Examining a Multidimensional Framework of Racial Identity Across Different Biracial Groups

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The term *multiracial* is complex. Recent research has adopted a multidimensional view initially proposed by Rockquemore and colleagues (2002, 2009) for examining racial identity among Black/White biracial people. This approach has acknowledged the social construction of race and broadened the range of racial identity options beyond the two "traditional" options of being "Black" or "biracial." This study was designed to further assess this framework by examining a more diverse multiracial sample from Canada and the U.S. ($N = 122$). Both the Black/White biracials ($n = 38$) and Asian/White biracials ($n = 40$) showed great variability in their selection of Rockquemore's multiracial identity categories, but the pattern of responses differed across the two groups. In addition to revealing different patterns of identity selection between Asian/White and Black/White biracial persons, findings demonstrated the importance of identity validation by others and its relation to conceptions of the self. Having a multiracial identity that is validated by others (as opposed to invalidated or contextually dependent identities) was associated with higher levels of identity integration and self-concept clarity. Theoretical implications for extending a multidimensional model to other biracial groups are discussed.

Keywords: multiracial identity, self-concept, identity integration

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, more than six million people identified with more than one racial group (Jones & Symens Smith, 2001). This statistic is mirrored in the number of multiracial individuals in Canada, reaching almost half a million in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2008). Recent efforts to implement important changes in the sociopolitical realm have increased recognition that individuals of mixed ancestry should have the option of identifying with multiple racial heritages. The 2000 U.S. Census marked the first time in American census history that individuals were given the option of checking off more than one racial category (Nobles, 2000). This small yet important

change in race assessment not only attracted public attention but also further sparked social science research and theory that focused on how multiracial individuals understand themselves and are understood by others (Harris & Sim, 2002; Rockquemore, 1999).[1]

Literature addressing the multiracial experience has been largely theoretical or qualitative, with very small samples, although this is changing (Suyemoto, 2004). Moreover, attention has been directed primarily at Black/White multiracials (Khanna, 2004; Root, 1990) who make up only a subset of the multiracial population. Other racial groups (e.g., Asians) share some of the highest interracial marriage rates of any racial minority, producing a growing group of children from various racial groups (Khanna, 2004; Kitano, Yeung, Chai, & Hatanaka, 1984). Asians have also been the focus of much work on the self and identity. The primary goal of the

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[1] The authors of this paper ascribe to the perspective that race is a socially constructed category. The idea of race holds social meaning rather than reflecting biological differences. This concept of race is subjective and can change in meaning over time.

present study was to empirically examine the unique psychological experiences and conceptions of the self associated with having a multiracial identity, across different mixed-race groups (e.g., Asian/Whites) and within a multidimensional framework (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002).[2]

Defining Multiracial Identity

The term *multiracial* is complex. It is used in various ways, each carrying different theoretical, political, and social implications (Shih & Sanchez, 2009). Throughout this paper, we used the term *multiracial* to refer to people who identify with two or more racial heritages that are based on socially constructed criteria (e.g., U.S. Census categories).[3] Although racial identity may give a person a sense of self as well as a sense of belongingness with a group (Khanna, 2004), this sense of self may be particularly complex for individuals who have multiple racial backgrounds (Phinney, 1990).

Previous research on multiracial identity has compared multiracial to monoracial individuals typically has operationalized multiracial identity simply as belonging to multiple racial groups (Binning, Unzueta, Huo, & Molina, 2009; see Shih & Sanchez, 2005, for a review). This operationalization, however, does not necessarily mean that multiracial individuals psychologically identify with all of those groups (Suzuki-Crumly & Hyers, 2004). This "multiracial-monoracial dichotomy" implies that multiracial identity has a single meaning—that is, it assumes that all multiracial individuals identify only as "multiracial," often without considering or assessing how they actually interpret their own multiracial experiences (Binning et al., 2009; Rockquemore, 1999).

