination as their monoracial minority counterparts and held slightly less positive feelings about their ethnic backgrounds. Many biracials also considered ethnic background less central to their identities than did monoracial minority students. It is possible that because their racial identity is confusing or complicated, biracial youth discount its significance and focus instead on other aspects of their identities. Perhaps because they feel excluded from all monoracial groups, biracials as a whole group perceived a good deal of ethnic discrimination, and their feelings about their ethnic background were correspondingly less positive than those of all but one monoracial group (Asians). Ethnographic research has borne out this conjecture about exclusion (Gaskins, 1999; Twine, 1997), though there is also evidence to suggest that biracial youth are better able to span boundaries between race groups and manage the discrimination they experience (Corrin & Cook, 1999). Multiracial youth clearly hold a lower status than monoracial Whites, which, as Erikson (1968) pointed out, requires making a greater effort to derive a positive self-identity. Many of the multiracial youth in this sample indeed had less positive ethnic identities than Whites but nonetheless managed to develop a relatively healthy self-esteem. Thus, my findings are consistent with both sides of the multiracial outcomes debate: Being multiracial is more challenging and is often associated with less positive ethnic identity, but multiracials rise to the challenge and develop in healthy ways nonetheless. How do they accomplish this feat? One possible way to develop a healthy self-esteem is to assert the identity of one's higher status group. On this logic, I explored the factors driving self-identification.

My third hypothesis was that a combination of racial context, ethnic identity, and demographic measures would explain the forced choices multiracial youth make when self-identifying with a racial category. The results demonstrate that respondents were more likely to report being White if they appeared White to observers; considered ethnic identity less important; and, in the case of part Hispanics, lived in predominantly White contexts. Perceiving ethnic discrimination and holding a positive ethnic identity were associated with identifying as non-White. Thus, I conjecture that the more ethnic discrimination one experiences, the more one internalizes the racial categorization of others. Furthermore, I suspect that American society tends to conflate ethnic identity with minority racial identity, leading biracial youth to identify with the minority aspects of their racial background. The respondents in this sample who perceived more ethnic discrimination were consistently less likely to report being White than to report any other race group. This finding is in keeping with other studies finding that multiracial respondents with darker physiognomy perceived more ethnic discrimination and were more likely to self-identify as a minority race (Harrison, 1997; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Tizard & Phoenix, 1995).

In addition to ethnic identity, the racial composition of the neighborhood, peer group, cohabiting family members, and school all had significant impacts on racial identification. The most consistent of these effects were the family and peer group. Youth who were members of an ethnic peer group were more likely to identify as non-White. Neighborhood composition was strongly associated with racial identification but only among part Hispanics. The wealthier and Whiter the neighborhood, the more likely part Hispanics were to self-identify as White. This finding is probably related to the issue of whether Hispanic is considered an ethnic category or a race category. Hispanics with fair skin often

consider themselves Caucasian as a race and Hispanic as an ethnicity whereas darker skinned (but not Black) Hispanics tend to consider Hispanic as both an ethnicity and a race (Menchaca, 2001). Some argue that this darker group's ''real'' race is Native American, but most group members do not identify as Native Americans. Instead, many would call themselves *mestizo* if they had the option (Menchaca, 2001). Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans, in contrast, identify racially as Black and ethnically as Hispanic. Mexican Americans with a European physical appearance have higher socioeconomic status than do those with an indigenous Native American physical appearance (Arce, Murguia, & Frisbie, 1987). However, the issue is more complicated than simply skin color. Despite a darker physiognomy, some Hispanics consider themselves White because they are married to Caucasians or live in White communities where they are treated as White (Menchaca, 2001). This survey, which offered Hispanic only as a race, may be picking up this trend.

