

What Does It Mean To Be A “Monkey-Bird”? : Mixed-Race Students’ Educational  
Experiences in the Manitoban K-12 Public Education System and Their Sense of Identity

By

Michelle Bradley

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Department of Educational Administration, Foundations, and Psychology  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg

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### **Abstract**

This thesis explores three main questions: (1) How is diversity and equity in education in Manitoban schools addressed and does this include mixed-raced students?, (2) What are mixed-race students' experiences with and perceptions of ethnocultural equity in the Manitoban secondary school system and how do these experiences impact their personal and collective identities in the following areas: Social (relationships with peers and family members), Political (notions of Canadian identity and citizenship), Identity (sense of cultural and racial identity and social positioning), Cultural (influences of related cultural groups and communities), and Pedagogical (instructional materials, relationships with teachers and staff, teaching practices and pedagogies, school policies and initiatives) and (3) What can educators and teacher-educators learn from this research that could be used toward a more informed and successful practice? Conclusions are that more work needs to be done to develop a provincial antiracism and ethnocultural policy document for development and implementation that will help establish a system of accountability and consistency, assist our leaders in understanding the complexities of mixedness, establish relationships with different relevant community groups and families, critically examine the curricula for bias, investigate student placement, provide opportunities for counselling staff, explore how to prepare staff to deal with racial and ethnocultural harassment, and consider the representation of mixedness in the staff population.

Keywords: mixed-race, multicultural education, critical mixed-race theory and pedagogy, personal and collective identity development, ecological framework for identity development, white privilege, acting and reading race, kinship journeys, micro-aggressions, talking race, racial tool kits, blood quantum, hidden curriculum, null curriculum, overt curriculum.

### **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my parents, Anne and Colin, for their bravery in being an interracial relationship and having a multiracial family (when these terms were not an accessible part of our vocabulary) and for always supporting me through all the ups and downs in my life. You have endowed me with the most invaluable life *tool kit* by making me the strong and resilient person I am today. I value all the laughter, tears, stories, and steadfastness to persevere despite the odds. "The apple don't fall far from the tree" after all. Thank-you for forever believing in me and walking this path alongside me from all worlds.

"Children learn more from what you are than what you teach." W.E.B. Dubois

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## Chapter 1: Purpose, Context and Background

The purpose of this thesis is to explore mixed-race students' experiences in the Manitoban school system and how these impact their sense of personal and collective identity. When defining the term “mixed-race”, one of the respondents, Mark, said: “Mixed-race. I don't know. I think it's like the monkey-bird.” His description exposed the reality that mixed-race individuals use socially constructed single-race categories to racially label themselves in order to navigate society and articulate a sense of self and collective identity. A challenge to the *cultural melting pot* rhetoric informing Canadian identity is people of mixed-race, who are typically void from the cultural fabric of Canadian society because they sit on the periphery of the cultural and racial classification system. While there is considerably less empirical research on mixed-race in Canada compared to the United States, the research is growing (Taylor, 2008, p. 86). Canada and the US have had a long history of gathering data through national censuses. With respect to racial identification, however, the Canadian census relies on mixed-race respondents self-reporting their identities through checking multiple population group boxes. According to the 2000 US Census, more than six million people identified with more than one racial group and this statistic is mirrored in the number of mixed-race people in Canada, reaching almost half a million in 2006 (Lou, Lalonde, Wilson, 2011, p. 79). In fact, according to Siddiqui in “Critical Social Work With Mixed-Race Individuals: Implications for Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Practice,” the 2006 census revealed that 458,240 Canadians reported belonging to more than one population group and 104,215 of these were visible minority groups. More important in self-identification is the composition of the families the mixed-race individuals belong to. Further data confirmed that mixed unions (marriages or common-law relationships) between a visible

minority and non-visible minority increased 33.1% between 2001 and 2006, (p. 255) a statistic that Shannon Proudfoot, in her article on mixed-race couples in the Times – Colonist (2010), identified as a growth that is “five times faster than the average for all [Canadian] couples.” (p. 1) The 2010 Statistics Canada document, “A Portrait of Couples in Mixed-Race Unions” (based on data from the 2000 census) indicates that mixed-race unions account for 3.9% of all unions in Canada and that these are higher in certain urban centers such as Vancouver (8.5%), Toronto (7.1%), and Calgary (6.1%). Additionally, it is noted that unions between a visible minority and non-visible minority (86% of all mixed couples) were much higher than unions between two visible minorities (0.6% of all couples in Canada), but their numbers are growing steadily and realized an increase of 50% from 2001 to 2006 (Proudfoot, 2010, p. 2). Of notable interest, is the fact that Canadian born visible minorities are more likely to marry outside their racial group and this likelihood increases with each generation born in Canada. Additionally, mixed-race unions are more common within the 25-34 age bracket and these people tend to have higher levels of education, earn higher incomes, and have more children than those in non-mixed unions (Siddiqui, 2011, p. 258). For the purposes of interpreting the data, “visible minority” is characterized as “persons, other than Aboriginal Peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in color” (*Employment Equity Act*, 1995, Interpretation). It is important to note that although a good source of data collection for statistical and planning purposes, the racial classification expectation on censuses has come under scrutiny for its protection of white privilege and maintenance of racial hierarchies (Thompson, 2002, p. 1411). Much of the information collected by enumeration has been criticized for promoting racial classification on the basis of pre-established categories of race and ethnicity and implicit “white/non-white”

hypodescention (“one drop rule”). Pertinent to my study, is the reality that “mixed-race” does not necessarily imply visible minority.

As a country composed of immigrants from practically every country in the world, cultural diversity has been an important element informing the fabric of Canadian society and in the building of nationhood. Historically, primary considerations in developing public policy have been: bridging the two “founding nations” of British and French, dealing with immigration, and establishing the relationship between the State and the First Peoples (Joshee, Peck, Thompson, Chareka, Sears, 2010, p. 1). In the 70s and 80s, as a response to the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1988), the focus of Canadian cultural diversity shifted from the aim of civic cohesion and a quest for nationhood reflecting a primarily British identity, to what is identified as “iconic rather than a deep pluralism,” of respecting, celebrating, and embracing diversity (Joshee, Peck, Thompson, Chareka, Sears, p. 10). The key tenets of Canadian multicultural policy are: (1) to assist all Canadian cultural groups to develop a capacity to grow and contribute to Canadian society, (2) to assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers that prevent their contribution to Canadian society, (3) to promote interchange among all Canadian cultural groups, and (4) to assist all immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada’s official languages (Mahtani, 2002, p. 69). The aim of the policy seems simple and innocuous enough: an ethic of inclusion that promotes “difference through unity” and a nation built on equal opportunity and cultural protection and progenation (Mahtani, 2002, p. 68). What makes multiculturalism the hallmark of Canadian identity, is the fact that unlike other nations, it is “enshrined in [our] constitution and through law” (Mahtani, 2002, p. 68). Further, as Ungerleider (Joshee and Johnson, 2007, Forward) argues, there are marked differences in language education rights, multicultural heritage, treaty rights, and essential public services (health care and education).

Questions about which cultural groups benefit from and are reflected in Canada’s multiculturalism policy as well as what this means for a sense of cohesive nationhood, with a clear, transparent, and “profound sense of ‘group affinity and shared values,’” have surfaced in recent literature pertaining to equity and social justice concerns inherent in Canada’s conception of multiculturalism (Joshee, Peck, Thompson, Chareka, Sears, 2010, p. 7). This body of work has been recognized under the umbrella of *critical multiculturalism*, that infuses the disciplines of anti-racist education, critical-race theory, and critical pedagogy (May and Sleeter, 2010). Critical multiculturalism is explained as a framework that recognizes inequalities of power in historical, legal, scientific, cultural, economic, and sociopolitical influences that prevent social change. Critical multiculturalism incorporates critical pedagogy through personal reflection, identity, development, and recognition of intersectionality of three levels of social production: (1) structural systems, institutions, policies, practices, and laws, (2) symbolic group representations, and (3) micro-interactions (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2002). While it is true that over the past several decades, we have realized what Joshee, Peck, Thompson, Chareka, and Sears characterize as “increased autonomy for national minorities, a move away from policies of assimilation of immigrants toward integration, and greater recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples (2010, p. 3), there is still an emphasis on equality and diversity versus specific attention placed on equity and social justice. As Mahtani (2002) asserts, this transition would mean examining the “exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance” and “unpacking the embedded racist history of the country (p. 82), including who is recognized as “Canadian” and how power is distributed through access to employment opportunities, education, and status.

Canadian citizenship, as suggested by multicultural policy, necessitates developing a model of homogeneity that somehow paradoxically means at once adopting an ethic that

embraces sameness and difference. One result of this contradiction is the creation of social spaces that reinforce the belief that Canada is primarily a *White* nation with a dual English and French heritage, and that “visible minorities” are the ones who “perform culture from elsewhere” in the sense of being singled out to display ethnic characteristics such as food, traditions, clothing, and language (Taylor, 2008, p. 85). By placing emphasis on culture rather than racial background, multiculturalism supports individuals’ choices to affiliate with any traditions or practices they wish without fear of discrimination, but this further marginalizes individuals by positioning some groups as more “Canadian” than others (Taylor, 2008, p. 85). Schick and St. Denis (2005), characterize this phenomenon as *white privilege*, to “pass [whiteness] invisibly for the norm (p. 299) and to perpetuate the binaries of the social construction of “other”;

“[w]hiteness depends on the discursive production of other(ness) and difference, even where no “difference” [actually] exists” (p. 301). Taylor (2008) refers to Mahtani’s work on mixed-race by explaining that “the Canadian tendency [is] to use cultural hyphens to identify who is Canadian and who is not...where one is seen as not solely ‘Canadian’ but ‘Canadian and fill-in-your-ethnic background’” (p. 86), which further confounds the development of a cohesive multicultural framework of Canadian society. The concept of “nation” in the Canadian context refers most prominently to the foundation nations: English, French, and most recently (and contestingly), Aboriginal (Ungerleider, in Joshee and Johnson, 2007, Forward). The overall goal of the research is to investigate whether mixed-race students are represented in the Manitoba educational system, what their lived experiences are, and how they come to form a sense of identity based on these influences.

## Statement of the Problem and Research Purpose

Despite the fact that the number of mixed-race children and adults in Canada is growing, the public education system does not recognize their unique experiences and how this impacts their formation of identity and citizenship. It follows that we continue to have few supports for mixed-race students, faculty, or staff in our schools and fewer resources with which to infuse the experiences of our mixed-race population in schools (Renn, 2000, p. 19). In “Interrogating the Hyphen Nation: Canadian Multicultural Policy and ‘Mixed-Race’ Identities,” Mahtani (2002) discusses the fact that her mixed-race respondents described the Canadian multicultural policy as an “institutional project” that promotes “staged ethnic representations” that do not reflect the daily realities of their lives. Participants felt that the “celebration of particular stereotypical snapshots of ethnic cultures sanitize[d] cultural differences...[and also] essentialized them in racial terms (p. 74). Further, they felt that multicultural policy privileges ethnicity over other social identities (such as gender and class) and does not adequately address the way they are racialized by society to find a suitable place for them within this construct, or acknowledges the fact that these influences impact their self-perception (Mahtani, 2002, p. 76). At the core of this research, is an intrinsic search for definitions of citizenship and Canadian identity in a landscape where “[to] be real Canadian, it is assumed that one must be white...or European” (Mahtani, 2002, p. 77), and to which mixed-race people do not belong. Taylor (2008) cites Nakagawa and Thankur’s documentary, where she quotes one interviewee explaining that, “multiculturalism was never really designed to imagine me,” and explains this comment as “[their] “inbetweenness” is put on trial and determined to be culturally different, confusing, and “un-Canadian” (p. 87). She explains that mixed-race identities challenge the norm of what is

understood as “Canadian”, as a simple by-product of being positioned as “doubly different, doubly strange, and doubly foreign” (Taylor, 2008, p. 86).

Renn (2000) discusses three major approaches to multiracial politics: (1) struggle for inclusion in traditional racial/ethnic communities, (2) creation of a new multiracial community (assuming there is a common experience of being mixed), and (3) deconstructing dominant racial ideology to create connections across and between communities (p. 5). It is important in Education, to be cognizant of these possibilities for students and to encourage them to explore these approaches in developing a sense of identity as well as citizenship. In “Multiracial in a Monoracial World: Student Stories of Racial Dissolution on the Colorblind Campus” (2011), Museus, Lee, and Lambe explore the notion that while it is widely accepted in Education that educators acknowledge student needs and do whatever necessary to address them, there is a disconnect with society’s beliefs about race and “racial considerations,” that leaks into other areas of public life, including most prominently Education (p. 22). Although racial dialogues do take place, [multiracial] issues remain largely ignored (p. 22). Educators’ preparedness, critical awareness of, and commitment to, identifying and meeting the needs of multiracial or mixed origin students (including critically investigating initiatives that intend to support the students), appear to be a function of *colorblindness* as well as misunderstanding about the best ways to include discussion and the realities of multiracial populations into the fabric of school communities (p. 25). Museus, Lee, and Lambe suggest that educational communities should make more efforts to: (1) cultivate campus cultures that embrace racial dialogues as norms, (2) ensure that multiracial issues are included in campus discourses about race, and (3) actively support multiracial students and groups (p. 24). Caballero, Haynes, and Tikly, in “Researching Mixed-Race in Education: Perceptions, Policies, and Practices” (2007), posit that educators were

unaware of issues experienced by mixed-race students (p. 354) and that the normalcy and culture of *whiteness* still pervades Education and remains largely unchallenged (p. 354) and so students of mixed-race continue to experience *double invisibility* as educators do not recognize mixedness as a separate and distinct minority category and certainly do not consider the plurality of voices that exist within this category or its many facets and implications for how we “do” education (p. 355).

Caballero, Haynes, and Tikly identify the fact that there is little consensus on terminology and its use to accurately describe the experiences of people from mixed racial and ethnic backgrounds and therefore schools are unable to enter into discussion about addressing the needs of this population of students (p. 357). There is also little research on Aboriginal students who self-identify as mixed-race. Dualistic modes of thinking and essentialist categories that dominate Public Education are responsible for forcing bi and multiracial students to choose one over another, argue Reid and Henry, in “Waiting to Excel: Biraciality in the Classroom” (2000). There are ambiguous criteria for categorization, limited national statistics on bi and multiracial families and individuals, and imposed Western standards of whiteness against which having to choose sides becomes an expectation (p. 565). It is clear that there is a prominent need for more studies on bi and multiracial children in community settings (most especially schools) (p. 570), but there is little direction on what this would entail. Reid and Henry suggest educators work to create a climate that fosters the development of a healthy identity for all students through acceptance of religious, social, cultural, and other differences, as well as through acceptance of learning styles and socialization issues (p. 571), and they suggest educators choosing curricular content that reflects this (p. 573) and also develop an awareness of their own views of interracial families and their children (p. 574).

Wardle, in “Children of Mixed-Race – No Longer Invisible” (2000), talks about the fact that educators do not receive necessary training to adequately address the issues of mixedness in their classrooms and that there are few resources available to assist them in this work (p. 68) and that multicultural education has not included this particular segment of the population (p. 70), thereby forcing students to choose one side over another in addressing issues of race, minority issues, and social justice concerns. In “Race Bending: Mixed Youth Practicing Strategic Racialization in California” (2012), Pollock advocates for schools to challenge the reproduction of categories that perpetuate inequities and inequality and mirror social reality that is mired in dualistic and hierarchical paradigms (p. 32). Pollock writes that competition and ranking in Public Education reinforce unequal structural relationships (p. 36) that force students to self-identify through single word and single-race categories and that, further, there was a *right* or ultimate answer (p. 40). Race labelling and the constraints of language barriers and the racial lexicon (adequate language to describe racial identity) meant that students *bent* race categories instead of challenging and breaking them (p. 40) and multicultural activities were focused around simplification and group creation/fragmentation (p. 45), instead of eradicating and contesting this way of approach. In this thesis, I will explore mixed-race students’ social and educational positioning and sense of citizenship within the Manitoban social and political landscape. I will also consider possible implications of this research on pedagogy and practice within Canadian classrooms for educators and policy-makers.

## Research Questions

1. How is diversity and equity in Manitoban schools addressed and does this include mixed-race students?
2. What are mixed-race students’ experiences with and perceptions of ethnocultural equity in the Canadian secondary school system and how do these experiences impact their personal and collective identity?:
  - Social (relationships with peers and family members)
  - Political (notions of Canadian identity and citizenship)
  - Identity (sense of cultural and racial identity and social positioning)
  - Cultural (influences of related cultural groups and communities)
  - Pedagogical (instructional materials, relationships with teachers, teaching practices and pedagogies, school policies and initiatives)
3. What can educators and teacher-educators learn from this research that could be used toward a more informed and successful practice?

In 2003, the Government of Manitoba published a document that outlined a plan specifically geared toward addressing ethnocultural equity in Education. “Diversity and Equity in Education: An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity” (2003) set out the government’s plan to “help build schools that are committed to social justice, equality, democratic government, equitable economic opportunity for all, intellectual freedom, environmental protection, and human rights” (p. 2). The government put forth two terms that were understood as crucial to establishing the framework for ethnocultural equity: *diversity* and *equity*. The terms were viewed as being mutually dependent: *diversity* is understanding and accepting the uniqueness of all individuals and accepting their differences (acceptance and respect for difference) and *equity* is linked to

equality and social justice and democratic values and therefore is concerned with fairness with respect to educational opportunities, access, and outcomes for all people (and learners in the educational setting). Equity seeks to eradicate barriers to equality by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices (p. 4). More importantly, the government outlining a goal of including anti-racist education training as part of its Safe Schools initiative. It is vital to present these terms in a study of educational practices relating to mixed-race students in a Manitoban context because it is pivotal to address the interplay and interconnectivity of culture and race through an acknowledgment of the experiences of ethnocultural minorities. The existence of the Government of Manitoba’s Action Plan means that my study will not be limited to studies of culture only and will instead expand to also include race relations.

## **Significance of Research**

There have been few studies conducted on the experiences of mixed-race individuals in Canadian society and how these shape their identity formation and racial categorization. There are fewer still on the particular experiences of mixed-race students in public education and their identity formation as influenced by the multicultural policies reflected in schools. Gonzales-Backen (2013) notes in her study, that “ethnic socialization” (ways group membership affects development) may be influenced by teachers, other adults in the community, or the media and that there are no empirical studies that have examined socialization from these sources among biethnic adolescents in the United States. (p. 102). Lopez (2003), also addresses this fact when she writes,

It would also be valuable and interesting to begin using mixed-race heritage information in conjunction with other demographic variables (e.g. socioeconomic status, gender, language use) to see if there are interaction effects, whether we are

studying academic participation of performance, peer interactions in or out of the classroom, experiences with multicultural programming, and such through quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods endeavors.

(p. 35)

This points to the acknowledgement that there is a void in the literature surrounding mixed-race students, their experiences, and identity formation processes that researchers are identifying as necessary. Siddiqui (2011) outlines her position that Canadian mixed-race research should include critical evaluation of the intersection of institutional policy and individual challenges of families and communities. Further, she contends that “more research is necessary to explore trends in mixed-race groups in Canada and the experiences of Canadian mixed-race persons” (p. 269). Talbot (2008) concludes that due to the increasing population of mixed-race individuals, there is an emergent need for literature on mixed-race people. The lack of information, according to Talbot, has resulted in providing little guidance for educators (p. 23). Joshee and Johnson (2007) cite the lack of studies on multicultural education policies in Canada and the United States. They also expose the fact that literature that does exist focuses on defining multicultural education instead of using a critical analysis of what it looks like in practice, how it perpetuates racism and exclusion, and how this impacts students (Introduction). That a critical gaze is required when evaluating multicultural policy implementation in Canadian schools, is tantamount for researchers in the field of mixed-race studies, and this need will hopefully bottom-out in future studies on mixedness and education (Talbot, 2008, 23). This study is timely and significant because the population of mixed-race individuals in Canada is growing steadily and this means that there will also be an increase in the number of mixed-race students in Canadian schools. Because race and cultural considerations are addressed in schools as

multicultural initiatives, policy development and implementation that deals with race and culture must include mixedness and the social and educational complexities it entails.

## Working Definitions and Terms

It is important to have some working definitions that are clearly defined and articulated for the purposes of the study, especially as there is much controversy surrounding the lexicon of terms that pertain to the field of mixed-race studies. According to Caballero, Haynes, and Tickly (2007), it is difficult to come to consensus on the leading terminology used to describe people from mixed racial and ethnic backgrounds (p. 355), due largely to the fact that race considerations are contextual in terms of geographical location, history, and political milieu. The argument is that current terminology and language does not adequately reflect the plurality of mixed experiences implicit in studies of mixed-race (Haynes, Tikly, Caballero, 2006, p. 572). In fact, there is controversy involving questions of whether, given the reality that the conception of mixedness captures such a wide and varied array of experiences, there can be any universal understanding or lexicon. The lexicon has evolved over time, context, and geographical location, including self-created and employed terms generated by people of mixed racial and ethnic backgrounds, to describe their own experiences and social histories (*race bending*), such as “Hapa” to describe being half or part (Pollock, 2012, p. 33). This has spawned scrutiny about the validity of terms used in data collection by researchers in the field (Aspinall, 2009, p. 3). It is noted that the general feeling of researchers, is that categories should be used that reflect the respondent’s own preferred ethnic descriptions of themselves (Aspinall, 2009, p. 8).

The concept of *race* is also questionable. Race is understood by most Critical-Race theorists as a socially derived construct (based in phenotype or biological genetic affiliation and created with socially constructed criteria and association) and therefore is a mutable notion that

changes in meaning over time and context (Lou, Lalonde, Wilson, 2011, p. 79). Additionally, the notion of race is problematic because it infers that there is an essentialist understanding of pure races that is perpetuated through binary social categorization (Aspinall, 2009, p. 3). Some, however, distinguish between race and ethnicity, where race is understood as having “a genetic designation based on phenotypic characteristics” and ethnicity is grounded in establishing a common historical, geographic, and cultural link (Fernandes Williams, 2011, p. 182). Studies of race and ethnicity are difficult, because the two influences are often intertwined and/or mutually exclusive from one another, which further confounds studies that aim to investigate racial identification and categorization. Some theorists, such as Azoulay, argue that the term “mixed cultural” (synonymous in this sense with “mixed ethnic”) assumes that all cultures are equal and does not account for structures and relations of power that are more accurately reflected in the term “mixed-race” (Aspinall, 2009, 6). The term mixed-race is generally considered interchangeable with the terms *multiracial*, *bicultural*, *biracial*, *multiethnic*, *racially mixed*, or *of mixed ethnic origin, ancestry, or heritage* (Mahtani, 2002, p. 71), but it is not without reproach as Aspinall (2009) explains, the historical legacy of the term – make the widespread adoption of mixed-race unattractive to some sociologists and anthropologists” (p. 8).

For this study, I chose mixed-race as the term that I use to describe those of mixed racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. I chose mixed-race because in the literature that I reference, it appears to be the term most widely used by researchers and people of mixed racial and ethnic backgrounds in US and Canadian studies. They are referenced by Michelle Mahtani, who arguably, is the leading researcher in the field of mixed-race studies in Canada. They are also used by Jillian Parag, a graduate student at the University of Alberta who is likely the second mixed-race researcher in Canada. Because many of the terms and concepts pertaining to mixed-

race ontology is contextual, it does not seem fitting to adopt terms more widely used to describe realities in the most other researched locations: the US and Great Britain. *Mixedness* is also a term referred to by Aspinall (2009, p. 5) and Caballero, Haynes, and Tickly (2007), as a catch-all for the “experiences and conceptualization of people from perceived different racial or ethnic backgrounds” (2007, p. 346) and I adopt it as a form of reference for my study as well.

While I note which terms are most frequently used in US and Canadian research, there is considerable research outlining terms that are generally unacceptable for use in the lexicon – these have colonial and racist underpinnings, and are determined based on geographical location, historical, and linguistic significance. Aspinall (2009) goes on to explain that the most offensive terms in recent U.K. studies are: “half-caste,” “biracial,” “dual heritage,” “colored,” “half-breed,” “mixed origins,” “mixed heritage” (p. 7) and Ifekwunigwe’s work in the United States has elucidated that the lexicon is full of “unsatisfactory” terms: “metis/metisse, oscillation, contradiction, paradox, hybridity, creolization, mestizaje, “blending and mixing,” polyglot, heteroglossia, transnationalities, multiple reference points, multiculturalism, so-called multiraciality, “belonging nowhere and everywhere,” endogenous and exogenous roots, and mixed origin” (Aspinall, 2009, p. 5). This is generally in keeping with the Canadian context and some of these terms are not applicable in a Canadian context at all.

For the purposes of this study, in keeping with Root’s 1992 paper and with the fact that I am concerned with Canadian experiences and social reality, I will use the term mixed-race or multiracial to refer to individuals who have and recognize multiple racial ancestries (including biracial) (p. 3). Further, I will refer to *racial identity* as the race with which a person associates and feels a sense of belonging and *racial identity development or formation* and *racial*

*categorization* to describe the process by which the person becomes aware of his/her racial identity and its significance (Fernandes Williams, 2011, p. 183).

## **Context of the Study**

### **Education and Diversity in Canada**

As outlined above, mixed-race is a field of studies that is contextual in terms of the political, cultural, and historical landscape of the place under discussion. Education is one institution that mirrors the society in which it operates. Joshee, Peck, Thompson, Chareka, and Sears (2010) outline the fact that since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, education has been a pivotal institution for the implementation of diversity and multiculturalism in Canada (p. 5). Education has always been a “linchpin in the cog” of cultural diversity, but the value and meaning of the term is what has morphed over time (Joshee, Peck, Thompson, Chareka, Sears, 2010, p. 1). Educational policy reflects a framework that supports “the pluralist ideal”, which means that ethnicities are compartmentalized and forged through difference (Mahtani, 2002, p. 82). This implies an oxymoron: although aiming to perpetuate an ideal that promotes acceptance of difference, because this difference is socially inherent, it continues to contribute to the structural racism that is and has been part of Canada’s history (Taylor, 2008, p. 85).

Education is a provincial responsibility in Canada and each provincial or territorial educational directorate (department of education) has its own local policies and systems for supporting them, which means that in addition to being at different stages in the implementation process of multicultural/anti-racist education, the structural racism and inequity also takes on many forms in different ways. A federal initiative, multiculturalism is an institutional priority that is mandated by the Canadian government for implementation at the local and regional levels (Joshee, Peck, Thompson, Chareka, Sears, 2010, p. 2). All ten Canadian provinces and three

territories have some form of multiculturalism policy that informs how the province interprets and enforces “The Canadian Multiculturalism Act”. Most have authorized legislation informed by provincial and territorial organizational bodies such as secretariats (“2011-12 Annual Report on the Operation of the Canadian Multicultural Act”). Because one of the primary upholders of public policy is Education, most provinces and territories also have policies on equity and diversity in Education, (e.g. “An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity”, Manitoba Education and Youth) that are interpreted by provincial and territorial levels and exercised at local or regional school districts.

### **Mixed-Race and Canadian Education**

While public education is key in the development of students’ identities, understanding of themselves as Canadians, and their expectations of inclusion and opportunity as members of society (Taylor, 2008, p. 84), there is concern in critical educational disciplines, that Canadian educational institutions are unable to adequately address the diverse needs of their students. More specifically, concerns have resounded regarding the contradictions in both public and post-secondary schools in promoting respect for diversity, difference, and equality (Taylor, 2008, p. 81). One of these examples is the direct consequence of what Joshee (2010) terms, “the combination of neoliberal and neoconservative discourses in multicultural education [that have] construct[ed] diversity as a problem [and positioned] minoritized students as having deficits that need to be addressed” (p. 15). Through a model of inclusion, equality is viewed as equal access to opportunity, which presupposes a particular level of education, *white privilege*, and economic status, which Mahtani understands as “Eurocentric values” (Mahtani, 2002, p. 74). The concern is that this means the benchmark is determined by whiteness and mixed-race students are in a very precarious social and educational juncture, because they are not necessarily considered part

of the “minority” group, nor are they considered “majority”, especially as they often view themselves in terms of various ethnic, cultural, national, and racial affiliations (Mahtani, 2002, p. 71). That there is a void of multiracial student experiences in the canon of multicultural education in Canada, will be further elucidated in this study.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that informs this research is Critical Mixed-Race Theory (CMRT) that stresses a critical analysis of the institutionalization of social, cultural, and political structures based on dominant conceptions of race. CMRT has its roots in Critical Mixed-Race Studies, an interdisciplinary field that explores the political, social, and historical processes of racialization and social hierarchies as pertains to mixed-race individuals. One of the prominent dilemmas for mixed-race students arises from the Western binary system that focuses on acceptance of White race and culture as the norm, pitted against *other* races and cultures as marginal or deviant (Reid and Henry, 2000, p. 560). Any theory that considers the particular influences and concerns of mixed-race individuals must therefore contain a critical-race component. Mahtani (2002) addresses the fact that CMRT “emphasizes the importance of analyzing the experiences of those who comprehend, acknowledge, and [af]firm the many racial, cultural, and ethnic threads that make up their ethno-racial identity, including those beyond a black/white [binary] mix” (p. 71). Siddiqui (2011) advocates for an approach that integrates critical awareness of rejection and social exclusion as a function of the appearance, self-identification, spoken language, and other assumptions made by others on the part of mixed-race individuals and calls for the exposure of systems of power and racism that operate within public, cultural, and institutional discourses and spaces (p. 265). CMRT also addresses local and global

systemic injustices rooted in systems of racialization and the salience of race while challenging hierarchies and racialized access to power (p. 257).

CMRT is useful in Canadian education because it begins at the place where multicultural approaches fall short – and works toward the inclusion of mixed-race perspectives into the educational arena. Studies of mixed-race identity formation would be myopic if they did not address the discourse of dominance and oppression that pervades the Canadian educational system. Siddiqui (2011) explains the promise of CMRT:

Critical mixed-race approaches can interrogate the role of race in social hierarchies and subordination, access to power and privilege, systemic oppression, and experiences of exclusion. Critical mixed-race approaches can also take a structural look at the operation of racism and processes of racialization at institutional/systemic, cultural, and individual levels. Such perspectives can validate individual and shared experiences of race-based exclusion and denial, as well as appeal to greater organizing around White privilege and racial oppression. (p. 268)

In order to provide any kind of accurate reflection of matters pertaining to mixed-race studies, an approach must be employed that provides a specific “analysis of power” within a social justice framework. This means an understanding of the heritage of mixed-race persons (including colonialism, cultural imperialism, globalization, culture, and whiteness) (Siddiqui, 2011, p. 268), and CMRT is the most suitable theory and framework through which to understand and inform these studies.

The way I apply CMRT in my research and studies in Education is by exploring the extent to which mixed-race students are positioned by educational policies, their own

conceptions of race and positionality within Canadian society (as reinforced by educational practices), instructional materials, teaching practices and pedagogies, assumptions made by others (based in notions of Canadian identity), social (peer) inclusion and exclusion, home/school relationships and family dynamics, and cultural influences (including language, sense of cultural identity, and community connection). Reid and Henry (2000) explain that “there is a critical need for investigations of mixed-race children in community settings, especially schools and classrooms (p. 570), a fact that is echoed by Cabellero, Haynes, and Tikly (2007), that recognizes a “vacuum in the broader educational research relating to minority ethnic achievement and needs, as well as in the field of “mixed-race” studies” (p. 346). Similar to *Critical Multiculturalism*, CMRT challenges current multicultural theories and is especially aimed at mixed-race experiences and perceptions and challenging the way race is used to determine and perpetuate power structures through public policy, social convention and expectation, and most prominently, Education. These monoliths are intertwined and mutually dependent and must be recognized as such in order to achieve social justice and/or social transformation.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The research examines perspectives on the Manitoban multicultural and anti-racist education experience - its intent, content, delivery, how it is received and interpreted by students of mixed-race, and how it informs the development and formation of the personal and collective identities of these students. The research examines and assesses how the worldviews, experiences, and positioning of mixed-race students are represented in school. The study considers the perspectives and experiences of mixed-race students with specific attention to five factors: social (relationships with peers and family members), political (notions of Canadian identity and citizenship), identity (sense of cultural and racial identity and social positioning), cultural (influences of related cultural groups and communities), and pedagogical (instructional materials, relationships with teachers, teaching practices and pedagogies, school policies and initiatives). I begin my literature review with a brief history of the genesis of multiculturalism in Canada then I move on to provide an understanding of how these aims are mirrored in Education and ways that these do not address specific political and historical concerns. Because my research focuses exclusively on mixed-race students, I will distinguish between multicultural education and more a critical or transformative pedagogical model (antiracist education/critical race pedagogy) and what this looks like applied in a mixed-race context: Critical Mixed-Race Studies/pedagogy. Finally, because my research centers on personal and collective identity development among mixed-race individuals, I offer the ecological model of identity formation that is arguably the most applicable lens through which identity matters are understood regarding the lived experience of mixed-race individuals.