Some researchers have adopted the perspective that social context has a strong hand in shaping racial identity. For example, contexts can differ in their racial composition, thus influencing how a person understands his or her own identity, or the extent to which he or she feels "White" or "Asian" (Harris & Sim, 2002), for example. Views on race (e.g., the belief that race is socially constructed, or the belief that race is biologically based) and multiraciality (i.e., "multiracial" is seen as an acceptable social category) may guide the extent to which a racial identity is central to one's self concept

(Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Others' knowledge about or type of relationship with the individual (e.g., stranger, family member) also can regulate how one's identity is expressed to others. For example, a family member or close friend may perceive a person in the same way that person understands him- or herself racially. Outside the home, however, a stranger may place a person in a particular racial category based on external features (e.g., skin color) that do not reflect how that person sees himself or herself. Whether or not other people accept the racial identity that is adopted (i.e., whether or not that identity is socially validated) can complicate the multiracial experience. This perspective challenges the assumptions underlying the singular meaning of being multiracial and emphasizes the need to broaden the range of identity categories beyond two or three options (e.g., Collins, 2000; Suyemoto, 2004).

Broadening the meaning of multiracial identity and whether it is socially validated also allows us to examine the way multiracial individuals perceive themselves racially, integrate their multiple identities, and organize their self-concept. Biracial people may view their two social identities as compatible or oppositional to one another. Identity integration is a measure of the degree to which two seemingly conflicting social identities are perceived to be compatible or oppositional to one another (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos, 2005). This construct has been used for looking at how individuals with multiple cultural identities integrate these identities and can be extended to other social identities

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[2] We focus on Non-White/White multiracial subpopulations in this research because they represent the largest multiracial groups in the United States (Brittingham & de la Cruz, 2004) and Canada (Statistics Canada, 2008). Participants are referred to with their minority background first for the sake of convenience. This does not imply that one racial background is more important than the other. In addition, while we recognize the variety and complexity of different Asian, Black, and White heritages, participants were not subdivided into separate groups due to sample size limitations.

[3] We use the term *multiracial* to refer to people who identify with two or more racial heritages and the term *biracial* to refer to multiracials who identify with two racial heritages. In this study, we do not distinguish between the two terms, although some of the analysis focuses on the biracials in our sample (e.g., comparing Asian/Whites to Black/Whites).

such as racial identities (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Cheng & Lee, 2009). Related to identity integration is the extent to which a person's racial identity is consistent or integrated from one situation to the next. Self-concept clarity refers to a structural aspect of the self, or the extent to which self-beliefs are clearly defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable (Campbell et al., 1996). Because multiracial people can have more than one racial identity, they have more than one way to organize these different dimensions of the self. The present study examined variation in these two constructs of identity integration and self-concept clarity across individuals who hold different multiracial identities.

A Multidimensional Framework

Rockquemore and colleagues (Rockquemore, 1999; Rockquemore & Arend, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009) have proposed a multidimensional model that captures the wide variation in the ways individuals understand and respond to their multiraciality. The framework rests on three classic assumptions of symbolic interactionism: (1) that we know things by their meanings, (2) that meanings are created through social interaction, and (3) that meanings change through interaction. Here, the idea is that racial identities are socially constructed, and racial group boundaries are subjective. Moreover, racial identities are fluid and dynamic according to the context in the moment rather than fixed immutable categories (Harris & Sim, 2002; Shih & Sanchez, 2009). Rockquemore's (1999) model allows for individuals to indicate experiencing contextual shifting of identities, holding multiple simultaneous identities, or adopting no racial identity at all.

So far, examination of this framework has focused on Black/White biracials. Thus, the examples provided below are drawn from this experience. Black/White multiracials, however, make up only a subset of the multiracial population. In this study, we examine Rockquemore's (1999) framework and its implications for the self among Asian/White in addition to Black/White biracial individuals.

The singular identity option: Exclusively monoracial. For biracial individuals who choose to racially self-identify with the race of only one rather than both parents, their self-understanding is an exclusively monoracial identity. Among the different categories of self-understanding in Rockquemore and Brunsma's (2002) Black/White sample ($N = 177$), 13% of respondents considered themselves "exclusively Black" and 4% considered themselves "exclusively White."

The border identity option: Exclusively biracial. Some individuals construct a border identity, or one that lies between predefined social categories. For example, such Black/White multiracials do not consider themselves to be *either* Black *or* White, but understand themselves to be unique individuals who are *both* Black and White—biracial identity is an entirely separate category in itself. The border identity was the most common category of self-understanding in Rockquemore and Brunsma's (2002) sample, representing about 58% of their participants.

