

RELATIONSHIP OF AGE, GENDER, ATTACHMENT LEVEL TO PARENT,  
AND RACE OF PRIMARY CAREGIVER  
WITH BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT  
AMONG BIRACIAL STUDENTS

by

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## ABSTRACT

TRAVIS SCOTT BOBB. Relationship of age, gender, attachment level to parent, and race of primary caregiver with Biracial identity development among Biracial students (Under the direction of DR. PHYLLIS POST)

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of age, gender, attachment level to parent, and race, race of primary caregiver with Biracial identity development. A sample of 59 Biracial students was identified from a large public university in the southeast. Correlation coefficient and a one-way ANOVA were used in this study designed to examine the relationship of these factors on Biracial identity development. Identity development was measured using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure and also aided in identifying their self-reported race. The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment was used to determine participants' primary caregivers. The results suggest that individuals' Biracial identity development levels were significantly related to attachment levels to their mothers ( $p < .01$ ). No other significant relationships were found. The recommendations for future research are to explore wide array of variables that continue to impact the identity development in this rapidly growing population in the U.S.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I was told once that nothing of worth comes without a struggle. This journey has put that statement to the test many times in the past 3 years. This dissertation is dedicated to my classmates (Cohort 7), my family and friends, but especially to my wife, S. Nicole Van Every Bobb who have all played a vital role in my successful completion of the doctoral program at UNC Charlotte with their unconditional love and support. Without all of you in my life, I am nothing!

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

According to the 2000 U.S Census Bureau, there are approximately 6.8 million individuals in this country who identify as having two or more races (U.S Census Bureau, 2000). It has been estimated that the number of Biracial individuals in the U.S is between one and ten million (U.S Census Bureau, 2000). This population is steadily increasing in the U.S as the number of interracial unions rise (Gibbs, 1987; Herring, 1992; Wardle, 1987). Having parents from different racial backgrounds has made it difficult for some youth to progress through their identity development stages successfully (Miville, Constatine, Baysden, & So-Lloyd, 2005). This fact warrants further attention due to the increased level of mental health issues that some biracial individuals are experiencing during the course of their maturation (Hall, 2001).

The data obtained on this population has historically been invalidated due to improper instrumentation during data collection and data analysis (Gibbs, 1987; Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995). Research on identity development and maturation in Biracial Black/White individuals had previously been measured using scales developed primarily for Black individuals. However, these scales were generalized and used with Biracial Black/White persons of color, which created concern with regards to the findings of historic studies. In addition, Rockquemore and Brunisma (2002) stated that much of the current research on Biracial identity development is not based on a theoretical perspective. The study investigated how Biracial Black/White individuals identify themselves through their development.

## Level of Identity Development in Biracial Black/White College Students

Biracial individuals experience prejudice and discrimination similar to other minority groups (Sue & Sue, 2003). Securing a healthy Biracial identity has been a unique challenge for this segment of this population, because previous models suggested that the individual must accept one of their caregiver's heritages while rejecting the other part. According to Root (1996), society is placing undue pressures on Biracial persons encouraging individuals to choose a category in how they define themselves. Some of their individual needs are not being met and as a result clinicians in the field are encouraged to consider ways to assist them in developing a healthy intact identity (Deters, 1997; Harris & Halpin, 2002; Henrickson, 1997).

Historically, Biracial individuals when studied have been measured on Black identity development scales. Through additional data collection and studies, researchers have concluded that this is not an appropriate measure because Biracial people come from two separate heritages. The research does indicate that because of this dual heritage, Black/White youths have difficulty choosing one race over the other (Miville et al. 2005; Poston, 1990). Previous models suggest that a person would have to choose one parent's heritage over the other's heritage. Acceptance of one culture or race and rejection of the other was essential according to these previous models. Unfortunately, in the U.S. some Biracial Black/White persons may not be accepted by either race or culture thus experiencing rejection from both sides, which reduces the likelihood of healthy movement through their identity development (Kich, 1992; Miville et al. 2005).

In 2000, the Census Bureau allowed for greater freedom of self identification by including a Biracial or multiracial category (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002). This more

appropriate way to identify Biracial persons has improved the ability to provide more accurate information about racial identity. Nevertheless a healthy identity is still difficult for some Biracial individuals in their development because they challenge many of society's assumptions about race (Benson, 1981; Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007). Choosing to accept one caregiver's heritage, while rejecting the other's, assists in the decay of these individuals ethnic identity. Being forced to negate part of one's self has further contributed to the lack of belonging individuals in this population feel, as well as the quality of their self-identity.

Some Biracial Black and White individuals often lack a sense of affirmation and belonging that their single race peers have and therefore may be at a higher risk for mental health and behavior issues (Udry, Li, & Hendrickson-Smith, 2003). Their level of identity development has been hindered when compared to other college aged students because they have been overlooked as a race and as individuals in society and schools. Furthermore, their ability to commit to both heritages has been difficult for some to embrace due to societal views and expectations placed on these individuals. This ambivalence and lack of assurance about belonging has contributed negatively to their identity. More recently, Biracial identity's influence on development has been researched more in the U.S due to the reported increase in the number of interracial marriages. Black and White identity development has become even more significant in recent years due to the increase in problems associated with poor identity development (Brandell, 1988). To address this problem, this research will explore perceived self-report of race on the level of ethnic identity in Biracial Black and White college students.

### Effects of Age on Biracial Identity Development in College Students

The research study examined the relationship between age of the individual and identity development level of the individual. Racial identity development occurs differently in some Biracial children. According to Jacobs (1997), Biracial individuals have shown difficulty in their identity development because they internalize the transitional stage as children struggle to acquire a Biracial label. Individuals can develop a healthier racial identity with age.

Adolescence and young adulthood is a period where the need for belonging is important. According to Erickson (1968), the primary goal of adolescence is to establish an identity. Over time, individuals needs shift due to cultural influence and reinforcements they receive which assist their obtaining a more secure racial identity. There is not a body of research that measures the origin of identity development across age. However, Johnson (1992) conducted a study that found trends in Biracial/White children's age, on identity development when compared to Black children and White children. Although methodology has not been consistent with this variable, there is evidence that identity development does progress as individuals mature.

### Effects of Gender on Biracial Identity Development

This research study examined the impact that gender has on identity development of Biracial individuals. Identity development is significantly influenced by social factors. Men and women construct their identities based on social interactions and the way they experience the world. Gender shapes individual's understanding of their race and how men and women socially experience and interpret their embodied selves (Rockquemore,

2002). Women's walk through their identity development has been considered to appear much different than their male counterparts.

After the Civil War, the desire for White characteristics and features became more prominent in the African American culture and represented a higher status (Rockquemore, 2002). Biracial women have received the positive effects of being "light skinned" and therefore have had different social experiences thus impacting their identity development differently than men. Their approximation to White's has caused them to be more desired which ultimately has influenced the way Biracial females view themselves unlike Biracial men. In our society, it is the man who chooses his partner and therefore gender has played a vital role in the identity development of Biracial individuals.

#### Effects of Race on Biracial Identity Development in College Students

Racial identification has not been optional for Biracial individuals. Historically, these individuals were categorized as Black as a result of the one-drop rule. The one-drop rule placed individuals from multiple heritages (no matter how they identified themselves) into a single category based on the fact that they had racial lineage and/or linkage to a person of African American decent. How a person identifies racially impacts their journey through development. Lee and Bean (2004) state that race has been defined as a consciousness of status and identity based on ancestry but suggest that this has changed. They also suggest that the significant factors impacting race are social and cultural factors, not biological ones.

Strong social rules govern the race of Black/White individual's classification and influence identity development significantly (Harris & Sim, 2002). Consideration of this perspective is important if clinicians are to understand the complexity of race and its

influence on identity development. Understanding how race impacts identity development is essential in assisting Biracial individuals. In sum, self-identification impacts the way a person views the world and the pre-historic notion of the one-drop rule has been slowly evaporating with the increase in interracial marriages and permeable color lines that was once impenetrable.

#### Effects of Race of Primary Caregiver with Biracial Identity Development in College Students

Research indicates that developing a healthy identity is part of maturation and a developmental milestone for every individual (Erickson, 1968). Development of a healthy Biracial identity is a complex process that involves several factors in a person's life (Brown, 1990; Gibbs, 1987). Biracial identity development has received increasing attention in recent years and this interest has been prompted by demographic trends indicating a rapid increase in the population coupled with the scarcity of participants, theory, and well-defined research in this area (Gibbs, 1987; Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995; Poussaint, 1984). According to Reid (2003), specific data on Biracial students has been limited due to the lack individuals identified as being from more than one race. The goal of conducting this study was to develop a better understanding of the identity development of Black/White Biracial individuals.

According to Gibbs and Hines (1992), families have the opportunity for a healthier state of living when there is a supportive social environment. Research indicates that while social acceptance from peers is essential, caregivers' influence is equally valuable. Affirmation and confidence in ones ethnic identity originates within the family. The research placed emphasis on social difficulties that interracial families encounter

(Brandell, 1988; Ford, Harris, & Scheurger, 1993; Schachter, 2004). This research study took into account the race of the parents and also the role that the primary caregiver played in that individual's life.

Parental influence plays a very important role in children's lives. According to Root (1992, 1996), Biracial individuals identify with the caregiver who appears most similar in terms of physical features and color. Specifically, the race of the primary caregiver in individual's lives carries much significance in their self-report of race as well as their identity development. Affirmation stems from caregivers who initially serve as children's primary role models. In fact, when parents empower their children to embrace their ethnic diversity, they can have the opportunity to help foster a healthy racial identity (Henrickson, 1997; Sebring, 1985). To address this issue, this study examined the influence of the race of the individual's primary caregiver on identity development.

#### Significance of the Study

In the U.S, some Biracial Black/White individuals have often felt unaccepted by both of the racial groups of their parents (Poston, 1990). As mentioned previously, some experience rejection from both races, leaving them in a state of racial identity confusion. It is because of this state of ambiguity that the racial identity among college-aged individuals can be unclear. Society labels these individuals as Black and therefore their racial identities have been hindered (Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006).

The racial identities of Biracial individuals are viewed as framed by institutional inequality and ideological racism that restrict the capacity of those with African ancestry to construct any identity other than that assigned to them by our-group members

(Rockquemore, 2002). Historically, Biracial individuals have developed Black identities due to society's categorization individuals determined by the one-drop rule.