### **Canada’s Multicultural Policy**

Historically, the notion of multiculturalism is linked to “The Québec Act” of 1774 that reinstated the system of civil law and allowed French Canadians to retain their language. The 1867 Canadian Constitution identified the two founding nations (French/English) and accorded Quebec the autonomy to protect its language, religion and tradition of civil law. Jump forward almost two hundred years to 1971, when Prime Minister Trudeau introduced the “Bilingualism Within a Multicultural Framework” policy in the House of Commons and Canada officially became a bilingual and multicultural country. Throughout its history, being a country that officially recognizes linguistic and cultural heterogeneity has been reinforced in many ways: political, social, economic, and religious. In “The Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism” (1971), Trudeau explained the purposes of multicultural policy as promoting a sense of nationalism:

[It is] the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians. Such a policy should help break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies. National unity....must be founded on confidence in one’s own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas.... (Government of Canada, 1969)

Canada is the first country in the world to officially implement a legislative framework for multiculturalism. In addition to formalizing a policy to protect and promote diversity within Canadian society, the policy addressed the rights of Aboriginal peoples and formally supported the use of Canada’s two official languages. The *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* of 1982 became part of the Canadian Constitution and paved the way for multicultural initiatives and practices in all Canadian laws, policies, and institutions (Ghosh, 1996, p. 17). In July 1988, “The Canadian

Multiculturalism Act” was passed which pledged “to recognize all Canadians as full and equal participants in Canadian society” by establishing legislation to protect ethnic, racial, linguistic and religious diversity within Canadian society” and which helped form the pivotal principle around which Canadian identity was to be influenced and preserved. A land “of many faces and cultures”, Canada has become one of the world’s largest receiving countries in terms of immigration (Ghosh, 2004, p. 266). The Canadian population is now made up of millions of people from more than 200 different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, meaning that Canada’s long history of immigration has resulted in a large and burgeoning group of mixed-race people that are struggling to articulate a sense of collective nationalistic identity (“2011 National Household Survey” – Statistics Canada).

### **Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity**

The search to define Canadian identity ultimately leads to comparing and contrasting us with our neighbor south of the border. Because of our close social, political, and economic ties to the United States, there has always been a strong drive to distinguish Canada from its neighbor to the south (Kivisto, 2002, p. 90). In terms of culture, we distinguish ourselves from the *melting pot* model of the United States and adopt instead the *cultural mosaic* model (Kivisto, 2002, p. 85). Ghosh (2004) states that “[multiculturalism] has provided Canada with an identity” (p. 268), and it is one of Canada’s greatest accomplishments (Alladin, 2006, p. 175). In fact, cultural pluralism is entrenched in the very essence of Canadian identity (“The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism”, 1971, appendix).

While a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework has deep vestigial roots within Canadian conceptions of nationhood, it is inherently problematic in that there is no clear

vision as to how these two identities were intended to be reconciled through the development of the fabric of Canadian society and culture (Kivisto, 2002, p. 90). Most specifically, the idea of pluralism and a history of multiculturalism as linked with immigration negates the fact that the region was constituted by three main ethnic groups: The British, the French, and Aboriginal/First Nations peoples (Marakenko, 2010, p. 3). The practice of Multiculturalism has its own set of problems. Application of the policy has been piecemeal and arbitrary across the provinces and territories (Ghosh, 2004, p. 271). Makarenko (2010) asserts:

Because of the different levels of government, Canadian multiculturalism is pursued in a garmented manner, with different governments pursuing different priorities and programs. Hence while there may be an official federal multicultural policy; it is fair to say a true national multicultural strategy does not exist. (p. 3)

In 1975, Saskatchewan was the first province to endorse the policy through its *Multiculturalism Act* and other provinces have followed suit, but what this looks like in practice has widely varied across geographical location and history (Gosh, 2006, p. 19). Philosophically, multiculturalism promotes the ideal of *unity within diversity*. Its main objectives are: (1) to assist all cultural groups to grow and contribute to Canada; (2) to help minority groups overcome cultural barriers so that they can enjoy full participation in Canadian society; (3) to develop healthy intergroup relations, thereby reducing racial and ethnic tension and promoting national unity; and (4) to provide facilities to minority groups for language learning (Ghosh, 2004, p. 269). Multiculturalism does not address societal power imbalances of race, socioeconomic class, gender, language, culture, sexual preference and disability.

## Race Relations in Canada

In 2011, Canada had a foreign-born population of about 6,775,800 people, representing 20.6% of the total population, the highest proportion among the G8 countries. Nearly 6,264,800 identified themselves as a member of a *visible minority group* representing 19.1% of the total population in Canada. Those self-declaring as Aboriginal comprised 1,400,685 or 4.3%. These numbers are growing, but despite these statistics, racial minorities (and First Nations peoples) are still excluded from complete institutional involvement (Ewan Rymer and Alladin, 1996, p. 157). This underscores the inherent racism that exists in access to opportunity in employment, education, and other Canadian institutions and the fact that “[r]acism remains a major problem and different minority groups [still] experience different levels of discrimination” (Ghosh, 2004, 278). As Ghosh contends, despite multicultural initiatives and policy, racism is very much still alive and well and a large number of Canadians hold racist views and there is a large chasm between “political discourse and reality, despite multicultural policies that have been in effect for almost [five] decades” (Ghosh, 2004, 178). It is argued that “whiteness has become invisible,” in Canadian society and that multiculturalism has been applied almost exclusively in practice to non-white groups who are part of the “subordinate ethnic or cultural minorities” (Ghosh, 1996, p. 6). In fact, Kincheloe and Steinberg (2002) cite color blindness in race-related educational and socio-political goals as a deterrent to antiracist practices (p.10). It serves to reinforce the *Vertical Mosaic*, as conceptualized by Porter in 1965 through hierarchy based on ethnicity, class, and gender (Ghosh, 2004, p. 279). In “Deconstructing Whiteness: Pedagogical Implications for Anti-Racism Education” (2014), Bedard understands that an eradication of racism and other oppressions requires an “exploration of white bodies throughout the histories of colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism” (p. 42). Bedard (2014) argues that race is used as a political tool

that is constructed in a historical and contextual environment, to define language, popular culture, and dominant ways of knowing that carry with them privilege and, conversely, disadvantage based on “racial markers” (p. 42). Race, is “coded in discourses of “welfare reform”, “neighborhood schools”, “toughness on crime” and “illegitimate births” instead of being identified as White Privilege and a social construction of power. Bedard (2014) explains that it is impossible to distinguish between racism and white racism because they are synonymous in the Canadian context (p. 45):

I would suggest that many would argue that Canadian identity is white, male, and heterosexual, but they stick to their comfortable position that it is multicultural...Multiculturalism is a trope to satiate non-white peoples while relieving white anxiety and guilt about their colonial and imperial past. (Bedard, 2014, p. 48)

It is clear that there is a strong link between the multicultural agenda and its importance in Canadian education (Ghosh, 2004, p. 263) but what precisely multicultural education looks like the practice is pivotal to the discussion of identity matters.

### **Multicultural Education in Canada**

One of the aims of multicultural education is to focus on identity development at the individual, community, and national arenas (Ghosh, 1996, p. 4) and this implies that educators must consider the links between cultural, ethnic, and social identities and the larger Canadian identity (Ghosh, 1996, p. 8) . This is accomplished through curriculum, assessment and placement, staff development, personnel practices and policy, and community relations (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 13). According to Sefa Dei and Calliste (2000), there is

a marked and distinct difference between multicultural and anti-racist aims in the Canadian context:

Multiculturalism works with the notion of our basic humanness and downplays inequities of difference by accentuating shared commonalities...[It] heralds the mosaic, cherishes diversity and plurality and promotes an image of multiple, thriving, mutually respectful and appreciative ethno-cultural communities. (p. 21)

Mahtani (2014) suggests that multicultural policy is supported and informed by an inauthentic celebration of tradition and heritage and therefore is insufficient to address racism in Canada that presents as inequality of opportunities and stratification that is “tolerated, endorsed, and promoted on the basis of racial and ethnic origins through government-funded celebration of cultural traditions” (p. 112). Further, multicultural education actually perpetuates Whiteness and White Privilege because it does not exist in a cultural vacuum (p. 151) and actually makes invisible the mechanisms that reinforce it (p. 143) through initiatives that focus on unity and developing a sense of Canadianness that does not address ethnocultural diversity or as Mahtani argues, Canada’s colonial history (Mahtani, 2014, p. 244).

### **Multicultural Education in Manitoba**

In Manitoba, the provincial government department that sets the guidelines that are implemented and interpreted by the individual school divisions and educational institutions is Manitoba Education and Training. Manitoba Education introduced a policy on bilingualism in 1979 and this appears to have been the emphasis for the preservation of other heritage languages and English as a second language. In 1983, Manitoba Education sponsored a symposium on heritage languages and this provoked subsequent developments in other areas, such as culture

and ethnicity (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 23). By 1985, work began on forming a multicultural education policy for Manitoba and in 1992, after the publication of Manitoba’s multicultural policy, “Multicultural Education – A Policy for the 1990s” was introduced, that provided the framework for multicultural in Manitoba (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 24). The Manitoban policy statement on multicultural education is informed by three tenets: education for full participation, education for cultural and linguistic development, and education for intercultural understanding (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 30).

In response to the mandate of Manitoba Education, some school divisions throughout the province have formal multicultural policies, but this is often dependent on the composition of the student population in the division’s communities (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 31). School divisions are encouraged to develop their own individual multicultural education policies and implementation strategies as well as provide and develop professional development opportunities and relationships with ethnocultural communities (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 31) and as a result, some school divisions have steering committees, designated personnel (EAL/Aboriginal Education Consultants and Support Teachers) and/or task forces to develop division-wide policies and plans (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 39). However, it is noted that while Manitoba Education and Training policy provides the foundation for post-secondary institutions and school divisions, establishing policy and strategies for implementation is not mandatory and remains a local initiative (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 33). The lack of a legislated multicultural mandate on the part of the province has made its realization inconsistent and fragmented across Manitoba.

In 2003, the Government of Manitoba published a document titled “Diversity and Equity in Education: An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity”. The plan outlined the government’s commitment to promoting diversity and equity in educational policy and practice through the implementation of goals that centered around bringing about cultural and linguistic diversity and equity issues (p. 5). Some of the implications for school divisions were: (1) re-evaluation of ESL/EAL programs; (2) creation and distribution of teacher support documents on diversity and equity in the classroom for compulsory classes (starting with Social Studies); (3) develop and host professional learning series on inclusive schools and teaching for teachers and administrators; and (4) support divisional and school planning to build safe and inclusive schools and anti-racist/anti-bias initiatives (p.10).

There are some inherent problems with the Manitoba Education directive to promote anti-racist/anti-bias initiatives. The focus of the policy document appears to be more linguistically and cultural proficiency orientated instead of clearly elucidating the aim of the document is to eradicate racism in Manitoba schools. Additionally, Manitoba school divisions are at different stages in the development and implementation of multicultural policy. As a result, policies vary in content and emphasis and therefore are not as effective as they could be (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 6). In fact, not all school divisions across the province have acknowledged that multicultural and anti-racist education should be a goal of every school in the division (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 67). In many school divisions, multicultural and anti-racist training sessions are voluntary and “seem to be the exception rather than the norm” (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 42) and what this means, is that there is little monitoring and evaluation being done at the divisional level that can inform a unified direction taken by the Province. The curriculum development that is taking place in terms

of multicultural and anti-racist education is local and mainly enforced with schools in more diverse populations and there is little data on assessment and student placement (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 41).

Zamudio, Russell, Rios, and Bridgeman (2011) argue that “the elements of multicultural education that have been implemented are those which have been acceptable to the dominant group (i.e. those elements of multicultural education which serve the dominant group’s interests)” (p. 113) and that much of the impact that multicultural education has made in schools has “represent[ed] a superficial application of multicultural education in practice” (p. 112). As the Social Council of Winnipeg (1994) identifies, “...while it is nice to appreciate other cultures, activities focused on appreciation barely touch the surface of the real issues. These issues have been identified as racism, discrimination, bias, cultural inappropriateness, intolerance and ignorance” (p. 67). Additionally, Kincheloe and Steinberg (2002) posit that there is a *hidden hegemonic curriculum* that “involves the promotion of a form of cultural tourism that fails to address or understand the harsh realities of race, class, and gender subjugation” (p. 18). Alladin (1996) explains the stagnation of multicultural education implementation as a result of the fact that educational reform and curriculum have shifted toward the political right and therefore, as teachers are under pressure from the ministries of education to cover prescribed material first and foremost; multicultural education is viewed as an additional “burden” (Ghosh, 1996, p. 88).

In the 1990s, Ghosh (1996) identifies teacher education programs as a possible site for transformation. She notes that very few Canadian teacher education programs had attempted integration of multicultural components in compulsory courses and the courses that did exist on multicultural education were elective (p. 85). Today, many teacher training programs have courses specifically aimed at addressing diversity and equity and each institution develops its

own focus and curriculum. Additionally, Ghosh argues that teacher candidates are unprepared to meet the needs of students in multicultural classrooms:

...teacher training institutions behave as if student teachers either do not need, or will be automatically prepared, to deal with the culturally diverse populations in the schools today. The reluctance to respond to changing societal needs has resulted in a non-active and “colour blind” policy by teacher training institutions and, until recently, by teacher unions, school boards, and schools. (Ghosh, 1996, p. 86)

Zamudio, Russell, Rios, and Bridgeman (2011) cite critical awareness of personal bias as pivotal to adoption of a transformative stance in education:

The continued persistence of many teachers’ low expectations for students based on race is especially problematic. However, these teachers often see themselves as colorblind. Their failure to acknowledge that the racial attitudes of the broader society penetrate even their own interactions with minority students prevents them from critically analyzing their own role in the reproduction of social inequality. (p. 110)

Carson (1996) notes that regulation and standardization has been largely responsible for the neglect of the ethnic and cultural diversity that exists within classrooms because it encourages educators to pathologize difference (p. 123) and aim activities and materials at minority students versus the entire student population. In “Towards an Anti-Racism Discursive Framework” (2000), Sefa Dei speaks to the expectations of meritocracy, excellence, ethnocultural neutrality, and “rugged individualism” that are made “normal” through the perpetuation of

Whiteness (p. 28). He claims that academic discussions on race are often avoided, rejected, or erased completely in school settings (p. 30) and that critical examination of race-based hierarchies must take place in order for equity in education to be realized.

### **Antiracist Education**

Although antiracist and multicultural education are often cited together and similarly conceptually conceived in studies and literature relating to critical and transformative pedagogy and practices, these frameworks are not the same philosophically and politically. The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (1994) identifies that “the purpose of multicultural/antiracism education in these two definitions is quite different [and] there often exist dichotomies between ideology and practice...an organization may subscribe to the latter definition, without manifesting it in its organizational behavior (p. 9). In the 1970s, Canadian multicultural education (then in its infancy) attempted inclusion in terms of appreciation of the minority groups’ languages, foods, dress, customs, etc.; what Kincheloe and Steinberg (2002) describe as “cultural tourism” that reinforces a “hidden hegemonic curriculum” (p. 18). However, in the 1980s, the scope of multicultural education expanded to address racism through the creation of anti-racism strategies in schools and other Canadian institutions (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 33). Subsequently, there has been a shift in the terminology and frameworks in Education that deal with multiculturalism: “anti-bias education, anti-racism education, race relations, human relations, ethnic relations, race relations training, anti-racism education, anti-racism discrimination training, intercultural education, cross-cultural education” (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, p. 12).

As a distinct framework, anti-racist education began in Britain in the 1960s and has been implemented in Canada formally in Ontario and British Columbia. Anti-racist education has an equity and social justice focus, specifically on structural and individual discrimination (particularly racism and its relationship with class and gender) and on social reconstruction (Gosh, 1996, p. 34). There is a critical and transformative element to anti-racism education that is not necessarily present in multicultural education. Ewan Rymer and Alladin (1996) identify four factors that should be present in antiracist education: (1) identification of discrimination [and racism]; (2) the role of the teacher and student in this identification; (3) the critical gaze that must be used in this identification; and (4) the importance of entertaining a discourse of possibility. The suggestion is that the fabric of an antiracism education implies controversy and challenge to the *status quo* on the basis of the nature and distribution of power in society (p. 160). What must be studied, is the ability of education to address race relations considerations in a specifically Canadian context. Mahtani (2014) explains:

Scholars in Canada are often overly reliant on American [and British] work on race...Canadian academics are therefore plagued by an insufficient body of knowledge on how race operates in Canada. (p. 31)

In “Why Write Back to the New Missionaries? Addressing the Exclusion of (Black) Others From Discourses of Empowerment” (2000), Kashope Wright refers to the Eurocentric academic tradition of white fathers (p. 126) to describe what he terms “white solipsism”: an implied norming of Whiteness.

Rather than over racism, we are more likely to find white solipsism; instead of blatant homophobia, we would find heteronormativity; instead of explicit sexism and misogyny, we would find patriarchal condescension...tokenism. (p. 134)

Kashope Wright encourages those adopting an anti-racist approach to look critically toward the shortcomings of multiculturalism. Similarly, Ibrahim (2000) appeals to Sefa Dei in that with anti-racism, race and social difference are understood as considerations of power and equity rather than as cultural and ethnic matters (p. 60). In terms of an antiracist curriculum, Alladin (1996) writes:

In an antiracist education curriculum, the attempt is to focus on eliminating racial intolerance, racial injustice, and racial inequality. Besides avoiding ethnic and race stereotyping, textbooks have to address issues such as social stratification and equality of opportunity. The antiracist curriculum does not only enable the teacher to address such vital issues but provides opportunities to empower students of diverse cultures by recognizing their languages, histories, and existence. (p. 5)

The teacher must therefore construct a classroom climate that encourages open sharing of thoughts and ideas, even if they are unpopular or offensive to the teacher and a respectful classroom community (Ewan Rymer and Alladin, 1996, p. 161). The difficulty for educators to adopt an antiracist pedagogy is that it can be viewed as oppositional to the institution of Education: because its aim is to bring about social change, this necessitates the educator being at odds with the very social structure that influences and controls the practice (Ewan Rymer and Alladin, 1996, p. 162). Importantly, Sefa Dei acknowledges that racist practices are not a product of racist intentionality on the part of individuals: “practices may be racist in terms of their effects” (Sefa Dei, 2000, p. 36), and educators must evaluate not only their personal biases but also the possible results of their actions. Continual reflection and challenging of beliefs and

attitudes about one’s own misconceptions, suppositions, biases, and stereotypic beliefs is vital for the antiracist education of students (Ewan Rymer and Alladin, 1996, p. 159). Policy development is the site of the basis for anti-racism education because “policies provide a vision and guide for action. Policy translated into actions gives credibility to the race relations struggle and says that [we want to act]” (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 67). However, it is noted that although there have been measures taken to formulate policies dealing specifically with race relations in Canadian institutions, there has been little significant organization change (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 12) and it is evident that much more work needs to be done both on personal and institutional levels.

Teachers’ attitudes have a great impact on students” (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 17). Ibrahim, in ““Whassup Homeboy?” Black/Popular Culture and the Politics of “Curriculum Studies”: Devising an Anti-Racism Perspective” (2000), talks to the reality that there is the *explicit curriculum* that is the publically sanctioned goals of education: reading and writing, learning the history and geography of a country, and studying Science. There is also the *implicit curriculum* that teachers must acknowledge which is known as the *hidden curriculum* that outlines what students are expect to conform to and follow in terms of cultural practice and expectations and finally there is the *null curriculum*, which is concerned with what schools do not teach and is “left out” of teaching and learning in schools (p. 59). Teachers must also be aware that there are many sites for teachable moments other than classrooms that inform what happens with their practice: homes, hospitals, factories, clubs, school sites (hallways and gyms” (Ibrahim, 2000, p. 57).

Tastsoglou (2000) argues that while classrooms mirror and reconstruct the struggles of the outside society (p. 103), there is the challenge of *borderlands* in a liberatory border pedagogy

(bell hooks), where students and educators can move in and out of borders constructed around difference and power (p. 105). However, border crossings in classrooms are not necessarily sites of resistance because as Tastsoglou explains, ethnic/cultural/minority students may not embrace opportunities for challenging the status quo and may instead remain silent by their own volition (p. 106). Further, Ibrahim (2000) notes that anti-racism pedagogy necessitates creating safe and secure spaces where there is no expectation or pressure that minority or marginalized students act as the “expert”: “[it must] work against a celebratory frame of consuming the other’s voice, knowledge, and cultural way of being” (p. 61).

Without training, many teachers are not equipped to respond appropriately to “problematic behaviors” that are determined and interpreted by the educator’s beliefs and attitudes regarding cultural difference (Ali, 2003, p. 158). The by-product of this is student placement in specialized programs. Instead of, as Sefa Dei (2000) refers to as “pathologizing” the family or home environment as the source of problems that students face in schools (p. 34), involving parents and the home communities in most aspects of the school life through open communication and relationship-building, is another area that helps to serve the needs of students. “Integrating immigrant [Aboriginal] and minority students into Canadian society can be achieved only with the cooperation and involvement of parents. While communication between home and school is always important, it becomes particularly salient in school communities with diverse populations” (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 19). Parents and community representatives must be empowered to share in the common goals of a school community through open constant and consistent dialogue. It is also suggested that having representation of minority groups on staff is supportive of all students and the worldviews of these individuals must be represented in the school community.

In Ali's 2003 study of school practices in Great Britain, she found that although most administrators implemented a whole school approach to antiracist and multicultural practice and that classroom teachers showed a commitment to educating their students about racism, there were differing opinions amongst staff as to what the policies entailed and whether they were effective and what “good practice” looked like (p. 154). Further, there is a disconnect between policy and practice in improving personnel practices, hiring and equal opportunity, providing adequate training, professional development opportunities, and following up on staff progress (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994, p. 18).

### **Critical-Race Theory and Pedagogy**

Critical-race theorists understand that the notion of race is immutable and shaped by social and historical contexts, specifically as a function of colonialism. The general themes of Critical-Race Theory are:

...that racism as a normal daily fact of life in society, and the ideology of racism have been so historically ingrained in political and legal structures as to be almost unrecognizable. Legal, racial designations have complex, historical and socially constructed meanings that insure the location of political inferiority of racially marginalized groups. (Zack, 1993, p. 50)

Zamudio, Russell, Rios, Bridgeman (2001) write that according to Yosso, there are five elements in a critical-race pedagogical framework: (1) acknowledge the central and intersecting roles of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination in maintaining inequality in curricular structures, processes, and discourses; (2) challenge dominant social and cultural assumptions regarding culture and intelligence, language and capability, objectivity and meritocracy; (3)

utilize interdisciplinary methods of historical and contemporary analysis to articulate the linkages between educational and societal inequality; (4) develop counter discourses through storytelling, narratives, chronicles, family histories, scenarios, biographies, and parables that draw on the lived experiences students of color bring to the classroom; and (5) direct the formal curriculum toward goals of social justice and the hidden curriculum toward Freirian education goals of crucial consciousness (p. 92).

Applied practically in the classroom, critical-race curriculum would place discussions of race, its intersections (gender, class, disability, homophobia, culture, language, immigration status, sexual orientation, etc.), and racism at the center of the curriculum (p. 104). Educators are asked to question their worldviews that are developed through their own racial, gender, and class backgrounds and to critically examine the materials used in the classroom and their ideological bias as well as classroom management practices (p. 109). They are also encouraged to present counter stories and challenge students to think critically about what and whose perspectives textbooks represent (p. 103). Also to consider are student placement, what classes are offered and to whom, and whose language and culture are represented in the school (p. 106). Parental and community involvement and relationship building are crucial to a critical-race pedagogy:

A CRT approach would challenge prevailing assumptions about parents, including those that assert parents do not care about education. Instead it would acknowledge the often intimidating nature of schools, the parent's own experiences in school (often not very pleasant), organizational structures (such as the lack of language mediators, child care provisions, transportation challenges, etc.) and economic constraints (such as needing to work more than one job or working during parent-school open house) and explanations for parent's behavior.

It would also seek to understand the ways parents do support their children’s education by way of transmitting cultural knowledge and values. In addition, it would see that cultural assets such as a value of bilingualism and biculturalism, commitment to family and community, and spirituality can support student learning. (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, Bridgeman, p. 112)

Finally, Critical-Race Theory encourages educators to consider the difference between what is being taught and what is being learned and what the function of public education is. This investigation questions what is being taught intentionally as part of the overt curriculum and what is either being suggested through the hidden curriculum or simply left out entirely (null curriculum).

### **Critical Mixed-Race Studies and Pedagogy**

The field of Critical Mixed-Race Studies (CMRS) is a relatively new one despite many decades of established identification of mixed-race individuals and the unique issues related to their experiences and positionality in society. It was only in around 2004 that mixed-race/multiracial studies were identified as a distinct field of academic study and publications on the topic acquired a self-sustaining viability (Daniel, Kina, Dariotis, Fojas, 2014, p. 8). As Daniel, Kina, Dariotis, and Fojas (2014) explain, there is now recognition of an entire field devoted to the study of multiraciality and mixed-race experiences: “mixed-race studies is now being formally defined at a time that beckons scholars to assess the merit of argumentation made over the last 20 years and their relevance for future research” (p. 6). Because of the development of critical mixed-race work, there is a greater ability for individuals who have a critical mixed-race identity to devote energy to developing organizations and institutions that address mixed-

race concerns and challenge the existing racial order based on inequitable power relations (Daniel, Kina, Dariotis, Fojas, 2013, p. 15). It is argued that a study of mixed-race and multiraciality must critically assess unequal power relations and what makes Critical Mixed-Race Studies more transformative in its application is the fact that:

CMRS underscores the mutability of race and the porosity of racial boundaries and categories in order to critically examine local and global systemic injustices grounded in social processes of racialization and social stratification based on race...CMRS interrogates racial essentialism and racial hierarchy. (Daniel, Kina, Dariotis, Fojas, 2014, p. 8)

Jolivéte (2014) also recognizes that critical mixed-race work must extend beyond nationally constructed borders and take a global stance (p. 155). It also recognizes the intersection of racial issues with gender, sex, sexuality, class, and other categories of difference (Daniel, Kina, Dariotis, Fojas, 2014, p. 8). CMRS stresses the critical analysis of the institutionalization of social, cultural, and political structures based on dominant conceptions of “race” and also does not privilege any single identified group:

This involves the study of racial consciousness among racially mixed people, the world in which they live, and the ideological, social, economic, and political forces, as well as policies that impact the social location of mixed-race individuals and inform their mixed-race experiences and identities. (Daniel, Kina, Dariotis, Fojas, 2014, p. 8)

Several Western historical movements have influenced the development of CMRS: the rise of multiculturalism, the identity politics of the 1980s and 1990s, the multiracial movement

regarding the US census, mixed-race identity, and indigeneity. Issues of mixed-race through the lens of CMRS include racial mixing, interraciality, multiraciality, transracial adoption, and interethnic alliances and is also concerned with social justice and antiracism (especially how racial groups and hierarchies are constructed) (Daniel, Kina, Dariotis, Fojas, 2014, p. 23).

The first official journal of Critical Mixed-Race Studies (online) was published in Spring 2014 through the University of California (Santa Barbara). This legitimized the purpose of scholars in this area because there had been no academic journals specifically devoted to the subject of mixed-race and/or CMRS (Daniel, Kina, Dariotis, Fojas, 2014, p. 10) and, as Daniel, Kina, Dariotis, and Fojas contend, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, are emerging as important locations for Critical Mixed-Race Studies as well as cultural productions by and about people of mixed-heritage (p. 27). Although the field is mainly North American in scope, it has transnational implications because, as Jolvi ette (2014) argues, “[c]ritical mixed-race studies scholars must articulate ways of working with multiple groups around the world toward the United Nations declaration on the rights of oppressed groups. This should include plans of actions for dealing with child exploitation, xenophobia, race and religious-based discrimination, a decentralization of borders...” (p. 156).

Critical Mixed-Race Studies is particularly applicable to the institution of Education, because this is one of the primary locations where mixed-race individuals form their identities. According to Jolivi ette (2014), a critical mixed-race pedagogy must include a model that incorporates mixed-race ontology (a theory about existence and reality), epistemology (the study of the nature of knowing or thinking), methodology (a theory of how knowledge is acquired), and axiology (the ethics and morals that guide us in how we acquired knowledge) (p. 155). A formal definition of critical mixed pedagogy is difficult to articulate, but applied in Education, it

has four main components: social justice, self-determination, cross ethnic and transnational solidarity, and radical love. Each component is mutually dependent on the other:

...social justice asserts that all communities regardless of history, socioeconomic circumstance, educational background, health status or national origin require access to the same rights of national and global citizenship as all other bodies. [It]...is about explicitly working to reform laws that privilege certain bodies while marginalizing others...Radical love is about being vulnerable. It is about being unafraid to speak out about issues that may not have a direct impact **(on)** us...[and] should ask how does the work in which we are engaged help to build respectful relationships between ourselves and the others involved in social justice movements...Is what is being shared adding to the growth of the community and is this sharing reciprocal? (p. 155-6)

Critical-Race Pedagogy must incorporate self-reflection and knowledge in “listening and observing the self as well as [self] in relationship to others,” and this has significant implications for educators (Jolivéte, 2014, p. 156). Educators must examine their feelings and biases about mixed- race students and also engage in professional development on the topic (Davis, 2009, 59). Teachers must challenge the myths of interracial families and mixed- race children such as: people who marry into other racial or ethnic groups are perverted, minorities accept [mixed-race] children better than non-minorities, interracial marriages more often end in divorce, the fact that the child is [mixed-race] is a far more noteworthy difference than any other individual difference (ability, gender, giftedness), and that this difference will result in a more negative impact than what other children experience (Davis, 2009, p. 59).

Educators must make a concerted and knowledgeable effort to alter school curriculum and the classroom culture to recognize students who come from mixed-heritage backgrounds by examining the representation of culture and race in chosen texts, critically analyze what is included and excluded from the curriculum, weave mixed-heritage experiences and worldview into the curriculum, and encouraging the option of mixed-heritage as viable, wherever possible (Wallace, 2001, p. 157).

Incidents that involve prejudice and abuse based on language, ethnicity, or culture, must be framed as racism and dealt with accordingly (Ali, 2003, p. 153). Creating a community that exposes what we do not know about race, what we do not accept about racism, and what we must confront about racial privilege, is at the core of developing a Critical Mixed- Race Pedagogy and must be at the forefront of our work with mixed-race students.

## **Mixed-Race and Identity Formation**

It is clear that there is no homogenous experience or sense of unified identity among mixed-race individuals as being part of a defined and recognizable racial, cultural, or ethnic social group. However, it is argued that despite these complications, their multiple heritage and non-monoracial experiences can constitute a common ground and sense of shared collectivity (Wallace, 2001, p. 120). Daniel, Kina, Dariotis, and Fojas (2014) present the idea that among multiracial individuals, there is an emergent collective subjectivity, connecting social and geographical locations, that is based in their backgrounds, experiences, and identities (p. 17). Zack (1993) argues that mixed-race consciousness is not legitimized by the current social racial categorization model that simply *others* anything that does not fit within the prescribed norm. She points out that “[if the system] does not permit the identification of individuals in the third

person, as mixed-race, then it is impossible for them to have mixed-race identities in the first person” (p. 4).

For much of the history of the identification of mixed-race individuals, a sense of identity has been created based on a negative relationship to social norms and expectations. As Davis (2009) states, “[as] late as 1944, scientists still published work on the degeneracy of “mixed bloods” filled with theories of the maladjusted or “marginal” man...” (p. 33). Additionally, most of the literature about mixed-race children was written about children who had been referred to psychologists and sociologists, and therefore the pool of subjects was too specific and there was pre-established bias on the part of researchers (Quillian and Redd, 2009, p. 281). “New wave” research in the United Kingdom challenges the traditional view of the “marginal” or “pathological” nature of mixed-race and instead emphasizes the influence of social variables on identity development (Haynes, Tikly, Caballero, 2006, p. 570). It replaces the stereotype of the marginal person with positive and celebratory perceptions of mixedness that demonstrate that people of mixed-race are beginning to perceive their identities as fluid and multiple. More importantly, these identities are stable but change over time (Caballero, Haynes, and Tikly, 2007, p. 346). As Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) posit, identity development is not a static process that occurs based on a single interaction, but progresses over a series of extremely complex and coded social interactions (p. 5) and therefore, the journey of how a mixed-race individual arrives at racial self-understanding and awareness, is vital to making sense of the process of identity formation (p. 19).

The five areas that have been articulated for the purposes of this study: social, political, identity, cultural, and pedagogical, have been based on Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) model of human development where there are five influences that impact the developing child: (1) the

**microsystem** – family, school, peer group (for this study, the “social”); (2) **mesosystem** – interactions between the members of the microsystem in various settings (teachers and families) (the pedagogical); (3) **exosystem** – interactions and processes between two settings, one of which does not directly involve the developing person but influences their immediate environment (home life and a parent’s social community) (the cultural); (4) **macrosystem** – the culture or subculture that is embedded in and reinforced by the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem (knowledge, customs, and beliefs of the dominant culture or subculture) (identity); and (5) **chronosystem** – the impact of time on development (the fact that identities of mixed-race individuals are fluid and change over time according to sociohistorical context) (the political).

Influenced by Bronfenbrenner’s model of human development, Maria Root’s “Ecological Framework for Understanding Racial Identity” (2002) (Appendix E) is cited as the most widely accepted model of racial identity development for mixed-race individuals (Winn Tutweiler, 2015, p. 66) and appeals to various “screening lenses” used to interpret experiences and contexts that influence racial identity constructions over the individual’s life. Root suggests that the generational and geographical history of race, sexual orientation, gender, class, (family and community influences, individual influences (physical appearance and phenotype), and multiple and diverse racial identities) are facets of the “screening lenses” and have been streamlined into the five areas that are investigated in this study.

**Social** (relationships with peers and family members)

Racial identity comes about through a social process that is determined by particular ideas about race, the constraints of physical appearances, and the interactions that take place

between mixed-race individuals and others (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 18). Identity is the way we understand ourselves in relation to others and our social environment (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 4) and two of the most influential relationships children develop are those with their families and their peers or friendship networks. Reid and Henry (2000) present the reality that mixed-race children's attitudes and perceptions about race develop differently from children of mono-racial families (p. 567). Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) identify three important factors in how parents of mixed-race children socialize their children: individual parental factors, the quality and nature of the relationship between the parents, and how the parents respond to their children's physical appearance (p. 62).