Given that identity is not created or maintained in isolation, social context can influence an individual's selection among different racial identity options (Phinney, 1990). The term *identity* also refers to a validated self-understanding that situates or defines the self. Individuals understand and evaluate themselves and others through the process of social interaction and external validation. One's identity is validated to the extent that one's self-understanding is consistent with the response of others (Rockquemore, 1999). This interactional process of developing a validated or unvalidated identity may be particularly challenging for multiracial individuals who try to realize their appropriated identities in social contexts where others may not perceive them as they see themselves (Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009).

Rockquemore's (1999) model takes into account the process of identity validation in influencing one's identity selection, a process that can be heavily influenced by contextual factors (Root, 1990, 1998), such as experiences of personal racial discrimination (Rockquemore, 1999). For example, a border identity may be validated such that others accept the person's identity as "biracial," or it may not be validated such that others do not recognize "biracial" as a unique identity (Rockquemore & Arend, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2001, 2002). The majority of border identity respondents in Rockquemore and Brunsma's (2002) sample re-

ported that their border identities were unvalidated. Although such individuals might be understood as biracial by close family members and friends, they are routinely invalidated and misidentified by people outside their immediate social networks who may categorize them as Black. Biracials who hold a border identity may experience racial discrimination by others who do not consider "biracial" to be a meaningful racial identity and who evaluate them less positively (Sanchez & Bonam, 2009). Moreover, a mismatch between one's private self-understanding and the public's perception may contribute to racial identity conflict for multiracials (Townsend et al., 2009).

The protean identity option: Multiple choices. Some multiracial individuals may have a fluid self-understanding such that they can shift between racial identities depending on the social context (Harris & Sim, 2002; Rockquemore, 1999; Root, 1996). Because these individuals shift between rather than blend together their assorted identities, their sense of self may be built upon components that are not culturally integrated (Cheng & Lee, 2009; Rockquemore & Arend, 2002). The protean identity was the least frequent choice among Black/White individuals in Rockquemore and Brunsma's (2002) sample (about 4%). This pattern of results, however, may underestimate protean types of identities in samples of Asian mixed-race individuals. Harris and Sim (2002) found that compared to their Black/White counterparts, Asian/White youth exhibit somewhat less consistency in racial identity across school and home environments. Suyemoto (2004) also found that Japanese European Americans endorse multiple identities if given the opportunity to do so. Adopting a protean identity may be more common among multiracial people with Asian backgrounds because their sense of self may be defined by a more interdependent self-construal and contextual responsiveness (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

The transcendent identity option: Beyond race. Individuals who hold a transcendent identity view their multiracialness as a position where they can "transcend" racial categorization altogether and be simply "human" (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, and Peck (2007) noted that compared to people of monoracial descent, multiracial people, on average, tend to challenge the va-

lidity of race itself, viewing race as a social construction. Just over 13% of Rockquemore and Brunsma's (2002) sample perceived their identity as "transcendent."

Conceptions of Self

Rockquemore's framework is useful in that it allows multiracial individuals to self-identify in a number of descriptive categories. It is important, however, to go beyond mere categorization and gain a better understanding of how the self is conceived within each category—for instance, an understanding of the degree to which individuals perceive their two racial identities to be compatible or oppositional to one another. This idea is captured by the construct of identity integration, taken from Benet-Martinez and Haritatos's (2005) concept of bicultural identity integration. Also of interest is self-concept clarity (Campbell et al., 1996), or the extent to which biracials have a sense of self that is clearly defined, internally consistent, and stable over time.

We were interested in conceptions of the self when a single person's identity, or its constituents, can be perceived or distinguished in different ways. Thus, our study focused on the identity options for which biracials would need to organize or structure different components of their identity. Monoracial identity and transcendent identity each encapsulate a single meaning, so our focus was on border identity (which can be either validated or unvalidated) and protean identity (where a person shifts between racial identities according to social context). As shown in previous work by Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002), the distinction between validated and unvalidated identities is an important one for Black/White biracials. Although Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) did not find a large number of protean identifiers in their sample, we argue later that this identity option may be underrepresented in certain mixed-race groups. Validated and unvalidated border and protean identities will be referred to hereafter as *biracial identity groups*.