Definitions of Blackness were necessary in part because of state laws making interracial marriages illegal (Roth, 2005). People could only have one race until the concept of multiple or simultaneous ethnicities were recognized (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003). Roth (2005) states there are several models of multiracial identification that are available to multiracials with Black heritage. Her research study contradicts the traditional one-drop rule instituted to Biracial individuals. Roth (2005) evaluates the one-drop rule and suggested an end to this prehistoric method of categorizing Biracial individuals. She purports that racial identity of Biracial individuals was mostly influenced by the race of the head of household.

Furthermore, the need for this study is intensified due to its pertinence to classifying the racial make-up of the population in the U.S due to the increasing number of interracial marriages per year. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2007) marriage statistics, interracial marriages have multiplied since the 1960s and doubled in 2005 compared to 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

Parental race and attachment as an influence on identity development has not been given much attention and its impact on a person's identity development. However, the research indicates that the racial identity of the primary caregiver of the Biracial youth plays a vital part in children's self-report of race as well as their level of identity development (Miville et al., 2005). All of these factors merit further attention if Biracial individuals are to have the opportunity for healthy identity development.



## Research Question

The research questions are:

Question 1: Is there a relationship between age of the participant and Biracial identity development?

Question 2: Is there a relationship between gender of the participant and Biracial identity development?

Question 3: Is there a relationship between attachment to mother, father, and primary caregiver and Biracial identity development?

Question 4: Is there a difference between race of primary caregiver and Biracial identity development?

## Delimitations

This study has the following delimitations: The participants in this study are Biracial college students 18 and over. All individuals were obtained from one university in North Carolina. In addition, the youth were identifying the race of their parents' or other primary caregiver.

## Limitations

The sample of this study was convenient and purposeful which indicates that only those students who met all requirements had the opportunity to participate in the research. Students were only be made part of the sample if they completed all of the necessary documents. Also, it is assumed that the individuals answered the questions honestly and to the best of their ability.

This sample included participants who attend one southern university in the U.S. Therefore the sample only represents those college-aged individuals who were attracted

to attending this southern university. This would indicate the possibility that these students were already potentially biased towards the views and attitudes found in southern states. Furthermore, living the south could bias participants' views, identity level, and/or self-report of race of the subjects parents. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to college-aged students who live in other parts of the United States.

Third, all individuals participating in this study did so because they consented on their own free will. Other potential candidates for the sample may have self-selected not to participate and perhaps have a different level of identity development than those willing to participate in the study. All of these factors could impact the generalizability of the study.

#### Assumptions

The following assumptions were made while conducting this study: It is assumed that subjects will know their race and that their self-identified race will be reported accurately. Also, it is assumed that these students did not answer the questions on the survey based on socially desired answers. Finally, it was assumed that individuals with different levels of identity development volunteered for the study.

#### Threats to validity

Even though precautions were taken to insure procedures are implemented with utmost care, still there appears to be some threats to external validity. According to Campbell and Stanley (1966), the extent to which a study's results (regardless of whether the study is descriptive or experimental) can be generalized/applied to other settings. In other words, if a researcher can take findings from one study and apply them to another population and condition a study is said to possess external validity (Isaac & Michael,

1971). The sample size (because it was collected only at one university in the South) posed as one of these threats because it did not represent the entire population of Biracial college students in the country. In fact, only a small percentage of Biracial youths were a part of the sample that is obtained from one university in North Carolina. Efforts to gather data from individuals from all over the state or country would have been ideal.

Internal validity refers to the proficiency with which the study was conducted (research design, operational definitions used, how variables were measured, what was measured) and how confidently one can conclude that the change in the dependent variable was produced solely by the independent variable and not extraneous ones (Campbell & Stanley, 1966; Isaac & Michael, 1971). In short, inferences are said to possess internal validity if a relationship can be shown between both the independent and dependent variable but not the controlled variable. The assessments being used in this study were reliable in the identification of identity levels and parent attachment levels in individuals. The instrumentation process insured that the assessments and the data collected are valid. The process by which the sample group was selected could, as previously mentioned, threaten internal validity.

#### Operational definitions

Race in this study was defined as the self-perceived report of ethnicity for the participants who consent to participate in the study. Such individuals will be identified through a survey administered by the researcher.

Biracial identity development is described as individuals that come from two different cultures, backgrounds, and/or ethnic groups (Phinney, 1992). Identity in this

situation will be classified as participants' responses to the question on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney).

Biracial identification is congruous with terms such as bicultural and bilingual and is preferred to terms used such as mixed or interracial when referring to an individual (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995). For the purpose of this study, ethnicity of the participant was defined by their self-report that one parent is identified as Black and the other parent is identified as White.

Age was defined as the self reported chronological age of each participant in the study. This information is a question on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure administered through a survey format to the students.

Gender is defined by individuals self-report of their gender which is a question on the MEIM.

Race was defined by the individuals self-report of their own race. This information will be requested on the demographic questionnaire.

Race of Primary Caregiver is defined as the participants' self report of their parents' race. The IPPA-R instrument will determine the race of the primary caregiver.

## Summary

The Biracial population in the U.S. is rapidly increasing thus creating more interest in these individuals identity development. The existing research serves merely as a moderate foundation into the multi-faceted journey that an individual from these two heritages embarks, especially growing up in America. This research looked at identity formation of Biracial college students that reside in Charlotte, North Carolina, a relatively medium sized southern city. It also examined the self-reported race individuals while

keeping in mind the influence of these youths primary caregiver. Studying Biracial identity development in the U.S will help us better understand how we can facilitate a healthier identity development in these individuals.

This was a quantitative study that examined the relationships of age, gender, attachment level to parent, and race of the primary caregiver on their Biracial identity development levels. The information obtained from this research study could be used to help clinicians have more insight as to why Biracial Black/White college students in America have consistently struggled with identity development.

#### Organization of the Study

This research is offered to the readers in three chapters. First, Chapter 1 introduces the topic and the independent variables that were examined. Furthermore, it presents a statement of the problem and the significance of the study. A historical overview is then laid out to assist the readers in understanding the foundation of the research. Finally, the research questions were introduced along with the delimitations, limitations, assumptions, operational definitions, and threats to validity.

Chapter 2 offers a review of the literature. It begins with information from the Census data with regards to the prevalence of Biracial Black/White individuals in America. Next, identity formation is looked at and how it exemplifies development in the young adults in the U.S. The critical factors are examined while the effects of age, gender, race, and parental influence are also given thought. Following a discussion of these is a review of the models of racial identity development with an in depth review of Biracial identity development models. Last, theory and research are discussed regarding their pertinence to all of these variables.

In Chapter 3, the methodology is introduced and examined along with the participants. Also, the instruments as well as the procedures used in the research study were discussed. Finally, the researcher depicted how the data was analyzed.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Census Data

In the 1950's, a person from Black and White ancestry was classified as "Mulatto" (Allport, 1954). Although this term was coined decades ago, it is still, at times used when referring to one of Black and White heritage. Individuals that are a product of interracial marriages have a combination of two heritages. In this review, people with a mixed Black and White ethnicity will be referred to as Biracial. Individuals who identify as Biracial are growing in numbers in America. Population statistics and census projections suggest that ethnic and racial minority representation in general is expanding at a rate that is faster than that of European Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

According to the U.S Census Bureau (2000) out of the 281.4 million people that reside in the U.S., 7.3% or 2.6 million reported that they are from more than one race and 791,801 were from Black/White heritages. The U.S census purports that Biracial people are increasing in vast numbers. However, research on identity development among Biracial individuals has been insufficient thus far and has been limited due to its lack of empirically validated data. This forces some Biracial individuals to continue to struggle with acceptance while living in the U.S. It is imperative that we begin to take notice of this. The lack of studies into this underrepresented population in the literature has left a gap and an abundance of unanswered questions with regards to the identity development of Biracial individuals.

## Levels of Identity Development

Research suggests that when discussing identity formation, both heritages should be considered (Poston, 1990). Racial identity formation is important for several reasons: it helps shape individuals attitudes about themselves, attitudes about other individuals from other racial groups, attitudes about individuals from other ethnic minority groups, attitudes about individuals from the majority. Furthermore, it dispels the cultural conformity myth, which is that all individuals from a particular minority group are the same, with regard to their attitudes and preferences (Gibbs, 1987; Poston, 1990).

Theorists indicate that some Biracial Black/White adolescents may reject one of their heritages at some point in their identity formation. Most often the heritage that is rejected is the White heritage. In theory, the individual's would be accepted by one of the cultures thus being able to identify with one of the two cultures. Biracial individuals must immerse themselves into one culture in hopes of being accepted while simultaneously denying the other culture. However, in a large proportion of Biracial Black/White adolescents in the U.S this seldom happens and they are in fact rejected by both races (Hall, 1980; Poston, 1990). Data previously collected on Biracial individuals accepting and rejecting pieces of their heritage lacks validity because research was based on the idea that the individuals could and would be granted complete acceptance (Miville et al., 2005). Some Biracial people face obstacles and experience prejudice from both Blacks and Whites because they do not physically appear like them (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993).

Self-report of race for individuals who have struggled with such rejection has been inconsistent. The research suggests that the identified race of a Biracial individual



would most often be to self-identify with the heritage of the majority, especially if they were in the initial stages of their identity development. However, the findings of Miville et al. (2005) and Root (1996) contradicts previous research that examines Biracial individuals and suggests that Biracial individual's identify with the African American (Harris & Sim, 2002) parent because they are viewed as being Black based on society and their social context. After being discriminated against from Whites, Biracial individuals remain in a state of confusion which can lead to anger towards one and perhaps both Black and White heritages.

#### Model of Racial Identity

Non-Black/White Biracial young adults have been presumed to progress through identity development similarly to their Biracial Black/White counterparts. Research has suggested that a one-size fits all model is not appropriate for every racial groups (Aldarondo, 2001). This type of model carries less validity because it cannot be applied to Biracial individuals. Applicability of mono-racial identity models to those of Biracial heritage, as defined here, is questionable. Research on identity formation for many Biracial groups has been empirically validated. Some of the theoretical models discuss similarities between frameworks and display a hierarchy of stages, such as to begin with initial learning about race and ethnicity differences, then move to the struggle to find an identity but feeling pressure to choose only one group, and finally ending in achievement of some level of Biracial identity where both cultures are accepted and integrated into the persons overall identity formation (Aldarondo, 2001).