Brunsma's 2005 study explores the reality that children begin to develop recognition of race and racial difference as early as 3-4 years of age and that parental socialization influences this process (p. 1133). Motoyoshi (2003) argues that the child's ability to form a stable and coherent identity is a result of parental attitudes toward the child's race and to race issues in general (p. 79). Wallace (2001) argues that parents' orientations toward their own heritages have a significant influence on how mixed-race children form ethnic group memberships (p. 153). How parents understand and interpret their own racial identity plays an important factor in how they raise their children (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 66) and the values and attitudes regarding racial identity that they pass on to their children.

One complication for mixed-race children is that historically, society has not supported or acknowledged the existence of mixed-race families and in many cases, mixed-race lineage may be fraught with personal trauma and tragedy. Many mixed-race individuals who are *first generation* do not have any family members with whom they are able to identify (Zack, 1993, p. 69) and mixed-race individuals continue to exist along the margins of society (and their families)

where there is no clear community of mixed-race people or an ideology of a distinct mixed-race experience that can be offered with which to develop a positive and cohesive sense of self-identity. Additionally, mixed-race children generally have no parent with whom they can identify with as a mixed-race person (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 61). On one end, parents who are visible minorities reinforce their worldviews and experiences with their mixed-race children and on the other, the *invisibility of whiteness* can lead white parents to feel that issues of *color* are not relevant to them or their children (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 67).

Further, Siddiqui (2011) argues that family structure (whether the parents are together, presence of siblings, and attitudes of extended family) are critical factors to consider when working with mixed-race individuals (p. 264). She goes on to explain that extended family members may have been against the interracial relationship of the parents of mixed-race children and this may have resulted in negative and possible hostile treatment of the children and conflict between the family members and the parents of the children (p. 264). Further, as Escudero (2012) explains, there may be external negation of the legitimacy of mixed-race family relationships:

Questions from outsiders such as “is that your son?” or “is that your mother?” are not uncommon experiences for those in mixed marriages or for “monoracial” parents who are seen with multiracial children, in which case the children are mistaken as not theirs (p. 86).

Fernandes Williams (2011) discusses the reality that many parents of mixed-race children “are sometimes not clear on the direction to take with their children and may [need] the support and advice of well-trained social workers and professionals” in order to socialize their children to meet the realities of society (p. 181). Lorenzo-Blanco, Bares, and Delva (2013) investigate the

fact that parents who are not racial or ethnic minorities or mixed-race themselves may not have the tools or understanding to guide and assist their children and so mixed-race children may feel unsupported or not understood (p. 127) and as Nadal, Sriken, Davidoff, Wong, and Mclean (2013) explain, this may have negative consequences of feeling isolated by peers, communities, and also families which may result in issues of self-esteem and well-being (p. 192). It is incumbent on parents of mixed-race children to acknowledge that their children are members of a racially stigmatized and marginalized group and this may lead to incidents of racism and rejection. Further, it is important to teach and reinforce strategies to effectively deal with and respond to racism and social invalidation (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 129). *Talking race* means teaching children the lexicon and grammar that defines *race talk* and practicing these in multiple contexts in order to become fluent.

Another family influence on the identity development of mixed-race children is their siblings. Siddiqui (2011) discusses her 1994 study, where she found that tensions can arise between siblings who have different access to white privilege because of their appearance based on a phenomenon titled *shadeism* and particular siblings' abilities to *pass* as white or being favored for their whiter appearance (p. 264). Talbot's 2008 study found that when asked about their families and siblings, one of the most common responses was how their physical appearances reflected those of their parents (p. 27). In fact, Talbot (2008) discussed phenotypical characteristics as being an important factor in racial identification:

From an early age, all participants could place themselves along a continuum of skin color, hair texture, eye shape, and facial structure. No matter how they identified themselves internally or to others, participants were still labeled by their

physical appearance. This constant external labeling came from family, close friends, teachers...[and] random strangers. (p. 27)

Nadal, Sriken, Davidoff, Wong, and Mclean (2013) discuss micro-aggressions that take place among mixed-race families and that have a direct and negative impact on mixed-race children: (1) isolation within the family; (2) favoritism; (3) questioning authenticity; (4) denial of mixed-race identity and experiences; and (5) not learning about family heritage or culture (p. 195).

A major influence for children in identity development is their peer and friendship relationships. The messages mixed-race children receive from peers and friends about race and racial identity shape their sense of who they are and their place in the world (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 102). Peer relationships are the main locations where conflicts around racial identity are created (Wallace, 2001, p. 157) and, as Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) attest, peers and friends assist the mixed-race child to form his/her social identity because they can accept or reject the child's racial identity and in this vein, can reinforce or undermine the racial socialization children receive at home (p. 104).

Quillian and Redd also noted that mixed-race people generally form more diverse friendship networks than their single-race peers, a phenomenon called *bridging* (p. 281). Peer acceptance is cited as a particular issue for multiracial people, especially in adolescence, where “in response to race-based peer rejection...multiracial children commonly either socially isolate themselves or overconform to peer pressure to find acceptance” (Quillian and Redd, 2009, p. 281). Gonzales-Backen's 2013 study found that physical appearance has implications for peer relations, specifically mixed-race individuals are likely to choose and be accepted into peer

groups that are based on the group that the individual most closely physically resembles (p. 102). Rockquemore and Laszloffy's 2005 study pointed to the fact that mixed-race girls' sense of self-identity is more linked with their appearance than mixed-race boys (p. 134) and that they experienced more ridicule and rejection around their hairstyles, body size, eye color, eye shape, and bust size, and that this was especially damaging to their sense of positive esteem (p. 138). Schlabach (2013) discusses the fact that adolescence is a pivotal time in a mixed-race individual's life where racial identity becomes especially important. She notes that with romantic relationships especially, young people begin to distinguish themselves from their peers and try to position their racial heritage (p. 157).

**Political** (notions of Canadian identity and citizenship)

Identity is based on the interplay of many elements such as race, gender, nationality, and sexual orientation. Each individual has several social identities (gender, ethnicity, class) that have implications at the political and social/cultural levels, such as being seen as minority and/or being marginalized (Ghosh, 1996, p. 7). Institutional racism includes the practices, policies, procedures, and culture of social institutions that deny racially identified groups from equal access, opportunities, and treatment (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 46). Zamudio, Russell, Rios, and Bridgeman (2011) argue that schools typically reproduce the inequalities that they strive to break down insofar as policies and practices reinforce these ideologies in overt and covert ways (p. 97). One such way is the *hidden curriculum* that makes the experiences of mixed-race students invisible and absent from school (Wallace, 2001, p. 157). As discussed earlier, Ibrahim (2000) makes distinction between the explicit curriculum, implicit curriculum (hidden curriculum) and null curriculum, which can be especially insidious. Ali (2003) explains

that there is a void in the school and classroom culture in terms of mixed-race consciousness and experiences:

Children *are* learning about 'race' in school, but multiple positionalities such as 'mixed-race' are missing from curricula, activities and practices. The subject of 'mixed-race' arises in classes in an informal way if it is spoken of at all. (p. 165)

Reid and Henry (2000) argue that a mixed-race student must be encouraged to both identify how he/she fits into society but also to understand him/herself as an agent of social change, necessitating critical awareness and the skills necessary to bring about social transformation (p. 578). Talbot (2008) argues that concepts of race and culture are shaped by the sociopolitical issues within a country (p. 25). Mahtani's 2002 study revealed that questions of national belonging and identity are key components to Canadian mixed-race individual's sense of identity (p. 81). Taylor's 2008 study revealed that many of her respondents identified Canada's cultural diversity and multicultural policies as a key influence in their identity formation and their position as Canadians citizens. Taylor notes that while the study participants believed that individuals had the freedom to claim their personal sense of self-identity, there were contradictions in the educational system and multiculturalism's aims of diversity, difference, and equality and their ability to claim this sense of identity (p. 84). She further contends that because Canada is primarily a "white" nation of English and French culture and language, visible minorities are singled out for ethnic contributions to Canada's cultural mosaic such as food, traditions, and clothing are considered those "with culture" and are assumed to be a homogenous group that comes from elsewhere and shares these experiences and influences (p. 85). Taylor quotes Mahtani (2002) as asserting that "the ideology of multiculturalism creates a

burden of hyphenation where one is seen as not solely ‘Canadian’ but ‘Canadian and fill-in-your-ethnic background’” where mixed-race people must often develop their sense of social identity as a recognized mono-racial and hyphenated “other” identity (p. 85), which positions mixed-race individuals as “doubly different, doubly strange, and doubly foreign” (p. 86). Siddiqui (2011) explains this phenomenon in terms of whiteness: “...being not White or not fully White means you are not real Canadian, you must be from elsewhere and this view flies in the face of the reality that many of her participants reported that mixed-race identities are part of multiculturalism and are therefore intrinsically Canadian” (p. 262).

Mahtani (2002) identifies that for Canadian mixed-race individuals, the process of identification as a Canadian is fraught with contradictions and underlying and oftentimes covert Eurocentric values and power relations and for many, “their self-definitions of ‘mixed-race’ identity included various ethnic, cultural, national, and racial affiliations” (p. 71). Identity, as Mahtani explains, is linked to a *politics of location* with racialization shifting in different contexts (p. 75). Further, Mahtani identifies moments where the reality of living in Canada as a mixed-race person challenges the immutable notion of Canadian identity where “one can both embrace a sense of country and still unveil the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance” (p. 82).

**Identity** (sense of cultural and racial identity and social positioning)

Just like the field of mixed-race studies, the importance of the fact that mixed-race individuals form a sense of identity differently than mono-racial people is a relatively new phenomenon. Okitikpi and Goodyer (2007) cite questions about identity, classification, and how people of mixed-race fare in a socially constructed binary world where it is assumed that one

must be either white [or other] (p. 63). Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) suggest that identity models that incorporate a *one size fits all* approach to racial identity development do not accurately reflect that life experiences of mixed-race people and further that adopting such an approach is actually harmful when those who do not conform to this model do not fit (p. xi-xii). Pollock (2012) identified that when asked, “what are you?” or “what are you mixed with?”, students in her study described their racial identity using one or multiple simple race terms or race categories. Pollock elucidated that use of these race labels, as dominant descriptive tools, pointed to the fact that single race categorization was too pervasive a social construct to be escaped (p. 40). Lou, Lalonde, and Wilson (2011) posit that in their study of mixed-race individuals and racial identity, the fact that a significant proportion of the sample whose identity was invalidated is indicative of the fact that race is socially constructed and while seemingly based in biological factors, is in fact based almost exclusively on social meaning and therefore is determined based on social norms (p. 86). Further, self-identifying as “mixed-race” creates a new and separate category that is neither one race nor another [nor an in between] but instead a blending of many racial ancestries (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 24). Ali (2003) describes the “in-between” or “third” space that is conceptualized by Homi Bhabha. This reflects Tastsoglou’s (2000) understanding of borderlands or the importance of students and teachers in educational settings to become border crossers who move in and out of socially constructed and perpetuated borders.

Another issue is the fact that the term “mixed-race” is not always accepted as a legitimate category of racial identification. When a child self-identifies as “mixed-race,” this may be validated, challenged, or outright rejected (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 122). Experiences with validation and/or rejection play a critical role in the process of identity

formation and racial identity development, and also contribute to the overall wellness of mixed-race people (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 10). Racial categorization is problematic when: bodily features are ambiguous, the classifier has information about the individual that complicates categorization based solely on appearance, the individual's secondary and tertiary cues (such as language or dress) do not fit the preconceived ideas about a particular racial group. Any one of a combination of these factors can lead to conflict. Further, Lou, Lalonde, and Wilson (2011) argue that developing a validated or invalidated identity may be difficult for mixed-race individuals in social contexts where others do not perceive them as they see themselves (p. 81). Wallace (2001) cites the fact that physical appearance is linked to ethnic group membership and clarification of racial ambiguity often reinforces the importance of physical appearance in racial categorization (p. 154).

*Passing* is a phenomenon that is especially relevant to mixed-race individuals in racial categorization and historically refers to an individual who has a non-white identity but who pretends to be white for various social and economic advantages. This had specific implications in the United States historically because of the *rule of hypodescent*, where multiracial people were relegated immediately to the group of the lower-status parent (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 6). Talbot's 2008 study found that mixed-race individuals began to question their belonging to racial communities that represented their heritage if they were not openly accepted by these communities (p. 28). Motoyoshi (2003) found that geographical community also made a difference for mixed-race individuals:

...the surroundings respondents live in made a significant impact not only on how they identified, but also on how well they adjusted to their chosen racial identification. Being raised in a multiracial neighborhood most often resulted in

positive reinforcement and ease of acceptance of an interracial identity, while youth spent in a uniracial, especially predominantly White, neighborhood, generally made adjustment to a multiracial identity rather difficult and uncomfortable (p. 80).

Root (1998) speaks to the possibilities of identities that supersede race (such as military or religious affiliation) (p. 245). Song (2010) also discusses the fact that studies of mixed-race individuals and families must not assume that racial lines of difference are more meaningful or significant than other modes of belonging and identification (such as ethnic, religious, or regional forms of belonging) (p. 340). She finds that being mixed-race is only one and not always a very central part of who mixed-race individuals perceived themselves to be (Song, 2010, p.

Tizard and Phoenix (2002) argue that racialized identities (like social identities) are not fixed and are subject to change throughout the life course. Caballero, Haynes, and Tickly (2007) consider that "new wave" accounts of mixedness support the reality that mixed-race individuals perceive their identities as fluid and multiple, however this paradigm is problematic in how society perceives and responds to this mixedness (p. 346). Root proposes four ways to resolve internal conflict with identity formation: (1) acceptance of the identity society assigns; (2) identification with both groups; (3) identifications with a single racial group; and (4) identification as a new racial group (p.15). Root (1998) presents her notion of an "Ecological Model of Racial Identity Development" that considers the macro lenses of gender, class and regional history of race and the micro lenses of inherited influences (given names, languages spoken in the home, phenotype, cultural values, sexual orientation, personal traits) and social environments (home, school work) to filter the daily experiences of mixed-race individuals (p.

238). Root posits that the ecological model of racial identity development acknowledges that while there are different ways that mixed-race people identify themselves, these may be situational and changeable throughout the life cycle and does not follow a linear path (Root, 1998, p. 240). In terms of racial identity models, Lou, Lalonde, and Wilson argue that these are socially constructed and fluid and dynamic, depending on context (p. 81).

### **Cultural** (influences of related cultural groups and communities)

Rockquemore and Laszoffy (2005) explain that when children are in a largely socially homogenous environment, they become oriented toward the group of people they interact with regularly (p. 90) and also the relationships that they develop as a function of these interactions (p. xii). In terms of their heritage communities, mixed-race children have differing experiences, which has a direct impact on their ethnic identity development (Wallace, 2001, p. 154). The factors that influence these experiences and set them apart from single-heritage children, are that mixed-race children must constantly navigate between cultural contexts and may experience marginalization from one or all of these heritage communities and it is through interactions with peers and family members within these heritage communities, that mixed-race children develop a sense of their relative status (Wallace, 2001, p. 155). One element that mixed-race individuals point out, is that their ethnic and racial identities are formed through mobility where they negotiate group boundaries while traveling between heritage communities. As a result, mixed-race individuals learn to adapt to the cultural norms and expectations of each group. However, mixed-race individuals are often marginalized by one or both heritage communities and this may mean that their loyalties and legitimacy are “tested” by members of their peer and community groups as well as their families (Wallace, 2001, p. 120). Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005)

argue that “stepparents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, or people not related by blood or marriage can influence children’s socialization, thereby increasing the potential for them to receive conflicting messages about race and feel trapped between competing loyalties (p. 73). Further, they discuss the fact that attempting to “fit” into these communities places mixed-race children at risk of being rejected by both groups (p. 80).

The experiences of mixed-race individuals lead them to adopt a positive attitude toward ethnic and race relations in the sense that they view themselves as *bridges* between heritage communities and/or as able to more easily deal with multiple perspectives. Some mixed-race individuals also understand that their unique positionality allows them to honor their cultural roots.

**Pedagogical** (instructional materials, relationships with teachers, teaching practices and pedagogies, school policies and initiatives)

Schools are one of the main locations where mixed-race children develop a sense of racial identity through the interplay of physical appearance, behavior (how they present themselves racially) and teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, biases, and response behaviors towards them (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 95). It is clear that mixed-race students have unique developmental concerns and experiences and that educators must become aware of these differences in order to meet the needs of these students (Osei-Kofi, 2011, p. 251). It is suggested that teachers’ attitudes and behaviors toward mixed-race children are determined by their physical appearance and racial self-presentation (racial identity, clothing choice, affective expression style, and language usage) (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 94). Further, some barriers to academic achievement for mixed-race students are connected to low expectations of

teachers based on a stereotypical perception of students’ “confused” identities and fragmented and unsupportive home environments and teacher, peer, and societal understanding of mixedness in general (Caballero, Haynes, and Tikly, 2007, p. 348).

Fernandes Williams (2011) points to the fact that while teachers are aware of the presence of multiracial students, they do not necessarily adapt their teaching to them. In fact, she reports that in her study, when they learned that a student was *mixed*, they tend to not pursue further discussion of this fact (p. 191). Fernandes Williams explains this phenomenon in terms of: (1) lack of awareness of the student’s experiences; (2) failure to incorporate knowledge of mixed-race individuals in the curriculum; and (3) tendency to categorize *mixed* students as monoracial (p. 190). In fact, none of the parents she spoke with remembered teachers speaking with them about race in general or attempting to learn more about their experiences (p. 191).

There is almost a total neglect of mixed- race students in educational policy and mixed-race students remain largely invisible at school in terms of identification and monitoring or support and strategies to raise academic achievement (Caballero, Haynes, and Tikly, 2007, p. 352). Therefore, it is crucial that educators critically examine the nature of social relationships and the curriculum at the school and classroom levels and their responsibility to either support or challenge them and encourage their students to do the same (Wallace, 2001, p. 156).

Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) contend that individual racism in education is typically illustrated by differential teacher expectations (p. 47) and while many educators take a critical stance in understanding race relations in education in general, many are not confident in addressing these in the classrooms setting (Ali, 2003, p. 144). Further, Museus, Lee and Lambe’s 2011 study on postsecondary student experiences highlights the fact that while educators at different levels are able to objectively challenge race issues, there are still difficulties with

engaging in racial dialogue and activism, what Museus, Lee, and Lambe term *racial dissolution*: where a student’s passion for addressing racial problems and issues is diminished or extinguished by environments that overtly or subtly discourage these activities (p. 22). Racial dissolution can lead to students “giving up,” feeling confused, frustrated, discouraged, apathetic, and/or hopeless (p. 23). This leads to what Caballero, Haynes, and Tikly (2007) identify as *double invisibility*: mixed-race students continue to not be visible in the curriculum and recognized through other interventions as are other visible minorities (p. 355). Wardle (2000) explains the phenomenon in terms of:

...a lack of familiar visual images in textbooks and materials, no interracial doll families,; posters, marketing and public relations materials, and parents handouts that ignore them; and counseling intervention that often insists that multiracial and multiethnic students embrace the heritage of the parent of color or of one parent of color. (p. 70)

Caballero, Haynes, and Tikly (2007) discuss the tension that exists between the positive perceptions that students and their parents had of their mixed-race identity and the unsupportive attitudes they encountered on the part of teachers, peers, and society (p. 347). In their 2006 study, Haynes, Tikly, and Caballero identify a deep-seated belief among educators that mixed-race students are expected to suffer from identity problems, low self-esteem, and manifest these in delinquent behavior (p. 576).

Mixed-race students are reported as feeling left out during holidays and celebrations dedicated to single identity groups especially when they are forced to celebrate the heritage of one parent while rejecting the heritage of the other (Wardle, 2000, p. 71). In Pao, Wong and

Teuben Rowe's 1996 study, they find that participants felt that teachers had a lack of cultural and racial sensitivity and knowledge which accounted for students' sense of isolation (p. 628).

Mixed-race issues must be infused into the entire curriculum and teachers must not only engage their students in discussion of the physical differences of racial groups but also discussions of racial oppression (Reid and Henry, 2000, p. 572). This is a top-down process and begins with a school's leadership team (p. 91). Zamudio, Russell, Rios, and Bridgeman (2011) note that there is an important distinction in how students' behavior is addressed in the classroom: often the most assertive approaches to discipline are used with students of color while the reverse is true with white students (p. 108). The physical structure of the classroom also determines the interactions that students have with each other and the teacher (p. 107). Additionally, it is important for educators to assess the posters, artifacts, messages, and slogans that are displayed in the classroom and school (p. 107) as well as the content and delivery of standardized assessments as an accurate and objective measure of student learning (p. 91).

Finally, the visibility of teachers of color as well as mixed-race educators is vitally important to the positive identity development of mixed-race students (p. 105). Wardle (2000) corroborates this contention (p. 69). What this means is that there should be more mixed-race and/or visible minority staff members and this should be a priority for Human Resources departments in terms of staffing.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter discusses the shape and scope of the study and an explanation of and justification for the particular methodological framework and theoretical lens chosen. I begin by grounding the study in the research problem or question and move forward to present the conceptual framework of the study (including theoretical lens), the research design (including participants and ethical considerations, data sources, database and data handling), and finally my plans for analysis of the data (trustworthiness of the study, and specific strategy for analysis).

### Research Problem/Questions

The study explores the extent to which secondary mixed-race students are positioned by Education, their own conceptions and interpretations of race and positionality within Canadian society (as established and reinforced by educational practices), assumptions made by others (founded in expectations derived by Canadian identity), social (peer) inclusion and exclusion, home/school relationships and family dynamics, and cultural influences (including language, sense of cultural identity, and community connection). The study examines the influences of social (relationships with peers and family), political (notions of Canadian identity and citizenship), identity (sense of cultural and racial identity and social positioning), cultural (influences of related cultural groups and communities), and pedagogical (instructional materials, relationships with teachers and staff, teaching practices and pedagogies, school policies and initiatives) in establishing how these experiences impact students' sense of personal and collective identity. The research explores the extent to which the policies that exist in Canada in general and Manitoba in particular address the worldviews, experiences, and positioning of mixed-race students in Canadian society and consider the implications for educational policy and

practice. There are five main areas that the study explores: social, political, identity, cultural, and pedagogical. These areas are articulated and conceptualized in my study through consideration of Maria Root’s “Ecological Framework for Understanding Racial Identity” (2002) is arguably the most comprehensive model of racial identity development for mixed-race people (Winn Tutweiler, 2015, p. 66) and involves multiple “screening lenses” that mixed-race individuals use to interpret experiences and situations that influence racial identity constructions which shift in importance over the individual’s life. Root suggests that the generational and geographical history of race, sexual orientation, gender, class, (family and community influences, individual influences (physical appearance and phenotype), and multiple and diverse racial identities) are facets of the “screening lenses” and have been streamlined into the five areas that are investigated in this study.

#### Research Questions:

1. How is diversity and equity in Manitoban schools addressed and does this include mixed-race students?
2. What are mixed-race students’ experiences with and perceptions of ethnocultural equity in the Canadian secondary school system and how do these experiences impact their personal and collective identity?:
  - Social (relationships with peers and family members)
  - Political (notions of Canadian identity and citizenship)
  - Identity (sense of cultural and racial identity and social positioning)
  - Cultural (influences of related cultural groups and communities)
  - Pedagogical (instructional materials, relationships with teachers, teaching practices and pedagogies, school policies and initiatives)

3. What can educators and teacher-educators learn from this research that could be used toward a more informed and successful practice?

For the purposes of this study, the notion of *diversity* (the understanding that each individual is unique and recognizing and respecting our respective differences) will fit under the mandate of multicultural education policies and practices and *equity* (concern for equality and social justice in a democratic society by removing barriers to equality by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices) falls under the purview of ethnocultural equity (anti-racist education and race relations, and critical pedagogy).

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Qualitative Research Design**

This study is grounded in a qualitative approach, with special attention to the multiple case study method. Additionally, the study is phenomenological in its scope as it investigates a phenomenon (mixed-race identity formation) through the lived experience of participants. I chose a qualitative study because most of the work related to mixed-race individuals is qualitative in nature (Mahtani, 2014, p. 63). This framework is pertinent because it allows a more personal and in-depth understanding of the complexities of the participants' experiences in order to gain a more purposeful understanding of how these experiences impact their identities. In deciding specifically which type of research methods and tools to use, I read Creswell's work on qualitative research design. Creswell (2007) explains that a qualitative study is especially useful where what is needed is a complex detailed understanding of an issue that is obtained solely with talking directly to individuals who have experience with the situation or phenomenon being studied. Having the ability to contextualize their stories, the inquiry is made more personal in

scope (p. 40). I felt that because my research involved the lived experiences of a specific group or people in particular contexts, it would be important to allow my respondents to be able to tell their stories and explain their experiences in a way that would allow me to interact with them by asking questions for clarification or providing them the opportunity to include information that was not directly requested by the interview protocol. It is the researcher who collects and analyses the data through various tools that he/she has chosen. The data tools are specifically geared toward the situation and individuals or groups: they may consist of interviews, observations, and investigation of personal and pertinent found documents and artifacts. In this study, I felt that interviews involving artifacts that were self-selected were the most pertinent because the artifacts would allow for a starting point for participants to recount their experiences and show me what they meant by certain references. The research begins with determining a problem or issue that should be resolved, an understanding of the best group of population that can provide data related to the issue, the identification of a theoretical lens for examination of the data, and identification of specific themes to make sense of the positioning of the participants with respect to the specific issue or situation of interest (p. 37). The nature of my theoretical lens is critical. As Creswell elucidates, there is also a more critical lens to qualitative research design because the aim of qualitative research is to empower individuals to “share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power [dynamics]” that may exist in other types of studies (p. 40). He advocates for the opportunity to conduct the research in a “natural” setting where issues of artificiality and power dynamic between researcher and participant is avoided. Creswell focuses on allowing “silenced voices” the opportunity to be heard and by empowering respondents through addressing concerns of gender differences, race, economics, status, and individual difference. My interviews were generally structured based on the interview protocol but had the

ability to take their own shape if the participant wanted to discuss a topic that was not directly addressed in the interview questions or provide examples that may not have been directly requested by the questions. In this sense, although there was a format, the interview was able to be participatory. One of the ways that qualitative research has the capacity to be participatory is the focus on participant involvement in developing the research plan and/or refinement and review of the data as a living and growing process. In this vein, Hancock and Algozzine (2006) understand a qualitative approach to be particularly useful in allowing the researcher to understand the situation being studied from the participants' perspective (*emic*, or insider's perspective) (p. 8). Qualitative research methods were chosen because of their personal and critical nature. The study requires that the researcher is able to study the context under which participants address considerations that affect them as well as be informed by emergent data in order to better make sense of the phenomenon of personal and collective identity formation based on social, cultural, identity, political, and pedagogical factors that are reinforced and reflected by their experiences as students. I felt that because I chose qualitative research tools, this allowed me to collect very rich data.

### **Multiple Case Study**

A multiple case study allowed me to elicit answers pertaining to my research questions but also provided an opportunity for the participants to share their experiences and stories. The study focuses on the experience of coming to a sense of personal and collective identity as a mixed-race student in the Manitoban public education system but because there are influences of a wide range of aspects of learning that go on in sites other than classrooms but clearly inform the school experience (Ibrahim, 2014, 57), it is important to allow participants to speak to how they have come to understand and make sense of who they are in many arenas. In keeping with

the ability of qualitative research methods to elicit participant stories and voices, Yin (2009) and Stake (2006) identify that case study research is based on a constructivist paradigm where truth is relative and determinant of individual perspective. The subjective nature of the creation of meaning has much to do with the social construction of reality (as relates to the work of John Searle) and therefore necessitates a close and intimate collaboration between researcher and participant in order to yield the richest data. Yin (2009) encourages the use of case studies to answer “how” or “why” questions that are based in contemporary events and over which the researcher has little or no control (p. 13). The event(s) are studied in depth within real-life contexts specifically when the delineation between context and the phenomenon of interest is not clearly defined (p. 18). For this reason, Hancock and Algozzine (2006) argue that case study research is generally more exploratory than confirmatory where the researcher aims to identify themes or categories or behavior and events versus proving relationships or testing hypotheses (p. 16). Yin advocates the use of case studies in the event that the researcher is searching for operational links over a period of time versus simple frequencies or incidences of a phenomenon that would be more suited to a quantitative research study (p. 9). In contrast with a quantitative research study where the data points are the subject of interest, a case study considers many more variables of interest and also relies on multiple sources of data converging in a triangulating way vis a vis the theoretical propositions that guide and inform the data collection and analysis (p. 15). Creswell (2007) explains that with case study research, the researcher investigates a bounded system (the cases) over time through detailed in depth data collection involving multiple sources in order to extrapolate themes. In order to determine the emergent themes, I used Maria Root’s “Ecological Model for Identity Development” to identify the five main “big ideas”. Each theme corresponded with a series of questions and while reading the transcripts, I

grouped parts of participant’s responses together if it appeared the participants were referring to a similar experience or phenomenon. These were identified based on the literature I had referred to in the literature review that provided context for the identification of the experience (or how to term it). In the present study, the extrapolated themes were:

- Social (how parents prepared their children for developing a sense of racial identity, friendships and peer groups, family relationships and dynamics, and micro-aggressions or colorism/shadeism within the family)
- Cultural (finding importance in taking trips to their “homeland”, race acting (or “passing) or others reading race)
- Identity (race performance and performativity (what does racial identity look like?), self-advocacy, advocacy for others, and also developing a racial “toughness”, and how participants understood mixed-race social identity within a Canadian historical and geographical context)
- Political (what it means to be Canadian (and how this contextualizes being mixed-race), how participants define multiculturalism and how this impacts them, ways participants felt like outsiders especially within particular communities to which they belong, and social justice commitment and “freedom fighting”)
- Pedagogical (bias and Whiteness in school policy and practice, the silencing and invisibility of race in curriculum (“null curriculum”), school, and educational policy, interactions between staff and students, and the importance of relationships between students and teachers of similar backgrounds.

Cresswell cites Merriam (1998) as finding case studies especially pertinent to the field of Education (p. 73). Neale, Thapa, and Boyce (2006) offer case studies as useful when there is an interesting story to be told that can offer a more comprehensive and complete picture of the

phenomenon and is therefore able to allow a researcher to collect much more detailed information than what is available through other methods (p. 4). I found this especially fitting with my study. Respondents were able to better “unpack” their experiences as a function of the dialogue that we engaged in. Baxter and Jack’s 2008 paper on case study methodology corroborates the idea that a qualitative case study approach encourages the use of a variety of data sources to allow the issue to be revealed and understood through multiple lenses which allow for its multiple facets to be elucidated (p. 544). Creswell identifies two types of case studies: single and multiple (p. 116). In what Creswell terms *collective case study*, the one issue or concern is selected but the researcher uses multiple examples of the case to illustrate the issue (p. 74). This is also termed *multiple case study* in other related literature, where the researcher selects a *purposeful sample* of individuals because they purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon of the study (p. 125). Stake (2006) encourages the selection of individual cases that share a common characteristic or condition and are *categorically bound* together in some way (p. 5). He terms the phenomenon or situation a *quintain* that is used to establish the specific site or manifestation of the phenomenon in order to consider what is similar and what is different between cases to understand and contextualize it (p. 6). Stake also argues that the purpose for multicase research is to examine and understand how the phenomenon manifests in different environments and circumstances and may imply investigation in both typical and atypical settings (p. 23). My study had four respondents who were between the ages of 18-21 and who were current students in a Winnipeg school or recent graduates and who had all of their schooling in metro Winnipeg. They had to self-identify as “mixed-race” and also at least one of their parents had to be of a visible minority or Aboriginal/First Nations background. I chose four respondents, two male and two female

because Creswell advises that a researcher select no more than four or five cases in a multiple case study (p. 128) and the researcher is encouraged to intentionally adopt a *holistic* analysis of the issue and understand the complexity and intricacy of the case but not generalize beyond it or draw specific correlations (p. 75). I was careful in the data analysis, to identify common emergent themes and ideas but to not situate or apply these globally. I chose two male and two female respondents in order to explore my questions from different gender perspectives, especially as the literature on identity formation related to mixed-race individuals notes some differences between the experiences of males and females, especially with respect to sexuality and notions of exoticism and beauty for females. It is important for the researcher to consider whether the case is being described, explored, or compared with others and for this reason, Yin (2009) categorizes case studies as explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive. Because the study aimed to explore the impact diversity and equity has on the experiences of secondary mixed-race students with respect to their identity as Canadians, the nature of the study is exploratory and because respondents provided examples of their experiences, the study elicited data that was descriptive. Additionally, it involves multiple cases of a phenomenon (specifically two male and two female) and provides the opportunity to extrapolate themes and big ideas and also to compare and contrast the experiences and influences cited by participants.

### **Critical Mixed-Race Theory and Mixed-Race Identity Formation**

The lens that is applied to the research analysis is Critical Mixed-Race Theory (CMRT). I chose CMRT and more specifically Critical Mixed-Race Pedagogy (CMRP) because my study deals with specific considerations of race relations within a Canadian and Manitoban context and the research tools were chosen to provide the most maximal opportunity for respondents to be able to participate in the dialogue. Creswell (2007) speaks to the possibility offered by Critical-

Race Theory in qualitative research in that it has three identifiable aims: (1) allows stories to be told about discrimination from the perspective of those who experienced it; (2) promotes the eradication of racial subjugation while understanding that race is a social construct; and (3) explores other areas of difference (gender, class, and any other relevant and related inequities (p. 28). This lens fits with the scope and breadth of the study, because as Creswell (2007) implies, there is a social and political nature to understanding a phenomenon surrounding race relations and race issues as a function and reflection of North American (Canadian) society (p. 28) and an empowering element implicit in qualitative research design. Further, Mahtani (2014) argues that studies of mixed-race identity within a Canadian context must confront the reality that there is a historical and geographical influence of colonialism inherent in analyses of mixedrace matters (p. 46). Sefa Dei (2000) posits that personal experiences are lived through social relations of power (p. 57) that take on a very specific form in Canada. Mixed-race research and theory identifies five strands or factors that are relevant to understanding the identity development and formation in individuals that hold pertinent information about how mixed-race individuals come to understand their personal and collective sense of identity: social, political, identity, cultural, and pedagogical. These are defined above with the research question/issue.