People who adopt a border identity by definition have blended and integrated separate components into a single meaning. People who understand themselves as exclusively biracial and have others view them in the same way should have a high level of biracial identity

integration, meaning that they experience little conflict between their identities. Validated biracials who incorporate multiple in-group identities into a compound unit are also likely to have high self-concept clarity. They consistently place themselves in the same blended category across situations, which might be related to having self-beliefs that are clearly defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable.

Individuals with an unvalidated border identity, on the other hand, have identities that are incompatible with one another. Despite adopting a single border identity, having other people place them in a monoracial category may dismantle this blended identity, increasing the distance between the two component monoracial identities. Because identity is developed in a social context, social unvalidation can fragment the view that individuals have of themselves. As a result, they may feel caught between their self-definitions and the public ones ascribed by others, and, consequently, may prefer to keep them separate (Townsend et al., 2009). The psychological distance between identities, between component racial identities and between private and public identities, can lead to a self-understanding that lacks integration and arouses conflict within the self. When a person's chosen racial identity (e.g., biracial) is challenged or rejected by others, a relatively unclear and inconsistent self-concept may develop.

Multiracial individuals who adopt a protean identity have multiple group membership in their two monoracial groups. Feeling the need to switch between these groups may be associated with a compartmentalization of identities, resulting in low identity integration. The context-dependent nature of protean identities also means relatively little consistency across different times and places. It follows that multiracials who hold a protean identity should by definition have lower self-concept clarity, as their self-beliefs are less stable and consistent from one situation to the next.

Identity Selection Across Mixed-Race Groups

Given that Rockquemore's taxonomy captures multiple ways in which Black/White biracials understand themselves, we expected that the *variation* in these options would apply to biracials of other backgrounds as well. Like the identity selections of Black/Whites, those of Asian/Whites may span all of the categories. Black/Whites and Asian/Whites may, however, show distinct *patterns* of identity selection.

Patterns of self-identification or self-labeling of individuals from these two groups may be influenced to some extent by the historical and political forces that define them. For instance, the Black experience in America is unique historically and politically compared to more recent immigrant populations such as Asians (see Sears, Fu, Henry, & Bui, 2003; Sears & Savalei, 2006). For African Americans, racial identity often refers to a historical sense of self that has emerged from the struggle against White oppression that has been reproduced over generations and is still embedded in today's society (Rockquemore & Arend, 2002; West, 1990). For Black/White mixed-race people, slavery and segregation were associated with the historical "one-drop" rule, which deemed all individuals with any Black ancestry as members of the Black race (Root, 1996; Suzuki-Crumly & Hyers, 2004). Even if Black/White individuals understand themselves as biracial, others may view them as part of the "collective Black." The disjuncture between self-identity and the way a person is understood by others (i.e., identity validation) may be particularly magnified for Black/White multiracials. We expected that there would be a higher representation of unvalidated border identity among Black/Whites than among Asian/Whites.

Differences in racial identity may also stem from cultural differences in self-construal. More specifically, Asian societies emphasize interdependence when defining the self whereas Western societies tend to focus on independence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Individuals in East Asian cultures look to the social environment to define the self—their self-concepts can be seen as flexible responses to the social context (Harris & Sim, 2002). A greater tendency for Asians to define themselves in terms of close relationships may be linked to a greater likelihood of having fluid or protean identities in order to adapt to a given social context. It is also possible that the relatively smaller social distance historically between Whites and Asians than between Whites and Blacks allows greater freedom for Asian/Whites to negotiate between identities across contexts (Harris & Sim, 2002; Xie & Goyette, 1997). By shifting their identi-

ties to match each social context, Asian/Whites can further reduce social distance with others in order to validate their racial identity in that situation. Thus, it was expected that protean selection would be more highly represented among Asian/Whites than among Black/Whites.