There are several models of racial identity development however for the purpose of this study; this examination of the literature only reviewed those that were empirically

valid. Cross (1991) and Kerwin and Ponterotto (1995) postulate that their racial identity models should apply to Biracial people because the model acknowledges progression through stages. However, other theorists such as Root (1992), Rockquemore, (2002), and LaFromboise et al., (1993) have developmental models that allow for more flexibility on the part of Biracial individuals which could provide a positive opportunity identity development to occur.

Cross has developed several models that have been of surmountable value to understanding Biracial identity development. His models were the first to introduce a notion of multiple identity clusters at each stage which led to the development of the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS; Worrell, Cross, & Vandiver, 2001). Cross's Nigrescence Stages and Identities have served as catalyst in identity development for Biracial individuals. The original model was created by Cross in 1971 and revised in 1991. Both illustrate similar progression through stages beginning with the Pre-encounter stage. During this initial stage, individuals identify with the White heritage and reject the Black culture (Poston, 1990). Second, is the Encounter stage where a confrontation occurs and Biracial individuals begin to question their acceptance by White's. In this case, most often a scenario occurs where individuals are introduced to the idea that they are not White and do not fit in. This event thrusts individual's into the following stage which is the Immersion-Emersion stage. Here, youth then become anti-White and begin to increase their involvement with their Black heritage. Last, individuals begin to internalize their acceptance of their Black heritage and take on more of a bicultural identity when previously they had been identifying with their White heritage. Identifying with both heritages provides more of a well-rounded and healthy person. In Cross'

expanded model that he developed in 1991, the stages are similar to that of the previous models however, he goes into greater detail in describing the identity struggles early in the development of the child.

In addition to Cross' contribution, Poston (1990) added his own version of an identity model in 1990. In his model, individuals progress through five stages. First, individuals struggle their personal identity leading to mono-racial identity forcing a choice of group categorization. Next, Poston describes how enmeshment and denial lead to guilt over the rejection of one parents' culture. Following this, the individuals' begin to develop more of an appreciation of his multiple identities and begin to explore both heritages equally, finally learning to value and integrate a multicultural identity (Poston, 1990).

Following Poston's model in 1990, Jacobs (1992) created his identity development model in 1992. In his framework, individuals first encounter a pre-color constancy meaning that color would be viewed without prior evaluation up until age four and a half. Then children come to a post-color constancy where preschoolers have racial ambivalence, where they reject one group and then the other (Jacobs, 1992). In the third and final stage, Jacobs (1992) stated that Biracial identity between the ages of 8-12 is based on parentage, not color, and a renewed racial ambivalence is introduced in adolescence.

Kerwin and Ponterotto (1995) offered their model of racial identity three years later that described development in 6 stages. In the initial stage, preschoolers become aware of their parents physical and outer differences. Then children begin to use descriptive terms and labels provided by the family to define themselves. Next,

individuals in preadolescence begin to identify their group membership which is usually triggered by a paradoxical event such as an incident with a peer in school that forces them to identify what they are. Following this stage, pre-teens begin to receive pressure from peers to declare their race or membership to one heritage. This created conflict within the teenager because he is forced to only identify and accept one parent and reject the other causing inner turmoil.

The pressure instigated from social groups to deny one background leads to the attempted immersion into one culture and carries through to young adulthood, according to the researchers. In the end, individuals can successfully navigate through the early stages; they can increase their interdependence and start to integrate a Biracial identity. Even though theorists are clear in their description of the journey Biracial individuals experience in search of healthy identities, it is contingent on the completion of all previous stages. This model has validity in the world of empirical research; however its emphasis on a linear progression of stages leaves a lot of room individuals to have difficulty at achieving a healthy identity (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995).

On the other hand, Root (1998) posed as an exception to other more traditional Biracial identity models because in her framework the individual can proceed down several paths while still developing a positive bicultural view of self. According to Root, the four potential outcomes that a Biracial person can have are to assume the identity assigned by others, identify with both racial groups, chose one over the other, and identify with a new Biracial or multiracial group. Root's contribution to racial identity of Biracial Black/White individuals suggests the possibility for more successful outcomes in identity formation.

Rockquemore describes a more recent approach to identity development in Biracial individuals which is labeled the Ecological Approach (Rockquemore, 2009). In this model, the assumptions are that these individuals construct different racial identities based on varying contexts (Root, 1996). The individual does not progress through stages as in previous identity development models and do not choose one heritage or racial identity over the other because this replicates the flaws of the previous models in that individuals had to reject a part of themselves. This model allows mixed individuals to refrain from having any racial identity and instead, can identify as “human” (Rockquemore, 2009).

These models provide valuable insight into Biracial identity development. The theorists are in agreement that the early stages in identity development are significant. Most of the models suggest that healthy Biracial identity development (BiRID) moves from a nonracially defined personal identity through an externally defined mono-racial identity perspective, often involving some identity ambivalence and struggle, to an internally defined multicultural one using non-clinical samples of Biracial people which takes their unique statuses and experiences into account (Gillem, Cohn, & Throne, 2001).

#### Adjustment of Biracial Youth and Adolescents

Historically, research has considered racial identity from a Black perspective but was applied to Biracial Black/White people not taking into consideration the uniqueness of being from two separate heritages (Gibbs, 1987). Models mentioned previously did not follow the same historic underpinnings. Even though race is not a prominent issue as it was in the 1950's, 1960's, and 1970's in the U.S., it still provides a measure for social separation between people today. Current data indicate it is not health for Biracial people

to side with one heritage and deny the other. Gillem, et.al. (2001), suggested that it is better to support Biracial people in exploring both sides of their heritage to develop positive Biracial identities and healthy psychological adjustment.

LaFromboise et al. (1993) offered another model that had alternatives for healthy adjustment for Biracial youth. In her model, individuals can thrive in two different cultures by altering their behavior to fit each specific social context. Here, individuals do not have to reject one of their heritages or parts of themselves to successfully move through identity formation as suggested by other theorist. Adolescents can develop a positive sense of and not experience the guilt of having to deny one of their parent's heritages. The idea of denying a piece of oneself has been the cause of mental health issues, substance abuse issues, as well as poor identity formation (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

Being able to change from one identity to another has been more of a coping strategy developed by Biracial Black and White individuals. Miville et al. (2005) suggest that while the chameleon experience can deem itself helpful to Biracial people because of the flexibility with both social groups (Rockquemore, 2009), it can also be detrimental to one's identity because individuals may never feel part of either group. Research has shown that if children can learn about diversity in supportive families and environments (Luyckx et al., 2007), they will have an increased chance of developing a healthy Biracial identity.

#### Research on Biracial Identity Development and Age

Biracial individuals' age influences self-report of race and their stage of identity development (Arnett, 2004). The assumption is that the younger individuals are, the less

likely they will have had the opportunity for enough time to pass in order to form their identity. Research indicates that these individuals will not have had the life experiences necessary to move through the stages of identity development. Therefore, age plays a significant role in individuals' identity development.

The time frame that is required for individuals to develop a healthy identity is important. Because it has been difficult for young adults to feel secure about their identity, identity development is being prolonged. Arnett (2004) suggests in his theory of emerging adulthood that American culture has extended the transition period between adolescence and young adulthood. Due to this need for an extension in development, individuals' identity formation has more time to develop.

Erickson (1968) purports throughout his research that adolescence and young adulthood is one of the most significant periods in identity development. Adolescence is a time of vulnerability and search for independence and self-sufficiency. Erickson suggests that young adults are at a stage where their beliefs and perspectives are ripe for alteration and transformation because they are experiencing advanced cognitive abilities, which sets up the perfect scenario for identity exploration.

During this discovery period, individuals try new things. This journey provides them with the opportunity to investigate their self-perception, meaning who they are and where they come from. Exposure and experimentation through their life experiences and personal relationships will influence their identity development. Young adults will begin to formulate friendships and relationships that also contribute to how they perceive themselves. Erickson (1968), states that identity progression occurs with advanced capacity for intimate relationships and the ability to be flexible psychologically.

Individuals' openness to life changing events increases with maturation and contributes to their increased level identity development.

McLean and Pratt (2006) indicated that with age comes maturation and the ability for individual's to struggle with their identity and self-exploration which they refer to as status approaches. Self exploration requires both curiosity and a commitment which encourages identity development. Prager (1986) also suggested that the significant part of identity development is the ability for individuals to think and reflect on life experiences that comes with age. Furthermore, with age comes a variety of life experiences with also an accumulation of thought processing.

Through life experiences, individual's can journey through stages in their identity development. Research suggests that there are three stages that individuals progress through during status approach. First there is the exploration status where the individual is sensitive to moral issues and ambivalent to family relationships which are called the moratorium status (Adams, Markstrom, & Abraham, 1987; McLean & Pratt, 2006). The second stage is described by Marcia et al. (1993) as the foreclosure status where there is a commitment from the individual where there are close family relationships and the individuals may have authoritarian values. The final status approach is described as individuals' needs for gaining independence from family which is satisfied by the freedom experienced while away at college. Individuals in this diffusion status approach experience apathy towards school, family, and distant family relationships (Archer, 1982; McLean & Pratt, 2006). During this status there is however an increased interest in close friendships and familial relationships. The interactions these young adults have during this period in their lives will influence their identity development. Thorne, McLean, and



Lawrence (2004) explained during the college aged years, individuals obtain self-defining memories about relationships which are central to meaning-making which encourages their relationships to undergo a tremendous transformation.

Relationships are a key component to meaning-making as individuals mature. McLean and Thorne (2003) define meaning making as lessons or insights learned in life that come with age. Identity develops as the individual experiences more life changes. A person's life story impacts their identity which comes with maturation.

McLean and Pratt (2006) conducted a study that consisted of 200 participants that measured turning points in identity development or life stories at ages 17, 19, and 23. They found that meaning is significant in stories in emerging adults, especially for those with lower levels of identity development. Furthermore, they also discerned that meaning is even more significant in advanced identity development. Identity development decreases with the lack of time to self-reflect and explore in young adults (McLean & Pratt, 2006). Elaborate stories come with time and age provides the necessary life experiences for identity development to occur.