## **Research Design**

### **Participants and Participant Selection**

The identification of key participants (criterion sampling) means considering whose knowledge and opinions may provide the most pertinent and important insights regarding the research questions (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006, p. 39). In this study, the research question focuses on the experiences of secondary (grades 10-12) students or newly graduated (within the

last year) students (between the ages of 18-21) who have self-declared as *mixed-race* according to the provided definition: I use the term *mixed-race* or *multiracial* to refer to individuals who have and recognize multiple racial ancestries (including *biracial*). *Racial identity* is the race with which a person associates and feels a sense of belonging and *racial identity development* and *racial categorization* describes the process by which the person becomes aware of his/her racial identity and its significance within society. Further, due to the scope of the study as taking root in Critical Mixed-Race Studies, a condition of participant selection is that participants self-identify as having at least one *visible minority* and/or First Nations or Aboriginal parent. First Nations and Aboriginal are terms that will be used interchangeably based on participant preference. *Visible minority* status will be determined through the definition provided by the “Canadian Employment Equity Act” (1995) as “persons...who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in color” and will extend to *Aboriginal Peoples* for the scope of this study. In all associated promotional material for the study, these definitions were provided to potential participants, given the concern Paragg’s 2014 study identified with self-identification of the respondents as mixed-race or as having mixed racial identity. All participants self-identified as mixed-race (but what the term meant and how it had been applied to their lived experiences varied for each participant). The political and social implications of race in society are understood and considered at the secondary educational grades through social justice and citizenship curriculum and initiatives and in terms of richness and informed quality of the data, as well as an understanding of the context of their experiences and ability to name them (with respect to voice and empowerment), the ages 18-21 mean that participants are either current students or newly graduated with enough recent experience in their educational setting to provide relevant and pertinent data. Participants had all of their formal education in the public education system in

Winnipeg. This was established by the researcher (me) asking which schools/school divisions the respondent attended for their primary and secondary education and/or which the respondent currently attends. There were four total participants: two female and two male that provided an opportunity for me to abstract themes that may differ and/or that are carried across genders and sexes. The participants were selected from the main urban center in Manitoba, Winnipeg. This is a function of access to participants on the part of the researcher as well as selecting participants from a location where there is a greater sample size. Mahtani (2014) noted a similar phenomenon in her mixed-race studies in the 1990s (p. 69). According to Statistics Canada (2010), there is a higher concentration of mixed-race pairings in urban centers and most educational policies are implemented with greater frequency in areas where the policy reflects the population it is geared toward (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg). Because my study deals specifically with mixed-race students, it follows logically that the participants were recruited from the largest Manitoban urban center.

Mahtani (2014) explains that research on recruiting multiracial participants found that the process of recruitment is especially difficult, and yields a selective and small sample (p. 66). Further, there are many considerations in the politics of recruitment such as introverted racism (participants equating their multiracial status with negative status), self-identification and status (some participants identify and pass as white), and concern with the motives of the research (p. 67). Participant recruitment in this study took place with developing a social media (Facebook) page that generated interest in the study (Please see Appendix C). The “profile” was “Winnipeg Mixed-Race Study” and the page status was “open” which means that there were no limits to who had access to the page. The contents included textual information only (no graphics or web links to other pages or websites). The text provided the context of the study as well as an appeal

for interested participants and/or anyone who wished to contact the research with questions and/or further information. The researcher’s identity as well as e-mail contact information at the University of Manitoba was included. There was an option to “friend” the page and “inbox” the researcher after which time e-mail contact was made. Two of the respondents contacted the researcher via Facebook “inboxing” and two directly e-mailed me. The site was active for around a month and a half. The suggested method of contact was the e-mail to the University of Manitoba address. Once e-mail contact was made, I sent the letter of introduction (Appendix A) and if the potential participant fit the selection criteria of the study, they were sent the letter of consent to read and fill out with me before the interview. One potential participant was discounted from being selected on account of age (she was under 18). The selection of participants was “first come, first chosen” in the sense that the first four respondents, two female and two male who fit the criteria were selected as participants and an interview was set up and conducted. Over the course of the month and a half, there were fourteen “friends” that were accepted to the site. Nine of the “friends” were known to me and five were not. Only one of the individuals who became a “friend” on the site was chosen as a participant in the study.

Wesolowski’s 2014 paper on the use of forums and message boards for participant recruitment speaks to the viability of the Internet as a *site* or an online community to engage with individuals with particular similarities. Wesolowski explains that online communities are valuable to researchers recruiting participants when conducting qualitative research studies where private or potentially sensitive issues are discussed (p. 2). Additionally, he notes that researchers can use online communities as a method to locate participants who would otherwise be too difficult to recruit using other methods and this can be especially valuable in data collection because it combines Internet recruitment with face-to-face interviewing data collection (p. 3). Given the

reality that there was no clearly identifiable cultural or community center or geographical location (site) where a large population of participants could be located as well as the sensitive nature of the data collected, it is fitting that there were two main methods of soliciting participants: the internet and word of mouth, or *snowball sampling*/respondent-driven sampling. Paragg’s 2014 study speaks to the viability of this form of participant recruitment among specific populations or groups. Her study of choosing methodological practices when working with mixed-race underscores both the delicacy of conducting such a study as well as the intricacy involved with recruiting participants: her study that requested young adults of mixed-race background solicited participants from various university department, student association, and study organization e-mail lists as well as through word of mouth (p. 349). Mahtani’s (2014) 1990s study also recruited participants through word of mouth, with the researcher’s friends mentioning the study to friends, colleagues, and family members. However, as Mahtani explains, this led to the sampling being from a particular industry with a specific stance on mixed-race (p. 67). When e-mail contact was made with each individual who responded to the Facebook page, as well as after each interview, I asked individuals to encourage other potential participants to contact me via e-mail or Facebook. While two participants indicated they would mention the study to family members, these members did not contact me and were not selected as participants in the study. The study took one session of 1-2 hours each session and was conducted over a period of five months. This included the initial interview (Appendix D) and a member-checking session, where participants had the chance to review the data (transcript from their individual interview) and contribute new or additional perspectives on the issue under study. The member checking session is an opportunity for participants to review their transcript information and also to elucidate or clarify any information provided at the interview. This means that the

respondent’s transcript was provided to them via the selected method (e-mail or hard copy). In all cases, the transcripts were e-mailed to the respondents. Because the purpose of the second meeting was to clarify the recorded information, I gave the respondents two to three weeks to review the transcript. The e-mail requested that the participant respond to let me know that he/she had received the transcript (which everyone did). If participants did not wish to or were unable to participate in the session, the recorded information was expected to remain “as is.” This fact was noted in the recruitment letter (Appendix A) and the Letter of Consent (Appendix B). There was the possibility that in the event the participant did not wish to review the transcript and give input in a face-to-face session, they could opt to webchat, telephone, e-mail, facetime, or any other available method. All participants chose to give feedback via e-mail and all affirmed the data but did not clarify or expand on any of the information. The fact that the Faculty Advisor, Nathalie Piquemal had access to all anonymized data was reflected in the Letter of Consent (Appendix B) but this was not necessary.

## **Data Sources**

### **Semi-Structured Interview**

The study has some suggested research questions that allowed some structure but also provides respondents with the opportunity to address and express their experiences in a way that was meaningful and made sense to them and provided the most opportunity for them to expand on their ideas and feelings (Appendix D, Interview Protocol). Paragg’s study (likely the most pertinent study conducted to date), points to the usefulness of semi-structured interviews in the field of mixed-race studies, that allows some structure to the questions posed but also allows respondents to address their experiences in whatever way they are comfortable (p. 349). Paragg

identifies what she terms, *critical curiosity*, or the ability for a researcher conducting a semi-structured interview to ask probing questions that deviated from the prescribed interview questions (p. 354). There is value to having a set of questions and interview protocols but given the fact that the research is qualitative in scope and that the aim is to provide participants the opportunity to have their stories and voices heard, it was important that the interviews allowed for the possibility to take shape as they evolve. It is still, however, necessary to provide some structure and focus to the interview in the scope of an interview protocol and interview questions related to the specific phenomenon being studied. The interviews proceeded this way.

Participants responded to the questions that I asked and had in some cases provided them before the interview but when there was a chance for me to ask for clarification or the participant felt that background information was needed, he/she was able to provide details that were not elicited simply by the question as written or stated. This also followed with the opportunity to bring in artifacts as conversation starters and also to substantiate information provided. These were in the form of a tattoo and pictures on a smart phone.

### **Personal Documents**

The study has a semi-structured interview that addressed the themes of the main framework of identity development – social, political, identity, cultural, and pedagogical and also a process of photo/artifact elicitation based on personal photographs/artifacts belonging to private records that corresponded to the themes and that assisted in prompting participants to engage with the interview questions. The photographs/artifacts were self-selected and optional and encouraged the participant to recount their stories (a starting point and point of reference as the interviews unfolded) as opposed to acting as artifacts to be studied by the researcher as separate documents. These included tattoo body art and pictures saved on an iPhone. The process

of working through the artifacts with respondents revolved around a series of questions that were determined in advance of the meeting:

1. Describe what we are listening to, looking at.
2. Why did you think of this (song, video, etc.)?
3. Why is this (song, video, etc.) significant to you?
4. What does this (song, video, etc.) tell someone about your experience being mixed-race (in society, at school, in your personal life, etc.)?
5. Tell me the story of this (song, video, etc.).
6. How does this (song, video, etc.) describe your mixed-race identity?

I anticipated the artifacts being photographs, songs, videos, or an article of clothing or accessory. However, one participant chose his arm tattoo as an artifact, to which the questions pertained. After the participants were selected for the study and a meeting time and place set, I asked them to bring photographs and any other artifacts that would help explain their experiences as a mixed-race individual with friends, activities and organization, family, school, or objects of significant to them that describe their experiences as a Canadian and of any trips taken. It was my hope that the artifacts would be drawn into the interviews spontaneously when they were volunteered by participants to encourage talk and/or thoughts that might not otherwise be elicited. The artifacts were not collected (or photos taken of the tattoo art) and this fact was stipulated clearly in all related materials to the study.

Epstein, Stevens, McKeever, and Baruchel (2006) discuss the potential of visual research methods in social research to walk the participant through the content (what is in the photo) as well as process (how the photo is presented) in order to discuss social relationships. Photo elicitation has been used in many disciplines including Education and has arguably provided more comprehensive data collection and discussion in semi-structured interview formats (p. 2).

Tinkler (2013) advocates the richness of photographs deliberately “inserted” into interviews to prompt discussion, reflection and recollection sometimes positioned alongside other visual and textual materials. Photos are sometimes drawn into interviews spontaneously when they are volunteered by participants (p. 174). The power of using photographs in interviews is that photos can build bridges between the interviewer and interviewee and also can offer a distraction from the interview context and eliminate tension and concerns of a relationship or power by giving participants more authority (p. 175). In this study, photos on a smart phone were brought forward by one respondent (Olivia). While the respondent who referred to his tattoo art (Nelson) provided his tattoo as an artifact related to his sense of self-identity, he did not consider it in advance of the interview and it came forward as a natural progression of the conversation in the context of his discussion within the “political” theme related to how his experiences being an Aboriginal male in Manitoba impacted his sense of personal and collective identity.

### **Database and Data Handling**

All interviews were audio recorded with a digital device and transferred onto computer with a password known only by the researcher for security. Transcripts were typed and kept as files on the computer. I transcribed the audio-tape data. Interview notes were taken in the form of graphic organizers (interview protocol) and transferred onto computer for security. The computer was a personal laptop that was kept secure by use of a password. Original materials were destroyed after they were transferred into digital format within two months of completion of the project. While working on the project, field data was stored in a filing cabinet with a lock and access only by me at my place of residence. All data will be stored for a maximum of five years (in or before October 2020), after which time all electronic data will be deleted off the computer hard drive and any written notes will be shredded and disposed of. The names of all individuals

included in the study have been replaced with pseudonyms in all reports to protect their identity. Any photographs or personal artifacts referred to are from personal collections and are optional and used at the discretion of participants and were not collected for the purposes of the study.

## **Analysis**

### **Trustworthiness of the Study**

The data collected is rich in depth and findings are likely to apply in similar contexts. Lincoln and Guba (1985) speak to the importance of credibility and confirmability in determining trustworthiness of a study. Credibility is having confidence in the “truth” of the findings and confirmability is the presence of a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the participants and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. Some tests for credibility are: use of data analysis software, negative case analysis, and member checking. A technique commonly used to establish confirmability is reflexivity (including researcher bias and positioning).

### **Negative Case Analysis**

Negative case analysis is one technique that is used to evaluate credibility of the study, where elements of the data that do not support or appear to contradict emerging patterns of explanations are identified and discussed by the researcher. Yin (2009) notes that “addressing rival explanations” is an important part in ensuring the internal validity of a study (p. 41). In my study, there were two places where the data seemed to contradict the emerging patterns: with the self-identification of my respondents as mixed-race and also with the fact that although they had experienced racism both in their personal lives and also in their educational careers, one

respondent did not articulate her experiences as racism. In her 2014 article that describes an earlier study Paragg did on mixed-race young adults in Western Canada, she notes that there was a discrepancy between how her respondents self-identified in terms of racial categorization for different purposes and in varied contexts. Similar to my study, her selection criteria included a requirement that participants self-declare as mixed-race according to a specified definition that was provided to them. Despite the fact that all her respondents (19) had self-selected as “mixed-race” in order to participate in the study, during the interview, they revealed that they did not actually self-identify as mixed-race. This is explained later (chapter 5), where participants assume different racial and cultural identities in different contexts for many purposes. All four of my respondents, although self-identifying as “mixed-race” based on genetic influences, understood their social identities in terms of mono-racial political, legal, and cultural status. Mark understood himself as Chinese. Nelson, Olivia, and Marnie identified as Aboriginal. While all four of my respondents could and did articulate their “racial constituencies”, it seemed that there was a difference between “knowing what you are” and “articulating where you fit”, a point that is taken up later in chapter 5 with respect to Mahtani’s work on mixed-race and Canadian identity. The second place where the data appeared to contradict the emergent patterns is with the experiences of racism in participants’ lives. While three of the four respondents (Mark, Nelson, and Olivia) openly discussed racism and termed their experiences as such, Marnie was reluctant to articulate and contextualize her similar experiences in terms of being racist. I had been very purposeful in crafting my interview questions to not lead participants into characterizing their negative experiences with race relations as racism. My questions related to race were in the Identity category: “what are some assumptions that you think people have about you?”, “What are some comments or words you’ve heard people say about you based on race?”, “What is your

experience "fitting in", and "What are some questions you've been asked about who you are?" In the Political category, I asked, "Have you ever felt that there were expectations of you based on race?", and in the Pedagogical, I asked, "What were some expectations that were placed on you because of race?" and "How was race and ethnicity addressed at school?" In response to the questions, all participants recounted what I interpret as negative experiences on the basis of race and in many instances, ways that race had imposed restrictions of access and power in their lives (which I term racism). Marnie described similar experiences but did not specifically use the word "racism" in order to explain her experiences. When I probed by asking "why do you think this happened?" or "Why do you think this is the case?", she would not answer the questions directly and said, "I don't know." In one instance, when I asked about whether she believed her experiences of racism at school on the part of her teacher and her peers were based on race, she responded, "I'm not sure but no one would tell you if they were," which led me to the belief that she intuited that her negative experiences were race-based but that she was unable or unwilling to verbalize or get into a discussion of racism, which was a concept that was uncomfortable to her. Olivia mentioned the fact that she felt she needed to take courses to educate herself on social and political social justice matters and did not feel comfortable speaking with people without the proper background and terminology. It seemed that there was a concern about validating experiences of racism and having the intellectual background and lexicon with which to substantiate these claims. It also seems that parents' contextualization of their and their mixed-race children's negative race-based experiences as racism provides individuals with an ability to be comfortable "talking race" as part of their "racial tool kit", a fact that is evidenced by Nelson's interview where the questions had opened up dialogue with his mother to disclose her own experiences with racism. While there were two places where the data

seemed to contradict the emergent themes, these are addressed by offering “rival explanations” in chapter 5.

### **Member checking**

This study offers participants the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews and clarify and/or expand on the information. This involved a presentation by the researcher of preliminary findings (in the form of a memo that was e-mailed to respondents). This is an important part of trustworthiness of the data because it allows the researcher to ensure that the suppositions that he/she is making and the emanating themes and ideas that are being linked together are accurate. Member checking is where the researcher’s interpretations of the data are shared with the participants who have the opportunity to discuss and clarify the interpretation and contribute new or additional perspectives on the issue under study (Baxter and Jack, 2008, 556). Yin (2009) identifies member checking as a way to ensure construct validity of a study (41). Creswell (2007) also cites member checking as a validation tool, where the researcher invites participants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations (208).

### **Researcher’s positioning**

One of the assets of using qualitative research methods is the ability for the researcher to understand the situation from an *emic* or insider’s perspective (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006, p. 8). When conducting the study, I disclosed my own identity as a mixed-race educator and former student but was mindful to not allow this to influence participants’ responses or to lead them in particular directions. This allowed me to ameliorate the richness of the data by building relationship with participants, allowing participants to feel safe and comfortable. Paragg (2014) presents the applicability of disclosing the researcher’s positioning as mixed-race as building

empathy with the experiences of the respondents through “enabling interactive moments between the interviewees and [herself] where...[her] own positionality as mixed-race [needed] to be considered for analyzing the dynamic in the interviews (p. 355). She questioned whether she would have elicited the richness and openness in responses if she did not have the specific rapport with her respondents: “[if] I was not also mixed-race, would respondents respond to me asking them to “think through” in the same way?” (p. 355). Paragg also mentions the fact that disclosing the fact that one is mixed-race when conducting studies pertaining to race in general and mixed-race matters specifically, allows respondents to feel comfortable to speak about their experiences, to develop and establish connection, and to build a safe-space. Finally, Paragg quotes Haritaworn (2009) in finding that there is the possibility of “co-production of collective narratives” in interviews involving both mixed-race participants and researcher and Mahtani (2012) cites the sharing of experiences of women of mixed-race as being particularly empowering (p. 355). It is clear that disclosing my own background and position as a mixed-race researcher, teacher, and student, allowed a social relationship to develop with participants as well as the ability to be an “insider researcher”: having a distinct advantage to “outsiders” that may impact the data received and interpreted. While it may be true that the researcher in the specific instance of mixed-race, may not share any of the same experiences as the participants, Paragg argues for the recognition of *complex commonalities* or identification of a similar set of racialized experiences if possible (Paragg, 2014, p. 356). Creswell (2007) notes that a researcher must *bracket* him or herself from the participant’s situations where the researcher “set[s] aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under investigation” (p. 59). Part of this bracketing is arguably exposing research bias from the outset of the study as a validation strategy (p. 208). Paragg also discusses the tradition in qualitative

research of disclosing one’s positionality as a matter of ethical practice (p. 355). It appears that while self-identifying as mixed-race, a researcher must possess a sensitivity to establishing “street cred” (Paragg, 2014, p. 356) while still maintaining an objective distancing with both collecting and analyzing the data. Paragg states that while her positionality as a person of mixed-race led some respondents to understand that she intimately understood their experiences in a way other researchers did not, they did not need to understanding how she herself identified in order to participate fully in the research or provide rich data (Paragg, 2014, p. 357). My own identity as a mixed-race person was disclosed on many occasions and in many ways throughout the study. As a response to the initial Facebook ad, some potential respondents asked whether I self-identified as “mixed-race” and how I derived my definition of mixed-race (effectively who qualified as mixed). While wanting to be transparent in both my focus and the scope of my study, I tried to provide answers in the most objective way possible: explaining that my definition came from the literature on mixed-race that I had read and would be analyzing my study with and also tailoring this to the Canadian context, where there was a visible minority or Aboriginal/First Nations requirement. I explained that I was interested in how a mixed-race person perceives him/herself and how others perceive him/her and this was an important part of self-identification so the phenotype (how a person looks) matters. I was clear that the impetus for my study was derived from my own experiences as a student in the Western Canadian educational system and also a mixed-race educator. I felt that this was important because it would help with what Mahtani and Paragg (2014) describe as a common bonding experience between participant and researcher – “you know what I mean.” As much as possible, although I may have had similar experiences, I wanted my participants to articulate their experiences and perceptions with as much insight and detail as possible. I noticed that participants became

empowered when I nodded or demonstrated an acceptance or understanding of their responses because they seemed to feel that I understood and was validating what they were saying. In fact, in many instances, my experiences were very similar to the respondents: making sense of Aboriginal identity and what this means in a Canadian multicultural landscape, considerations of different family arrangements, the complexities of being the child of a newcomer and finding access to White Privilege, notions of “fitting in” in many communities and which communities mattered most when deriving a sense of identity, the journey of finding out what composite racial parts comprise your identity and deciding based on this history, the place for and importance of kinship journeys, and the pivotal role cultural and linguistic traditions play in the perpetuation and adoption of racial identity. It was difficult to not enter into discussion that contextualized the data while we were engaged in the interview, however, so I tried to stay with the script of the interview and not respond to the participant’s discussion. It was important for me as a researcher, to ground my analysis in research and not to interpret the findings based on my own identity as an educator and mixed-race person. I cited and relied on work by other prominent researchers in the field and my own participants to substantiate the emergent themes and conclusions of chapter 5 and 6 and while the originating interest in the study was based on my insights relating to a specific population of individuals with particular experiences (of which I share), the results were contextualized using published research (bracketing).

### **Emergent Themes**

Studies of mixed-race are often multi-faceted and “messy” and the identification and categorization of emergent themes followed this precedent in my study. Based on Roots’ ecological model of self-identity, while preparing to write the interview questions, I had outlined five “big ideas” or main concentrations that I wanted to explore: social, political, identity,

cultural, pedagogical. This was to ensure that each pertinent concentration that I had previously identified from my literature review was addressed in my interview questions and also to see how these were reflected in the ecological model of identity development. While the general categories of main ideas were identified, the specific emergent themes or salient points took shape as a result of analyzing the data provided by the respondents' interviews. I used the background information from the literature review to code the data into themes under the larger headings of categories, which helped make sense of the data and give it context and perspective as well as allow me to understand the layers of complexities. While reading, important quotes were flagged and placed in the appropriate categories irrespective of respondent. These were then filtered by meaning and intent: if the big or main idea presented itself more than once, this was considered by me to be a pattern and I would create sub-categories under the main thematic categories (the five listed). Using the literature I cite, I then articulated the message of the quote. The quotes (under the main thematic categories) translated into the emergent themes:

#### Social

- Preparedness and Racial Tool Kits
- Friendships, Family Arrangements, and Family Ties
- Micro-aggressions and Colorism/Shadeism

#### Cultural

- Homelands and Kinship Journeys
- Race Acting and Reading Race
- Cultural Bridging
- Performing Race
- Self-Advocacy and Resiliency
- Mixed-Race and Social Reality

#### Political

- Canadianness and Multiculturalism
- Outsiders Inside the Community
- Social Justice and Freedom Fighting

#### Pedagogical

- Race Bias and Expectation in School and Policy

### Relationships With Teachers

The emergent themes were then discussed through a critical mixed-race lens with reference both to Root’s ecological model of identity and the main categories (which are derived from Root’s work).

### **Ethics**

All participants were informed of the nature of the research questions and the study prior to agreeing to and participating in the study, especially due to the sensitive nature of the study. Each participant was sent a copy of the Appendix D (research questions) in advance of the interview. Expectations were clearly laid out, including the 1.5-2 hour interview session as well as the one hour member-checking session. There were no intended personal benefits or risks involved in participating in the study and there are no other ethical considerations, including abuse of power, over participants. Participants were not previously known to the interviewer. Participants gave free and informed consent to take part in the study by signing the consent form stating they have agreed to be part of the study and understand the scope of their involvement in the study. The information letter and related materials as well as consent form outline the nature of the study. Participants over the age of 18 are able to give consent as adults. Participants were also invited to withdraw from the study at any time but no participants did so, which was reinforced by each participant being reminded at each meeting that they were able to withdraw from the study without penalty or explanation. Any concerns of abuse would have been reported immediately to the appropriate agencies but there were none.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### Study Design

The study is a qualitative study that involves multiple cases (specifically four semi-structured interviews). As outlined in the work on mixed-race studies by Mahtani (2014), the scope and breadth of the study involved group boundaries and how respondents had integrated aspects of their identities especially as a function of having been brought up in a Canadian context (p. 62). Mahtani (2014) argues that mixed-race identity formation must address affiliation to local, urban, and regional geographies and investigate how these work together to create a sense of “home” and “place” for an individual (p. 48). The lens applied to the study is Critical Mixed-Race Theory/Pedagogy and this informs the focus on a semi-structured interview that allowed for the discussion of artifacts that elicited starting points for conversation (in this study, they were body art/tattoos and pictures saved on an iPhone) as well as informal conversations of topics related to the questions that allowed the participant to create a sense of context for the answers. CMRT/P also informed the nature of the questions because they were influenced by Root’s framework of identity formation as applied to mixed-race as well as critical-race asked participants about the ways the categories are created and reinforced: “fitting in,” defining “mixed-race,” “things you have considered when making sense of who you are,” “influential topics and experiences related to difference,” “expectations based on race,” “dealing with difference in multiple contexts and settings.”

There are many theoretical approaches to mixed-race identity development but the one that influenced the design of the study was the ecological approach that is reflected in the work of Maria Root (2003). The ecological approach is the most recent framework to the field of

mixed-race identity formation, coming into existence in 2000 in the United States. This approach considers that mixed-race individuals are not a homogenous group and have diverse experiences and worldviews and as such, can construct a racial identity that is formed through their position in society as a function of an intersection of many influences (such as gender, class, community, family, personality, etc.) Bronfenbrenner’s model of human development, that involves the microsystem (family, school, peer group), mesosystem (links between various settings in the microsystem), exosystem (interactions between two settings that do not directly involve the individual but affect their environment), macrosystem (the culture of subculture that is embedded in the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem), and the chronosystem (the impact of time on development and sociohistorical context), is reflected Root’s “Ecological Framework for Understanding Racial Identity” (Appendix E) and this is arguably the most comprehensive model of racial identity development that can be applied to mixed-race individuals. The framework includes personal, sociocultural, and contextual influences on racial identity development and is structured as multiple streams of “screening lenses” that mixed-race people use to interpret experiences and situations that subsequently influence racial identity. These positions shift in importance in racial identity development over an individual’s lifetime.

I referenced Root’s model when developing my study design. The CMRS lens specifically recognized the intersection of racial concerns with gender, class, sexuality, and other categories of difference. Further, the questions elicited a critical examination of the social, cultural, and political structures that are based on dominant conceptions of race and the unequal power relations that result. My first category of questions was under the “social” umbrella and asked participants to speak to their relationships with siblings, family friends, and peers as well as parents’ sense of identity. Root (2002) cites family functioning as being a strong influencing

force in mixed-race identity development: considerations such as extended family, parents' sense of identity, family racial socialization and identity. Root also identifies what she terms "community attitudes and racial socialization" which involves school/work, community, friends, and new community. I named a "cultural" category which involves groups and communities, activities, family, and cultural knowledge and experiences. I chose to identify different categories for "Cultural" and "Pedagogical" because I was specifically studying the implications of school experiences on identity formation and while school is a distinct community, I feel it holds a different place for individuals than other communities such as sports teams, volunteering, cultural and religious organizations, and other activities (such as the Military or activism). Many times, the individual's community involvement revolves around or represents their cultural and racial affiliations, which are reinforced by the family. Root notes that there are five ethnicities that mixed-race individuals can use with which to categorize themselves: hypodescent/one drop rule, monoracial fit (self-assignment), new group/blended, bi/multiracial, and white with symbolic race. I termed one category "identity", that investigated personal positioning (how participants understood being "mixed"), outside positioning (how people positioned participants), inclusion (how participants "fit" into racial categories), and categories (what groups existed that participants can subscribe themselves to). My "political" category is similar to Root's "regional and generational history of race and ethnic relations" in that I looked at what it means to be Canadian from the participants' perspectives, what multiculturalism is and how it influenced their sense of identity, and the history of race and ethnic relations. Finally, I had an entire section devoted to the pedagogical lens where I investigated participants' teachers and school staff, multicultural activities, school friends and peer groups, and curricular materials/classroom activity.

## Study Participants

There are four participants in the study. Each participant had to self-identify as “mixed-race” according to the provided definition and also had to have completed all of their schooling in the metro Winnipeg. This confirms that they also all were raised in Winnipeg. Participants were asked which schools they attended for elementary, middle/junior, and high school, in order to confirm that their schooling had been exclusively in Winnipeg.

## Mark

I “e-met” Mark when he inboxed me on the recruitment Facebook site. He asked specifically what I meant by the term “mixed-race” because he wanted to know how many “mixes” qualified someone to be chosen as a participant for the study. He also asked what kind of questions would be posed as well as the time commitment and what was involved in participation. I outlined the fact that the term “mixed-race” has a politically self-declaratory element and that for the purpose of the study, participants would have to self-identify as having at least one racial ancestry as *visible minority and/or First Nations*. Mark and I met in a meeting room at my office. He was very forthcoming about the fact that he was interested in hearing more about the scope of my study because this was the first time he had formally been introduced to the term “mixed-race” and he believed that it was important to note that although he was participating in the study, he did not subscribe to the biological notion of racial difference and he believed that it was imperative that we (society) transcend the notion of race altogether. Mark is a 20 year old male of Chinese-Canadian and what he believes to be Eastern European-Canadian descent. Mark and his older brother were born in the metro Winnipeg area. Mark’s mother was born and raised in China and he does not know the racial identity of his biological father who he speculates is Eastern European-Canadian. Growing up, he had a father figure,

Sam, who was a close family friend and is second-generation Ukrainian-Canadian. Mark postulates that Sam could be his biological father (and considers him as a father figure) but this notion has never been substantiated. Throughout the interview, the reality that he does not know the identity of his biological father and has no relationship with him gave Mark much difficulty because although his physical appearance indicates that he is mixed-race, he does not know what his father’s genealogical background is. He reported that this impacted his sense of self-identity because he did not have a clear and well-defined lineage to declare when he was asked questions regarding his racial and ethnic background. During the interview, Mark became agitated when asked questions about Canadian identity and multiculturalism because as he explained later, his mother’s status as an immigrant when she arrived in Canada and her attempts to become more “Canadian” and raise her sons with this goal at the forefront of their consciousness was the cause for some tension and animosity within the family. Mark has met his extended family on his mother’s side but is not close with them as they live abroad and he described this fact as having further distanced him from a strong sense of identity. Mark’s brother is married and Mark has two young nephews whom he defines as “very mixed.” He made mention of the fact that the boys do not resemble him in terms of phenotype and this has given rise to questions about his relationship with them while they are engaged in various community activities. Mark grew up in a white middle class area in South Winnipeg and he attended schools in this area. Mark graduated from high school and has completed a few years of post-secondary schooling in Winnipeg.

### **Nelson**

Nelson and I communicated via e-mail after our initial contact on the Facebook page. Nelson was very interested in the rationale for the questions I posed during the interview as well

as having a copy of the questions before the interview that he shared with his mother. During our conversation before the interview at a branch of the local public library that was nearest Nelson’s home, he told me that as a function of his participation in the study, his mother had revealed to him that she had experienced incidents of racism in her home community as well as at school because she was seen as “too white” by the Aboriginal community to which she belonged but also “too native” by the non-Aboriginal community, which led to their discussion of racial identity, shadeism, and self-declaration. Nelson understood himself in terms of “blood quantum:” the fact that he was three quarters Aboriginal and one quarter “white.” This had inspired Nelson in the weeks leading up to the interview, to consider his own self-declaration as Aboriginal because his mother is Métis and had struggled with her own sense of self-identity and positioning. Nelson is a 21 year old male of Métis/Aboriginal ancestry. His mother is Métis and his father is Aboriginal and his parents are married and have been together for 23 years. While Nelson described the fact that growing up, family was important to him, he also noted that his family had dealt with “battling the lifestyle” that had caused rifts in the family to where they had gone from being very close knit to barely speaking to one another in some periods (a fact that he said he did not discuss with anyone, including his aunt who was close with the family). Nelson is the oldest child, with two younger sisters. One of his most important goals was that he be a strong and positive role model for his sisters. When he was small, his family lived in a predominantly white middle class area of South Winnipeg but they moved closer to the inner city of Winnipeg when his mother attended post-secondary school. Nelson considered his mother to be an inspiration to him because he is very committed to furthering his education. He had taken a few years off after high school while deciding where his life was headed but ultimately, he looked toward an uncle who had “made it” and who attended post-secondary and was a positive

influence for him as well as his mother, to seize inspiration to apply for post-secondary school. He was very passionate about his Aboriginal identity and hoped to become a community and family leader through education. He spoke emotionally about some of the ways he hoped to contribute to his community politically and ways he hoped to inspire change. When answering some of the questions, he felt that he was the voice of Aboriginal youth and therefore his answers were heartfelt and also thoughtful. His body art (tattoos) reflect the importance of Aboriginal culture and history for Nelson in his struggle for claiming a sense of self-identity. He is “hyper-sensitive” and conscious of the fact that he “looks really Indian” and this has also been influential in his racial and cultural positioning. He currently lives in a white working class area in North Winnipeg. Nelson’s family has close ties with his home community in Saskatchewan as well as a small town in Northern Manitoba. He grew up with his cousins and extended family and has a close relationship with his maternal grandmother. Nelson has been accepted to a post-secondary school in Winnipeg for a Fall start.

