

**Me, Myself, and I: Understanding Identity Denial of Multiethnic and
Multiracial People in White Settings**

Samantha Lauren Maksud

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lee Baker

Cultural Anthropology

March 2023

This project was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Graduate Liberal Studies Program in the Graduate School of Duke University.

Copyright by
Samantha Lauren Maksud
2023

Abstract

How people identify themselves and the reasons behind self-identification are important in understanding the human experience and interactions in social groups. Understanding how people navigate their identity when denied access to multiple identity groups they inherently belong to is equally as important. This is known as “Identity Denial.” Identity denial is a type of social threat to acceptance that occurs when an individual goes unrecognized by a group to which they belong. This typically happens when the individual does not resemble a prototypical member of the group. I theorize that Identity Denial contributes to how multi-ethnic individuals navigate their identity in predominantly white social settings. In this project, I synthesize secondary research focusing on the four main chapters of identity denial, identity switching, negotiation of identity, and belonging in social groups.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Methods	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
Introduction	1
What is Identity Denial?	1
Origins of Identity & Belonging	3
“Targeted conspiratorial killing, human self-domestication, and the evolution of groupishness” – Richard Wrangham (2021).....	4
“The Need to Belong: a Deep Dive into the Origins, Implications, and Future of a Foundational Construct” – Kelly-Anne Allen, Deleon Gray, Roy Baumeister, Mark Leary.	5
“Social Belonging Motivates Categorization of Racially Ambiguous Faces” – Sara Gaither, Kristin Pauker, Michael Slepian, Samuel Sommers.....	7
“Developing a Measure of Sense of Belonging” - Bonnie M. Haggerty & Kathleen Patuskey	8
Chapter 1: Identity Denial	10
Threats to Identity	10
“Social Identity Complexity” – Sonia Roccas & Marilynn B. Brewer	10
“The Context and Content of Social Identity Threat” – Nyla R. Branscombe, Naomi Ellemers, Russel Spears, & Bertjan Doosje.....	12
Denied	15
“Identity Denied: Comparing American or White Identity Denial and Psychological Health Among Bicultural and Biracial People” – Analia F. Albuja, Diana T. Sanchez, & Sarah E. Gaither	16
“On Becoming ‘Chinese Americans’: The Complexity of Navigating Two Worlds” – Hsin-Yu Chen and Yanhong Liu	19
“Where are you really from?: Asian American and Identity Denial” – Sapna Cheryan & Benoît Monin.....	21
“You are too ethnic; you are too National...” - Diana Cardenas, Maykel Verkuynten, and Fenella Fleischmann.....	23
“Finally, someone who ‘Gets’ me! Multiracial People Value Others’ Accuracy About Their Race” – Jessica Remedios & Allison Chasteen.....	24
“Blood Quantum: Native American Mixed Bloods” - Terry P. Wilson.....	25
Chapter Discussion	28
Chapter 2: Identity Negotiation & Shifting	30
“Street Smart and Book Smart: Charismatic Black Males Culturally Navigating a two-Year Predominately White Community College” – William R. Turner Jr.	30
“Navigating the workplace: The Cost and Benefits of Shifting Identities at Work among Early Career U.S. Black Women” – Danielle Dickens and Ernest Chaves.....	32
“Black Women in White Institutional Spaces: The Invisible Labor Clause and The Inclusion Tax”- Tsedale M Melaku.....	33
Chapter Discussion	35
Chapter 3: Identity Assimilation	38
“Is there assimilation in minority groups’ national, ethnic, and religious identity” – Lucinda Platt	38
“Choosing Ethnicity, Negotiation Race: Korean Adoptees in America” – Mia Tuan & Jiannbin Lee Shiao ...	41
Chapter Discussion	43

Chapter 4: Identity Assertion	45
“Where are you really from?..” Study 4, Cheryan and Monin	45
“My Choices, Your Categories: The Denial of Multiracial Identities” – Sarah Townsend, Hazel Markus, and Hilary Bergslerker	47
Chapter Discussion	49
Conclusion	50
General Discussion	50
Paper Limitations	53
Future Research	53
Works Cited	55

Methods

This project will synthesize secondary research focusing on identity denial, identity switching, negotiation of identity, and belonging in social groups. In this research, I will look at how identity can change, the mechanisms behind the change, and how people respond to identity in different social situations. The paper will focus on four main sections: identity denial, identity negotiation, identity assimilation, and identity assertion. These sections will be the four main chapters where I plan to review the respective literature, identify common themes, and present examples of the concept through personal experiences or cinematic representation in a concluding chapter discussion. Each chapter will review a varying number of subsection articles that are relevant to the respective chapter's topic that will be summarized, reviewed, and analyzed. The articles will be organized in terms of relevance to the topic with the goal of building upon each other in each chapter. The research that I plan to read will also incorporate multiple ethnicities/races to gauge a holistic viewpoint of this topic. Through this research, I plan to come up with a working theory that identity denial is the main contributing factor in why and how multi-ethnic and multiracial people navigate their identity in predominately white settings.