A body of research exists that indicates that age has an impact on Biracial identity development in young adults. Waterman (1982) examined college students and their identity statuses with regards to their age. In his study, he found that first year college students were not as prevalent in the achieved status as 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year college students. His data also suggested that most of the college students that participated in the study were in the moratorium stage. He proclaimed that this is so due to the independence and great amount of life experiences that college students experience while in college. Waterman's research supports the idea that identity status and development should

increase with age due to the added exposure to life changing events which encourage an individual to move from the diffusion status to the achieved status (Waterman, 1982).

Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, and Harris (1993) conducted a qualitative study that included six families with children from both Black and White heritages. In their study, the participants were asked questions through the long interview method regarding their perceptions of marginality, cultural issues, values, and self-report of race. They used a snowball sampling method which reduced the generalizability of their findings. However, their statistical findings indicated that as the participants aged, they gained more insight they had into their identity. The major theme that emerged from their research study was that Biracial youth's transition through stages of identity at different ages suggesting that the older the individual was, the higher their level of identity development (Kerwin et al., 1993).

Collins (2000) conducted a qualitative study that examined the effect of age on identity development of 15 multiracial individuals. Participants explored their own meaning of identity over a long-term period. The results indicated that opportunities for change were measured by social experiences over time. Individuals were measured in different environments where they encountered new contacts and role models where some of the individuals experienced role transitions which impacted their identity development. Participants indicated that the process was an emotional and conflicting journey to assertion of their identity. The research indicated that the Biracial individuals developed healthy identities gradually but with the help of consistent allegiances and shared perspectives with a reference group. Identity development among all the

participants varied, but instead of staying marginalized as the research has previously indicated, most of the subjects were able to develop an integrated identity (Collins, 2000).

Miville, Constatine, Baysden, and So-Lloyd (2005) conducted a study that examined 10 (self-reported) multiracial adults and the racial identity themes that emerged. The researchers used a snowball method to gather their participants and used a qualitative method in their examination of their data. All participants were students ranging in age from 20-54. Four major themes were identified which were encounters with racism, reference group orientation, the “chameleon” experience, and the importance of social context in identity development. However, the most significant finding was that their data supported other models that emphasized developmental markers which are driven by age, which they labeled as age-based development (Miville et al., 2005).

Worrell and Gardner-Kitt (2006) completed a research investigation that examined the relationship between racial and ethnic identity in Black and White adolescents. In their research, they compared their findings to the only other two studies that had been conducted on the subject. Worrell and Gardner-Kitt looked at the scores on the assessment of the individuals attitudes which were operationalized by the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992). They compared the scores from the 143 individuals used in their sample and found that the t tests indicated that middle school students had significantly higher Afrocentric scores than the high school students and that the high school students had significantly higher multicultural inclusive scores than their middle school counterparts. This indicates that the younger in age the participant, the more attached the individual was to one heritage thus securing a lower level of identity

development because they had not yet begun to accept both parts that comprised their ethnicity (Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, (2006).

#### Research on Biracial Identity Development and Gender

Research has found that there are several factors impacting identity development. There is a body of research that suggests that identity development in biracial Black and white individuals is affected by gender. Rockquemore (2002) conducted research that consisted of 259 individuals with one parent self-identifying as Black and one self-identifying as white. An in-depth interview was implemented with 16 participants from 6 different geographical institutions with varying demographic make-up. In this study, the researchers obtained data on how gender affects the identity development process for women. Of the participants included in the study, 12 were women and 4 were men. Their ages ranged from 18 to 46 and the individual's skin color and physical appearance varied. From the 16 semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions were asked to obtain data on childhood experiences, school experiences, friendships, significant others, interactions with strangers, and self perceptions (Rockquemore, 2002).

The researchers analyzed the data for relationships and themes and found that women's identity development differed by race and how they negated this with other Black women, internalized negativity towards Blackness, and racial socialization by parents. Both men and women reported negative interactions with Black women. However female respondents indicated a higher frequency of negative encounters and attributed their problems mostly to negative interactions with Black women. They also found that female participant's interactions with both Black men and women were dramatically different. Women included in the study had more interactional difficulties

because they were seen as believing that they were “better” than other Black women and some developed strong anti-Black sentiments. Social context for female ultimately shaped the difference in the way women negotiate their racial identity as opposed to men (Rockquemore, 2002).

In another investigation, Brunnsma (2005) explored the racial identification of individuals in interracial unions. The researcher utilized a descriptive analysis when describing the findings in his logistic regression models when looking at influences on mixed-race offspring. The results revealed that Biracial individuals were more likely to identify with the minority parent. However, Biracial women are more likely to identify with their mother’s racial identity, therefore implying the way women experience socialization is different than men which impacts their view of self (Brunnsma, 2005).

#### Research on Biracial Identity Development and Race

There is a body of literature that indicates that race is socially constructed meaning that individuals define their race based on what and how others view them whereas Biracial individuals in the past have been automatically categorized by the one-drop rule. The one-drop rule forced individuals from multiple heritages to be categorized as Black despite links to other races including Whites (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003). Today, youths are raised in a society that is much more accepting of diversity and differing races. Many no longer have to or want to disown part of their ancestry and are resisting societal practice of forcing them to identify with only the heritage of one parent (Dhooper, 2003).

McRoy and Freeman (1986) conducted a study designed to assist individuals experiencing racial identity dilemmas. They found through their case study with mixed-

race individuals that development of a positive racial self-concept was significant in adjustment throughout development. Furthermore, the researchers discovered that a healthy view of race strengthened the linkages between home and community (McRoy & Freeman, 1986). Their findings indicated that race was a key component in healthy racial identity in Biracial individuals.

Rockquemore (1998) conducted a research study that gathered data from interviews to determine what Biracial meant to individuals from both Black and White heritages. Her research offered a descriptive map of the multiple ways individuals understand and respond to their Biracialness. She found that societal factors influence how Biracial individuals interpret their race and their identity. Ultimately, the addition of the multi-racial category in the 2000 Census has impacted the way individuals view their race thus impacting their identity development (Rockquemore, 1998).

Race is expressed internally by what we think about ourselves as well as by what others think about us (Harris & Sim, 2002). Harris and Sim (2002) surveyed a sample of individuals in a longitudinal study of health. Studies were conducted from 80 different schools as well as in-home interviews were utilized in this study to identify the identified self-report of race of individuals. Those participants that identified a parent from White and one parent from a Black heritage were included in the study.

The researchers found that patterns and processes of social construction significantly influenced racial identity development in the individuals examined. The study examined the schemes of racial classification, patterns in racial reporting, and how multiracial youth answered questions that insisted upon single race responses (Harris & Sim, 2002). Furthermore, the researchers found a significant relationship between racial

classification and race of primary caregivers. The youth of today are not being raised in a society dominated by the traditional one-drop rule and therefore Biracial individuals' process towards racial identification is socially constructed and heavily impacted by age. Although some of the participants provided inconsistent responses about race, the data indicated that context affects one's choice of race most (Harris & Sim, 2002).

#### Research on Biracial Identity Development and Race of Primary Caregiver

The data indicates that there are critical factors impacting the identity development of Biracial individuals. Identity development is influenced by peers, however parental influence, especially that of a mother, has a large impact also (Wim & Maja, 1995). The race of the primary caregiver often predicted the level of identity development in adolescents. It appears the influence of one parent in children's lives over the other influences individuals in choosing which heritage with which they identify with (Miville et al., 2005). Parental influence can inhibit experiences of autonomy in children and adolescents which can also lead to them being less in tune with their inner self making it more difficult for them to make a personal commitment to their identity (Luyckx et al., 2007). This would suggest that the impact that a caregiver has on their child is significant towards their development if their influence can help and/or hinder identity formation.

The research emphasized the importance of the role of the race of the primary caregiver on identity development (Hart, Atkins, & Ford, 1999). A strong connection to a family member seemed to influence identity formation. Family environments that are emotionally supportive enhance the development of healthy identities (Hart, Atkins, & Ford, 1999). Having resources was a positive in the adolescents view and contributed to

the siding with the parent and the heritage of that particular caregiver. In theory, children will almost always identify more with the parent that have the greatest influence in their lives (Miville et al., 2005). However, confusion may arise when both parents are present in the home and children must choose one racial identity over the other. Research shows that some individuals choose to identify with the heritage of the majority. Biracial individuals attempt to identify as White because social cues send overt and covert messages that White is better. However, Biracial individuals are not accepted by Whites and feel rejected (Poston, 1990). Individuals who participate in joint family activities and have the benefit and influence from both parents develop healthier identities (Hart et al., 1999). For all individuals, especially for these individuals who belong to disenfranchised groups, it may not be possible to disentangle fully personal and social identity (Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006).

There is a body of literature that indicates that the race of the primary caregiver has a significant impact on the identity development of Biracial individuals. Kerwin et al., (1993) focused their qualitative research study on racial identity in Biracial individuals. The data they collected on 143 participant's counters a body of research that says that children and adolescents perceive themselves as marginal in two cultures. Nor was there an inclination to identify with one racial group over the other. None of the participants reported feeling ostracized by family members as a result of being in an interracial marriage or the product of one. However, their findings did show that children naturally establish a sense of Biracial identity when provided with an open environment, integrated settings, and supportive caregivers who encourage them to participate in the cultural activities of both parents. Individuals were sensitive to values and viewpoints of



both parents. It was not the race of one caregiver that influenced an individual's identity development; it was several factors coupled together that had the most influence (Kerwin et al., 1993).

Root (1998) examined 40 multiracial siblings and their experiences with race in school. The data suggested that individuals experienced prejudice in school due to their dual heritages. Her findings also indicated that Biracial youths who lacked support from their caregivers and sustained family dysfunction, were more likely to struggle with their identity development and be less likely to secure a healthy identity in the future (Root, 1998).

Miville et al. (2005) conducted a research study that was mentioned above that examined themes that emerged on racial identity for 10 multiracial individuals. They used a qualitative approach when looking at the data gathered from all the student participants. Major themes were identified with relationships to racial identity development; however one of the most critical factors that they found was that identity development was influenced by "critical" people. This phenomenon in most cases tends to be the individuals primary caregivers (Miville et al., 2005).