Overview of the Present Study

The purpose of this study was to adopt a multidimensional framework for examining multiracial identity. Specifically, we aimed to understand how multiracial identity selection is related to the way self-understanding is organized (i.e., identity integration) and structured (i.e., self-concept clarity), and to explore identity selection patterns and self-understanding across mixed-race groups (i.e., Black/Whites, Asian/Whites). Compared to their validated counterparts, we predicted that individuals who hold unvalidated border identities would be more likely to report feelings of identity conflict or confusion, as indicated by low scores on self-concept clarity and identity integration. We supposed that individuals with protean identity would also indicate lower self-concept clarity and less identity integration than those with a validated border identity, given their tendency to switch easily between subjectively compatible racial identities. In addition, we expected that between the two mixed-race groups (Asian/White, Black/White), unvalidated border identity would be more highly represented among Black/Whites and protean identity more highly represented among Asian/Whites.

Method

Participants

Participants, 122 individuals (85 women, 37 men, M age = 26.1, SD = 9.1), were recruited using convenience and snowball sampling on a social networking website, various multiracial websites, and online discussion forums in Canada and the United States. Requests for participation were posted with a link for the online survey. This study focused on biracial individuals with one White parent. Among those reporting citizenship, 71 were Canadian and 45 were American. The reported racial identity of both parents was used to categorize participants' specific component biracial identities

(e.g., Black/White, Asian/White). For participants who selected the "Other" fill-in option for each parent, three independent coders determined whether the responses (e.g., *Irish American*) could fall into a more general category (e.g., *White*). Respondents who indicated having at least one parent with two or more racial heritages were coded as Multiracial (n = 23). An *uncodeable* category (n = 12) was created for those who listed a parent's racial identity as a religion (e.g., *Jewish*) or from a racially diverse region (e.g., *Central American*). The remaining participants were coded Asian/White (n = 40), Black/White (n = 38), Aboriginal/White (n = 5), South Asian/White (n = 3) and Aboriginal/Asian (n = 1).

Procedure and Measures

After providing their informed consent, participants completed an online questionnaire asking for demographic information and the race(s) of their biological mother and father. Two dichotomous items (*yes/no*) assessed previously experienced personal racial discrimination from White people and/or from members of their non-White racial group. Next they completed a series of measures, described below. Upon completing the survey, participants were debriefed and given the opportunity to enter a draw for a $100 gift certificate for a major retailer.

Multiracial identity. Understanding of racial identity was assessed using an adapted version of the Survey of Multiracial Experience (Rockquemore, 1999; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Because the measure was originally developed for Black/White biracials, all words referring to Black identity were replaced by asterisks with instructions to replace the asterisks with the race of the non-White parent. The words "*my other race*" were replaced by "*White.*" Thus, participants were asked to select which of the following best described their racial identity: (1) I consider myself exclusively *******; (2) I sometimes consider myself *******, sometimes White, and sometimes biracial, depending on the circumstances; (3) I consider myself biracial, but I experience the world as a ******* person; (4) I consider myself exclusively biracial (neither ******* nor White); (5) I consider myself exclusively White (not ******* or biracial); (6) Race is meaningless, I do not believe in racial identities; or (7)

Other—please specify. Responses coded "1" and "5" represent the monoracial identity option, responses "3" and "4" represent the border identity options (unvalidated and validated, respectively), response "2" represents the protean identity, and response "6" represents the transcendent identity.

Biracial identity integration. The 8 items of Benet-Martínez and Haritatos's (2005) Bicultural Identity Integration scale were modified to reflect identity integration for Non-White/White biracials (e.g., "I don't feel trapped between my ******* and White racial identities"). The scale was modified from the original cultural identity items to reflect racial identity, by changing the word "cultural" to "racial," for example. Identity integration refers to the extent to which individuals perceive their different racial identities as compatible (high integration) or oppositional (low integration). Items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree)* through 5 (*strongly agree*), where higher scores indicated higher identity integration. In previous research, the Cronbach's alpha of the original scale has ranged between .70 and .80 (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Cheng & Lee, 2009; Cheng et al., 2008). In the current sample, the Cronbach's alpha of our biracial identity integration scale showed acceptable reliability, α = .71.

Self-concept clarity. Six items from the Self-Concept Clarity Scale (Campbell et al., 1996) were modified to assess the degree to which one's self-concept (in terms of cultural and racial identity) is clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and stable (e.g., "I spend a lot of time wondering what kind of cultural or racial identity I really have," *reverse-keyed*). Items were modified from the original scale to refer specifically to racial identity as well as cultural identity. Items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) through 5 (*strongly agree*). They were recoded so that higher scores indicated greater self-concept clarity. The original scale has been demonstrated to have high internal consistency (α ranging from .85 to .86), construct validity, and criterion validity (Campbell et al., 1996). In the current sample, the modified scale showed good reliability, α = .81.