Acknowledgments

Words cannot express how deeply thankful I am for the Graduate Liberal Studies program at Duke University where I have spent the last two years maturing and honing my personal, and professional skills. I would like to give a special thanks to Dr. Anne Mitchell Whisnant and Dr. Kent Wicker for their constant, and dependable, leadership and guidance through times of uncertainty. Without you, I would have never found the strength and perseverance when times were indeed hard.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to my mentor and project supervisor, Dr. Lee Baker. You have seen me overcome many things during my time at Duke and I have enjoyed every moment of learning, observing, and conversating with you. Thank you for all your guidance and support during every stage of this project. I'd also like to recognize my third reader, Dr. Sarah Gaither. Thank you for your in-depth knowledge during the process of this project and the personal guidance that you have given me. I'd also like to express my thanks to my friends, near and far, for their unwavering support and much-needed encouragement.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. I could have not undertaken this journey without your love and support during my time and Duke. You have guided, supported, and done many other things that words cannot describe. Without you, I would not be where I am or the person I am today. You are my whole world, and I love you so much, so this project is dedicated to you.

Introduction

I was eight years old the first time I was asked: “Where I was from”. I remember being confused about why someone would ask me that. “Texas!” I responded but I could see that that wasn’t the response that they wanted after the look of disappointment would cross their face. I grew up in a predominately white, Czech, and catholic town. Being a tan girl with very non-white features, this question was something I would become acquainted with. At sixteen years old I was constantly asked to recite my ethnicity to people I had just met when receiving remarks about my eyes, hair, or skin tone because “I didn’t look fully white”. When I was twenty-one years old, I was told to “go back to my country” in a grocery store parking lot after a small altercation with an angry driver. All my life, my identity has been questioned, commented on, and denied by people I would regard as members of a community I was a part of. Yet, members of that community do not give me the same regard. What I have experienced throughout my life are different forms of identity Denial.

What is Identity Denial?

What I experienced as a child and as an adult is not an uncommon experience for people like me that come from multiple ethnic backgrounds and identities. Identity denial is a curious event that can happen to anyone, no matter their race, ethnicity, or nationality. Yet, what is identity denial and why does it matter? Identity denial “operates as a threat to acceptance because how others perceive the person does not correspond with how they self-identify” (Cárdenas, Verkuyten, and Fleischmann, 2021). This typically happens when the individual does not resemble a prototypical member of the group. In other words, individuals that don’t have the same physical features, language, culture, or national background may be denied access to that

group's membership even though those individuals feel that they have the same membership as those denying them. But what does identity denial look like? How do we know it's happening?

Identity denial can take on many forms that range from simple questioning or comments about one's identity to negotiation/shifting, assimilating, assertion, and denial of that same identity -- like the questions I often receive about my ethnicity and physical appearance. This phenomenon usually occurs when people of certain or multiple identities are in a space conforming to one singular identity. For example, a man born and raised in Boston, but whose parents are from New York City, loves the Boston Red Sox as well as the New York Yankees but isn't accepted by either group because of his affiliation with the opposing team when asked whom he roots for or when he wears the opposing team's jersey. This is a simple example of identity denial. So, to avoid confrontation, the man often conforms to the status quo of where he is. Casting one identity to the side in favor of the identity that will grant him acceptance in that particular social space: wearing the appropriate jersey and saying the team chants. This example of identity denial, code-switching, and the man's reaction to being denied a part of his identity is common for multi-ethnic, and biracial people who are often confronted with different forms of identity denial when in predominately white spaces.

To clarify, predominately white spaces are physical and metaphysical places that are predominately controlled by white culture, and white people, and where whiteness goes unmarked. These spaces are not to be confused with the refusal of non-white people to inhabit the same space, but rather non-white people's existence in these spaces is conditional to how "white they are" (Brunsma et al. 2020).