### **Olivia**

Olivia and I met up on a post-secondary campus in a private tutorial room. She was very proud of the fact that before the interview, she had written an exam that she felt she did very well on. After the interview, she introduced me to a school friend who was her first “Black” friend and with whom she was going to celebrate the end of her exams. Olivia is 20 years old and is in her second year of post-secondary school. She understands her ethnic background as having a father who was born in Nigeria and a mother whose father is Polish and Aboriginal and mother who is Icelandic and Aboriginal. She described herself in racial and ethnic categories: Aboriginal, Icelandic, Polish, and Nigerian-Canadian. Olivia has one older sister and they have the same father. They have a younger brother who has a different father. All three children were

raised together and this has given them a strong sense of family as well as identity. Olivia's parents were together until she was around three years old. When they separated, she and her older sister lived with her father for around a year. Olivia reports that they were too young to have their father's culture and language as a very strong influence in their sense of identity. After this time, their mother got legal custody of them and they went to live with her. The last time she spoke with her father is when she was thirteen. She has almost no contact with her paternal family, which is something she reports that she misses but is tentative about rekindling the family relationship because she is unsure how this will impact her family. She also mentioned that she was unsure what this would mean for her sense of identity because she identified as Aboriginal and forming relationships with her Nigerian side meant she would have to celebrate in the traditions, adopt the culture, and learn the language. She is close with her mother's family including her grandmother and says that having strong female role models has helped her strive to better herself in her life. Her boyfriend of two years is also of mixed origin and they met through mutual friends. Olivia attended a number of elementary schools but grew up mainly in a white middle class area in North Winnipeg. She is attending a post-secondary school in Winnipeg and hopes to take courses that will allow her to understand her Aboriginal history and ancestry. Olivia was particularly interested in the education aspect of the study because she finds a strong part of her identity as an adult to be intertwined with her experiences at university. She notes that until she reached university, issues of ethnicity and race were not as widely or openly addressed and that the two years spent at university was helping her unpack her identity. Having professors who reflect her ethnic background on both sides has inspired her to want to come to a sense of self-identity and also to share this with others. During the interview, Olivia seemed to understand multiculturalism as racism, which led her to open up after the interview about some

experiences her mother had had in school and the community. She mentioned that her mother had shared these experiences predominantly with her older sister and her older sister did not discuss them with her. She felt that this would help understand her mother better including how she met her father. She also considered experiences she had where people questioned her ethnic background as incidents of racism and although she did not explicitly identify these occurrences as negative, when she recounted the situations where people were curious as to her background, she became more quiet and withdrawn, almost as if she was intuiting a social subtext or implied power dynamics.

### **Marnie**

Marnie was asked by a friend to "check out" my Facebook page and ultimately we made contact via e-mail. We met at a branch of the public library that was closest to Marnie's home. She lives at home with her parents but spends a great deal of time at her boyfriend's dad's house. Marnie is 19 years old and has spent the last two years after graduation working in the retail sector. Her mother is Aboriginal and her father is Ukrainian-Canadian. Her parents have been married for over thirty years and Marnie explained their relationship as having the usual "ups and downs of typical relationships" where her parents fight, drink, and "make back up again". She has an older brother and sister. Her brother is active in the military and her sister is married with two children. Growing up, Marnie considered herself and her brother as more outspoken than her sister. She felt that her sister's shyness and "less obviously Aboriginal look" allowed her to be better accepted by social groups. Marnie also considered her brother's homosexuality to be a determining factor in some of the issues she identified as him having in school and in life. She mentioned the fact that her brother had a strong relationship with her mother as one way where her mother "played" siblings against each other but she also said that her mother has been

estranged from all three children at some points in their relationship history. Friendships have been difficult for her mother and Marnie relayed the fact that her mother has had few long-term friends and has strained relationships with both close friends and family members. She reports not being close to her extended family on either her mother or her father’s side and although she assumed a strong sense of Aboriginal identity, this was not reinforced by her mother. Race and cultural identity were difficult topics for Marnie. At points throughout the interview that dealt specifically with racial categorization and more broadly conceptualized definitions, Marnie appeared to “shut down” and she offered very scant answers or simply shrugged her shoulders and said, “I don’t know.” Marnie struggled with the questions on friendships and she quickly stated that she had few friendships and that her life goals had prevented her from sustaining many close friendships because her friends were all “messed up.” She was matter of fact in this description but she seemed to be acutely aware that all her friendships had been made through and sustained in school. She grew up in a white working class neighborhood in North Winnipeg and attended schools in this area. Marnie felt that although she wanted to pursue post-secondary studies, she enjoyed the freedom that was offered to her through work and that she needed more time to decide what kind of meaningful career was best suited to her.

### **Emergent Themes**

The five categories of identity formation that determined the scope of the interview questions were: social, cultural, identity, political, and pedagogical. **Social** considerations included how parents prepared their children for developing a sense of racial identity, friendships and peer groups, family relationships and dynamics, and micro-aggressions or colorism/shadeism within the family. **Cultural** aspects were participants finding importance in taking trips to their “homeland”, race acting (or “passing”)/others reading race, and participants acting as cultural

bridges for different groups. **Identity** factors were race performance (what does racial identity look like?), how participants self-advocated, advocated for others, and also developed a racial “toughness”, and how participants understood mixed-race social identity. **Political** elements included what it means to be Canadian (and how this contextualizes being mixed-race), what multiculturalism means to participants (and how they define it), ways that participants felt like outsiders especially within particular communities to which they belong, and examples of a commitment to social justice and “freedom fighting” that participants exhibited. Finally, the **pedagogical** theme examined bias in school policy and practice, the silencing and invisibility of race in curriculum, school and educational community, and the interactions between teacher and students, and lastly, the importance of relationships between students and teachers of similar backgrounds.

## **Social**

The first category of the data analysis was “Social” and the emergent themes were ways that parents prepared their children for developing a sense of racial identity (including “race talk” and racism based on social positioning, the racial backgrounds of their friends and peer groups (at school or in other community activities), the type of family relationship they were raised in (one parent, both parents, common-law, married, heterosexual, same sex, adopted, extended family, etc.) and the dynamic within the family (colorism and shadeism between siblings, favoritism, estrangement). Generally, the themes in the Social category were the foundational contextualization and understanding participants had of race relations and race issues in general that were reinforced or challenged in the other areas of their lives.

### **Preparedness and Racial Tool Kits**

One of the considerations cited in studies relating to identity formation among mixed-race children and youth, is the influence parents have in preparing their children to understand the complexities of their racial backgrounds and cultural differences both within the family and in the many communities that their children participate in as part of the outside world. There are multiple perspectives on this factor in identity development because parents could be mixed themselves, of different racial and cultural backgrounds than their child, the child could be adopted or raised among extended family that may not fit with their self-definition or chosen racial identity, etc. Preparedness means how parents prepare a child to deal with the social reality of being mixed-race and in what ways this allows them to develop tool kits to navigate society.

One of the questions asked participants how their parents explained their racial and cultural backgrounds to them. Most participants conveyed the fact that although they were all able to clearly articulate their racial and cultural identities, this was not something that was explicitly addressed at any one particular moment in their upbringing by their parents. Mark queried, "Is that something parents do? [Is it] something they say...this is your background?" He noted that his experience had been that his mother did not discuss his racial identity and that when he moved into adolescence, he experienced a pivotal moment where he began questioning his racial background in terms of his father's identity but became frustrated when he was unable to find these answers: "...now I just don't pick anymore because I'm sure there's some reason why she doesn't want to tell me." Marnie also echoed Mark's experience with her parents not formally discussing their racial and cultural backgrounds with their children. When asked if race was discussed at home, she answered,

Not a whole lot. They talked about the fact that my dad’s Ukrainian and my mom’s Aboriginal. They weren’t really raised on, you know, “you’re this or you’re that” so it was a mix of both I guess...they kind of just told me in small parts, so there wasn’t a whole story.

Later, Marnie explained that she developed a sense of racial and ethnic identity based on family activities and not traditions and that a large part of her identity was derived from having her Indian Status Card that helped her define a strong sense of legal and political identity.

Olivia also cited her family self-identification as a strong influence in her own understanding of her racial identity:

I’ve always felt that I was Aboriginal because my whole family is pretty Aboriginal. They’re all mixed too and they don’t go to pow-wows and stuff but you can tell they’re Aboriginal on my mom’s side.

For Olivia, like Marnie, having a legal and political identity through her status card, was an important part of self-identification. She also noted that there was a void in the racial lexicon when it came to describing her racial identity so this encouraged her to choose. In addition, when asked how she understood her background, she broke her identity into distinct racial categories, or “ethnic constituencies” (Mahtani, 2014, p. 115):

[My mom] basically told me what my background was. My dad was born in Nigeria and my mom’s dad is Polish and Aboriginal and my Grandma is Icelandic and Aboriginal so I started growing up telling people I was Métis just to simplify it but now I just tell them I’m Aboriginal. Because I don’t think Métis is really what I am. It’s French and Aboriginal so instead of saying that, I say I’m Aboriginal, Nigerian, Polish, and Icelandic.

Nelson’s parents’ self-identification helped him form his own sense of cultural and racial identity. In addition, he brought up the notion of blood quantum (the amount of “Indian blood” someone has) as being a measure for self-identification:

Well, my dad identifies as Aboriginal. And my mom also identifies as Aboriginal but Métis because she’s Métis. My parents told me I’m about 75 percent Aboriginal.

Nelson’s sense of identity was derived from legal and political status as well: “I’d say I identify as Aboriginal. I’m not Métis. I’m status Indian and I’m basically full blood but I have some mixed genes in me.” Nelson noted that he never had a formal conversation with his parents about his cultural or racial background to inform his sense of identity but his parents discussed issues of racism and white-privilege with him and encouraged him to become critically aware and to self-advocate wherever and whenever necessary.

The importance of preparing mixed-race children and providing them “racial tool kits” with which to help them navigate the world outside the family was something that the participants’ parents were clearly cognizant of and did in different ways. One commonality among participants was that there was no overt lesson(s) or teachings about the participants’ racial background, parents’ experiences with race, or societal implications when dealing with race. In fact, racial identification came for many participants through the political and legal status accorded to them by their Indian Status Card, notions of blood quantum, and identifying the parts as a cumulative whole.

### **Friendships, Family Arrangements, and Family Ties**

Friendships and peer groups reflected participants’ sense of identity. When asked about childhood or long-time friends, participants reported having friendships with the children

of close family friends, neighborhood friends, extended family, or school friends. In some instances, these friends were both or all four of the categories. Marnie’s childhood friend (since kindergarten) grew up down the street from her so they attended the same neighborhood schools. She noted that they were both Aboriginal so they became close as part of being “different”:

Me and my best friend for fourteen years, we were basically just the only Aboriginal kids in our class for pretty much all of our elementary school so it was just her and I against all these people. And I fought a lot as a kid and in school and I don’t know if that had anything to do with the bullying I got growing up.

Olivia also talked about having racial and cultural commonality with her best friends: “my good friends have some Aboriginal in them and are white.” In addition, she reported that all of her close friends are mixed-race as well. In the interview, she discussed having a friend whose mixedness mirrored her own with respect to her paternal background: “I don’t think she’s the exact same mix but she is Nigerian. It was kind of cool to know that there’s someone else. We connected.” Olivia shared that her partner is mixed-race as well: “My boyfriend is mixed too. He’s Jamaican. You can’t really tell because he’s very light and Icelandic.”

Mark discussed having friends based on the schools he attended. Like Olivia, most of his close friends were mixed-race. “In elementary, my best friend was from Nigeria. In elementary, it was mostly mixed-race, like my best friend...everyone was from mixed-heritage or background.”

Nelson’s childhood friend resulted from a close friendship his mother had with her own long-time friend from a small town. He explains that despite geographical distance, he and his friend have maintained their friendship, “[although] his mom moved around a bunch...we always maintained that level...that bond [that] hasn’t been broken. Nelson attributes this to

having friends with similar interests. Although his childhood friend is Aboriginal, he insists that he does not look for a particular culture or ethnicity as a starting point for entering into a friendship. Instead, it was the person’s worldview and the ease of connection.

Mark and Marnie both talked about “getting in with the wrong crowd” as influencing the friendship groups they had. Mark explained that in adolescence, he began rebelling against his mother and skipping school and having a difficult time with substance abuse. His decision to rehabilitate himself meant socially isolating himself from his former friends: “...once you stop doing drugs and stuff, people who do drugs don’t really associate with you anymore...that’s majority of the reasons why I don’t really go out or am social anymore.” Marnie shared that she has very few friends because she is “trying to get rid of the negativity.” She attributed the fact that she has only a small group of friends to the reality that in order to attain her life goals, she had to make a hard decision to distance herself from her friends who are potentially “bad influences.”

Family arrangements and relationships were also a consideration in participants’ identity formation. For participants who grew up in a single parent household with limited or no contact with their other parent, they adopted the racial and cultural identity of the parent who raised them although they demonstrated an interest and curiosity in their estranged parent’s ethnic and cultural background primarily in their adolescence. Mark explained, “I don’t know my father’s side so that’s out of the question, but my aunts and uncles all live in Hong Kong.” Olivia had a similar experience: “I don’t talk to my dad’s family at all. I talk to my grandma and grandpa. Pretty much just my mom’s family.” Although Olivia did not interact with her father’s family, she explained that she still feels some connection to them. “[They’re] very into their culture still. I’ll show you a picture of my auntie, my dad’s sister. Very traditional.” and she

talked about having a relationship with her grandmother as being a pivotal part of her identity when she was growing up.

We went to church with [my father's family] when we were younger. That's part of my African family...My grandma used to pick us up on Sunday and take us to Sunday school but as we got older, we haven't been going...

For participants who discussed language, this was contextualized as being bound with culture. Olivia pointed out that language is an important part of cultural identity.

My mom doesn't speak Ojibway but my grandma spoke Ojibway when we went to the reserve. When she talked to other people on the reserve, she would speak Ojibway but then include some English in there too but my mom didn't practice that at all so then we didn't either. The same for my dad's side, I don't speak Nigerian but they did speak Nigerian when I was there but I didn't understand it.

Nelson discussed a desire to learn Cree and also other languages such as French and Spanish and feels that this helps with being traditional and having an appreciation for his culture as well as other cultures.

My family. They are still very attuned to the traditional way, with my dad's mom and dad who showed them with our elders in a circle. It's been passed down. My cousin makes moccasins and mukluks. She does beautiful work. So I'd go there. And there's multiple people in my family that know how to do...they work with leather and they make clothing and they make the moccasins. I'd go [to my home community] to learn the language. Basically, anyone that's over 40 in my family still speaks Cree or some form of it. That's one thing I really want to...that's a goal.

Nelson's parents were his greatest influence with language and culture and have prompted him to become interested in cultural activities:

I'm actually really considering, because my sister and are just inclined. I know how to do beadwork and we actually want to make our own pow-wow costumes and learn how. I'd do that with my sister.

Mark discussed speaking Cantonese when he was small but having it extinguished as he entered school because language was viewed in terms of its barrier to entrance into the world of education. He later remarked that this barrier was reinforced by his mother's perceptions of what it means to be considered Canadian. "I used to [speak Chinese]. Then I went to kindergarten. And obviously, I didn't see any use in it."

Family bonds were another topic that participants felt influenced their sense of self-identity. Nelson remarked that it is essential to maintain a strong relationship with family. After his family moved, he reported that they became disconnected and as he described, "their lifestyle got to them." His relationship with his sisters was as their big brother who was there to "keep them on the right path" and guide them but although his relationship with his immediate family is close knit, he talks about not being as close with his extended family. "[How] would it make my family look if I was to talk to [my aunt] about what I'm going through? I just don't like that aspect of meeting with each other, you know, people know too much that they shouldn't."

Nelson said that he has an uncle who is as close to him as a cousin and has become a role model and mentor to him because "he comes from a very similar circumstance. And he's risen above. He has a good paying job – he's totally escaped this lifestyle and everything that has to do with my family." Mark also discussed the importance of having a role model or mentor in the form of his mother's friend Sam. "He's always been in my life. As a kid, he would pick me up from

school and on weekends and then I'd sleep over there and I don't know, he's just always been in my life...”

In terms of relationships, participants had three main groups of supports: (1) family and close neighborhood friends; (2) school friends; and (3) family members. With respect to family friends, these friends were generally made in childhood and reflected the cultural and racial background of the participants' families. Close neighborhood friends were made in childhood and sometimes were not kept beyond adolescence when participants had to make significant life choices. School friends typically reflected the cultural and racial backgrounds of participants with many friends being mixed-race. These friends also generally were not kept when participants had to make significant life choices that conflicted with the participant's life goals. Family members included people participants viewed as role models and parental figures (even if these were not biological) and all participants had family supports, whether they were immediate or extended family members.

### **Micro-aggressions and Colorism/Shadeism**

Micro-aggressions are the verbal and non-verbal communication of messages that target people based on their marginalized group membership. Colorism or shadeism are forms of micro-aggression and involve discrimination based on skin color or shade. While most overt incidents of micro-aggression take place outside the home, they also take place within families, whether intentional or not. Olivia discussed this phenomenon when she described the relationship between all three siblings:

It's funny because my brother doesn't look like me because he's more light because we have different dads. He was always the different one. Me and my sister have the same dad so there was us and there was my brother but we never

called him our half-brother because we grew up with him so he's just our brother.

But it was always different because he's my brother but he doesn't look a thing like me.

When asked what her brother's reaction was to being "different" from his sisters, Olivia responded that although shadeism was something that neither she nor her family overtly demonstrated, she had noted confusion over the identity of her parents, most especially of the parent who she least resembled. This revealed that shadeism is still a consideration in her life and the life of her family:

I think [he] said that someone didn't believe that was his sisters or something and my mom too. When I show people pictures of my mom people don't believe that's my mom.

Olivia was very conscious about the difference in appearance of her siblings. "[My brother's] friends just knew that he had two sisters that didn't have the same skin color as him. He didn't say much about it." Although colorism took place with the outside world, it seemed that Olivia and her family noticing the difference exacerbated it as well. Another example was when Olivia noted the differences in appearance between her and her sister:

I don't think my sister and I look completely the same either. We just jokingly say it's because we both look Black and we don't take it offensively and we don't get offended easily but definitely not my brother. No one would guess that's my brother. Do you want me to show you a picture of him?

Marnie also spoke about differences in appearance between herself and her siblings:

Most of elementary is a blur but I would get comments like, "how come your sister's white and you're not?" My sister is white as a ghost. I don't know why

she's so white. Me and my brother are clearly brown and she's white. She has the same status as I do though.

Marnie characterized the difference as having a potentially negative consequence in school for her:

I think me and my brother dealt with more bullying than my sister did. I don't know if she was just quiet and me and my brother are loudmouths. It could have been that. I don't know what my sister went through.

Unlike Marnie, Olivia embraced the difference between her siblings and admitted that she was proud of her appearance: "[Apparently] I have more of my dad's features...I have his nose and bad vision..." When asked about how she felt about the fact that her mom and her sister typified her looks as representing her father's, Olivia explained, "I don't mind it. I like being different and having different features. More Nigerian features."

Shadeism and colorism were present in participants' lives. They were found both inside the home (within families) and also in the community. Shadeism and colorism often took the form of questioning participants' parents' and siblings' identities and in some instances, displayed prominently in identification formation related to disclosure of family relationship in school and the community.

## **Cultural**

The second category for the study was "Cultural" and the themes included in this area were the importance visiting the participants' homelands (also known as kinship journeys that reunited the participants with their families or members of their communities) has for mixed-race individuals. Another consideration is race acting or others reading race and the complexities this presents in mixed-race people claiming a sense of racial identity (especially

where the identity the individual adopts is in conflict with the identity ascribed by others), and participants being cultural bridges or bridging between members of their varied racial communities, others, and members of the same racial community. The cultural aspect relates to how race and culture are used to form a sense of identity, especially in specific political, legal, and social contexts (such as Manitoba and Canada).

### **Homelands and Kinship Journeys**

Most of the participants described having a strong connection with a place of cultural and community significance that they visited either at various points in their lives or on a continued basis throughout their lives. This is described as a “homeland”: the physical and cultural/spiritual place of special significance and meaning or a home community. The process of visiting the “homeland” can be termed a “kinship journey” which reunites the individual with their family or cultural community. In most instances, an important part of the journey is experience with the language of the “homeland.” For Mark, his visit to China to meet his family was a part of his claiming cultural authenticity. “I’m going to China because I’m half Chinese...to physically embrace the culture instead of projecting yourself because you don’t really know how to behave...how can you identify with being Chinese if you don’t speak the language?”

For Nelson, language (the language itself as well as the nuances and cultural subtexts) was the key to navigating his kinship journeys and fitting in, in his “homeland”:

Language. My dad speaks like, a broken Cree. A swampy Cree. It’s like a city Cree. When you go up North, I can’t speak Cree, but I can understand what everyone’s saying. I can laugh with the conversation. You can follow because it’s always been there.

Part of the importance of a kinship journey are the cultural activities that are practiced and taught and that reinforce cultural norms and identity:

I go home every three years. But I've been going there twice a year for the past three years...I like to go out there during the winter time. Right now would be perfect. Just going skidoing, hunting, trapping, fishing, just doing all the cultural things that bring you home, give you a sense of community and belonging, really. It feels good to be out there with your people...even though I was raised in the city and I've always been in the city, they still identify with me really well. They just look at me not as an outsider but just less attune with what is to be in a reserve, like that lifestyle...

Olivia cited family connection as being the most important part of her kinship journey. She explains that spending a significant amount of time on her cultural “homeland” growing up is an important part of understanding who she is:

My grandma used to...have a store on the reserve and I'd go and help her. And I was like the only Black kid [there]. I'd go out there for a couple of weeks in the summer and help out...

Family connection can take the form of rekindling relationships or beginning them. Olivia discussed intending to bridge the rift between her father's family and her and her sister with a trip to visit them and also learn more about his culture:

Me and my sister have been saying we would like to see my auntie again because that's who we used to visit when we were younger and it would be nice to get to know some of my other family too and I've thought about going to Nigeria...

Nelson also reported enjoying staying close with his extended family as a function of his visits: “my dad has seven brothers and one sister and they all live there and I’m pretty close with a good number...my uncle Albert, Uncle John, Auntie Geraldine.”

Kinship journeys and visiting what is considered a participant’s homeland was important in identity formation because it provided participants with an understanding and appreciation of their racial and cultural heritages. Participants felt that many aspects of the kinship journey was key: language and cultural subtext (nuances and innuendo), relationships, and cultural activities.

### **Race Acting and Reading Race**

Race acting refers to various behaviors that “perform” race. This notion is referred to by Judith Butler (1999) in her definition of “performativity”: investigating how we use language and behavior to construct identity. In this instance, identity refers to cultural or racial identity and for mixed-race individuals, this can be very complex. Participants in the study talked about the reality that both they and those they interacted with “read” race in their relations with each other in that either individuals made assumptions about the cultural and racial background of the participant, made conscious or unconscious decisions about where the participant fit (sometimes this did not correspond with how the participant self-identified), was uneasy or unsure about how to interact with the participant until the participant offered some sort of racial or cultural identity, and made judgements about how the participant should self-identify. Additionally, participants spoke about “passing,” where their cultural and racial identity was mistaken by others, where they were lumped in one racial or cultural category over another by others based on the way they “performed” race, where they were intentionally not disclosing their backgrounds, and where they were accused of deliberately trying to negate their cultural

and racial identities for specific purposes, namely white privilege. Generally the term "passing" refers to mixed-race individuals being mistaken for or claiming to be white or whatever the dominant/superior racial and cultural majority background in the society is.

Mark talked about the difference between him and his brother in that while he adopted a strong sense of cultural identity with his mother's Chinese background, his brother identified differently and did not openly disclose his racial and cultural identity:

I think the difference between my brother and I is he rejected...I'm not saying he completely rejected his ethnic background, but he didn't identify with it. Like, never did he take any interest in our language or culture or background or history...I'm not saying he portrayed himself as First Nations, but everybody thought he was First Nations...he didn't correct people.

Mark developed a sense of racial and cultural identity through reacting to what he understood as a negation of his background by his brother or in other words, the desire to "pass" in order to fit in. Mark described his own experiences with fitting in:

...there's other instances where you know, I'm in a group of a lot of like, my friends, and they find out I'm Asian and they're like, "Dude, I thought you were Native." And I'm like, "No, I'm Asian."...it's sometimes those instances where I totally understand why my brother portrays himself as something else...it comes up a lot.

He expressed embarrassment about not openly disclosing his background publicly in situations where he felt it was warranted: "That was a huge part of childhood where I really tried to project myself as [other]...it's pretty embarrassing now that I think about it...where I was really trying

to be a poseur about it." For Mark, not finding a strong and clear sense of identity was fraught with more negative social consequences than confronting those who misidentified him.

Although Mark pointed to occasions where he intuitively felt there are negative reactions to his racial and ethnic background, he downplayed the impact by comparing his experiences to what he perceived to be a situation where there is more overt and hostile racism:

It doesn't happen a lot anymore where I get scrutinized for being Asian unless it's called out...like...when people see my name and stuff, that starts to become an issue for being Asian, but it's not like I am, you know, a Japanese person living in Pearl Harbor...

Mark disclosed one incident in particular where he felt he had to fight to maintain his self-identification which further distanced him from a desire to engage in considerations of race.

...there's one instance where this guy came up to me and asked me what band I'm from, what rez I'm from and I said, "I don't have one" and he said, "don't be ashamed, just admit it," and we almost got into a fight because I said I don't have a band or rez, you know, I don't come from a reservation...I'm not Ojibway or Cree, and he says, "don't be afraid of your heritage, just admit it." And I'm like, I'm not, I'm Asian, and in that instance, that was pretty awkward.

Marnie described her experiences with mistaken identity and her annoyance with having to address questions and concerns about race:

Sometimes I get Asian. Some people asked me if I was Asian and I don't know why people felt the need to ask me what I was. But I was like, "No...I'm not anything close to Asian."

Nelson expressed the societal need to categorize individuals based on race and the uncomfortable complexities that arise when attempting to form a strong sense of racial and cultural identity or interact with other cultural groups:

I feel that people are standoffish and I feel like if you're not Aboriginal and you try to identify me, it's kind of hard because I feel that there's a prejudice almost. People have this idea [of who] we are...[that] we're to ourselves as a culture, that if you're not native, you shouldn't try to identify with us. I just feel that there's a wall when it comes to other cultures that are trying to interact with you. There's an uncertainty almost.

Olivia spoke to the stereotyped or media sensationalized understanding and acceptance of cultural traits and expectations. She was hurt that for much of her life, people assumed that she had no relationship and had never had a relationship with her father and her paternal relatives because she lived with and was brought up by her mother and maternal family and identified with her Aboriginal heritage. Marnie also discussed what she understands as the reactions to her disclosing her cultural and racial identity:

She comes from a broken home, all the stereotypical things they say about Indians. That's the first thing people think about because it's our society. Social media, society. You're white. You must come from a rich house, white parents, everything's proper. You're native. You come from the other side of town where everything's ghetto and your parents are alcoholics. Every family is different but people are so quick to think what society makes you think.

Nelson also spoke passionately about social expectations that influenced his own sense of cultural and racial identity and his self-identification process. He reasoned that the process of

self-identification had been painful and upsetting for him because of the negative expectations placed on him based on his decision to identify as Aboriginal:

They think you should be some drunk, with no motivation or drive, not going anywhere with your life. Just a bum. Lazy. And the only time I've seen where people openly address that I'm native and I should be a certain way is just ignorant people who see Aboriginal people downtown and that's what envelops what a Native person is because they've never seen an Aboriginal person that's come farther than out of their social bracket and actually made a positive change or move in government or social aspects. I've never met anyone who said, "Oh, you're Native...you have such a rich culture." I've never had anyone see Aboriginals in a positive light.

Marnie also disclosed that coming to adopt a sense of identity was also difficult for her because it forced her to be an outsider and to be victimized for this decision:

The elementary school I went to was mainly white kids that were like, "you're brown. I don't want to talk to you." And then high school, I didn't really do anything [about it].

Nelson discussed the notion of "talking white" as being a relational barrier to authenticity and acceptance into his chosen identity group. In some places, this is referred to as "getting caught in the act". He also talked about the disconnect he felt with having pride in his cultural and racial identity and having a pressure placed on him to "talk down" or what he understood as negatively representing his Aboriginal background through language (and status).

People say, "you speak so white". Why do you speak so white, like uppity? It's speaking proper English and addressing someone in a professional manner with

respect and dignity. Should you have respect for yourself? Shouldn't you speak in a way where people respect you? Especially from my culture.

Olivia talked about people reading or misreading her racial and cultural identity through expectation. Like Mark, she mentioned that her Nigerian last name was an injection site for people to query her ethnic background and that her appearance was one of the first places that was used to racially identify her which was problematic when she did not fit the assumptions. She described an incident where her friend's reaction when she disclosed her mother's racial and cultural identity to was disbelief. "She was just surprised. I get that all the time, "Oh, that's your mom?" Additionally, Olivia discussed the social undertones implied by mixedness that make her feel as if she is forced to explain her background when there is an incongruence in expectation:

I think when I say mixed, they assume black and white and not Aboriginal because most people are surprised when I say Aboriginal. I think for most people, their mixed is assuming I'm white and black.

She characterized this questioning as a location of commonality as she explains that "it's mainly Black people I find that ask me what I am because they can tell I am part African but they can't tell where from." Olivia found that this opening the flow of dialogue to be bridging because it is a place where she can learn about her own heritage and also engage others in race talk.

Participants discussed the impacts that "reading" race in their interactions with others had in their developing and maintaining a sense of identity. They noted that others made assumptions about their background, declarations about where the participant belonged racially and culturally, even in situations where this was incongruent with how the participant viewed him/herself, and was uneasy interacting with the participant until they understood the participant's cultural and racial

identity (or where they could place the participant). There were concerns of “passing” and what this meant for participants and also how the importance of race performance. In some instances, participants felt they were misrepresenting their heritage and this gave them cause for embarrassment and feeling even more distanced from their identities.

### **Cultural Bridging**

Cultural bridging refers to the ability of mixed-race people to form a relational and physical bridge between people in terms of bringing about cultural awareness and consciousness-raising. It is argued that mixed-race individuals are able to act as liaisons between cultural groups and individuals because their racial and political status falls simultaneously outside and inside the borders of multiple racial and cultural groups.

Olivia talked about conversations that she engaged people in about her racial and ethnic background and how her openness to enter into race talk with people allowed her to build connections with people:

“Are you Black?” or “What’s your background?” It doesn’t come from people I would take if offensively from either, so it’s not like I get random people coming up to me. Sometimes some Black guys will come up to me and ask me what my background is and I just tell them Nigerian [to start talking to them].

For Mark, there was a social justice component to his commitment to blur the racial and cultural barriers. “I really like that concept that everyone’s equal.” He mentioned that his interest in cultural bridging is that it is unfair and unjust for anyone to discriminate based on heritage and that this is based on the life experiences he has had both being treated differently and also witnessing others being discriminated against. He understood that his particular cultural

vantage point offered him the opportunity to adopt a different and unique type of worldview that allowed him to question:

That’s what makes you wonder...If I had come from a different background, would I have had the same experiences? Would I have had it that early in life? [How] long would it take me to realize that people are being treated unfairly? Or would it have been pressed upon me...that’s their decision...that’s just how we treat them. Them. The fact that them is in there...I feel I’m really fortunate to have the roots in my life that have brought me to this relationship with people.

Olivia expressed excitement at the prospect of visiting her boyfriend’s family on an upcoming trip to Jamaica and also the fact that because of her own mixed-heritage, this has encouraged her to be open to learning about and exploring other cultures as well. “When we go visit his Oma, who is very Icelandic, it was interesting to learn about that culture and then we’re going to learn about the Jamaican history too. It’s interesting. I’m excited!” Nelson also described a time when he took it upon himself to settle a dispute among friends of different backgrounds in a lesson on cultural sensitivity and understanding and assumed the position of cultural facilitator. He explains, “Social norms are so different.”

Participants were relationally and physically able to bridge cultures by engaging people from different backgrounds and also by being examples for others of the ways that cultural barriers are artificial and can be challenged. Participants were aware of this status and interested in race talk that opens the dialogue and conversations about race and culture. Participants were also instigators themselves in challenging social expectations and racial boundaries that they felt were limiting and isolating.

## **Identity**

Identity deals with how participants felt they fit into the fabric of society and also the difficulties they experienced while negotiating where they fit. Some considerations were race performance (how participants demonstrated to others what racial category they belonged to), how participants self-advocated when they challenged racial stereotypes and racism toward themselves and others (also called racial “toughness”), and how participants situated mixed-race identity within a Canadian social landscape.

### **Performing Race**

Performing race was discussed above in terms of how participants externalized their racial and cultural identities through language and behavior. One of the considerations in how participants chose to project their racial identity is how they understood others’ perceptions of how they “race acted” or what others “read” and ways they made choices about how they represented their racial and cultural identities. Many times, although participants acknowledged that how they were perceived was very much beyond their control, they were also sensitive to the fact that there is often a social message or status implied with their appearance.

Olivia spoke about the fact that in her eyes, difference was synonymous with racism because it carried with it societal expectations and white privilege. She recounted a time when a small boy noticed her and pointed out that she was a “black person” and although there were no overt racist comments, she characterized the incident as “racist” because of the tone the little boy had when he racially identified her. Mark also discussed his experiences with being different or an “outsider” and having others label him:

I think it's a little disappointing and insulting at times and sometimes it makes me feel a little ashamed to say that...they're changing, but if that's how they're going to perceive me, then that's alright.