Results

Multiracial Identity Selection

When considering the entire sample, results indicated that participants showed substantial variation in self-reported racial identity, spanning all seven options of Rockquemore's (1999) multidimensional typology of multiracial experience. Those selecting "Other" were recoded if the response fell into one of the other six categories. Out of the seven possible options, the three biracial identity groups emerged as being the most frequent: validated border (29%), unvalidated border (22%), and protean (22%). The remaining participants indicated their racial identity as "Other" (14%), transcendent (6%), exclusively minority race (5%), and exclusively White (2%).

Variation in identity selection was observed within each of the Asian/White and Black/White subsamples (see Table 1). A chi-square test of independence revealed that the two groups differed significantly in their selection pattern of biracial identity group (validated border, unvalidated border, and protean), $\chi^2(2) = 6.06$, $p = .048$, Cramer's $V = .31$. The highest proportion of the Asian/White group (30%) held a protean identity, followed by the validated (28%) and unvalidated (20%) border identity options. Among the Black/White participants, the validated border identity was the most common (42%) and the unvalidated border identity the next common (at 34%). Relatively few Black/White participants (10.5%) selected the protean option compared to the high representation among Asian/White participants.

Table 1

Racial Identity Selection Patterns For Asian/White and Black/White Biracials

Racial Identity	Asian/White %	Black/White %
n	40	38
Validated Biracial	27.5	42.1
Unvalidated Biracial	20.0	34.2
Protean	30.0	10.5
Non-White (Asian or Black)	5.0	0.0
White	2.5	0.0
Transcendent	5.0	5.3
Other	10.0	7.9

Conceptions of Self

Identity integration and self-concept clarity were positively correlated, $r = .61$, $p < .001$. The relationships between identity choice and self-concept clarity and identity integration were examined at the group level using a series of one-way ANOVAs, followed by tests of means using Tukey's HSD procedure (see Table 2).[4] Although it would have been interesting to examine whether the relation between identity and selection and conceptions of self would vary across groups, our small sample size did not allow for accurate tests of interactions between biracial identity group and mixed-race group. Differences in identity integration were found between the three biracial identity groups, $F(2, 79) = 5.34$, $p = .007$, $\eta^2 = .12$. Post hoc tests revealed that the validated border group scored higher on identity integration compared to both the unvalidated border group ($p = .028$) and the protean group ($p = .012$); the latter two groups did not differ in this regard ($p = .96$). Compared to individuals whose biracial identity was validated, individuals whose identity was not validated or subject to contextual shifts understood their racial orientations to be relatively separated and conflicted with one another.

A similar pattern of differences between the three biracial identity groups emerged in self-concept clarity, $F(2, 79) = 5.43$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .12$. Post hoc tests revealed that the validated border identity group scored higher on self-concept clarity than the protean identity group ($p = .004$). The unvalidated group fell between the other two groups but did not differ from either (ps $> .16$). Consistent with our predictions, these findings indicated that compared to individuals whose biracial identity was validated, individuals with a protean identity had self-concepts that were less organized and less internally consistent.

The important distinction between validated and unvalidated identities was further supported by differences in the perceived discrimination experiences reported by participants. A chi-square test of independence indicated that a greater proportion of the unvalidated group (96.3%) had experienced discrimination from Whites relative to the validated group (62.9%) and protean group (63.0%), $\chi^2(2) = 10.65$, $p = .005$, Cramer's $V = .35$.

Discussion

In the present study, we adopted a multidimensional framework to examine multiracial identity in a social context and its impact on conceptions of self among Asian/White and Black/White biracials. Identity selection spanned all seven categories of Rockquemore's (1999) framework, which is evidence that researchers need to move beyond the multiracial—monoracial dichotomy in order to encompass the unique constructions of self held by multiracial individuals. Moreover, these unique constructions of self were associated with varying levels of self-concept clarity and identity integration.