Coleman and Carter (2007) assessed 61 Biracial individuals on depression, trait anxiety, and social anxiety, such as pressure from peers, caregivers, to ascertain if their racial identity impacted them psychologically. These young adults were obtained from the community and three local universities. The findings from the study indicate that societal pressure from individuals' families played a significant role on subjects' racial identity development. The individuals that were not supported by their family were more likely to develop psychological issues and maintained lower levels of Biracial identities,

according to the Biracial Self-identification Measure. These lower levels of ethnic identification were due to feeling as if they had to identify with only one heritage. Participants that were supported by their families, as measured on the Survey of Biracial Experiences, did not feel as if they had to experience the world only through their Black heritage. The participants did not have to identify monoracially and therefore perceived themselves as being from both races and displayed more comfort in their Biracial identities (Coleman & Carter, 2007).

According to the research performed by these researchers on identity development, there are several factors that influence Biracial identity development in particular. Age and the race of the primary caregiver are significant factors that must be taken into consideration if an individual is to navigate through identity development in a healthy manner. Even though there is some research that supports these two critical factors, there is not sufficient information that addresses the unique progression through identity development that Biracial Black/White individuals undergo, which is why there is a need for further research.

#### Summary of Literature

Historical models of Biracial identity development emphasize the acceptance of individual's into either Black or White cultures although this does not occur frequently in America. In the U.S. Biracial individuals are rejected by both heritages due to physical traits and characteristics (Poston, 1990). Also, the multi-faceted make-up of people's individuality has made it difficult to apply findings from one research study to another because people's characteristics vary greatly among sub-groups (Gibbs, 1987).

Several models suggest that Biracial Black and White individuals must reject one of their heritages to navigate through identity formation. Age is a significant factor that influences identity development due to an individual's progression through life and the accumulation of experiences that impact identity development. Both of these facts are linked to increased psychological problems with this population which further emphasizes the impact of caregivers' race on children's identity development.

In sum, confusion regarding heritage can lead to identity confusion. Scott and Robinson (2001) proclaim that racial identity attitudes can be unlearned and replaced with more functional belief systems. In general, the models do acknowledge factors, such as attachment levels to parents, age, and caregiver's race. Although there is valid research on Biracial identity development in Black/White individuals, there is a need for future research (Miville et al., 2005).

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the participants, methodology, instruments, and data analysis used in this study when looking at the relationships between age, gender, attachment level to parent, and race of primary caregiver to Biracial identity development.

### Participants

Approximately 6,500 college-aged students were randomly selected and invited to participate in the research study. The researcher contacted the Registrar's Office at the large university in the southeast United States and explained the criteria necessary for the sample desired. Before the list of emails was sent to the researcher, the Registrar's Office was instructed to select those students that were between the 18-28 years of age and those who reported being Black or White. Students who reported their race as any other category were excluded from the list sent for the study. Participants in this study were only Biracial Black and White college aged students 18-28 years old. Although a majority of the respondents that completed the surveys identified as Caucasian, individuals who self-identified as Biracial Black and White (Biracial/Mixed/Mulatto, Other) also met the criteria and were invited to participate in this research. The criteria for being included in the study were done in two ways. First, students who self-identified as Biracial Black and White were included. Second, those students who perhaps did not self-identify as Biracial Black and White but identified one of their parents as being from

a Black heritage and the other from a White heritage were included. Individuals were invited to participate via indirect contact which consisted of emailed surveys and direct contact which the researcher obtained through face-to-face contact.

### Instruments

In this section, the researcher described how information for all of the variables was obtained. Two assessments were administered to gather information from participants, which included the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment – Revised and the Multigroup Ethnic, Identity Measure. Demographic questions were added at the end of the MEIM to obtain additional information.

#### Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment - Revised.

The first survey included was the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA-R; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) that determined individuals' attachment level to parents. The IPPA-R was an online assessment and took approximately 7-10 minutes to complete. It consists of a 28 item questionnaire (Parent Scale Items) that measured individuals' attachment to their caregivers that assisted researchers in determining the influence of individuals' primary caregivers.

The assessment was based on a five point Likert-scale response format. It was scored by reverse-scoring the negatively worded items and then averaging the response values of each section. It also assessed the positive and negative cognitive dimensions individuals had with their caregivers. The interrater reliability ranged from .87 to .93 using Cronbach's alpha. In terms of construct validity, the scores on the IPPA-R were found to be moderately to highly-related to parental attachment and Family and Social

Self scores from the Tennessee Self Concept Scale and to most subscales on the Family Environment Scale (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987).

#### Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure.

The second assessment provided for the participants was the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992). The MEIM was an online assessment that identified the identity levels in young adults and took approximately 7-10 minutes to complete. The MEIM was a 17 item self-report questionnaire measuring levels of identity in young adults from diverse groups. The purpose of the MEIM was to identify participants' identity development level with regards to their self-reported race. The assessment comprised two factors, ethnic identity and affirmation to one's heritage, belonging, and commitment. In this study, only the total score was used.

According to Armsden and Greenberg (1987), the assessments coefficient alpha level shows adequate reliability falling typically above .80 across a range of ethnic groups and ages. The preferred method for scoring was the use of the mean of the item scores for an over-all score with a range from 1-4. If desired, the ethnic identity level and affirmation to one's heritage could have been separated and a mean for ethnic identity search items could have been totaled. However, in this study the total of the scores was used and the factors were not separated.

The last 5 items on the MEIM were used for identification of demographic information. The demographic questions included were created by the researcher and consisted of items that requested information on age, gender, attachment level to parent, and race of mother and father.

## Procedures

Before data collection began, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research with Human Subjects at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte was obtained.

### Procedures using SurveyShare.com.

The researcher collected the data initially intended. The researcher worked diligently with the registrar's office to obtain a random sample of the students who met the inclusion criteria for the study which included Black, White, and Biracial Black and White individuals. The request was granted by the Registrar's Office and the list of emails of individuals who met the inclusion criteria was sent to the researcher.

The researcher sent out the surveys to 3,300 students individually via email using SurveyShare, a free service for faculty and students at universities through the U.S. Dillman (2007) suggested that personalized greetings attached to the emailed surveys from the researcher as well as follow up contact decreased non-response bias and subjects answering in socially desired manners. SurveyShare automatically sent out the invitation for the assessments to each individual student and described the study and purpose of the research that was being conducted. The participants were able to click on the link in the emails, and then able to read the consent form attached with the surveys. All individuals were advised of the potential risks and also benefits of participating in the study. Those who participated were informed that their participation was voluntary. This assured individuals that they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants received instruction on how to complete the surveys in the email prior to beginning. Students then had the opportunity to decide if they wanted to

participate in the research study by selecting the Internet link attached to the email and completing the assessments attached to SurveyShare.

Those students who chose to participate in the study were given specific instructions via the script (see Appendix D) on how to proceed. Students' responses to the emailed assessments were automatically entered into a spreadsheet and transferred to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) where the data were analyzed by the researcher. The SPSS software program provided the screening of the data and statistical findings for the research study.

Because the sample of usable responses was roughly 35, the researcher contacted the Registrar's Office again at the university in order to request an additional sample of emails of current students. Permission was granted from the IRB to modify the methodology of the study and the university sent the researcher 3,300 additional emails. After obtaining the second sample of 3,300 emails, the researcher was able to resume the data gathering process needed for the study.

The response rate was low, and the researcher only obtained 127 emailed responses from SurveyShare. Of the 127 responses, 41 students from both samples met the criteria for being Biracial Black and White either by self-report or by report of their parents being from both heritages according to the definition outlined by the researcher for this study.

Procedures using face-to-face data collection.

Because of the small sample size obtained through the emailed surveys, the researcher chose to also recruit participants directly. Before individuals were contacted through personal contact, the researcher resubmitted the application and gained approval



from the IRB. With this revision, the researcher was able to begin recruitment once again. Through the direct and face-to-face approach to collecting the data, an additional 100 paper and pencil versions of the surveys were distributed and obtained by the researcher. Instructions were provided along with the paper and pencil formats in order to insure consistency with the explanation of the tasks at hand as well as data gathering.

During this part of the data collection, the researcher strategically placed himself in populated locations throughout the university and asked students as they passed by if they were interested in participating in a research study. When a student demonstrated interest in participating and gave their consent to participate (see Appendix C), the researcher read a standardized explanation of the research study and the procedures to follow. The researcher reviewed the aspects of confidentiality in the study and informed the participants that none of the assessments had any identifying information which preserved their confidentiality. To reduce error for social desirability, the researcher informed the participants that their responses would be kept private and that their anonymity would be preserved (Dillman, 2007).

According to Dillman (1991, 2007), measurement error was reduced through the procedure of instruction dictated through scripted and written instructions, which were provided for participants prior to beginning the assessments. Because the presence of an interviewer could have increased the susceptibility of individuals to answer the surveys with socially desired answers (Duffy, Smith, Terhanian, & Bremer, 2005), the researcher followed strict guidelines when conducting the interviews. Furthermore, reduction in error was addressed through the display of the author's names and credentials at the front

of each page included in the packet of assessments along with the university's logo which promotes trust (Dillman, 2007).

Following this explanation, participants completed two assessments; the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA-R; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992). Individuals also responded to several demographic questions which were added to the MEIM regarding attachment level to parent, ethnicity of participants, parents age, and gender. Assessments were returned to the researcher by direct contact. Students were also given the researcher's school email address and an invitation to contact him after a particular date if they were interested in receiving a brief summary of the results once the study was completed.

According to Dillman (2007), sampling error could have been attributed to the fact that certain members of the population were deliberately excluded from the study from which the responses were obtained. Thus, both indirect and direct methods for obtaining the sample were used and students were all approached with equal opportunity to participate in the study.

The surveys gathered through direct contact were entered manually by the researcher unlike the online assessments that were automatically linked and transferred to the excel spreadsheet.

#### Data Analysis

The demographic questions were used to determine whether individuals met the requirements for participation in the study which was based on their age, self-reported race, and reported race of primary their primary caregiver. From the individuals who returned the assessments with all appropriate consents signed, the sample was obtained.

The only data that was used was only those participants who identified themselves as Biracial Black and White or had parents where they identified one parent as Black and the other White. Thus the inclusion criteria were self identification as Biracial Black and White while their identification of parents who were both Black and White. The final sample size was 59 Biracial Black and White students.