For all the participants, their self-identification, although not always throughout their entire lives, was well defined and they had adopted what they saw as a particular cultural and racial way of life. Mark unequivocally self-defined as Asian, Nelson understood himself as "an Aboriginal male", Marnie identified as Aboriginal and Olivia also viewed herself as Aboriginal. However, the participants explained that with declaration came backlash and what was described as an uncomfortable change in people's reactions:

It's usually like, "Wow, you're Asian!" So I'm like yeah, I'm Chinese, and I'm never sure if it's a bad thing or a good thing...how they're perceiving it in their head because it definitely changes their perspective on me. And I think that's weird that people's perspective of you changes just based on your ethnic background...you can hear it in people's voices that it changes. For most people.

For Nelson, the change in stance was not as subtle. He described this phenomenon as the vestiges of white privilege and also the discomfort felt through the process of interpreting and processing race:

...you feel offset when you address me or you're trying to speak with me or identify with me. I feel like there's this stigma...a wall there that keeps both sides from being legitimate and comfortable and relaxed so they can be who they are. Because when you think about all the times you've interacted with anyone who's a different race, you feel that. You really feel like...I can't put my finger on it...

Nelson's discussion of this phenomenon exposed the fact that to him, there is less of a reaction or impact felt with visible minorities and more so a kind of bonding that takes place:

There's more of an understanding and even though there may be a cultural wall, it's easier to identify and to connect with someone who's native to another land...I don't know why though...

Olivia described this phenomenon as white privilege:

When I tell people I'm Aboriginal, I can tell people feel differently. I don't want to say less, but different. I'm not really sure but I feel like they're a little surprised when I say I'm Aboriginal. I don't know exactly what they're thinking when they respond. Obviously they're not going to say anything negative in front of me.

Marnie corroborated Olivia's experience when she explained that there are social cues that take place when she discloses her racial identity that are difficult to interpret and sometimes racist.

People like to say things behind other people's backs so you can hear people talking about others and they're so stupid and nasty. When people find out I'm Aboriginal, I've had people just shut down and walk away from me. It's like they want nothing to do with me.

Mark talked openly about the racism he experienced in the form of ridicule and bullying. For him, the discrimination he faced was painful but a necessary process in forming his sense of identity. Marnie discussed "growing a thick skin" in order to protect herself:

I don't think people are scared to ask people what they are at all. Sometimes I make it pretty clear I'm Aboriginal. I'll make jokes and stuff. What's the point in hiding what you are? Say the joke before anyone else can say it. Better to have fun than not to have fun with who you are right?

Marnie also explained that “people are first to judge and pass judgement” and that for her, navigating race has meant to learn how to “speak up” and find her voice. Participants reported the social implications implied by racial identification. For participants in many instances, racial identification meant social isolation, rejection, and racism. Participants identified White Privilege that informed others’ reactions to their identity as well as an uneasiness and discomfort with how to interact with them. Participants also noted that navigating race provides an opportunity for them to process the complexities of coming to a decision regarding where they fit and also the dangers of self-identification. This reality, however, has been the foundation for participants to find their voice and be able to self-advocate as well.

### **Self-Advocacy and Resiliency**

Self-advocacy and resiliency relate to an individual’s ability to represent one’s views or interests and resiliency is the ability to recover from and deal with adversity. Participants engaged in different acts that demonstrated these abilities: “race-bending,” where terms and language were claimed or re-claimed in order to find a sense of solidarity and strength, engaging others in race talk, and advocating for the rights of others as well as committing themselves to social justice and political efforts.

Like Marnie, Mark talked about the use of humor and “race-bending” in dealing with his identity. “Sometimes I make a joke. I say...Wasian. White Asian.” This allowed him to race bend, where he created a term to describe himself: a political act that pointed to the reality that his identity is not included in the existing racial categories. Olivia discussed the importance of finding her voice and the value of personal strength in dealing with incidents of racism:

It's hard for them to assume anything...I don't feel racism much because I'm not shy. I don't get the feeling from people because I'm not just one thing so I think if someone were to come at me from one perspective, it would be hard for them...I would definitely say something back because I'm not one to not stick up for myself.

Nelson also mentioned that “sticking up for himself” was important to him because he felt the need to change people's perspectives if they stereotyped him.

I don't feel I should be identified as that person...a bad seed or a reckless individual and I would have a debate with people and be level with them and address the situation as a human being instead of responding to what they think or what they've seen.

Marnie reinforced the reality that for her, it was always more beneficial to develop an internal toughness because “people try not to mess with you...I'd rather be tough than weak.”

Nelson externalized his commitment to his racial and cultural identity through tattoos. He explained that the tattoos give him a sense of power and a reminder of the importance that culture plays in his life. His tattoos include portraits of Aboriginal chiefs of specific significance to him: Big Bear, Geronimo, and Sitting Bull. For him, understanding history and politics is a form of resistance and the key to social change. For Olivia, this came in the form of being a role model for other post-secondary students when speaking on behalf of an organization that focuses on getting more Aboriginal students into the workforce through internships. She hoped that more Aboriginal youth will be encouraged to be successful in school and that publicizing success stories like hers will be the catalyst for change.

Participants engaged in “race-bending,” where they purposefully created a lexicon of self-describing terms to challenge that reality that these do not exist in the social fabric of racial categories. Part of this activity was a commitment to challenging negative racial stereotypes and expectations and also to engage in acts of resistance and resiliency that reflected a commitment to social change and community activism.

### **Mixed-Race Social Reality**

There has been much debate on whether a sense of collective mixed-race identity can be derived and forming a definition of what it means to be mixed-race is difficult because the experience is multi-faceted. While they identified the issues that are perpetuated by a strict reliance on biological racial categories, participants also alluded to the potential possibilities of a theoretical status of mixedness.

Mark explained his objections to the term mixed-race by contextualizing his rejection of difference as substantiated by genetic racial markers. He pointed to an absence in the racial lexicon for people who fit into more than one of the categories simultaneously:

Mixed-race. I don't know. I think it's like the monkey bird. Like, the term race should be abolished in that context...race is like a species...Genetically speaking, we're the same....I don't like that term, but is there another term for mixed-race? We don't really have one, do we? So that's the term we use...

Olivia pointed to the confusion that can arise when making sense of multiple racial and cultural backgrounds and the fact that while being mixed offers some benefits, it can also be limiting. The example that was most impactful for her was language:

Now that I think back on it, I think that it would be nice to understand at least one of them but I'm so in between the two of them that I didn't get a chance to pick

up either because maybe if both my parents spoke the same language, I would definitely grow up speaking that language and English but since I was in between the two of them, I didn't grow up speaking either at all.

Marnie identified being mixed-race as "someone who's more than just one thing. You're one of each or mixed cultures together." Being mixed had its complexities but it also offered her different possibilities. Mark also talked about the flexibility he found in being a "racial hybrid" and walking in two worlds simultaneously. For him, there is a freedom associated with "border crossings" but there is also some concern with having a mutable racial identity:

There's times when I can be anything. I can fit into this group...like a bandwagon...which I guess is a pretty nasty thing to do, when people are making fun of someone else because you're the same heritage. So being multicultural in that aspect is good...

Mark explained that mixed-heritage means for him that he can more easily relate to other people especially other people who are mixed. For him, this has been a double edged sword because while he was ashamed of not being "full blooded" and having "full status," the fact that he was able to claim more than one racial background allowed him to have multiple perspectives and identities. Nelson also cited a similar outlook on being mixed:

Having two different ethnicities in you...is a big thing...I always felt sure on the Aboriginal. I look and the culture's there but at the same time, I'm almost diluted with another ethnicity and it really muddies the water of your identity. It makes you feel disconnected almost like you're alienating yourself just by how you perceive yourself and how what you feel others see you as.

All participants agreed that although they have strong cultural and racial identity preferences, they also accept that they are mixed. Olivia described this phenomenon as being positive. “I’m unique in some ways. Very different and diverse and I have a big background. I like being mixed.” This positive identity lead Olivia to approach others who are also mixed: “Sometimes I will ask people who I can tell are mixed...they’re open and friendly about it.”

Participants philosophically understood the premise of a mixed-race individual having more than one cultural or racial background. However, they all self-identified as predominantly one race or culture for different reasons. They recounted feeling “caught between two worlds” and having to navigate the complexities of coming to choose one background: in some places, feeling guilt for having a racial and cultural fluidity and also for favoring one race and/or culture over the other in the process of self-identifying. There were also opportunities that were afforded by conceptualizing mixed-race as a fluid and mutable reality: uniqueness, commonality with others who are mixed, and an opportunity to have a transcendent social vantage point when relating to others.

## **Political**

The Political category explored how participants understood what it means to be Canadian and how this allowed them to make sense of their racial identities. Participants also discussed their conception of multiculturalism and how it impacted their lives as mixed-race individuals, especially how multiculturalism was reinforced at school. Participants talked about how they often felt like outsiders even within the various communities to which they belonged and how this had impacted their commitment to social justice and activism and “freedom fighting”. In this section participants underscored the impact that a Canadian context had on their understanding of racial identity regarding mixedness in a specific social environment.

### **Canadianness and Multiculturalism**

The social reality of being mixed-race is influenced by geographical location and the social norms and expectations that result from this environment as well as the history. Canadian identity revolves around notions of multiculturalism and it was important to understand how these impacted participants' processes of self-identification. Canadianness refers to the practice of being Canadian and the definition of what it means to be Canadian and multiculturalism references having many cultures that are honored and practiced within a particular society.

Nelson characterized his own understanding of Canadianness and being mixed-race as “Heinz 57”, a term describing someone who is of mixed blood and of many originating nationalities. For Mark, Canadianness is synonymous with whiteness. He explained, “That’s definitely where for my mom Canadian means to be white, whatever that means. To fit in, like the majority, so you don’t get alienated.” Mark described his mother’s journey to becoming a Canadian citizen as something that she was reluctant to recount to him. Just like his questions about his father, he learned to stop asking what the circumstances were of her immigrating to Canada. Mark identified a hyper-stereotyped newcomer understanding of what Canadianness is:

I think she really emphasized that because she wouldn’t really try to teach me the language or anything like that. She was really content with me being like the other kids at school, so I didn’t really have any issues. She was really looking out for me in that aspect. Because for herself, she would have definitely been alienated coming to a country and not speaking a word of English. So, I guess she didn’t want me to have problems with that...so yeah, definitely pushed me to adopt

what’s the Canadian norm, which is passed on to me by social norms and whatever the media or TV or what everyone else is doing.

Marnie echoed Mark’s sentiment that Canadianness is determined by and reflective of social media in that “...it has such a huge impact on how people look at things.” Nelson expressed his support of transparency of the media in terms of political awareness and citizenship. This belief was supported by Olivia’s interest in broadening her own understanding of Aboriginal history:

Canadian means to be born here. There are lots of people with different backgrounds who are Canadian. Especially because I’m Aboriginal. Next year, I want to take an Aboriginal history class just so I can understand some of the issues. On social media, you see a lot of racist comments and it would be nice to be able to respond with knowledge, to be educated on the topics. I’m still learning.

Mark explained Canadian identity using the analogy of a salad bowl, something he explained was introduced to him by a History teacher:

Canada is a salad bowl, there’s lots of stuff in there...but there’s sometimes when I think Canada’s a melting pot...I’ve had to justify how I am Canadian...the term Canadian for me is constantly changing...

For participants, the idea of Canadianness is linked to multiculturalism. Olivia explained multiculturalism as promoting the “salad bowl” concept – “expressing the difference of people and accepting and learning about it.” Nelson understood being multicultural as transcending race:

...being able to identify with any culture of ethnicity and being able to embrace them no matter where they come from or their social status. Being able to

understand and identify with them, no matter where they come from. Being open. Having no prejudice to anyone coming from any place because everyone’ human and everyone should be addressed as such.

For Nelson, it was important that multiculturalism was promoted in Canada specifically as it related to his own commitment to improving race relations and fighting discrimination.

Participants recognized their mixed-race identity as being reflected in the goals and aims of Canadian notions of multiculturalism. They had a commitment to considering social status and Canadianness in different ways. One pivotal influence for them was the media and how this impacted perceptions of difference. They also noticed that race was an indicator of status in many situations.

### **Outsiders Inside the Community**

Although participants clearly self-identified racially and culturally, there were times where they still felt they were outsiders although they had acceptance and support from their respective communities. It appeared that they felt the need to justify their place and participation in their chosen community.

Olivia reasoned that she is as Aboriginal as the rest of her family because “they’re all mixed up too and they don’t go to pow-wows and stuff but you can tell they’re Aboriginal.” For her, this meant that although she doesn’t practice her Aboriginal traditions, or physically “read” as Aboriginal, this does not impact the legitimacy of her claim to be Aboriginal. Her internship (that was geared at preparing Aboriginal youth for work by developing their skills and education) and her status card substantiate the authenticity of her racial and cultural declaration: “My status card. That definitely tells me I’m Aboriginal.” Having legal and political status was important for Marnie as well:

It's a status and a right and it's like I waited long enough to earn it because I am more than half so it was just like I was waiting for that law to pass. And then it stops at the sixth generation of women so my sister can't pass it on to her kids and I can't pass it on to mine unless they create another law where we could.

However, for Marnie, while there is a strong reliance on blood quantum to prove her status (this was a discussion that spoke directly to her passionate stance that she did not agree with the proposition that people who have very little Aboriginal ancestry could "buy their treaty cards"), there is still something important about understanding and following traditions, language, and culture and that this is something she intends to follow up with her own children.

Just because you don't have a status card doesn't mean you're not Aboriginal so it's a choice about what they want to do. You can only persuade them [your children] for so long and they have to speak their mind. They should understand different elements of stuff and how things work.

Mark shared that although he self-identified as being Asian, he had very few Asian friends: "In terms of my friendship groups, I was always excluded from my culture." He noted that the reverse was true for his white friends: "when it came to high school, I had a lot of white friends. So that's when I really started to get picked on."

Participants found that self-identifying and having acceptance in a particular chosen racial and/or cultural group underwent a process of negotiation and that sometimes there was a disconnect with how they perceived themselves and how others perceived them. This reality was reflected in the fact that they felt the need to justify or explain in what ways they had status in a particular group and this was sometimes cited as political or legal status.

### **Social Justice and Freedom Fighting**

Participants reported being socially aware and having a social justice (human rights and equity) commitment. In addition, participants had an interest in freedom fighting – critically analyzing social norms and governmental policy as well as philanthropic activities. Mark explained this involvement as providing the opportunity to have relationships and connection with others who had the same commitments in working toward a common goal. He referred to this this action as selflessness, where helping others reminded him of the commonality between people. He termed this “community activism”, where he felt his capacity and abilities would be able to offer something to others and this allowed him to find a sense of purpose and identity that was linked to changing the world. Marnie’s personal experiences with loss of family members and her concern for Aboriginal women inspire her to create awareness through her art.

Nelson identified his social commitment as activism. For him, this activism took root in his pride in his culture. He talked about the importance of spreading awareness and especially encouraging young people to become educated and embrace their culture in order to change societal views:

Where most people see Aboriginals as street people, people struggling at the Salvation Army, they don’t see activism. They don’t see people from up North trying to fight for their basic human rights. They don’t see our culture engaged in trying to make a difference. It’s like two steps forward, one step back...If people aren’t ready to see a change, they aren’t going to see a change.

Nelson reported that his interest in History and Political Science encourages him to go into politics and to address some of the injustices that he feels are alive and well in Canada and Manitoba. Mark also hoped to become a role model for others through community involvement:

...friends brought me to that and in that, we could find something relatable to do together. You know, it's really cool to be with someone to work on something collaboratively and see progress for a cause...It's made a huge impact on me...it really made me think that I need to be more of a positive person in my community because I need to set an example for the younger ones around me...

Olivia explained that she hopes to impact the Aboriginal community by working toward inspiring Aboriginal youth to graduate school, attend post-secondary, and enter the workforce. She said, “I feel like Aboriginal people need to be able to help themselves. You see so many people struggling and the return you get from helping someone is great.”

Participants' journey of self-identification involved a commitment to community activism and social awareness. As part of the process of unpacking where they “fit” racially and culturally, the need to advocate for others and educate others on rights and injustices and finding opportunities for social change, took a place in their lives.

## **Pedagogical**

The emergent themes in the Pedagogical category presented a picture of respondents' experiences in school or in settings related to school activities. Participants recounted experiences with racial bias in school policy and practices, the invisibility of race in curriculum and school activities, the disconnect between teachers and racialized students, and the importance of building strong relationships between students and teachers of similar racial and cultural backgrounds, where possible. Because school is one of the most influential communities

to which young people belong, it follows that it also greatly impacts their sense of self and of belonging.

### **Race Bias and Expectation in School and Policy**

One of the most prominent communities that influenced participants’ sense of self-identity was school. Participants expressed that some of the experiences they had at school greatly impacted their commitments to advocate for others and also their interest in social justice and equity.

Nelson responded to the question on whether there were expectations placed on him by telling the story of his experiences at school and what he terms his “run-ins” with teaching staff and administrators. For him, the expectations that school staff had for him were related to how they “read” his cultural identity. This was especially impactful for him being a strong academic student who was raised to value Education.

I was thought of a lesser than, like we’re lazy. I’ve had administrators accuse me of being in a gang or doing graffiti or fighting or bullying or picking on a different culture or race or being racist. The expectations aren’t very high for Aboriginal people in general.

Nelson contended that graduating high school was difficult for him because he did not feel like part of the school culture and that in identifying with his Aboriginal heritage, he was choosing a path where academic success would be more difficult.

Having racism in a school directed at you from administration or a student. It happens. You feel disengaged, disenfranchised, like you don’t belong, like an outsider. You only identify with a particular group that’s your own culture. You feel alienated if you’re mixed.

Marnie explained that expectations and racial bias had proven a challenge to her positive academic experience and ultimate success:

I don't think they expected you to have anything done. I think the biggest percent of people dropping out is groups who don't fit in or they feel like they're treated differently so they'd rather drop out. I didn't like high school. There was a lot of drama and teachers didn't care.

When asked whether the reason she felt that teachers didn't care and were unable or unwilling to provide the help she needed was related to her cultural identification, she responded that although she suspected this was the case, "that's something no one would admit to anyway," and "...if it was about race, no one would tell you." Marnie also discussed racial bias in the meting out of school punishments for behavior:

This one time this kid who strangled me didn't get expelled. I don't know. Maybe I was labeled as a bad kid or when I got into fights, it wasn't always me but I would get punished for it.

Nelson remembered an incident that impacted him because he felt that identifying as Aboriginal branded him with negative stereotypes:

Aboriginal students were often seen the same way. I remember this one time, there was this graffiti and this teacher held six Native students back and pressed us about it...

Mark felt that there had definitely been racial bias and discrimination in his school environment which led him to feel unprotected by staff and administration.

...if you're being picked on for your background, you can definitely see...if someone is being targeted for theirs, you now? If you've never been hit by a snowball, how do you know someone else has been hit by a snowball?

Marnie discussed a project that she became involved with because her teacher wanted to engage her in learning about and expressing elements of her Aboriginal culture. She did an inquiry project around the missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Winnipeg which was meaningful to her. However, one part of the project required her to make a dreamcatcher. The teacher simply assumed this was a skill and an art that she had.

Participants identified various incidents where their racial or cultural identity had influenced the school expectations that were held for them. In particular, participants noted a distinct racial bias when involving particular groups which was interpreted by them as acts of racism. This bias reinforced stereotypes, marginalization, and privilege, and posed a dilemma for participants in the self-identification process.

### **Silencing and Invisibility of Race: *The Null Curriculum***

Silencing and invisibility of race is the absence of matters pertaining to race or critical awareness of race bias. This could manifest in some situations as color blindness (where staff completely denies noticing race) or a complete absence of race talk in school activity. Marnie described her experience with race in the classroom as being a matter of inequity where getting the teacher's attention and assistance was concerned:

All the teachers for the most part tried to treat everybody the same but some wouldn't. Every school I went to was different. It seemed like teachers would help people more than others.

Marnie also pointed to the fact that difference was not acknowledged at school. Olivia, like most of the other participants, did not recall multicultural activities in elementary and middle school although Nelson remembered having a culture fair at elementary school where everyone would prepare and sample different cultural or ethnic foods (tokenism). This was the most significant and impactful occasion of celebrating or dealing with race that he could articulate.

Nelson identified special language credit in high school as being an example where there was invisibility of race because although a student would be able to receive credit for speaking and writing a language, this was not specifically taught and there was no opportunity in school to learn. Nelson also noted a void for students of multiple racial and cultural backgrounds:

...if you're a mixed student, with two cultures, two identities, you are in the mix. You just fall through the cracks. There's no systems for you. There's nothing that engages you and makes you think that you should be proud of it. There's no social dynamics or school functions that address that. That's not something that's addressed in school, being mixed.

Mark discussed a complete absence of discussion of race and culture but reasoned that this was done purposefully to avoid bias:

...for most of my schooling, I was part of a really well diversified class. You know, a lot of kids from different backgrounds, and I think my teachers were...if they were biased in some way or prejudiced, they were really good at hiding that aspect in their academic teachings and expectations...

In fact, none of the participants recalled having an Aboriginal, visibly mixed-race, or minority teacher in their educational history before they attended post-secondary institutions. This being said, however, it was not agreed that it was the exclusive duty of this specific group of educators to deal with race matters.

Participants noted a void in school curriculum or activity where race issues were concerned. For different reasons, race was predominantly not addressed or acknowledged by school staff and in particular, the reality of being mixed-race was not discussed.

### **Relationships With Teachers**

This set of questions asked participants whether they had a mixed-race teacher or staff member, a teacher of visible minority status or Aboriginal ancestry. The purpose of these questions was to establish whether the participants had been able to identify racially and ethnically with a teacher in their academic histories and what impact this had on their educational experiences.

Participants responded unanimously that they had not personally had a mixed-race teacher, teacher with visible minority status, or teacher of Aboriginal ancestry, in their elementary years of their schooling. Some of them responded to the question, however with the response that “you wouldn’t know by looking at them” and reasoned that having a teacher who reflected their mixed-race, visible minority, or Aboriginal status would only be uncovered through disclosure by addressing race and culture which they could not recall happening. Additionally, they responded that they did not remember having an administrator with any of these backgrounds. Olivia was the only participant who recalled having a teacher with this background and this was during her post-secondary studies.

Despite the lack of racial and cultural similarity with teaching and administrative staff, Nelson felt that having a teacher of Aboriginal ancestry would have changed his educational experience:

It [would be] easier to get along with someone I could identify and connect with.

You can feel there's a tension with certain teachers...it would be more comfortable with someone who comes from a similar background as you.

The semester before the interview, Olivia had, for the first time, had a professor who was Nigerian for one of her classes. She felt that having a teacher who knew her family and also with whom she had a racial and cultural connection improved her motivation in the class and also her interest in the course:

My first black teacher was at University and he happened to be from Nigeria and happened to know my family but even before I knew he knew my family, I felt he looked like my dad or me and I somehow felt I had to be better because he knew my family.

Olivia also stated that having a teacher who reflects her would make her want to take more classes from him/her because it would increase her level of comfort and allow her to feel “recognized.”

Even if I had an Aboriginal teacher, it's nice to see difference...I have a Jamaican professor now. It surprises me because I never had a teacher who reflected me before.

Participants reported that having a teacher who they felt reflected them racially and/or culturally would help with their academics by giving them a connection with the teacher and also by feeling that they are welcomed and valued in classroom activity. A community member could

also provide insights into cultural activities, practices, and language. Also, having a teacher who could act as a role model for the student is also helpful in increasing academic success.

### **Conclusion**

Participants were asked a series of questions that were linked to five categories that were understood as representative of the facets of identity development: social, cultural, identity, political, and pedagogical. Participants discussed the process through which their parents had come to relate their cultural and racial backgrounds to them and how this allowed them to adopt a racial identity. They also talked about their friendship and peer groups (friends at school, in the community, and family friends) and how the cultural and racial identities of the people with whom they developed relationships reflected their perception of self-identity. A theme in their relationship with their family was colorism/shadeism within the family and ways the experience their siblings underwent in order to come to a sense of identity was different than their own. The concept of kinship journeys and the importance they played in finding identity was presented as well as the realities of race acting and “passing” and how participants responded to others racially and culturally categorizing them especially when this did not correspond with the way they perceived themselves. Participants also reported being aware of and acting as cultural bridges in different situations for varied groups. A theme for the interviews was performing race and how participants conceptualized their claim to identification with and inclusion of a particular group or group(s). Self-advocating and advocating for others through what was described as “racial toughness” and the importance of cultural bridging to derive and convey an understanding and acceptance of mixed-race social identity was also important. What it means to be Canadian and the definition and practice of multiculturalism unveiled a commitment to social justice and activism that participants had. This was fueled by school

experiences where there was race bias in school policy and practice, silencing and invisibility or race in curriculum and school activity, and where students felt racially and culturally underrepresented by staff members.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

This study explores how the Manitoban educational policies and practices that reflect ethnocultural equity impact mixed-race students' in terms of their personal and collective identity. Policies and practices that reflect ethnocultural equity in Manitoba are inspired by the 1980s commitment to multicultural education and the subsequent “Multicultural Education – A Policy for the 1990s” document published by Manitoba Education in 1990. “Diversity and Equity in Education: An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity” was published in 2003 as a more accurate reflection of the Manitoba Government's interest in cultural proficiency and anti-racist/bias initiatives. To date, this is the most recent and pertinent provincial policy involving race considerations in Education in Manitoba. The plan was conceived as a two-year process and was to be implemented at the school-divisional level. The mandate of the plan involved re-evaluation of ESL/EAL programming, creation and distribution of teacher support documents on diversity and equity in the classroom for compulsory courses, developing and hosting professional learning series on cultural proficiency, and supporting divisional and school planning to build safe and inclusive schools (with an emphasis on anti-racist/bias initiatives). Because policies are developed and administered by each school division, the content and emphasis of the policies vary across Manitoba. Additionally, there is little monitoring and evaluation being done by the Province and the plan is outdated; its final date of completion intended for 2005. Based on the interview with participants, the terms equity and diversity are nebulous: participants were more familiar with the term “multicultural education” but had difficulty articulating a definition of multicultural and also could not identify many concrete examples of how multiculturalism was practiced at school in their classes or in the school community. Despite an anti-racist/bias focus of the safe and inclusive schools initiative,

participants reported race being almost exclusively absent from curriculum and activities at school. Mixed-race students' experiences with and perceptions of diversity and equity and how these impacted their personal and collective identities were understood through the lens of the social, political, identity, cultural, and pedagogical aspects. The study found that race relations and racial identity matters were generally not discussed at home but were navigated by the mixed-race person through experiences. When race was discussed by parents, it was based on parent's own experiences with racial socialization and their own racial self-identity, which sometimes were not applicable to the mixed-race person. Participants who grew up in a single parent household with limited or no contact with their other parent assumed the racial and cultural identity of the parent who raised them. They still demonstrated an interest and curiosity in the other parent's heritage, mainly when they became adolescents. Friends and peers generally reflected participants' sense of personal and collective identity. Most participants had friends who were from the cultural and racial group to which they identified, were mixed-race, or visible minorities. Generally, however, even though participants talked about being cultural bridges for their friends, they noted that their friends of varied backgrounds did not necessarily “get along” and were not familiar with each other. Participants discussed having to make significant and often difficult friendship and peer choices when they got to a point in their lives where they had to make pivotal life decisions. Most participants had close family members or friends who were supports and role models for them. This was important in impacting their sense of identity because close family ties and positive relationships is an important part of self-identity. Many participants found racial identity through legal and political status and this self-identification was perpetuated through acts such as “race-bending” or creating terms that represented their cultural and racial experiences that were for the most part absent from the mono-racial lexicons used to

categorize individuals. Participants, although agreeing that they were racially mixed, explained their racial and cultural identities in terms of monoracial categories. In some instances, they referred to distinct racial categories to express their identities, “breaking down” their specific racial groups. The “amount of blood” the individual had qualified the participant for legal and political inclusion in specific groups. Micro-aggressions and colorism/shadeism played a part in identity formation, where phenotypical differences were noted between participants and their siblings and different treatment related to these differences influenced notions of identity.

Aspects of their physical appearances related to race also gave participants a sense of pride and helped with having race conversations with others. Kinship journeys and visiting their homeland was important for participants and this gave them a very strong sense of identity. Groups to which they belonged as well as groups from which they were excluded factored into the participants’ identification. Also pertinent was how participants understood what it meant to act like a member of a specific racial group and how others read this performativity. Most impactful were instances where participants were denied legitimacy to their own self-identification or were conflicted on the basis of “passing” or “acting too White”. Participants also pointed to the importance of disclosing and articulating their racial identities as a function of being misidentified or labeled. Participants reported feeling like they were endowed with the ability to act as cultural bridges for their families, friends, and communities. There was a strong social justice and advocacy commitment by participants and notions of border crossing and consciousness-raising seemed to be an opportunity for participants to challenging social expectation. In terms of political status, there were some concerns with the definitions of what it means to be Canadian. Participants described being Canadian as being synonymous with whiteness and reported that the term mixed-race often denotes specific white/minority heritages.

Participants felt they were not represented in the media as mixed-race people and were absent in representations at school. Participants all reported that their experiences at school impacted their sense of identity. They indicated that there were different school expectations placed on them. In some cases, there were lower expectations of their academic performance and ability based on race. Racial stereotypes were issues for many participants and this pointed to racial bias on the part of staff and administrators. Participants felt that for the most part, multicultural activities and initiatives were not inclusive of them or they were forced to act as “experts” for one of their heritage groups, sometimes the community to which they had the least connection or knowledge. What is termed as the “null curriculum” was also reported by participants, which is where groups are not represented at school and race matters were not addressed. Additionally, participants mentioned “clueless racism”, where educators tried to avoid race bias by adopting a color-blind approach to school activity. Participants did not have an Aboriginal, mixed-race, or minority teacher in their schooling before they attended post-secondary institutions but they mentioned that it would have been welcome and likely helped with their academic success and feelings of inclusivity. Analysis of the data of the study was done through a Critical Mixed-Race Pedagogical lens. The framework used to organize, analyze, and present the data was Maria Root’s “Ecological Framework for Understanding Identity Development”, (Appendix E) which is based on Bronfenbrenner’s “Ecological Model of Human Development” and adapted to mixed-race studies. In this study, these are identified and termed as social, cultural, identity, political, and pedagogical facets of identity development. The **social** category explored (1) preparedness and tool kits (political and legal status, essentialist racial categories and blood quantum, and “talking race” and racial tool kits); (2) friendships, family arrangements, and family ties/support networks (similar monoracial identification, mixed-race, or “other”

friendships, making positive friendship and peer group choices, monoracial identity, and the importance of close relationships and support networks); (3) micro-aggressions and colorism/shadeism (siblings and family relationships). The cultural lens presented (1) homelands and kinship journeys; (2) race acting and reading race (acting and reading race, “passing”, hyper-vigilance in “setting the record straight”, white privilege, and non-acceptance of self-identification; and (3) cultural bridging (border crossing and bridging and social justice and consciousness-raising). The identity influences looked at (1) performing race (“othering” and racism, self-advocacy and resiliency, race bending and community activism; (2) mixed-race social reality (“at once someone but no one”). The political section was concerned with (1) Canadianness and Multiculturalism (Canadian equals white (or off-white) and the myth of multiculturalism); (2) outsiders inside the community (securing membership); and (3) social justice and freedom fighting. Finally, the pedagogical examined (1) race bias and expectation in school and policy (expectations and tokenism); (2) silencing and invisibility of race – the *null curriculum* (“I must be invisible” and cultural tourism); and (3) relationships with teachers (and staff).

## **Social**

### **Preparedness and Tool Kits**

Root’s ecological model lists a macrolens of *family socialization* (Appendix E) that denotes influences to identity development originating in the home: language, nativity, given names, values, customs, parent’s identity, family identity, presence of extended family, and sexual orientation. Combined with the external influences of temperament, social skills, talents and aptitudes, and coping skills, this determines the salience of each lens to inform identity during one’s lifetime. One of the family influences identified by participants in this study is

preparedness and tool kits, which refers to how parents prepared respondents to deal with the social reality of being mixed-race and in what ways this allows them to develop and use their “tool kits” to navigate society. Most participants conveyed the fact that although they were all able to clearly articulate their racial and cultural identities, this was not something that was explicitly addressed at any one particular moment in their upbringing by their parents but instead learned through experience.

### **Political and Legal Status**

Participants developed a sense of racial and ethnic identity based on family activities and experiences. For most participants, their legal and political status (e.g. Status Indian) was a strong determining factor in racial and cultural identity formation and this was something they insisted had weight in their racial and cultural identity formation and conception of self. Even with discussion of the fact that their children would not share the same political and legal status (as a function of Bill C-3), participants insisted that being recognized by the Government gave them the legitimacy and acknowledgement they needed to be able to declare their racial ancestries and identities. This echoes Mahtani’s (2014) contention that mixed-race in an Indigenous context is unique in that individuals may not identify as mixed-race per se: they might identify as Indigenous (as Nelson, Olivia, and Marnie do) Métis, or not Indigenous at all (p. 56). Mahtani also discusses the 1869 “Gradual Enfranchisement Act” where categories of “status and non-status Indian” were created. A blood-quantum requirement was added to this definition, where in order to claim “Indian” status, an individual had to be able to trace the bloodline to at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  Aboriginal.

This was a similar phenomenon shared by other participants when they talked about the importance of “race bending” or specifically creating words such as “WAsian” to describe their

racial identities and to denote that there is a chasm between the reality of mixed-race individuals and racial categorization which resulted in participants being citizens of Canadian society but not understanding where they fit. This experience was mirrored in other studies where youth adopted or “claimed” racial self-descriptors such as “Chicana” or “Hapa” and takes root in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa on Mestiza consciousness and *borderlands*, which is discussed later in this chapter.