This research also demonstrates the importance of distinguishing between validated and unvalidated identities. The considerable proportion of the sample whose identity was unvalidated indicates that race does not happen in a vacuum. It is a socially constructed category that is not based on biological differences but that carries social meaning. Furthermore, our study showed that having validated versus unvalidated identities may carry different implications for one's conceptions of the self. The strong positive correlation between identity integration and self-concept clarity suggests that a lack of integration in racial identities occurs in conjunction with lack of clarity in one's self-concept (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Those with a validated border identity experienced relatively little separation and conflict between their racial orientations, as indicated by high scores of identity integration, and had an organized and internally consistent self-concept, as indicated by high scores of self-concept clarity. Those with identities that were not validated by society (i.e., private and public understanding of the self were inconsistent) were more likely to experience conflict within themselves, as indicated by low scores of identity integration. Furthermore, a greater proportion of people with

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[4] Given the large age range of the sample ($M = 26.1$, $SD = 9.1$), all analyses were repeated while controlling for age. Given that the pattern of results was the same with and without age control, only the results without age control are presented. In addition, none of the results were moderated by gender or national citizenship (Canadian, American). Thus, gender and national citizenship were not included in the reported results.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of the Primary Measures Across Biracial Identity Groups

Measures	Validated ($n = 35$) M (SD) or % yes	Unvalidated ($n = 27$) M (SD) or % yes	Protean ($n = 27$) M (SD) or % yes
Identity integration	3.97$_a$ (0.65)	3.45$_b$ (0.75)	3.39$_b$ (0.83)
Self-concept clarity	3.88$_a$ (0.81)	3.57$_{a,b}$ (0.99)	3.10$_b$ (0.88)
Perceived discrimination			
From White group	62.9%	96.3%	63.0%
From Non-White group	60.0%	70.4%	66.7%

Note. Means in the same row that do not share a common subscript are significantly different from each other at $p < .05$, according to Tukey's HSD comparison.

unvalidated border identity reported experiencing racial discrimination from Whites regarding their racial identity compared to the validated border identity and protean identity groups. This self/other distinction may increase feelings of discrimination and further contribute to a conflicted self-identity.

Rockquemore's (1999) model allowed us to explore whether the prevalence of certain racial identities differed across specific mixed-race groups. Our hypothesis that Black/Whites and Asian/Whites would have distinct patterns of identity selection was supported. Compared to the Black/White participants, Asian/White participants were much more likely to have a protean identity. The high representation of protean identity within the Asian/White group is in line with an Eastern influence on interdependent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and a greater tendency to define the self in relation to social context.

The pattern of racial identity selection for the Black/White group was consistent with that found in Rockquemore and Brunsma's sample (2002) in that the highest proportion of participants selected the validated border identity. Among the Asian/White group, the protean identity was the most common option. In addition, unvalidated border identity was more highly represented in the Black/White sample than in the Asian/White sample. The fact that many Black/White participants saw themselves as biracial but felt that others perceived them as Black may be residual of the historical "one-drop" rule applied to Blacks (but not Asians), which placed individuals with any Black ancestry as members of the Black race (Root, 1996), even if they were multiracial. Inconsistent with previous research using this framework (e.g., Brunsma, 2006; Lusk, Taylor, Nanney, & Austin, 2010), however, none of the Black/White participants reported a monoracial identity. Contributing to this unique finding may be the decreasing pressure for biracial individuals to choose a single racial category since the 2001 U.S. Census. Another contributor may be the characteristics of the sample (e.g., the fact that some participants were recruited from Web sites that are geared specifically toward multiracials; the different national contexts of the participants).

Future multiracial work can aim to compare conceptions of self and psychological outcomes of identity selection among biracials who identify to some degree with Eastern groups (e.g., Asians), Western groups, or both. Although the sample size in the present study was not large enough to conduct this analysis, there may be differences in identity integration and self-concept clarity across biracial identity groups. Self-concept clarity is a construct that was developed within a Western context (Campbell et al., 1996) in which the self is viewed as an autonomous entity, containing a unique, clearly articulated set of attributes that remain stable across situations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In Asian cultures, however, the consistency and stability of self-concepts may be interpreted otherwise and exert unique psychological effects. For instance, Sanchez, Shih, and Garcia (2009) found that malleable racial identity, or the tendency to identify with different racial identities depending on the social context, was associated with lower psychological well-being, but only for multiracials who have lower dialectical self-views (i.e., less tolerance for ambiguity, change, and contradiction within the self). This finding has implications for mixed-race groups that tend to have greater situational variability in their self-concepts compared to Westerners, as

the psychological outcomes of holding a particular racial identity may be different (English & Chen, 2007).