The data was screened for normality of distribution, outliers, and missing data. A correlation and a one-way analysis of variance were used to examine the research questions analyzing the relationship between age, gender, attachment level to parent, and race of primary caregiver with Biracial identity development in college students. The independent variables in the study were age, gender, attachment level to parent, and race of primary caregiver. The dependent variable was identity development level. The data was analyzed for a relationship between any of the variables as well as any significance between age, gender, attachment level to parent, and race of primary caregiver with Biracial identity development.

### Summary

This section presented the methodology of this study. The procedure was described briefly. Individuals were obtained from an undergraduate program at a university in the southeast and given assessments to determine appropriateness for the study. The participants used in the study were those who self-identified as Biracial Black and White college students. The recruitment methods used to obtain the sample and procedures for collecting data were also described. The instruments used to gather data from individuals was also described in detail. The creator's of the assessments used in the study gave the researcher their permission and an analysis of the data was explained.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this research study was to examine the relationship between age, gender, attachment level to parent, and race of primary caregiver, as they relate to Biracial identity development among Biracial college-aged students. This chapter includes the results from the research study. A description was given of the participants in the study both in terms of the demographic variables and in terms of their responses to the assessments they completed. Next, the chapter examined an overview of the data analysis looking closely at the inclusion/exclusion criteria for individuals to be included in the sample. The results were covered with regards to the research questions in this research study. Following the results was a summary of the chapter and findings.

### Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

Question 1: Is there a relationship between age of the participant and Biracial identity development?

Question 2: Is there a relationship between gender of the participant and Biracial identity development?

Question 3: Is there a relationship between attachment to mother, father, primary caregiver, and Biracial identity development?

Question 4: Is there a difference between race of primary caregiver and Biracial identity development?

## Description of Participants

Roughly 6,600 students at a university in the southern United States were emailed and invited to participate in this study. One hundred twenty seven individuals replied. Only 41 of the respondents met the inclusion criteria for the study. Therefore, an additional 100 students at this same university were also invited to participate in the study using a face-to-face procedure where they completed the assessments in written form. Eighteen additional participants were obtained from this method of sampling and utilized in the sample. From all of the individuals invited to participate in the study, 59 completed the surveys to be included in the research study. Only those who met the inclusion criteria indicating they were Biracial Black and White were eligible and the remaining individuals were removed from the data set.

Individuals were only invited to participate in the study if they're age ranged from 18-28. The mean age of the participants used in this study was 23.93 with a standard deviation of 4.99.

Twenty seven percent ( $n=16$ ) of the participants were male, and 73% ( $n=43$ ) were female.

Attachment level to parent in this study was used to describe each participant's heritage as they currently view it. The race that the individuals used to describe themselves often differed from what the researcher identified as their race, based on the reported race of their mother and father. The researcher examined the heritages of the mother and father and identified the race of each individual and compared it to their attachment level to parent. Many of the participants should have identified as being from multiple heritages or some category of the like based on the report of their mother and

father's race. However, 25 participants from the sample identified themselves as being from only one heritage, 4 identified with a heritage from another caregiver that they were close to, or in some cases the individuals did not identify with any race as evidenced by participant responses of their race being "I" and "human." Participants' self-identification of their race included Black ( $n=6$ ), African American ( $n=1$ ), White ( $n=8$ ), Caucasian ( $n=3$ ), Biracial ( $n=5$ ), Mulatto ( $n=1$ ), Mixed ( $n=19$ ), Multi-racial ( $n=2$ ), Other ( $n=1$ ), African ( $n=2$ ), Iranian ( $n=1$ ), Panamanian ( $n=1$ ), Costa Rican ( $n=1$ ), Puerto Rican ( $n=1$ ), Italian ( $n=2$ ), Black and White ( $n=1$ ), Native American ( $n=1$ ), I ( $n=1$ ), Arab, Black, White, and Native American ( $n=1$ ), and Human ( $n=1$ ).

Attachment to mother, father, and other caregiver (IPPA-R scores).

Level of attachment scores, as indicated by IPPA-R scores of individuals towards their mother or fathers were identified by the participants. The researcher then identified the race of the caregiver of the identified primary caregiver. Sixty one percent of the individuals identified having closer attachments to their mother's, 32% identified as being closer to their fathers, and 7% identified having a closer relationship with a different caregiver. The means and standard deviations for the participants' scores on the IPPA-R are shown in Table 1. The IPPA-R contains 25 items that measured attachment levels to mothers, fathers, and other caregivers. This assessment utilized a five point Likert-scale response format and averaged the values of each question. The values closer to one implied never true and the number 5 signified always true for participants responses to questions about their parents. Table 1 indicates that the mean scores for the mother were higher than the mean score for the father on the IPPA-R.

Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations of Attachment to Mother, Father and Primary Caregiver (IPPA-R)*

| Subscales                        | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| IPPA-R Score - Mother            | 59       | 3.53     | .769      |
| IPPA-R Score - Father            | 59       | 3.17     | .362      |
| IPPA-R Score - Primary Caregiver | 59       | 3.71     | .596      |

Race of primary caregiver.

The race of the primary caregiver in the study was defined as the caregiver to whom they felt the closest attachment. It was determined in a two step process. First, participants were asked questions to identify the heritages of both parental figures. In addition, they responded to items on the IPPA-R which determined their level of attachment to their mother, father, and other caregiver. The person who received the highest score on this assessment was defined as the “primary caregiver.” Of the respondents, 13 (22%) individuals identified their primary caregiver as being Black; 21 (36%) participants reported that their primary caregiver was White; 25 (42%) identified their parent as Biracial or mixed.

Biracial identify development (score on the MEIM).

Biracial identity development level was determined by the total score on the MEIM. The higher the score on the MEIM, the more comfortable the individual was in accepting both parents’ race. The lower the score of the participant, the less the individual identified with both parents backgrounds, identifying mostly with one race or denying a

part of themselves as a whole. The range of scores was from 17 to 68. The mean score of participants on the MEIM was 44.59 with a standard deviation of 7.56.

#### Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used by the researcher to conduct the data analysis. Correlations were used to determine if there were relationships between age, gender, attachment level to parent, and race of primary caregiver, on Biracial identity development in college-aged students. An ANOVA was used to determine if differences existed between participants' perceptions of their mother's and father's level of care and their own Biracial identity development.

Prior to analyzing the data, it was screened for missing data, outliers, assumptions, and normality. Due to the style and methodology of the assessments, none of the questions were left unanswered or skipped. There were no significant issues with outliers in the data either.

The results are reported below for each of the additional research questions that were utilized by the researcher.

Question 1: Is there a relationship between age of the participant and Biracial identity development?

Age of participants was not found to be significantly related to Biracial identity development ( $r = -.022, p = .870$ ). It was not found to impact Biracial identity development in youth and older participants did not demonstrate a higher level of identity development as a result of being chronologically older.

Question 2: Is there a relationship between gender of the participant and Biracial identity development?



Males in the analysis were coded as 0, and females were coded as 1. Gender of participants was not found to be significantly related to Biracial identify development ( $r = .104, p = .432$ ).

Question 3: Is there a relationship between attachment to mother, father, and primary caregiver and Biracial identity development?

The means and standard deviations of mother, father, and primary caregivers' scores on the IPPA-R are shown in Table 1. A correlation was used to examine this question. The findings indicated that Biracial individuals' attachment levels to their mother resulted in higher Biracial identity levels. For mother's scores, there was a positive correlation between attachment to mother and Biracial identity development ( $r = .275; p = .035$ ). However Biracial individuals' attachment levels to their father was not found to have statistical significance on Biracial identity level ( $r = .123; p = .355$ ). The caregiver that had the higher score on the IPPA-R (between mother's and father's) did not indicate a positive relationship either and can be observed by the correlation coefficients ( $r = .179, p = .175$ ). The results of the correlational analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Sample size, Pearson Coefficient, and P Values for the Correlations between Mother, Father, and Primary Caregiver on MEIM*

| Subscales                         | <i>n</i> | <i>r</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| IPPA-R Score - Mother             | 59       | .275     | .035     |
| IPPA-R Score - Father             | 59       | .123     | .355     |
| IPPA-R Score of Primary Caregiver | 59       | .179     | .175     |

Question 4: Is there a relationship between race of primary caregiver and Biracial identity development?

A one-way ANOVA was used to examine if there was a difference between the attachment level to parent of the participant (black, white, other/mixed) and Biracial identity development (MEIM scores). Before the data was analyzed, it was screened for normality on the dependent variable. The descriptive statistics that included the sample sizes, means, and standard deviation values are shown in Table 3. Individuals who perceived themselves as Black had lower mean scores where the participants who reported their race as something other than Black or White had the highest mean scores on the MEIM. The scores on the data analysis appeared to be normally distributed as evidenced by the skewness and kurtosis values. The boxplots only revealed one outlier, but it was left in the data when analyzed.

The degree of variability for the dependent variable across the groups was also examined using the Levene's test for equality of error variance and results indicated the assumption of homogeneity of variance as tenable. The results of the ANOVA indicated there was not a statistically significant difference among the group means,  $F(2,56)=2.217, p=.118$ .

Table 3

*Sample size, Means, and Standard Deviations of Attachment Level to Parent of Participant on MEIM*

| Subscales | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Black     | 13       | 41.38    | 7.81      |
| White     | 21       | 44.14    | 7.47      |
| Other     | 25       | 46.64    | 7.13      |

The one-way ANOVA did not indicate that there was a statistically significant difference among the race of the primary caregiver (Black, White, or Other) on Biracial identity development, but the low sample size may not be adequate to detect the differences. The score between Black and Other (highest score taken from the mother and father) was over a half of a standard deviation higher. There was a 5.0 point difference which indicated a moderate to high effect size between Black and Other on Biracial identity development levels even though it was not found significant. In sum, Black and White and White and Other races did not impact scores on the MEIM which would have indicated a stronger level of identity development in the participants.