### **Essentialist Racial Categories and Blood Quantum**

In the discussion of what participants said when they were asked “what are you?” by others, participants explained their backgrounds in terms of distinct monoracial categories or “ethnic constituencies”, as explained by Mahtani (2014). This reflects the perception that although mixed-race is a theoretically accepted reality and Canada is a nation founded on a history of “multiculturalism” and pluralism, we are inherently socially bound by monoracial categories in order to philosophically and physically make sense of race and ethnicity. Participants also understood their cultural and racial identities in terms of blood quantum as a measure for self-identification. This is similar to the practice of group subscription by hypodescent or the “one drop rule”. Participants described their identities through the “amount of Indian blood I have” and were assured by the percentage (I am 3/4 or predominantly Native so I qualify as part of the community). One of the implications is that the self-identification of participants may not fit with the identification ascribed to the individual by educators and society in general based on multiple reasons, one of which being an incongruence with outward appearance, lack of cultural knowledge, or political and legal status and how participants understood their own identities.

### **“Talking Race” and Racial Tool Kits**

Issues of racism and white privilege (racial tool kits) were not likely to be discussed outright in the homes of participants. In some instances, this was noted with parents’ or family members’ own experiences with racism in their lives. Winn Tutwiler (2016) explains that race may not be a central consideration in the way mixed-race families function (p. 92). In fact, what may be more pertinent, is the diversity of family arrangements (two heterosexual adults married or co-habiting, two same-sex adults, one single adult who is LGBTQ or straight, two adults with non-biological children, grandparents, foster parents, etc.) Also to consider, is the personalities of the parents and the environment in which they parent (p. 93). According to Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005), there are three factors in how parents of mixed-race children socialize them: (1) individual parental factors; (2) the quality and nature of the relationship between the parents; and (3) how the parents respond to their child’s physical appearance (p. 62). Additionally, there are three types of racial socialization that parents may appeal to: (1) preparation for bias; (2) cultural socialization; and (3) racial group membership (Winn Tutwiler, 2016, p. 101). This follows participants’ experiences with being prepared by their parents to navigate Canadian society: participants recounted parents speaking directly about the racism they encountered in school and in the community, the importance of having a strong cultural and racial ties and understanding the historical positioning of their particular race group, and finding a sense of identity through acceptance by a specific racial group. Wallace (2001) notes that parents’ sentiments regarding their own heritages and experiences as a result of them influence how mixed-race children form group memberships which affect the values and attitudes regarding racial identity (p. 153). Some parents avoid racial issues because they were rejected or reprimanded by family for choosing an interracial relationship (Fuyo-Gaskins, 1999, p. 118).

This was the case with one participant, Mark, whose mother “shut down” when asked about her decisions for leaving her home country and choosing to partner with Mark’s father who was still not known to her. Personal factors that influence parents’ socialization practices are: their own racial socialization experiences, their racial experiences, and their personal sense of racial self-identity (Winn Tutwiler, 2016, p. 104). Mark discussed the fact that his mother refused to allow him to speak Chinese and practice his culture because she wanted to afford him with the social mobility of *White Privilege*. Other factors are parental age and socioeconomic status and geographical location of the family, with older parents and parents in lower socioeconomic situations being less likely to engage in racial socialization of their mixed-race children. Also, parents in more rural or remote areas are less likely to discuss race or racially socialize their mixed-race children than those in urban areas or ethnically diverse communities (Winn Tutwiler, 2016, p. 106). Education, for the most part, seemed to be a goal that the families of participants understood as a tool for upward social mobility.

Parents who are not racial or ethnic minorities or mixed-race themselves may not have the tools or understanding to assist their children (Lorenzo-Blanco, Bares, and Delva, 2013, p. 127) and *talking race* involves a racial socialization that prepares children to navigate situations where racial discrimination occurs to understand the complexities of race relations, most especially in a Canadian context. Fuyo-Gaskins (1999) notes, “parents [may be] simply unaware. They aren’t mixed-race themselves, so they don’t foresee the experiences and feelings that their multiracial children may have.” (p. 118) Discussion of race by parents of mixed-race children is extremely delicate and complicated: parents who are visible minorities reinforce their worldviews and experiences with their children and the norming of whiteness can lead white parents to feel that issues of color are irrelevant to their child’s identity formation (Rockquemore

and Laszloffy, 2005, p. 67). This was the case with two participants, who described race as “not being an issue” in their upbringing. Parents who are monoracial may not completely understand how their mixed-race child experiences being more than one race (Winn Tutwiler, 2016, p. 99). Further, Fernandes Williams argues that “[some] parents of mixed-race children are not clear on the direction to take with their children and [may need] support and advice of well-trained social workers and professionals in order to socialize their children to address social reality (Fernandes Williams, 2011, p. 181). However, despite these complexities, Winn Tutwiler (2016) notes that although race discussion may be difficult for some parents, it has a positive influence on mixed-race children’s sense of identity (p. 98). In terms of school, Winn Tutwiler (2016) suggests that schools are a location where mixed-race individuals begin to form their racial identities:

Mixed-race children begin to face race-related questions about themselves and their family from peers as early as preschool. Clearly, schools represent one of many locations where mixed-race children require support from adults who are knowledgeable about how race mediates educational experience. (preface xi)

Mixed-race people have “racialized tool kits” that help them interact in the racially coded ways needed for inclusion in various social settings (Winn Tutwiler, 2016, p. 154). Fuyo-Gaskins (1999) explains that providing mixed-race children with “tool kits” involves helping them unpack the complexities of belonging to a multiracial family unit:

What’s life like inside an interracial family? What are the difficulties? What are the rewards? And how do these families deal with the racial and cultural differences under their roofs as well as help their children cope with the prejudices of the outside world? (p. 94)

During her work with mixed-race youth, Fuyo-Gaskins (1999) talked with many young people who reported the importance of having open communication with family to help unpack the complexities of being mixed-race (p. 116). She encouraged parents to engage their mixed-race children in *race talk* by reinforcing the fact that parents do not have to be racially mixed themselves to be terrific parents to their multiracial children (p. 118).

### **Friendships, Family Arrangements, and Family Ties/Support Networks**

Friendships and peer groups reflected participants' sense of identity. When asked about childhood or long-time friends, participants reported having friendships with the children of close family friends, neighborhood friends, extended family, or school friends. In some instances, these friends were both or all four of the categories. In terms of relationships, participants had three main groups of supports: (1) family and close neighborhood friends; (2) school friends; and (3) family members. With respect to family friends, these friends were generally made in childhood and reflected the cultural and racial background of the participants' families. Close neighborhood friends were made in childhood and generally were not kept beyond adolescence when participants were forced to make significant life choices. School friends typically reflected the cultural and racial backgrounds of participants with many friends being mixed-race. Family members included people participants viewed as role models and parental figures (even if these were not biological) and all participants had family supports, whether they were immediate or extended family members.

### **Similar Mono-Racial Identification, Mixed-Race, or “Other” Friendships**

For the most part, participants reported having friendships or peer groups that were comprised of similar mono-racial backgrounds that mirrored their own or being mixed-race (not always the same racial configurations as the participant). Quillian and Redd (2009) note that

racial awareness in interactions with peers and racial categorization norms of the social environment are key factors that affect the racial identification of mixed-race people (p. 280). In fact, mixed-race people generally form more diverse friendship networks than their single-race peers (p. 282), which is consistent with participant’s responses that their friendships were of similar mono-racial individuals to their own, were mixed themselves, or were visible minorities.

Winn Tutwiler (2016) corroborates this phenomenon:

Mixed-race youth who live in diverse communities are often able to interact with youth from several different racial backgrounds...[but] this does not mean...that their acquaintances from different racial groups will necessarily desire to, or interact comfortably with each other...(p. 142)

Participants noted having friends at different times in varied contexts and that their friends did not necessarily “get along with each other” or were familiar to each other. Generally, their friendships were individual ones, not being part of large peer or friendship groups, often cited as forming friendships based on common interests and goals as opposed to racial or cultural community. This phenomenon is discussed later in the chapter in terms of mixed-race youth having more incidence of being rejected from mono-racial or cultural peer groups.

### **Making Positive Friendship and Peer Group Choices**

Participants discussed having to make significant and sometimes painful friendship and peer choices in terms of their relationships based on purposefully isolating themselves from “the wrong crowd” or removing themselves from “bad influences”. One participant described this as “rising above the lifestyle”. This is consistent with mixed-race literature that posits mixed-race youth are often more socially isolated than their mono-racial peers by self or group selection. Winn Tutwiler (2016) notes that children’s experiences outside school influence their

experiences inside school (p. 111) and that the challenges that some mixed-race youth encounter when attaching to a peer group may result in withdrawal (isolation) or conformity, which may lead to risky behaviors (p. 155). Most participants described incidents with detrimental or “risky” behaviors in their lives, either as experienced by them or by their close friends and families.

### **Mono-Racial Identity**

Participants who grew up in a single parent household with limited or no contact with their other parent adopted the racial and cultural identity of the parent who raised them although they demonstrated an interest and curiosity in their estranged parent’s ethnic and cultural background primarily in their adolescence. They also noted an interest in learning the language of either or both of their parents’ backgrounds as well as engaging in cultural activities that they felt celebrated their family backgrounds (on either or both sides). In general, participants adopted a mono-racial identity, which is consistent with Root’s 1990s work on ways biracial individuals resolve internal conflict with identity formation: identification with a single racial group (Renn, 2008, p. 238). Additionally, the work of Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) indicates that children become oriented toward the group of people they interact with regularly (in this instance, family) (p. 90). It is noted that Pollock’s 2012 work on race terms and labels found that when students in her study were asked “what are you?” or “what are you mixed with?”, they described their racial identities using one or multiple simple (mono) racial terms or categories (Pollock, 2012, p. 40). This is consistent with how participants described their racial and ethnic backgrounds in terms of being mixed-race.

### **Close Family Relationships/Support Networks**

Participants reinforced the importance of having close family ties and relationships with extended family. Although some interracial families experience distress from extended

family behaviors and attitudes (such as micro-aggressions as intentional or unintentional verbal or non verbal slights, snubs, or insults or social isolation) (Winn Tutwiler, 2016, p. 88), participants discussed the importance of family support and relationships in their lives which had positive and healthy impacts on their sense of identity. Most notably, the male participants highlighted the importance of having a positive male figure in their lives. Winn Tutwiler (2016) explains that mixed-race boys may be more emotionally vulnerable than their monoracial peers and may wish to connect with their fathers [or father figures] on an emotional level (p. 98). Rockemore and Laszloffy (2005) suggest that when children are in a largely socially homogenous environment, they become oriented toward the group of people they largely interact with and the relationships they develop is a large influence in their sense of identity (p. 90). The ability to form a meaningful relationship with others as well as the environment in which they form these relationships is an important part of self-identity. Fuyo-Gaskins (1999) found that support from extended family members helped mixed-race youth form a strong and positive sense of self-identity. Just like the participants in the study, Fuyo-Gaskins' participant cited her grandmother as an invaluable support mechanism (p. 130). Because mixed-race children navigate more than one heritage community, they generally will also learn to adapt to the cultural norms and expectations of each group, allowing them to be better ambassadors and cultural bridgers/border crossers in other social contexts.

### **Micro-aggressions and Colorism/Shadeism**

Micro-aggressions are the verbal and non-verbal communication of messages that target people based on their marginalized group membership. Winn Tutwiler (2016) quoted Nadal et al.'s article that identified five main areas of micro-aggressions: (1) isolation; (2) favoritism; (3) questioning of authenticity; (4) denial of identity and experience; and (5) lack of

information about family heritage and culture (p. 97). Colorism or shadeism are forms of micro-aggression and involve discrimination based on skin color or shade. While most overt incidents of micro-aggression take place outside the home, they also take place within families, whether intentional or not.

### **Siblings**

Most participants divulged that phenotypical differences (physical outward appearance and characteristics) were noted between their siblings (as well as between themselves and their siblings). These differences did not typically define the relationships between the siblings within the family but had implications for their relationships outside the home. Winn Tutwiler (2016) explains that, "[it] is likely that some siblings in interracial families may be perceived as white and thus privy to social benefits not available to their darker skinned siblings" (p. 17). This phenomenon was noted with participants explaining that they felt they were bullied more for being visibly mixed than their siblings who could pass as white. Shadeism and colorism were present in participants' lives. They were found both inside the home (within families) and also in the community. Shadeism and colorism often took the form of questioning participants' parents' and siblings' identities and in some instances, displayed prominently in identification formation related to disclosure of family relationship in school and the community. Participants talked about feeling proud of particular characteristics that they felt linked them physically with what they understood as their racial and cultural communities and also that their appearance helped facilitate acceptance into particular groups and/or race conversations with others (bridging).

## Cultural

### Homelands and Kinship Journeys

Most of the participants described having a strong connection with a place of cultural and community significance that they visited either at various points in their lives or on a continued basis throughout their lives or having the intention of visiting these places in the future. This is described as a “homeland”: the physical and cultural/spiritual place of special significance and meaning or a home community. The process of visiting the “homeland” can be termed a “kinship journey” which reunites the individual with their family or cultural community. In most instances, an important part of the journey is experience with the language of the “homeland”. Additionally, the cultural activities that are practiced and taught reinforced cultural norms and identity as well as family connection and support networks. This also allowed participants to have a sense of their heritage community(ies) which allowed them to bridge cultures and encourage others to do the same. Winn Tutwiler (2016) cites kinship journeys as practices for mixed-race people who lack experiences with their heritage communities (p. 103). However, she notes that for Native American children, the stories, ceremonies, language, and traditions that form cultural knowledge are tied to physical places (p. 114). Fuyo-Gaskins (1999) understands kinship journeys as a cultural exploration where “[mixed-race youth] were studying in Beijing, learning how to speak Japanese, participating in Native American rituals and writing research papers about their family history” (p. 161). The act is less about adult individuals connecting with the heritage communities to which they belong but have had no exposure growing up, and more about exploring identity through going back to one’s roots and experiencing a part of cultural heritage first-hand with which to form a stronger sense of self-identity (Fuyo-Gaskins, 1999, p. 192).

## **Acting and Reading Race**

Race acting refers to various behaviors that “perform” race. This notion is referred to by Judith Butler in her definition of “performativity”: investigating how we use language and behavior to construct identity.

### **Acting and Reading Race**

Participants in the study talked about the reality that both they and those they interacted with “read” race in their relations with each other. Individuals made assumptions about the cultural and racial background of the participant, made conscious or unconscious decisions about where the participant fit (sometimes this did not correspond with how the participant self-identified), were uneasy or unsure about how to interact with the participant until the participant disclosed some sort of racial or cultural identity, and made judgments about how the participant should self-identify. Race acting is based on people’s beliefs about what it means to act like a member of a specific racial group (Winn Tutwiler, 2016, p. 143). Additionally,

Identity claims and social contexts play a major role in how mixed-race youth perceive and experience race acting. Those who claim to be white and enact white behaviors and attitudes [passing] are seen as culturally familiar to their white friends, yet they can still be viewed as non-white. (Winn Tutwiler, 2016, p. 144)

Winn Tutwiler (2016) notes that friendships among adolescents tend to be highly determined by race and that blending and amalgamation were two friendship patterns that emerged among mixed-race youth. Blending is where friendships that do not quite reflect each or either of the racial heritage groups are chosen by mixed-race youth. Mixed-race youth may bridge their friendships from both sides of their racial heritage or may form friendships with peers from multiple heritage groups (p. 148). It is also noted that mixed-race youth have a higher degree of

risk of being rejected by their chosen mono-racial groups (p. 152). This sometimes leads to a greater incidence of “passing”.

### **Passing**

Participants spoke about “passing,” where their cultural and racial identity was mistaken by others and where they were lumped in one racial or cultural category over another by others based on the way they “performed” race. They also reported intentionally not disclosing or withholding the details of their backgrounds and being accused of deliberately trying to negate their cultural and racial identities for specific purposes, namely white privilege. Generally, the term “passing” refers to mixed-race individuals being mistaken for being white or whatever the dominant/superior racial and cultural majority background in the society is. In many instances, this phenomenon is fraught with feelings of shame or guilt, especially when the passing is done intentionally to avoid the effects of racism and adopt a position of White Privilege. Another phenomenon related to “passing” is “getting caught in the act” which was discussed by participants, where the mixed-race individuals who desired to have group membership can be accused of race acting and have their authenticity questioned (Winn Tutwiler, 2016, p. 154). There is also “code switching,” where individuals alternate between two or more languages (often referring to the customs, “lingo,” and dialects implied by particular races or cultures) (Fuyo-Gaskins, 1999, p. 166). Participants discussed this phenomenon with respect to the language and cultural customs of their communities and navigating the various heritage groups to which they belong.

### **Hyper-Vigilance in “Setting the Record Straight”**

Participants discussed many complexities that arose from self-declaring and openly disclosing their racial backgrounds, especially as a function of racism perpetuated

through the media as well as society. They also spoke of the importance of conveying a strong sense of racial and cultural identity through “race acting.” Participants generally were inclined to correct individuals who mis-identified their chosen racial and cultural identities. In some instances, participants reported being upset or annoyed by questions that seemed to deny their legitimacy into their chosen groups or where they sensed the individual was trying to socially “place” them based on race. Fuyo-Gaskins (1999) speaks to the practice of mixed-race people who “turned the tables” on those who misidentified or mislabeled them, which in many cases, provided them with a sense of empowerment (p. 24).

### **White Privilege**

White Privilege is defined by Winn Tutwiler (2016) as not only systematically conferring advantages of one group gained through the disadvantage of another, but also that it is typically not acknowledged by the dominant group that holds power (p. 9). Participants spoke to the importance of having White Privilege in terms of upward social mobility with a focus on education and also “overcoming the lifestyle.” Participants also noted White Privilege with access to assistance from the teacher, punishments, and expectations in school. “Talking white” was cited as one example of exclusion from one racial category to which participants belong. This was discussed with reference to participants “walking in two worlds,” where they were rejected from one heritage group for not being able to *code switch* effectively in the proper context but also by being reprimanded by the community for “acting too white.”

### **Non-Acceptance of Self-Identification**

Participants noted that in some instances, they were denied inclusion into one of the monoracial categories they adopted based on phenotype. On these occasions, they felt pressured to reinforce their authenticity for belonging to their self-identified racial group. This is

noted by Wallace (2001) in a discussion of loyalty and legitimacy of the heritage community that is “tested” in different ways by families, peers, and the community (p. 120). Additionally, it was reported that others made assumptions about their background, declarations about where the participant belonged racially and culturally, even in situations where this was incongruent with how the participant viewed him/herself, which emotionally impacted them. Participants reported this happening when people refused to accept their own sense of mono-racial identity and resulted in them explaining their racial backgrounds in terms of ethnic constituencies. Rarely did participants appeal to the term “mixed-race” or a variant of the term. When they did, it was reported that further information was required and that they were forced to “break down” or name the heritage groups they belonged to. Rockquomore and Laszloffy (2005) explained that when a child self-identifies as “mixed-race”, it may be validated, challenged, or outright rejected (p. 122) and that experiences with validation and/or rejection play an important role in the process of identity formation and development. Further, developing a sense of identity may be difficult when others do not perceive the mixed-race individual as they see themselves (Lou, Lalonde, and Wilson, 2011, p. 81). Racial ambiguity in physical appearance was an emergent phenomenon for participants and they noted that others who were unable to immediately racially categorize them, were uneasy interacting with the participant until they could racially place the participant. This is discussed in Wallace’s 2001 article, where physical appearance is cited as a factor in whether mixed-race individuals are accepted into their heritage communities (p. 154). Participants also reported that the origins of their name(s) led to others questioning their racial and ethnic backgrounds and also forming expectations based on these categorizations, although in some instances, this also provided the participant with the opportunity to engage others in race talk and “bridging”. Participants also exposed the tendency of others to assume that the term

“mixed” meant specifically non-white mixed with white or black. Mahtani (2014) explains this phenomenon in the Canadian context as “when “mixed-race” is uttered, a partially white ancestry tends to be assumed” (p. 5) based on the white, dominant, Eurocentric vestiges of Canadian colonial history.

## **Cultural Bridging**

Cultural bridging refers to the ability of mixed-race people to form a relational and physical bridge between people in terms of bringing about cultural awareness and consciousness-raising. It is argued that mixed-race individuals are able to act as liaisons between cultural groups and individuals because their racial and political status falls simultaneously outside and inside the borders of multiple racial and cultural groups. This notion is reflected in the idea of *borderlands* and the creation and perpetuation of cultural and racial borders that individuals must navigate in society.

### **Border Crossing and Bridging**

Participants felt very confident in their ability to engage others in *race talk* and to act as bridges for various racial groups in many situations. There was a strong advocacy focus for participants, who understood part of their responsibility to be community activism and making connections with others in different contexts in many areas of their lives (such as work, school, and volunteering). It is argued that mixed-race individuals are *border crossers* in terms of physically and socially belonging to multiple racial and cultural groups. However, the simple fact of “walking many worlds” and crossing racial and social borders through mixedness does not mean that mixed-race people are in a position to act as advocates or activists to break down

social barriers although many mixed-race individuals feel it is their opportunity or obligation to be a cultural bridge between people (Fuyo-Gaskins, 1999, p. 247).

### **Social Justice and Consciousness-Raising**

Participants were relationally and physically able to bridge cultures by engaging people from different backgrounds and also exemplifying ways that cultural and racial barriers are artificial and should be challenged. Participants were aware of this status and interested in race talk that opens the dialogue and conversations about race and culture. Participants were also instigators themselves in challenging social expectations and racial boundaries that they felt were limiting and isolating. This was often as a function of what they or their families had experienced in terms of racism in their lives and was manifested in participants being interested in taking courses at school related to Canadian history and race relations, learning more about their heritage communities, taking kinship journeys, and becoming community activists.

## **Identity**

### **Performing Race**

Performing race was discussed above in terms of how participants externalized their racial and cultural identities through language and behavior. One of the considerations in how participants chose to project their racial identity is how they understood others' perceptions of how they “race acted” or what others “read” and ways they made choices about how they represented their racial and cultural identities. Many times, although participants acknowledged that how they were perceived was very much beyond their control, they were also sensitive to the fact that there is often a social message or status implied with their appearance.

### **“Othering” and Racism**

Participants recounted their experiences with difference as being synonymous with racism. Many participants reported having their status or position change with respect to the person to whom they had disclosed their identities in a process of interpreting and processing race due to what they perceived as Eurocentric and White Privilege vestiges in the Canadian context. Participants identified White Privilege that informed others’ reactions to their identity as well as an uneasiness and discomfort with how to interact with them until they disclosed the constituent racial groups to which they belonged. Participants also noted that navigating race provided an opportunity for them to process the complexities of coming to a decision regarding where they fit racially and also the dangers of self-identification. In some instances, participants noted that although class and race (and other social categories must be understood as interrelated), class was synonymous for race and resulted in their “cultural marginalization” (Winn Tutwiler, 2016, p. 22)

### **Self-Advocacy and Resiliency**

Self-advocacy and resiliency relate to an individual’s ability to represent one’s views or interests and resiliency is the ability to recover from and deal with adversity. Participants engaged in different acts that demonstrated these abilities: “race-bending”, where terms and language were claimed or re-claimed in order to find a sense of solidarity and strength, engaging others in race talk, and advocating for the rights of others as well as committing themselves to social justice and political efforts.

### **Race Bending and Community Activism**

Participants talked about the use of humor and “race-bending” in dealing with identity, where terms are created to describe experiences and situations of specific and direct

impact to mixed-race individuals. Additionally, terms were created to describe a blended racial category: “WAsian”. This is similar to Fuyo-Gaskin’s interview where self-identity is secured through naming (or re-naming) the racial category (Fuyo-Gaskins, 1999, p. 139). In some instances, identifying with a mixed racial category helps mixed-race individuals find a sense of identity and social positioning (p. 149). Additionally, because there have historically been so few positive terms for mixed racial backgrounds, deriving a lexicon specific to mixed-race is empowering (Fuyo-Gaskins, 1999, p. 201). Participants also described the use of humor to diffuse potentially threatening or awkward situations after disclosing their racial identities: “it’s better to make the joke first to expose what others are thinking.” Other ways participants demonstrated resistance is through art and community involvement. Root (1998) speaks to the possibilities offered by identities that do not involve race (such as military or religious affiliation) (p. 245). This is understood by Song (2010) as modes of belonging and identification and being mixed-race is only one and not always a prominent way that mixed-race individuals perceive themselves (p. 340). *Self-concept clarity* is developed in collaboration with identity integration, regardless of what factors there are in identity formation (Lou, Lalonde, and Wilson, 2011, p. 80) and what this means for participants is that community-based activities such as volunteering, activism, and modes of self-expression (creation of art or outward artistic displays such as body modification etc.) form part of the ecology of Root’s ecological model of racial identity development, especially as a function of “new wave” research in mixed-race studies regarding identity formation. Fuyo-Gaskins (1999) finds that although race is an important part of determining identity, for many mixed-race individuals, it is less the main focal point (p. 188).

### **Mixed-Race Social Reality**

Participants had a difficult time defining what the term “mixed-race” means, largely due to the fact that there has been much debate on whether a sense of collective mixed-race identity can be derived and forming a definition of what it means to be mixed-race is difficult because the experience is multi-faceted. While they identified the issues that are perpetuated by a strict reliance on biological racial categories, participants noted that they often described their racial backgrounds in terms of these monoracial categories, typically because they believed the term “mixed-race” would be insufficient to address questions related to their identity.

#### **“At Once Someone But No-one”**

Despite the flexibility and possibility being a “racial hybrid” and walking in two worlds simultaneously offers participants, there is also some concern with having a mutable racial identity. Participants generally chose a mono-racial and cultural identity. They acknowledged that they were mixed for different reasons and contexts. In some instances, they felt guilt for accepting racial and cultural fluidity and also for favoring one race and/or culture over the other in the process of self-identifying. They felt underrepresented in school and in the media and generally had not given much focused or purposeful thought to what it means to be “mixed-race” or how the term accurately represented them. Winn Tutwiler (2016) argues that:

Regardless of how mixed-race children identify themselves, they are noted as a fifth minority...not because they have a minority parent, but because as a group they make up a population of youth with distinct attributes and life circumstances that are different from the white majority and the...other...racial minorities.

(preface)

The invisibility participants felt as a racial category was reinforced through their experiences navigating society and relates to Mahtani’s argument that critical mixed-race theory is important because it allows for the exposure of the *historical amnesia* in Canada of the mixed-race social reality and experience and the realization that there has been a geography of exclusion of particular groups (Mahtani, 2014, p. 17).

## **Political**

### **Canadianness and Multiculturalism**

The social reality of being mixed-race is influenced by geographical location and the social norms and expectations that result from this environment as well as the history. Canadian identity is established in notions of multiculturalism and it was important to understand how these impacted participants’ processes of self-identification. Canadianness refers to the practice of being Canadian and the definition of what it means to be Canadian and multiculturalism references having many cultures that are honored and practiced within a particular society.

### **Canadian Equals White (Or Off-White)**

Participants described Canadianness as having components of imposed whiteness or White Privilege. This was referred to with participants understanding that the term “mixed” generally meant being mixed with “white” and something “other”. For Mahtani (2014), this means Canadian and “fill in your other identity”. Mahtani understands this as *hyphenation*, and mixed-race people in Canada are often forced to develop a sense of social identity as one mono-racial and hyphenated “other” identity which makes them “doubly different, doubly strange, and doubly foreign” (p. 86). Although participants generally understood their racial identities as monoracial, this was often incongruent with how others perceived them. This is

especially true when participants described their racial and ethnic backgrounds in terms of separate constituent heritages, where being Canadian was not always implied. In fact, Siddiqui (2011) argues that “...being not White or not fully White means you are not real Canadian, you must be from elsewhere.” (p. 86) This most especially contradicts the idea that mixed-race identities are a reflection of multiculturalism and intrinsically Canadian (p. 262) and further confounds the *politics of location*, as discussed by Mahtani (2002), where there is an immutable understanding and definition of Canadian identity where one can embrace a strong sense of nationalistic pride while at the same time exclude specific histories of oppression and resistance (p. 82). Winn Tutwiler (2016) discusses this in terms of the “in betweenness” of newcomers where they are considered not quite white but not non-white either but can attain whiteness through upward social mobility (p. 11). Kashope Wright (2000) refers to “white solipsism,” where there is a norming of whiteness (p. 126). Participants described this as others being surprised when they said they were “mixed” and of two minority heritage communities because they felt that the term had implied that they were “white” and “from other than Canada”.

### **The Myth of Multiculturalism**

Even though as Ghosh (1996) argues that one of the aims of multicultural education is to focus on identity development at the individual, community, and national arenas (p. 4), participants in the study were reluctant to articulate a definition of multiculturalism, identify concrete examples of how it had appeared in their lives both as a Canadian and also as a student, and were unable to explain its importance in developing a sense of self-identity. Winn Tutwiler (2016) argues that teachers who ignore race in their content, pedagogy, and classroom leave out an essential area of involvement for mixed-race youth. Even with multicultural aims, there is limited attention to mixed-race (p. 180). Mahtani (2014) asks, “What work does Canada

do – as a state, as a racial backdrop, as a formative geography – to impart definitions of mixed-race in the Canadian context?” (p. 7), which brings to the forefront the question of how cultural, racial, ethnic, and social identities (ethno-cultural positioning) inform Canadian identity. Winn Tutwiler (2016) (albeit from an American perspective) also notes the shortcomings of multicultural education to address mixedness:

...there is a chasm between teacher knowledge about this highly diverse group of students and the unique educational support they may need. The wave of multicultural educational practices and texts has been slow to fully address the unique experiences and educational needs of mixed-race children. This oversight leads to an inadequate understanding of mixed-race children, how they come to own a sense of identity, and subsequently how they position themselves within social environments, including schools. (preface)

Participants had a commitment to considering social status in the context of Canadianness in different ways. One pivotal influence for them was the media and how this impacted perceptions of difference (and made their realities invisible). They also noticed that race was an indicator of status in many situations and described when dealing with newcomers, having to explain where they fit within society. Mahtani (2014) explains this phenomenon in Canada as “...a modern, white-settler society imagined [and presented] as a liberal, multicultural democracy” (p. 20). The term “Heinz 57”, that was quoted by one participant to describe Canadianness, is widely used to describe someone who is of mixed blood and of many originating nationalities, but it did not accurately represent social positioning for participants. For Mark, Canadianness is synonymous with whiteness. He explains, “That’s definitely where for my mom Canadian means to be white, whatever that means. To fit in, like the majority, so you

don't get alienated.” There was a reliance on “catch phrases” that participants had heard at various points in their lives to explain multiculturalism: a “salad bowl, melting pot, respecting difference, focusing on a shared humanness,” but what this looked like and how these notions were applied in participants' lives as mixed-race in the Canadian context, were not addressed.

### **Outsiders Inside the Community**

Although participants clearly self-identified racially and culturally, there were times where they still felt they were outsiders although they had acceptance and support from their respective communities. It appeared that they felt the need to justify their place and participation in their chosen community.

### **Securing Membership**

Convincing others of authenticity was a recurring theme for participants in their quest to adopt a sense of identity. In some cases, this meant legal and political status that related to blood quantum, understanding and following traditions, language, and cultural practices, and speaking the language, which are indicators identified by Pearl Fuyo-Gaskins in her 1999 research (p. 64). In other cases, identity came about from rejection from one or more groups. Participants found that self-identifying and having acceptance in a particular chosen racial and/or cultural group underwent a process of negotiation and that sometimes there was a disconnect with how they perceived themselves and how others perceived them. In terms of community, socioeconomic status, the composition of youths' mixedness, and the context of the communit[ies] in which they grow provide different experiences for mixed-race youth (Winn Tutwiler, 2016, p. 112).

## **Social Justice and Freedom Fighting**

Participants reported being socially aware and having a social justice (human rights and equity) commitment. In addition, participants had an interest in freedom fighting – critically analyzing social norms and governmental policy as well as engaging in philanthropic activities that they believed would result in some sort of social change. Many times, this was linked with their cultural and racial identities and the experiences of racism that had dominated their experience of self-declaring as monoracial. Participants’ journey of self-identification involved a commitment to community activism and social awareness. As part of the process of unpacking where they “fit” racially and culturally, the need to advocate for others and educate others on rights and injustices and finding opportunities for social change, took a prominent place in their lives.

## **Pedagogical**

### **Race Bias and Expectation in School and Policy**

One of the most important communities that influenced participants’ sense of self-identity was school. Participants expressed that some of the experiences they had at school greatly impacted their commitments to advocate for others and also their interest in social justice and equity.

Expectations that school staff had were related to how they “read” participants’ cultural identity as well as personal bias the staff had that influenced their pedagogies. Pedagogy refers to the way educators come to the process of teaching and learning, including how they socially interact and build relationship with others.

## Expectations

Participants identified various incidents where their racial or cultural identity had influenced the school expectations that were held for them. In some instances, there were lower expectations of their academic performance based on racial bias. This bias reinforced stereotypes, marginalization, and privilege, and posed a dilemma for participants in the self-identification process. Winn Tutwiler (2016) explains this as the fact that race matters in the educational experiences of minority children who physically, social, and/or emotionally identify as children of color and further, that educators are likely to view mixed-race children as children of color regardless of how the children may self-identify (preface). This fact is corroborated by Fuyo-Gaskins (1999) when one of her respondents explained that academic expectations are lower based on racial bias (p. 137). This is particularly important for mixed-race children because their conception of race and the impact of race in terms of their social positioning is reflected in the school culture and climate:

In the process of being schooled, all children and youth acquire information and develop attitudes about race through what’s taught and who teaches it, and the very nature of the location of where it is taught. This knowledge often impacts students’ understanding of their positionality within schools. They also learn what to expect in terms of schools’ recognition and support of their needs. (preface xiii)

Participants described uneven application of school discipline policies as a function of race and race bias. Many mixed-race students report feeling that school rules were made to control but not to protect them (Winn Tutwiler, 2016, p. 193). Fuyo-Gaskins (1999) found that school policy is sometimes used to exclude particular students based on race (p. 143).