Research focused on biracials of Asian descent might also shed light on the relation between protean identity selection and conceptions of self. On one hand, having a protean identity may lead to a self-understanding that lacks integration and consistency. On the other hand, having an identity with these qualities may be what allows the person to adapt to a given social context in order to have his or her racial identity validated in that situation (Sanchez et al., 2009). McConnell (2011) suggests that the pattern of shifting between qualitatively different self-aspects is often due to specific others and specific relationships who become represented in the self-concept, especially within interdependent cultures. It would be interesting to have future research examine who and what relationships are likely to influence people who hold a shifting racial identity.

Characteristics of the current sample should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample was relatively small, although at the time of the study, to the best of our knowledge, this was one of the largest Asian/ White samples in an empirical study. The Internet was used to recruit participants through multiracial Web sites and social networking Web sites. Individuals who visit these sites or who responded to the survey may be particularly aware or conscious of their racial backgrounds, multiracial issues, and personal challenges, which may have influenced the type of identity they adopt and ways they think about racial identity. The use of snowball sampling for recruiting participants may have resulted in a biased sample, a common problem inherent in multiracial research, which limits the ability to generalize our results.

There are, of course, some limitations with Rockquemore's (1999) model of multiracial experience. First, it uses a single-item measure to categorize a person's multiracial identity. Given that multiracial identity is so complex, one item may not have been sufficient to capture that experience. A second issue to consider is social validation for identity types other than border identity. For instance, it is possible for a multiracial individual to have a validated or unvalidated transcendent identity or a validated/ unvalidated monoracial identity. Moreover,

there is no option for an unvalidated border identifier to say that others see him or her as White, only that others see him or her in terms of his or her non-White identity. Third, a biracial person might have great difficulty picking one of these statements. For example, a person might consider him- or herself biracial all the time *and* also shift among identities. Some people might view themselves as transcendent and express that transcendence by shifting between identities (a protean identity). An alternative to asking participants to pick one of Rockquemore's (1999) options may be to ask them to rate the extent to which they agreed with *each* identity option. Finally, Rockquemore's (1999) multidimensional view of multiracial experiences was developed to describe the experiences of Black/White biracials. Given the different sociopolitical histories and cultural backgrounds between racial groups, external validity of this framework may be compromised when applied to the Asian/White biracials in our sample. Thus, our findings must be interpreted in light of validity and reliability concerns. Nonetheless, we provide preliminary evidence that the psychological experiences of Asian/White and Black/White individuals may be equally complex, but that these experiences and how they relate to identity and the self may differ between mixed-race groups.

Future research exploring issues of multiracial identity may also consider examining individuals who identify with multiple visible minority groups (e.g., Black/Asians) as well as Non-White/White multiracials because multiple visible minority multiracials comprise a significant proportion of the population in the United States (Brittingham & de la Cruz, 2004) and Canada (Statistics Canada, 2008). Additionally, the high proportion of participants holding a protean identity in our study suggests that racial identity is not always a stable self-concept but rather a changing and evolving aspect of the self. Cheng and Lee (2009) found that how biracials manage their multiple social identities varies across contexts: recalling positive past identity-related experiences reduced perceptions of racial distance and conflict, whereas recalling negative experiences decreased these perceptions. This finding alludes to the complexity and fluidity of racial identity in various contexts (e.g., within family, neighborhoods, society). Studies with a multitime design may

be effective in examining fluctuations in identity and may determine the associated individual constraints and environmental cues across situations as well as age or cohort effects observed through development over the life course (Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

Broadening the range of identity categories beyond *multiracial* and *monoracial* not only emphasizes the complexity of multiracial identity, but also deepens our understanding of issues that surround multiracial identity, particularly with respect to social validation, self-concept clarity, and identity integration. Research in this area holds important implications for multiracial individuals, researchers, and society as they continue to explore the benefits and challenges associated with being multiracial and the psychological effects on the self.

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