#### Summary

The purpose of this research study was to explore the relationship of age, gender, attachment level to parent, and race of primary the caregiver with Biracial identity development among Biracial college students. This chapter included demographic information regarding the sample and the data analysis process for this research analysis. The findings indicated that there was no relationship between age, gender, attachment level to parent of participants, and race of primary caregiver and Biracial identify development. There was a relationship found between participants' attachment scores to mothers' and the Biracial identity development levels in Biracial college-aged students, such that the higher participants' attachment to their mothers, the higher their Biracial identify development. The following chapter examined the contributions of this study, the implications of these results, and provided recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of Chapter 5 was to present the findings of this study, the relationship of age, gender, attachment level to parent, and race of primary caregiver with Biracial identity development among Biracial college-aged students. The chapter includes the discussion, limitations of the study, implications, future research, and the concluding remarks are also provided.

### Discussion

According to the 2000 U.S Census Bureau, approximately 6.8 million individuals report being of two different heritages (U.S Census Bureau, 2000). This population is steadily increasing as are interracial marriages in the country. Due to this rapid increase in individuals from multiple heritages, Biracial identity development is a needed area for further research as well as variables that may hinder healthy identity development for this population.

While there is a substantial amount of data on Biracial identity development (Deters, 1997; Harris & Halpin, 2002; Henrickson, 1997), there are few empirically validated studies that examine Black and White mixed heritages specifically. Previously, Biracial identity development had been measured by scales that were developed for Black people only. Due to this improper methodology, historical data has not carried the needed worth as the topic merits in this century (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Therefore, this research study attempted to add to the already preexisting data collected on Biracial black and white individuals.

Roughly 6,600 students at a southern university were invited to participate in the research study. Of the total surveyed, 41 responded to the emailed surveys and the remaining participants were obtained via face-to-face recruiting methods. Eighteen additional participants were gathered through direct contact. After the respondents were screened for Biracial Black and White heritages, 59 met the criteria for inclusion in the study.

Previous research conducted has examined Biracial identity development using the MEIM. However, there has been minimal research conducted examining the information about primary caregiver and Biracial identify development. The MEIM assisted the researcher in identifying the levels of Biracial identity in participants. Of the 59 individuals surveyed, the IPPA-R assessment, which assesses level of attachment, was used to identify the primary caregiver. In the sample, 19 participants had a higher attachment to their father, 36 perceived having a closer connection to their mother, while 4 participants identified being more attached to someone other than their mother or father. In this study, the only factor found to have a positive relationship with Biracial identity development was the perceived attachment level of the individual to their mother. The closer participants felt towards their mother the higher they scored on their levels of Biracial identity development. This implied that 61% of the individuals in this study identified having a better connection with their mother. This was the most important factor affecting the level of Biracial identity development. Participants valued their relationship with their fathers but not nearly as much as their attachment to their mother. Only 7% of the sample found that their attachment with someone else impacted their identity development greater than their relationship with their mother or father. This

says that regardless of the race of the parent, the attachment to the mother is the key factor in Biracial identity development in college-aged students.

According to the research, maturation was believed to have an impact on identity development (Arnette, 2004). Age of Biracial participants was also predicted to be related to Biracial identity development in youths. However, age was not found to be significant in impacting identity development in college students. This finding contradicted the findings of Jacobs (1997) and Johnson (1992) who found support for age having an impact on Biracial identity development. The findings of this research did not support previous research which implies that due to the mean age of the sample being higher than the typical college-aged student could have impacted the results. This implied that students who are older in college could perhaps have already had the life experiences that increased their identity development process when compared to younger college-aged students. A person who is more mature will have a natural higher chance at being more in touch with both of their heritages when compared to someone who is younger.

Historically, gender has also been a big influence on the way individuals self-identify. Rockquemore (2002) purports that men and women experience identity development different from one another. This is because in American society, Biracial women are viewed differently than Biracial men. Women from dual heritages have been viewed with envy and creatures of exotic beauty. Their “light skinned” color has influenced how they are received and accepted by society. According to Harris and Sim (2002), Biracial identity in turn is socially constructed. Because Biracial women have received positive consideration from American culture, gender must be taken into consideration when examining Biracial identity development and was key factor in this

study. However, gender was not related to the identity development of Biracial school-aged individuals in this study. This implied that Biracial Black and White youth journey through their identity development similarly despite gender differences. The MEIM was previously used with adolescents and could explain the lack of differences with this population.

The results supported the data collected by Henrickson (1997) and Sebring (1985) that stressed the influence of primary caregivers on identity development. The only statistically significant finding in this study was that participants' attachment to their mother was positively related to their identity development. The results are consistent with the findings of Brunσμα (2005) where the researcher found that individuals' identity development is significantly impacted by the participants' connection to their mother. This result was consistent with the findings of parental influence on their children's identity according to Root (1992 & 1996) in that children are more impacted by their mother and not their father. In addition, the results supported the data collected by Henrickson (1997) and Sebring (1985) that stressed the influence of primary caregivers on identity development.

#### Limitations of Study

The limitations are that the sample was convenient and only those willing to complete the assessments were able to be a part of the study, potentially biasing the results. All of the participants were from one southern university in the southeastern part of the United States which indicated that the sample are from those participants who were willing to attend school in a southern university which may have held a particular set of

views. Finally, the findings may not be applicable to students in other parts of the United States or students attending small private colleges in the south.

Approximately 30% of the assessments were gathered face-to-face, and participants could have answered the questions dishonestly or been influenced by socially desired answers due to the perceived-race of the researcher. The researcher was required to make 16,500 contacts through the emailed surveys to obtain 41 participants' where it took roughly 100 contacts to obtain 18 usable surveys from the direct approach to data collection in order to obtain the sample that met the criteria for the study. Obtaining individuals who were willing to respond to this topic was difficult. This fact could have biased the sample in that it is not representative of Biracial college students.

In addition, the assessments were designed to be used with adolescents and due to the mean age of the sample being 24, this could pose as a limitation to the study and the results obtained through the surveys. Therefore the assessments could have influenced the findings of the analysis. Overall, there is still more research to be gathered on this population utilizing assessments that are more age appropriate and that are indicative of students graduate or undergraduate status at the university.

### Implications

There has been a lack of information surrounding the impact of the attachment to primary caregivers of Biracial students because these individuals are not identified and reported as being from more than one race (Reid, 2003). This study demonstrated the significant impact that the attachment to their mothers for Biracial individuals has on their identity development, specifically during college-aged years. This supported the findings of Brunsmma (2005) who found that the race and relationship that an individual



had with their mother influenced their identity levels. Wim and Maja (1995) found through their studies on Biracial individuals that parental influence was the greatest predictor of Biracial identity levels.

When counseling Biracial Black and White individuals, it is important to consider the attachment they have to their mother in order to gain insight into their worldview. Brunσμα (2005) suggests that individuals are more likely to identify with their mothers due to the bond that is naturally created with mothers' upon birth. In order to provide Biracial individuals the best opportunity to have increased levels of identity development, it is important that the parents of these youth understand that the attachment that the mother has with her child, regardless of race, is the most significant factor that will produce a high Biracial identity level in a child. Perhaps, creating counseling groups for women who have Biracial children would be helpful in assuring that their children have the attachment necessary to create the security required for an individual to have a high level of identity development.

Biracial individuals have had difficulty historically due to the lack of healthy adjustment during the transitional stage as youths (Jacobs, 1997). As the individuals mature, their needs shift. In this study, college students' age was not related to identity development in the individuals. This finding contradicted the findings of Johnson (1992) whose studies with Biracial individuals depicted trends with age on identity development, especially when compared to their single heritage counterparts. However, mean age in this study was approximately 24, whereas Johnson (1992) utilized mostly adolescents that were 17-19 years of age. This implied that the findings could have been impacted by the average age of the sample used in this study. Even though Jonhson (1992) found that age

influenced Biracial identity development, the mean age for the children in this sample was much lower and that could explain the reason for age not having a significant relationship to Biracial identity development in this study. Further, more research is needed to fully comprehend the identity development of older Biracial individuals.

The findings in this study indicated that gender was not related to Biracial identity development but was not supported by this study. Biracial identity development of the sample in this study based on age but also gender was low. Women have progressed through identity development differently than their male counterparts (Rockquemore, 2002). Perhaps this implies that the sample utilized already had high levels of identity development due to their ages being closer to 24 as opposed to adolescents and young adults used in other studies.

#### Future Research

Although there have been several areas identified for research surrounding Biracial Black and White individuals, identifying significant variables that impact their identity development has been limited about this population. Researchers should continue to explore factors related to Biracial identity development because of the growing amount of interracial couples and marriages that are occurring in the U.S today (U.S Census Bureau, 2000). To extend this research, attention should be placed on the method that the data on Biracial students is collected, Special attention should be addressed when considering sample methods and the type of assessments used which can significantly impact the sample size and type of participants who respond to surveys.

In addition, there is a need to examine the implications of Biracial identify development on other variables related to college students' experience in college, such as

the types of colleges Biracial students attend, social groups they seek, and resources at the colleges for these students. It would be useful to examine the relationship between the race of the primary caregiver and participants in terms of race, physical features, and color as Root (1992 & 1996). This would provide insight as to how the color of an individuals' parent impacts the color and/or heritage from which they see themselves.

Future studies could examine the impact of the mother's attachment to her child, geographical region reared, religious affiliation of the family or college attended and racial make-up of the environment or college attended as it impacts on Biracial identity development. Future research studies should also look at the difference that Biracial individuals are having today with identity development in comparison to Biracial individuals who grew up in the 80's and 90's.

#### Concluding Remarks

This study looked to examine the relationships between age, gender, and race of the primary caregiver of Biracial individuals and identity development among college-aged students. The most important findings were the wide variety of ways individuals identify themselves in terms of their race and the significant relationship between attachment to mother and Biracial identity development. Also, it was significant that age, gender, attachment to fathers, and attachment to the parent with whom the individual had a greater relationship towards whether it be father or mother, did not play as significant role in Biracial identity development in this research as was found in previously thought (Sebring, 1985; Johnson, 1992; Henrickson 1997; Rockquemore, 2002; & Arnette, 2004). Clearly, there is a need for further empirical research in this area as is implied by the results of the study. There are many variables that contribute to the healthy identity

development of Biracial individuals, and this study only examined a few while many still remain. If counselors can equip themselves with more insight about Biracial college students, they will have the opportunity of facilitating more positive therapeutic relationships with those clients and their families.

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APPENDIX A: THE INVENTORY OF PARENT AND PEER ATTACHMENT  
(IPPA-R)

This questionnaire asks about your relationships with important people in your life; your mother, your father, and your close friends. Please read the directions to each part carefully.