## **Tokenism**

There were skills and aptitudes that participants felt were expected or not expected or them in school activity based on race. This extended to language initiatives as well. If a special credit was awarded for speaking another language, this was not a function of the language being taught at school or opportunities for students to expand their linguistic repertoires. Cultural activities were controlled and limited to specific days and events as opposed to being reinforced as a school culture. Participants also felt that in some places, they were forced to act as the “experts” or ambassadors for events meant to address multiculturalism for one of their heritage communities, sometimes the community where they had the least connection or cultural knowledge.

### **Silencing and Invisibility of Race: *The Null Curriculum***

Silencing and invisibility of race is the absence of matters pertaining to race or critical awareness of race bias. This could manifest in some situations as color blindness (where staff completely denies noticing race) or a complete absence of race talk in school activity.

#### **“I Must Be Invisible”**

Participants described feeling invisible as a function of having access to the teacher for attention and assistance both during classroom activity as well as outside school. Some participants noted that non-discussion of race and culture was done purposefully by the teacher to avoid racism and bias in an attempt to attain “color-blindness.” Winn Tutwiler (2016) discusses this phenomenon as actually perpetuating White Privilege in schools: (1) ideological incongruence (where there is a mismatch between expressed beliefs and experiences related to these beliefs); (2) negating white capital (denial that white privilege and unearned benefits related to it exist); and (3) liberalist notions of individuality and meritocracy (everyone has the

equal opportunity to success and hard work can overcome obstacles with no attention to social conditions) (p. 8). For different reasons, race was predominantly not addressed or acknowledged by school staff and in particular, the reality of being mixed-race was not discussed. Winn Tutwiler (2016) notes that interracial families are made invisible when they are not represented in the media and when children in interracial families do not see reflections of their family configuration in textbooks they read in school (p. 97). Participants noted color blindness on the part of many of their teachers which means that teachers are silent about race and also perpetuate silence at school about race (p. 167). This, however, does not eliminate bias. In some cases, teachers' perceptions of a student's race does not match how the student self-identifies and this can be especially detrimental to the academic success as well as positive identity development of the student.

### **Cultural Tourism**

In general, cultural activities or race talk were not practiced in participants' schools. However, if they were, there was an element of superficiality and cultural tourism, where they were not made part of the fabric of the school culture. Participants reported that some teachers forced them into race-performing situations motivated by their own racial bias and how they read the race of the participant. Hypodescent (the one drop rule) and/or students' phenotypical characteristics determined how teachers racially placed the student (Winn Tutwiler, 2016, p. 174). In some instances, this was referred to as “clueless racism” (Fuyo-Gaskins, 1999, p. 161). An example participants recounted was where the teacher tried to be as “color blind” as possible to disguise racial bias. A clear understanding of issues pertaining to the education of mixed-race youth within a given educational context is one way to advocate for mixed-race students and heighten their visibility in schools (p. 214).

## Relationships With Teachers

None of the participants recalled having an Aboriginal, visibly mixed-race, or minority teacher in their educational history before they attended post-secondary institutions. Winn Tutwiler (2016) agrees that students of color will most likely be taught by a teacher who does not share their race, language, and/or culture at any point in their K-12 education. She also adds that most white teachers have limited exposure to and interactions with people of color so their relationships with students of color will be influenced by stereotypes and bias formed before entering the profession (p. 165). This being said, however, it was not agreed that it was the exclusive duty of this specific group of educators to deal with race matters. Participants responded unanimously that they had not personally had a mixed-race teacher, teacher with visible minority status, or teacher of Aboriginal ancestry, in their elementary years of their schooling. Some of them responded to the question, however with the response that “you wouldn’t know by looking at them” and reasoned that having a teacher who reflected their mixed-race, visible minority, or Aboriginal status would only be uncovered through disclosure by addressing race and culture which they could not recall happening. Additionally, they responded that they did not remember having an administrator with any of these backgrounds. However, participants noted that having a teacher or staff member who phenotypically resembled them would help feel connected and help them find a positive sense of identity as well as get motivated to succeed academically. Feeling “recognized” and “seen” was an important element for participants feeling welcomed and valued in the class. As well, having a positive role model and someone from the cultural/racial community who was successful, helped inspire participants. Although Winn Tutwiler (2016) stressed the importance of children perceiving that

their home and school are working collaboratively for their well-being (p. 93), none of the respondents mentioned their parents or families being involved with their education or having relationships with their teachers. Winn Tutwiler (2016) reports that “interracial families may not have large presence in their communities, which affect the extent to which they benefit from school-community connections” (p. 205).

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the study indicate that the respondents’ process of personal and collective identity formation is complex and multifaceted. Sandra Winn Tutwiler (2016) describes mixed-race youth as the “fifth minority” because as a group they are a population of young people with unique attributes, life circumstances, and experiences in relation the other major racial minorities (African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latino, and Native American). While Winn Tutwiler’s contention is applicable in a specifically American context, her perception underscores the reality that mixed-race youth (although not a heterogeneous group in terms of experiences and identities and backgrounds) have been left out of the discussion pertaining to race relations. Although many elements of anti-race/bias education are applicable to mixed-race youth, there are many implications regarding the specific educational supports mixed-race students and their families and supports may need and these should be considered and addressed in future studies

## Chapter 6: Conclusions and Implications

Despite the aims and goals of Manitoba Education and Youth to address race relations in educational settings through policy, racism continues to pervade Manitoba schools. The 2003 “Diversity and Equity in Education: An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity” document published by the Government of Manitoba, is the most recent and pertinent guideline informing Manitoba’s multicultural mandate to date. The document was created to follow the 1993 “Multicultural Education: A Policy for the 1990s” plan and unveils the concepts of diversity and ethnocultural equity in Manitoba schools. The two year plan (2003-5) focuses on ensuring that all students: have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of school life in an inclusive and affirming manner, experience culturally and personally relevant learning that engages them and encourages a sense of community and belonging that promotes socially responsible behaviour and action, become knowledgeable about human diversity, the multicultural nature of Canada, and Aboriginal peoples, both their history and contemporary lifestyles and aspirations, and regardless of origin or gender, complete their secondary education and access post-secondary education and training that will enable them to flourish and participate fully in the community and in the workplace (Manitoba Education, 2003, p. 4). As part of the “building safe and inclusive schools” focus, the initiative was to integrate antiracist/anti-bias elements in safe schools initiatives in 2004-5 (p. 9). There is little to no indication of how this goal was to be accomplished or if or what success it met in practice. There has been much debate with critical-race theorists, who have suggested the aim of multicultural education should involve specific treatment of race relations in order to have impact in the Canadian educational landscape. The guideline policy document that outlined the government’s commitment to promoting diversity and equity in educational policy and practice involves: (1) re-evaluation of ESL programs; (2)

creation and distribution of teacher support documents on diversity and equity in the classroom for compulsory classes (starting with Social Studies); (3) developing and hosting professional learning series on inclusive schools and teaching for teachers and administrators; and (4) supporting divisional and school planning to build safe and inclusive schools and anti-racist/anti-bias initiatives (Government of Manitoba, 2003, p. 10). I argue that while schools are quite adept at providing supports for concrete initiatives such as English As An Additional Language, diversity and multiculturalism (often presented as equity and cultural proficiency but as indicated throughout this thesis, not quite the same), and looking at ways to promote inclusivity (in terms of language, culture, ability), the last aim of engaging in anti-racist and anti-bias work has been problematic and fraught with a “veil of taboo and secrecy”. While school divisions across the province have acknowledged that anti-racist education should be a goal of every school, unified and consistent application of these goals has been slow or non-existent. With little to no monitoring and evaluation by the province, anti-racism education takes shape in multicultural and cultural proficiency initiatives that do not adequately address race relations. The curriculum development and professional development opportunities have been geared mainly toward school divisions with more diverse populations (and on an as needs and ad hoc basis) and data on assessment and student placement is sparse. Multicultural initiatives and teacher training generally do not specifically deal with race relations in Canada or are largely *ahistorical* and *ageographical*, meaning that they do not deal with Canada’s colonial history and Eurocentric roots. There is a haphazard and fragmented way that race is dealt with in school divisions, evidenced by the difficulty school divisions have in implementing programs aimed at promoting anti-racism education: Aboriginal Education (Treaty Education, Truth and Reconciliation) and Diversity and Equity education initiatives (cultural proficiency). Participants in the study spoke

to the ways they felt invisible and marginalized as a function of their educational experiences and this corroborates what Winn-Tutwiler (2016) aptly describes as making mixed-race students the “fifth minority” in school. Race-conscious policies and practices must extend beyond single-race practices to find ways to include mixed-race youth that are unique in their mixed-race status (Winn-Tutwiler, 2016, p. 222).

Future recommendations for a policy that would address mixedness would be that they are anti-racist and critical-race in nature. Given the fact that the consideration of mixedness is generally absent from the current teacher preparation programs, professional development opportunities, policies, and practices, a more comprehensive policy would outline the context of the mixed-race experience in Canada and provide a clear articulation of the aim and goal of anti-racism and critical-race pedagogy in Education: to challenge policies, procedures, and actions that are racist in their impact, and link its importance in meeting the needs of our students. Other provinces have documents that could be accessed to help, especially as the provinces are at different stages in their race work. In 1993, Ontario Ministry of Education and Training published a policy document that outlined the guidelines for policy development and implementation in the area of antiracism and ethnocultural equity for school boards. The document “fills in the gaps” where I argue Manitoba’s policy document on the same topic is insufficient. It begins with exposing the fact clearly and succinctly, that antiracism and ethnocultural policies are wider in breadth and scope than multiculturalism and race relations because they acknowledge from the outset, that inequities experienced by many individuals are linked to power and privilege. The policy gives latitude to the individual school boards in terms of implementation of the guidelines but only in the scope of its size, history, strength of its minority communities and past interactions with them. There are ten areas of recommendations

that are consistent with what current research on mixed-race indicates are areas to investigate in terms of students' education experiences: board policies, guidelines, and practices, leadership, school-community partnerships, curriculum, student languages, student evaluation, assessment and placement, guidance and counseling, racial and ethnocultural harassment, employment practices, and staff development. The development and implementation of policy must follow a prescribed framework that includes a board's mission statement regarding antiracism and ethnocultural equity, a list of objectives, a plan of action, a list of outcomes for accountability, a list of necessary and possible resources (human and material), a set of timelines, and an indication of the person(s) responsible for carrying out the plan, facilitate monitoring, and ensuring accountability. Implementation is intended to take place over five years but after the end of the five years, the goals and mission must be revisited and refined and the work is considered ongoing, which is vital in race work. The document is clear for the reader that Ontario Education's mandate is to eliminate racial and ethnocultural biases in terms of individual board policies, guidelines, and practices and to establish ways of measuring progress and setting clear criteria for implementation (which is lacking in Manitoba). It also acknowledges that administrative leaders have a strong responsibility to ensure the policy direction and the implementation of the policy takes place at the school level. It understands the White Eurocentric underpinning of the Canadian Education system and encourages curriculum that is equitable and also allows critical examination by students of the status quo. It encourages students who have a first language other than English or French to be encouraged in being competent in this language but that English and/or French are languages that are needed to add to their “linguistic repertoire” (Ontario Ministry of Education and Trade, 1993, p. 14). It outlines the fact that assessment is bias-free and designed to consider the student's personal experience and previous

education as well as not limit their educational and career opportunities.

Home/School/community partnerships must be created to support the student as well as helping guidance and counselling staff provide necessary supports. Professional development opportunities must focus on providing staff with the knowledge and skills to identify and deal with harassment. Staffing must reflect the diversity within the community. As well as a detailed graphic accompanying the steps to policy and implementation plans, the Ministry also includes in the document a series of checklists that act as a benchmark for each area of focus with specific details as to the goals and objectives. Additionally, there is an exemplar for the policy framework that include a chart with a detailed breakdown of what elements need to be addressed to develop the policy. What is provided is a clear direction for what a good policy addressing equity in Education looks like, checks and balances for accountability, and the reality that the work is continuous. The respondents in my study spoke in many ways about the inherent racism they experienced in their formal education in Manitoba and the Ontario approach seems to have much to provide in the way of guidance for our own Ministry.

More work needs to be done to make public the complexities of the mixed-race student ontology. Despite the driving force of building safe and inclusive schools and developing anti-racist and anti-bias initiatives in order to realize this goal, in 2016, change is slow, but the fact that in the past few years, there has been an emergence of groups and organizations committed to Critical Mixed-Race Studies and its application in Education as Critical Mixed-Race Pedagogy continues to provide hope and possibility for social change. The study points to the reality that for the participants, their experiences of being mixed-race were not represented by their teachers in classroom and school activity. The process of identity formation for mixed-race individuals is influenced by many factors, and these should be highlighted in teacher training programs and

professional development opportunities in order to assist educators and staff in better meeting the needs of this group of students. Despite the efforts of post-secondary institutions, Manitoba Education, and school divisions to provide adequate and pertinent race-relations training, there is much debate as to what extent teacher candidates, teachers, and other school staff (as well as school division personnel who derive policies and initiatives that guide the working of the division) understand and recognize the process of personal and collective identity formation among diverse groups of individuals and the relationship between identity formation and what happens in school. Root’s “Ecological Framework for Understanding Identity Development” (2002), Appendix E, underscores the interconnectedness of the various influences in identity formation.

More opportunities for educators to engage in professional learning about mixed-race need to be provided. There are many areas that the study highlights of importance to educators. The first consideration is the racial tool kits that mixed-race students arrive with at school. How have parents/supports prepared their children to deal with racism and race considerations both in school and in the society-at-large? More work needs to be done to study the process through which parents of mixed-race children engage their children in race talk and help them understand the historical and political/legal Canadian landscape, especially as participants reported that these considerations had generally not been discussed openly with them by their parents. Family arrangements and relationships are also important for educators to consider (one consideration is the inclusion of transnational adoption as an example of mixedness). This is of special importance to Guidance Counsellors and other counselling staff. Respondents noted that their families and supports had not been actively involved in school activities. Finding ways to involve the families and supports of mixed-race students in their educational lives is another area

of importance. Teachers should focus on learning more about which family activities and traditions help form the student’s sense of identity. Also to consider is the importance that kinship journeys and visits to (and learning about) homelands can play in students’ educational experiences. This could help build relationships and also help students become involved in the learning process by feeling acknowledged and welcomed.

It is also helpful for educators to become familiar with students’ friendship and peer groups because this can provide information for how the student understands him/herself. Understanding the impact of micro-aggressions that mixed-race individuals experience both within the home and at school and in the community on their sense of identity is also important. The knowledge that race cannot be considered the most prominent factor in identity development is pivotal for working with mixed-race individuals. Interests, aptitudes, passions (such as social justice aims) and other commitments (such as language and self-selected cultural activities) must inform the process of engaging students in the educational process. Experiences of mixed-race students must be encouraged in the process of student-orientated and centered learning opportunities. Teachers must critically examine what and who is left out of curriculum and materials as well as consider their own racial biases and consequent expectations of mixed-race students. It must be acknowledged that the specific incidents of racism that mixed-race people experience are complex and must be addressed with respect to their sense of who they are and where they fit, especially in school policies and culture. This is especially true of understanding the behaviors of “passing,” “acting race”, “bridging”, and how mixed-race students respond to others’ reading race and developing a sense of place in schools and elsewhere. As evidenced by the respondents in the study, the relevance of binary racial categorization that pervades our society and the reliance of mixed-race people to use these essentialist racial categories to

describe their racial heritages (“racial constituencies”) underscores the fact that we need to encourage mixed-race people to challenge mono-racial constraints in terms of their friendship and peer group choices as well as their sense of self-identity.

Educators should try to find ways to use race matters as a vehicle to encourage inquiry and critical thinking skills. Respondents spoke to the pervasiveness of the media and the underrepresentation of mixed-race families, individuals and considerations. Notions of who is represented and who is invisible in Canadian society and the media is also important because as Mahtani notes, we are a hyphen-nation in Canada, where if “otherness” is noted, it is assumed that the individual is Canadian and “from elsewhere,” which reinforces the mono-racial identification practice and White Privilege. Studies of mixed-race identity have also not explored with much depth the realities of mixedness in an Indigenous context with considerations such as the importance of legal and political status, blood quantum, and Indigenous cultural and historical knowledge in identity formation. Participants felt that school policies were meant to control and not protect or empower them. In most cases, this was a consequence of inherent racism and race bias on the part of school personnel. Much work needs to be done in the development of school policies and their implementation that address the complexities of mixed-race students

Acknowledgement of the null curriculum is also vital. Participants recounted having specific experiences with teacher bias and expectation during their schooling which impacted their sense of identity. Participants also noted the absence of acknowledgement of mixed-race in school curriculum, classroom activity, school-community, and staff. Most noted that this would have made them feel more acknowledged, involved, and comfortable in school and given them a greater sense of place and importance in classroom activity. Lopez (2003) addresses the fact that we need to acknowledge the growing population of mixed-race children through a critical

examination of ways we study and talk about race and ethnicity in school and make room for the fluid and multiple ways mixed-race individuals come to racial and ethnic identification (p. 25). Participants noted that conversations about race or mixedness in general were relatively absent in their educational careers. Teachers could make knowledgeable and concentrated efforts to adjust the curriculum, materials, and classroom culture to recognize students' mixed-heritages. They could also critically examine the representation (or lack of) culture and race in texts and materials, what is included and excluded from the curriculum, and provide opportunities for mixed-race students to express their experiences and heritages (Wallace, 2001, p. 157).

Engaging in personal reflection in terms of bias and beliefs about race are also difficult but important steps in realizing an educational experience that is equitable for mixed-race students and honors their lived experiences. Educators must challenge biases they may have regarding mixed-race individuals and families: mixed-race individuals are confused and have no sense of racial self-identity, people who marry into other racial or ethnic groups are deviant, minorities accept [mixed-race] children more readily than non-minorities, interracial marriages more often end in divorce, race is a more noteworthy and important difference than any other individual difference with mixed-race individuals, and that racial difference will result in a more negative impact than what other children experience (Davis, 2009, p. 59). Gonzales-Backen (2013) finds that there are no empirical studies that have examined socialization influences from teachers, other adults in the community, or the media concerning mixed-race students (p. 102). Participants spoke to ways they felt harassed and targeted because of race and this is especially true in terms of student placement in behavioral and academic programs. The reverse is also true: participants reflected on the fact that when they had teachers who represent their racial heritages, they were more motivated to do well in the class and felt a sense of connection with the teacher

as well as that they were acknowledged. Having role models is another element that participants cited as important in their sense of identity formation.

Staff representation and visibility is also necessary. This will help board trustees administrators, and other leadership groups make better staffing and hiring decisions. There is more work to be done on mixed-race educators and ways that they are able to provide new perspectives on critical-race pedagogy. Similar to mixed-race researchers gathering richer data in studies of mixed-race people because of their ability to build relationships with their respondents, mixed-race teachers may have commitments similar to those of many white teachers [but] when they connect with students around a shared mixed-race identity, the possibility exists for a teacher-student relationship that has a positive effect on the student’s schooling experience (p. 175). Teachers must also acknowledge that the experience and social positioning of being mixed-race is linked to specific historical and geographical contexts. This means considering how students come to a sense of who they are based on the locations they feel a sense of place versus being out of place. Bringing the reality that ethnocultural matters cannot be understood and addressed inside a social vacuum to the forefront of teaching and learning and making efforts to ensure that all students have a voice and are represented in classroom and school activity, is vital.

Winn Tutwiler (2016) posits that “it is plausible [and likely] that an increased population of mixed-race children will disturb existing school policies and practices and precipitate more focused efforts to understand the impact of race on the learning environment [and vice versa]” (preface). Adopting a Critical Mixed-Race pedagogy would necessitate educators demonstrating social justice (a commitment to ensuring that all communities regardless of history, socioeconomic circumstance, educational background, health status, or

national origin, have access to the same rights), self-determination (reforming laws or policies that privilege certain bodies while marginalizing others), radical love (being critical of oneself and one's biases as well as the biases of the Institution), and transnational solidarity (insuring that all people have status as national and global citizens). Educators must be open to developing cultural [racial] competence regarding mixed-race students: demonstrating a critical awareness to one's own [racial] cultural worldview, [racial] cultural difference, [racial] cultural practices and worldviews, and [race-relations] cross cultural skills. I would substitute cultural with racial in the scope of mixed-race because as critical-race theorists argue, race considerations have a very specific historical and geographical significance and context that must provide the foundation for all pedagogical work, including acknowledging the roles of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination in the perpetuation of White Privilege, challenging dominant social/cultural/racial assumptions and biases, employing interdisciplinary methods of historical and contemporary analysis to articulate the links between educational and societal inequity, develop counter discourses through student-centered and oriented activity in the classroom, and direct the formal curriculum toward social justice, hidden and null curricula, and critical consciousness. Further, efforts must be made to make race relations considerations part of the fabric of the school community as opposed to “one of” multicultural events or opportunities for cultural tourism or tokenism. As the study has demonstrated, it is vital that multiculturalism pedagogies be informed by critical-race elements.

### **So, What DOES It Mean To Be A Monkey-Bird?**

The term “monkey-bird” was used by one of my study participants Mark, in response to the question on how he understood being “mixed-race” It has stood out to me ever since our interview as something that piqued my curiosity and that is oddly very seemingly straightforward

but at the same time undeniably intriguing. In my attempts to subsequently intellectually wrap my mind around what he meant by the term as well as thinking about possible artistic representations of it, I see its innocent beauty. Its clear meaning for me exposed Mark's scathing critique of race-labeling and the resultant social expectation and stratification that accompanies it. The way he expressed the term was with disdain and a cheeky play on words (what we understand as *race bending*). With a naughty twinkle in his eye, he answered my question with a quick and perceptively witty response: I am before you something mythical; a contradiction, a being that simply cannot be, but at the same time, I am powerful and resilient and full of promise. In my most poetic moment, I imagine the monkey-bird learning to fly and all the possibility that this means. I am comforted that despite all the adversity, we are in a new age indeed.

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## Appendix A (Recruitment Letter)



UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education

**Research Project Title:** *The Impact of Mixed-Race Students' Experiences With and Perceptions of Diversity and Equity in the Manitoban Educational School System on Identity*

**Researcher:** Michelle Bradley, umbradl4@myumanitoba.ca, (204) XXX-XXXX

**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Nathalie Piquemal, Room 282, Education Building, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2 piquemal@cc.umanitoba.ca

Is at least one of your parents “visible minority” and/or First Nations and do you identify as “mixed” or “mixed-race”? Are you between ages of 18-21 and have you had most of your schooling in a public school division in Winnipeg and immediately surrounding areas? Are you a current student or recent graduate?

My name is Michelle Bradley and I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am conducting a research study as part of my graduate studies that explores the impacts of friendship and family relationships, what it means to be Canadian, cultural influences and social expectations, community ties, and school experiences on identity. The title of my study is *The Impact of Mixed-Race Students' Experiences With and Perceptions of Diversity and Equity in the Manitoban Educational School System on Identity*.

An interview will be conducted and will take approximately two hours. The interview will be audiotaped. There will be another follow up session within five months of the interview, of about an hour where participants will review the interview transcripts and provide clarification and/or feedback. If you do not wish to or unable to participate in the second session, the information provided in the first session will form part of the study as recorded. There may be other ways of giving feedback on the information recorded and you should speak with the researcher about these possibilities. These will be held in a Winnipeg Public Library tutorial room. There is the possibility of holding the meeting at another location. If you wish to do so, please speak with the researcher. The personal experiences and stories of individuals will be collected through interviews and the use of photographs/videos/songs/online community sites/e-mails and the findings will help those working in the field of Education the importance of understanding the multiple perspectives of mixed-race students as a particular and unique learning need.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please fill out the necessary consent form. Please understand that there is no incentive to participate in this study. At any time, you are encouraged to ask me questions and you can withdraw without penalty at any time during the process of this study.

Thank-you for your interest in this study. Please contact me at umbradl4@myumanitoba.ca

Sincerely,  
Michelle Bradley  
Graduate Student  
Department of Educational Administration, Foundations, and Psychology  
Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba

## Appendix B (Letter of Consent)



UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

**Research Project Title:** *The Impact of Mixed-Race Students’ Experiences With and Perceptions of Diversity and Equity in the Manitoban Educational School System on Identity*

**Researcher:** Michelle Bradley, umbradl4@myumanitoba.ca, (204) XXX-XXXX

**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Nathalie Piquemal, Room 282, Education Building, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2 piquemal@cc.umanitoba.ca

**This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation in the study will involve. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to ask. Please take the time to read the following carefully.**

My name is Michelle Bradley and I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am conducting a research study as part of my graduate studies that explores the impacts of friendship and family relationships, what it means to be Canadian, cultural influences and social expectations, community ties, and school experiences on identity. The title of my study is *The Impact of Mixed-Race Students’ Experiences With and Perceptions of Diversity and Equity in the Manitoban Educational School System on Identity*.

I am requesting your voluntary participation in the study, to help those working in the field of Education understand the importance of understanding the multiple perspectives and experiences of mixed-race students as a particular and unique learning need. Specifically, I am looking to investigate the following:

1. What are the policies that address diversity and equity in education in Canada and do they address mixed-race students?
2. What are mixed-race students’ experiences with and perceptions of diversity and equity in the Canadian secondary school system and to what extent do these experiences impact their personal and collective identity?:
  - **Social** (relationships with peers and family members)
  - **Political** (notions of Canadian identity and citizenship)
  - **Identity** (sense of cultural and racial identity and social positioning)
  - **Cultural** (influences of related cultural groups and communities)

- **Pedagogical** (instructional materials, relationships with teachers, teaching practices and pedagogies, school policies and initiatives)
3. What can educators and teacher-educators learn from this research that could be used toward a more informed and successful practice?

An interview will be conducted and will take no more than two hours. The interview will take place in a tutorial room at a branch of the Winnipeg Public Library. If you wish an alternative location, please speak with the researcher. The interview will be audiotaped. Within five months of the interview, there will be a follow up session of around an hour where we will review the interview transcripts and you will be able to provide clarification and/or feedback. The personal experiences and stories will be shared through interviews and the use of photographs/videos/songs/online community sites/e-mails that you feel are pertinent. These will not be kept by the researcher but simply discussed and used as reference to help you answer the interview questions. If you know of anyone who may be interested in participating in the study, you are invited to forward my Facebook page to them and/or have them contact me via e-mail.

To help protect your anonymity, during the follow-up session, you will be asked to read over the interview transcript to edit out any information that would lead to your identification or information you feel you do not wish to share publicly. Your real name and the names of others will not be used. Your information will be associated with fictitious names and these will be referred to in the thesis. My Faculty Advisor, Nathalie Piquemal, will have access to the anonymized data (the information after your name and identifying details are edited out). The information provided will be used as data for a graduate thesis. Direct quotes from the data will be used during the presentation. There are no anticipated benefits to you for your participation in the study. All written and electronic data collected, including the consent forms, will be destroyed approximately in or before October 2020. Print documents will be securely shredded and electronic data will be erased from any electronic devices.

A copy of the summary of findings will be shared with you at the follow-up session. Please let me know if you would like an electronic or hard copy. Additionally, if you do not wish to or are unable to participate in the second feedback session, the information provided in the first session will form part of the study as recorded. There may be other ways of giving feedback on the information recorded and you should speak with the researcher about these possibilities. Please note that you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Please inform me of your decision in person, by telephone, or e-mail. Any data that has been collected at this point will be destroyed. Audio files stored on my computer and/or other digital devices will be deleted and hard copies or any data will be confidentially shredded and disposed of immediately.

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights not release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

**The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.**

**This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named**

**persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at (204) 474-7122 or via e-mail at Margaret.Bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate how you would like to receive your transcript:

Electronic (e-mail) \_\_\_\_\_ Hard Copy (paper) \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate how you would like to receive your summary of findings:

Electronic (e-mail) \_\_\_\_\_ Hard Copy (paper) \_\_\_\_\_

My e-mail address is: \_\_\_\_\_

My mailing address is: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please note that you will have to sign for any paper copies)

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [umbradl4@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:umbradl4@myumanitoba.ca)

Sincerely Yours,

Michelle Bradley  
Graduate Student  
Department of Administration, Foundations, and Psychology  
Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba

### Appendix C (Facebook Page)

Hello! I am conducting a research study that explores the experiences that mixed-race students in Winnipeg have had in school and how these might have influenced their sense of identity. This study will form part of my Master’s degree/graduate studies at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education.

I am specifically interested in your:

- relationships with peers, friends, and family members
- ideas of Canadian identity and citizenship
- sense of cultural and racial identity
- influences of related cultural groups and communities
- experiences at school

My study is an interview of no more than two hours of your time and may include your discussion of artifacts that you think may be relevant such as songs, videos, photographs, writings, etc. There will also be a follow-up session of no more than two hours.

I am looking to interview individuals who are between the ages of 18-21 and are current students or recent graduates and who have had their schooling in a public school division in Winnipeg. Additionally, you must self-identify as “mixed-race” and at least one of your parents should be a “visible minority” and/or First Nations/Aboriginal. For the purposes of my study, “visible minority” status is determined by the *Canadian Employment Equity Act* (1995) as “persons...who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in color”.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC), Maggie Bowman, at (204) 474-7122 or via e-mail at [Margaret.Bowman@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Margaret.Bowman@umanitoba.ca).

If you’re interested, please e-mail me at [umbradl4@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:umbradl4@myumanitoba.ca) or respond by adding me as your “friend” and inboxing me and I will send you more information.

Thanks!

Michelle

Michelle Bradley  
Graduate Student  
Department of Administration, Foundations, and Psychology  
Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba

**Appendix D (Interview Protocol)**

Date:	Start Time:	End Time:
Location:	Participant:	
Follow Up Meeting:		

This interview will take no more than 2 hours. I will audiotape the interview and convert to written format later. You will be asked to review the transcript and preliminary findings of the study at a later date that we will set up after the interview. You are encouraged to ask questions to clarify at any time. You are free to discontinue participation in the study at any time. Please let me know and I will provide a form to sign and destroy any documents associated with your participation immediately.

If you have brought photographs, please be aware that these are for reference purposes only and I will not take a copy of the photographs. Questions related to photographs are:

Context:

1. Who took this photograph?
2. When was this photograph taken?
3. Where is the location of the photograph?

Content:

4. Why was the photograph taken?
5. Who does the photograph belong to?
6. What happened before and after the photograph was taken?

Significance:

7. Why and how does this photograph visually represent the subject for you?
8. What are some feelings you have related to this photograph?

I will be asking a series of questions that relate to the five main ideas around identity development of mixed-race students: social, cultural, identity, political, and pedagogical.

**Research Question:** What are mixed-race students’ experiences with and perceptions of diversity and equity in the Canadian secondary school system and to what extent do these experiences impact their personal and collective identity?

## Social

Subjects	Questions	Notes	Photographs
Parents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is your parents’ relationship like?</li> <li>2. How did your parents explain your background to you?</li> <li>3. How do your parents explain their own upbringing or ethnic backgrounds to you?</li> </ol>		
Siblings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about your siblings</li> <li>2. What is your relationship with your siblings like?</li> </ol>		
Extended Family	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is your relationship like with your extended family?</li> </ol>		
Family Friends	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who are the closest family friends?</li> <li>2. How do your parents know them?</li> </ol>		
Peers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who are your best friends?</li> <li>2. Are they long-time friends?</li> <li>3. How did you meet them?</li> <li>3. What are some other friendship groups you have?</li> </ol>		

## Cultural

Subjects	Questions	Notes	Photographs
Groups and Communities	1. Do you belong to any groups and/or communities?  2. What is the reason you belong to these groups?		
Activities	1. What are some activities you enjoy?		
Family	1. Do your parents and/or families share elements of their cultural and ethnic backgrounds?  2. Does your family practice any particular traditions?		
Cultural Knowledge and Experiences	1. Do you belong to any cultural community associations?  2. Are you involved with both or either of your parents’ cultural traditions, language, dress, customs, etc.?		

## Identity

Subjects	Questions	Notes	Photographs
Personal Positioning	1. What is your definition of “mixed-race”?  2. Do you identify yourself as “mixed-race”?		
Outside Positioning	1. How do you think people understand you based on your appearance?  2. What are some assumptions that you think people have about you?  3. What are some comments or words you’ve heard people say about you based on race?		
Inclusion	1. What is your experience “fitting in”?  2. What are some questions you’ve been asked about who you are?		
Categories	1. What are some things you have considered when making sense of who you are?		

## Political

Subjects	Questions	Notes	Photographs
Notion of Canadianness	1. How do you represent a Canadian?  2. Have you had to justify how you are Canadian?		
Multiculturalism	1. What is multiculturalism?  2. Has multiculturalism influenced your life? How?		
Race Relations	1. What are some specific topics related to difference that you have heard or that relate to you?  2. Have you ever felt that there were expectations of you based on race?		

## Pedagogical

Subjects	Questions	Notes	Photographs
Teachers and Staff	1. Do you have any minority or mixed-race teachers or staff?  2. What were some expectations that were placed on you because of race?		
Activities	1. How was race and ethnicity addressed at school?  2. What were some multicultural activities at school?		
Peers	1. How did you chose your school friends?		
Materials and Awareness	1. How was difference dealt with at school? How did this impact you?		

### Appendix E (Identity Model)

#### Ecological Framework for Understanding Multiracial Identity Development