In contrast to the neighborhood context effect, which demonstrated that the Whiteness of the context was associated with identifying as White, the school context effect illustrated that being in a Whiter context was associated with identifying as Hispanic. That is, part-Hispanic youth were more likely to identify as Hispanic if they attended schools with a greater percentage of White students. This finding may be related to McGuire's theory of distinctiveness: Ethnicity is most salient for members of minority groups (McGuire, McGuire, Child, & Fujioka, 1978). Thus, part-Hispanic youth who stick out more by virtue of being in Whiter schools are more likely to self-identify as Hispanic.

Methodological Critique

There are at least two methodological critiques of this study: the potential for reverse causality in the model and the age or type of data used in the analysis. Although hypotheses were supported by the findings, the cross-sectional design of the study clearly leaves the possibility of reverse causality in my models. For example, it may be that identity is caused by peer group influences, but it is also possible that biracial adolescents choose their peer groups based on their existing racial identities. Ethnographic studies show that many biracial children are accepted by peer groups of both races until adolescence (Gaskins, 1999; Twine, 1997). When they become teenagers, biracial youth are segregated and isolated by White peers who reinforce the adult social norms against dating and socializing across racial categories. Biracial youth come to realize they are not White and cannot expect to identify as White. These situations undoubtedly affect youth's racial identifications, which may in turn affect the contexts in which the youth choose to participate. Unlike peer groups or family living arrangements, it is hard to argue that a youth's racial identity has a big impact on the neighborhood where he or she resides. It is likely that their parents' racial identities and preferences affect the family's choice of a neighborhood, but this relationship of parent's race and neighborhood would be exogenous to the relationship between a youth's racial identity and his or her neighborhood racial demographics.

Phenotype (as perceived by others) may also suffer from the endogeneity problem in the sense that racial identification may contribute to self-presentation in terms of hairstyles and clothing choices. It is perhaps less obvious that there might be an endogenous relationship among phenotype, racial identification, and socioeconomic status. My finding that part Hispanics with high socioeconomic status were more likely to report being White seems to reflect the racial hierarchy of American society. Lighter skinned parents and youth often try to pass or identify as White and are treated more like Whites, enabling them to mirror the socioeconomic success of Whites in ways that darker skinned parents and youth cannot (Johnson, 1999; Williams, 1995). Is it socioeconomic success that leads to self-identification as White, or the reverse? Johnson (1999) argued that although many immigrants of color aspire to shed their ethnic background and its associated socioeconomic status, few succeed in doing so. Thus, biracials who succeed in shedding their low socioeconomic status are more likely those who were first able to shed their minority racial status, arguing for the direction of causality implied in my model: Phenotype leads to socioeconomic status, both of which lead to self-identification as White.

The other methodological critique concerns the age of the data and the forced-choice aspect of the questionnaire. These data were collected in 1987, which is now well over a decade ago. Yet the sample size of 1,492 respondents provides an unmatched glimpse at the factors affecting racial identity among a wide range of multiracial mixes. Other than the 2000 U.S. Census, the largest national data set that identifies multiracial youth (AdHealth) has few biracials, many of whom are part Native American. Although people with some Native American ancestry are multiracial, their experiences and challenges of identity formation do not generalize to those of Black-White, Hispanic-White, Asian-White,

Black-Asian, Black-Hispanic, or Asian-Hispanic adolescents. Thus, the available research on identity among biracial youth lacks a study with a large sample, and the results of my paper indicate some important methodological and theoretical considerations to make when designing such a study. Furthermore, although the social climate has changed since the late 1980s with respect to youth recognizing and proclaiming their multiple racial identities, there are still many situations in which multiracial youth are asked to choose one category. I doubt that the processes by which they do so have changed much in the intervening years. Therefore, this study represents a window into those processes, and its results offer strong hypotheses to retest in subsequent studies.

The unique contribution of my study is the ability to contrast students' reports of their parents' races with their own forced choices. It is possible that the way adolescents typically make this forced choice has changed since the time these data were gathered, but the changing social climate does not immediately suggest how. Rather, the social climate suggests that multiracial youth are simply at greater liberty to embrace all their racial identities—when given a chance. But even in 2003, that chance is not available in all situations.

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