Part I

Some of the following statements asks about your feelings about your mother or the person who has acted as your mother. If you have more than one person acting as your mother (e.g. a natural mother and a step-mother) answer the questions for the one you feel has most influenced you.

Please read each statement and circle the ONE number that tells how true the statement is for you now.

|   | Almost<br>Never or<br>Never<br>True | Not<br>Very<br>Often<br>True | Some-<br>times<br>True | Often<br>True | Almost<br>Always or<br>Always<br>True |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. My mother respects my feeling.   | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 2. I feel my mother does a good job as my mother.                         | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 3. I wish I had a different mother.                                       | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 4. My mother accepts me as I am.  | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 5. I like to get my mother's point of view on things I'm concerned about. | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 6. I feel it's no use letting my feelings show around my mother.          | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 7. My mother can tell when I'm upset about something.                     | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |

|  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. Talking over my problems with my mother makes me feel ashamed or foolish. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. My mother expects too much from me.                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I get upset easily around my mother.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I get upset a lot more than my mother knows about.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. When we discuss things, my mother cares about my point of view.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. My mother trusts my judgment.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. My mother has her own problems, so I don't bother her with mine.         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. My mother helps me to understand myself better.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I tell my mother about my problems and troubles.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I feel angry with my mother.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I don't get much attention from my mother.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. My mother helps me to talk about my difficulties.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. My mother understands me.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. When I am angry about something, my mother tries to be understanding.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I trust my mother.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

23. My mother doesn't understand what I'm going through these days.      1      2      3      4      5
24. I can count on my mother when I need to get something off my chest.      1      2      3      4      5
25. If my mother knows something is bothering me, she asks me about it.      1      2      3      4      5

## Part II

This part asks about your feelings about your father, or the man who has acted as your father. If you have more than one person acting as your father (e.g. natural and step-father) answer the question for the one you feel has most influenced you.

|  | Almost<br>Never or<br>Never<br>True | Not<br>Very<br>Often<br>True | Some-<br>times<br>True | Often<br>True | Almost<br>Always or<br>Always<br>True |
|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. My father respects my feelings.   | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 2. I feel my father does a good job as my father.                            | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 3. I wish I had a different father   | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 4. My father accepts me as I am  | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 5. I like to get my father's point of view on things I'm concerned about.    | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 6. I feel it's no use letting my feelings show around my father.             | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 7. My father can tell when I'm upset about something.                        | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 8. Talking over my problems with my father makes me feel ashamed or foolish. | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 9. My father expects too much from me.                                       | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 10. I get upset easily around my father.                                     | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 11. I get upset a lot more than my father knows about.                       | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. When we discuss things, my father cares about my point of view.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. My father trusts my judgment.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. My father has his own problems, so I don't bother him with mine.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. My father helps me to understand myself better.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I tell my father about my problems and troubles.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I feel angry with my father.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I don't get much attention from my father.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. My father helps me to talk about my difficulties.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. My father understands me.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. When I am angry about something, my father tries to be understanding. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I trust my father.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. My father doesn't understand what I'm going through these days.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. I can count on my father when I need to get something off my chest.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. If my father knows something is bothering me, he asks me about it.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## Part III

This part asks about your feelings about your relationships with other close caregivers (guardians or providers) with whom you had contact with prior to leaving for college. Please read each statement and circle the ONE number that tells how true the statement is for you now.

|   | Almost<br>Never or<br>Never<br>True | Not<br>Very<br>Often<br>True | Some-<br>times<br>True | Often<br>True | Almost<br>Always or<br>Always<br>True |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. I like to get my other caregivers point of view on things I'm concerned about.   | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 2. My other caregivers can tell when I'm upset about something.                     | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 3. When we discuss things, my close caregivers care about my point of view.         | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 4. Talking over my problems with close caregivers makes me feel ashamed or foolish. | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 5. I wish I had different close caregivers.   | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 6. My close caregivers understand me.   | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 7. My close caregivers encourage me to talk about my difficulties.                  | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 8. My close caregivers accept me as I am.   | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |
| 9. I feel the need to be in touch with my close caregivers more often.              | 1                                   | 2                            | 3                      | 4             | 5                                     |



- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. My close caregivers don't understand what I'm going through these days.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I feel alone or apart when I am with my close caregivers.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. My close caregivers listen to what I have to say.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I feel my close caregivers are good friends.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. My close caregivers are fairly easy to talk to.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. When I am angry about something, my close caregivers try to be understanding. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. My close caregivers help me to understand myself better.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. My close caregivers care about how I am feeling.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## APPENDIX B: MULTIGROUP ETHNIC IDENTITY MEASURE (MEIM)

### The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)

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

Please fill in: In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be \_\_\_\_\_

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

**(4) Strongly agree    (3) Agree    (2) Disagree    (1) Strongly disagree**

- 1- I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
- 2- I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.
- 3- I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.
- 4- I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.
- 5- I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.
- 6- I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.
- 7- I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.
- 8- In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.
- 9- I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.
- 10- I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.
- 11- I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.
- 12- I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.
- 13- My ethnicity is
  - (1) Asian or Asian American, including Chinese, Japanese, and others
  - (2) Black or African American
  - (3) Hispanic or Latino, including Mexican American, Central American, and others
  - (4) White, Caucasian, Anglo, European American; not Hispanic
  - (5) American Indian/Native American
  - (6) Mixed; Parents are from two different groups
  - (7) Other (write in): \_\_\_\_\_
- 14- My father's ethnicity is (use numbers above)
- 15- My mother's ethnicity is (use numbers above)
- 16- My age is? \_\_\_\_\_

17- My race is? \_\_\_\_\_

18- My gender is? Male \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_

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## APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte  
9201 University City Boulevard  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28223

College of Education  
Department of Counseling

### **Informed Consent for Identity Development Study**

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in a research study that looks to examine how identity changes in college students. I am also trying to figure out if age, race, gender, and race of caregivers, guardians, and other people who may have provided for you while at home, effects how identity develops.

This study is being conducted by a counselor, Travis Bobb, as part of a requirement for completion of a doctoral degree at the UNC Charlotte in the counseling department. I will be conducting this study under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Phyllis Post, professor of counselor education.

As a potential participant, you will be asked to complete a demographic survey as well as two assessments that should take approximately 20 minutes to complete all together. The surveys are designed to assess relationships with caregivers as well identity levels in individuals. You will be asked to complete these surveys and return them to the researcher upon completion. If you chose to participate in the study, you will be one of approximately 60 potential subjects in this study.

The benefit of participating in this study is your contribution to current research on factors related to the identity development of college students. Data gathered from this study will help counselors better understand how to assist individuals who may be having difficulty navigating through their identity development.

If you chose to participate in this study, you are doing so as a volunteer which means your decision is completely voluntary and you may stop at any time. Your consent will be indicated by the completion of the surveys although a consent form is attached. Data collected will be confidential and results will be published as a group and at no time will the researcher know the responses made on the assessments. You will not be graded on your participation in any fashion. There are no known risks for you participation in this study; however, there may be unforeseen risks. The information gathered will contain personal information and therefore steps will be put into place to ensure that your anonymity is preserved.

UNC Charlotte wants to make sure that you are treated in a fair and respectful manner. Contact the University's Research Compliance Office (704.687.3309) if you have any questions about how you are treated as a study participant.

You do not have to sign the consent form attached but your completion of the surveys will serve as your consent and willingness to participate in the study. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Travis Bobb, LPC

Doctoral Candidate  
UNC Charlotte

Dr. Phyllis Post, Dissertation  
Chair

Department of Counseling  
UNC Charlotte

Participant Consent Form  
For Identity Development Study

I have read the information on the consent form and I agree to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age and feel comfortable participating in this study. I understand that if I want to receive the results of this study, I will need to contact the researcher by email.

---

Participant's Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Date

---

Participant's Signature

Date

---

Investigator's Signature

Date

## APPENDIX D: INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING ASSESSMENTS

### **Instructions for Taking the Assessments**

To be provided for individuals participating in the study:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study. Your responses to the questionnaires will be much appreciated and provide valuable insight into identity development in college students.

You will be taking assessments where you will be asked to share your thoughts on a particular set of questions. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions you will encounter. Your responses are anonymous, so please do not put any identifying information, such as your name, on the forms. Now please select and complete the survey titled, IPPA-R. The instructions are provided in a script attached to this email. Please circle the appropriate answer.

Please circle the number that best rates your primary caregiver on each of the items on the IPPA-R using a scale from 1 (Almost Never or Never True) to 5 (Almost Always or Always True). Please circle the best answer on the MEIM ranging from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1) on your opinion of your ethnic background. Please circle your answer on the same line after each question. Once again there are no right or wrong answers.

Upon completion of the first survey (IPPA-R), please continue on and complete the second survey titled MEIM along with the demographic questions on your age, gender, attachment level to parent, and race of primary caregiver, listed at the bottom. Once again there are no right or wrong answers. Circle the best answer for each of the questions.

Please look over your answers once more to insure that you answered each question and I wanted to thank you for taking the time to complete the surveys.



The University of North Carolina at Charlotte  
9201 University City Boulevard  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28262

College of Education  
Department of Counseling

My name is Travis Bobb and I am a student at the UNC Charlotte. I am conducting a study to see how identity development is impacted during college years.

If you would like to be a part of my study, I will ask you to complete two surveys. The first has 15 questions and the second has 14 questions. There is a demographic questionnaire that is also included that contains 6 questions that will assist the researcher in identifying your age and races of your primary caregivers. There are no right or wrong answers and you will not receive a grade because this is not a test of any kind. Your name will not appear on any of the surveys and therefore your identity will remain anonymous.

You do not have to participate in the study if you do not choose to. If you decide to participate in the study, you can still choose to stop at any time at no cost to you. If you have any questions about the project, you may contact the University Research Compliance Office (704-687-3309), Travis Bobb (704-277-8197 or [tbobb@uncc.edu](mailto:tbobb@uncc.edu)) and Dr. Phyllis Post (704-687-8961) at [ppost@uncc.edu](mailto:ppost@uncc.edu).

When this study is completed, I will generate a report that will not include any information that will identify you. If you would like to be a part of this study, please complete the questionnaires and sign your name below.

Thank you.

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date