White spaces are commonly found in Western culture, in academic institutions, government facilities, residential neighborhoods, and even in certain social circles. When in

these spaces, multi-ethnic and multiracial people are often faced with micro-aggressions, identity questioning, or denial because they are considered a “threat” to these spaces. Just as multiethnic and multiracial people interpret identity denial as a social threat to themselves, so do monoracial and monoethnic people. The threat is not a negative one but more of a case of social rejection or social exclusion. The need to belong is so strong that we value our ingroup status so much we are more motivated to protect our ingroups from “contamination” and social threats. In recent studies, white people who strongly identify with their white identity are more likely to outcast someone with a racially ambiguous face than someone who resembles them more, to “protect their identity” (Gaither et al. 2016). People with multiple identities, or “targets of identity denial”, will often react to this exclusion or denial by altering their behavior when these threats are present or when it is perceived to do so by people with multiple identities (Cheryan and Monin 2005). Before we can understand the different forms of identity denial, we must first understand the origins of identity.

Origins of Identity & Belonging

Finding compelling ways to identify ourselves is a phenomenon people have been engaging in since the start of human history. First, it was within band societies, then the tribes we belonged to. As human history has progressed, we have taken self-identity to new levels that go beyond our nationalities like those based in a sports team, a college alumni affiliation, a military branch, or self-identification as a Taylor “Swift-ie”. Group membership like race, religion, ethnicity, or nationality is the most common way we distinguish ourselves. As humans, we socially group ourselves with people that look like us, talk like us, come from the same place, and many other things. This is known as “belonging”.

The need to belong is thought to have developed early in our evolution as humans. The need to belong socially is a fundamental human need like that of food, shelter, and protection against threats (Gaither et al., 2016). It is thought that we developed the need for “groupishness”, and cooperation, through natural selection. Charles Darwin postulated in his work, *The Descent of Man*, that tribes that were more willing to warn and aid during danger were more successful (Darwin, 1874). Other theories, like the self-domestication theory, say that during our early hominid years, during the process of self-domesticated, group members that displayed prosocial behavior in being more likely to protect us from predators, forage for food, and be willing to mate, were seen as desirable, compared to those who displayed antisocial behaviors (Haidt, 2012). The following article explores groupishness and how it relates to identity denial.

“Targeted conspiratorial killing, human self-domestication, and the evolution of groupishness” – Richard Wrangham (2021)

Those that were different from the group, with too aggressive or antisocial behaviors were punished and essentially made an example of. This idea of punishment for anti-social behaviors is explored in Richard Wrangham’s “Target conspiratorial killing, human self-domestication, and the Evolution of groupishness”. This article explores the idea of human evolution and groupishness and says that “groupishness benefits agents by protecting them from punishment” (Wrangham, 2021). Having aggressive or antisocial behavior could become a risk for the early hominid groups in terms of survival, so disposing of anti-social group members created the “long-term result of selection against antisocial behavior and favor of prosocial behavior, cooperation, and conformism, a dynamic that ultimately favored the moral sense and other components of groupishness” (Wrangham, 2021). This type of social control has evolved

past group killings of an anti-social group member and has become means of social isolation and identity denial of in-group and out-group members.

The motivators for groupishness and belonging are inherent and perhaps biological. We developed them to survive in times of great evolutionary hardships and they have evolved into something even more complex. Denying non-prototypical people from a particular group still protects that group's groupishness, but it doesn't change the need we feel to belong. The following article explores social belonging and the implications that it has in a modern context when it comes to identity in an in-depth interview with the authors that promoted the theory of belonging.

[“The Need to Belong: a Deep Dive into the Origins, Implications, and Future of a Foundational Construct” – Kelly-Anne Allen, Deleon Gray, Roy Baumeister, Mark Leary.](#)

Since the dawn of human existence, we have been motivated to survive and reproduce. However, some researchers suggest that belonging is a third motivator. This need stems from a deeply rooted human motivation that, underpinned by our ancestral origins, permeates our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This need to belong is a driving factor in how we form and maintain interpersonal relationships. However, this need is not to be confused with a desire. In this article, an interview with Robert Baumeister and Mark Leary, described belonging as “a need rather than merely a desire because people who fail to satisfy it suffer various mental health and physical health” (Allen et al., 2021). Yet, Baumeister and Leary express that not all efforts to belong are need-based. Some efforts are based on achieving a certain outcome. One example given in the article is that of a businessperson joining a business association not to just make personal connections but to drive more business to their company.

The purpose of this interview was to provide a brief and focused review of the topic of belonging and how it relates to work in educational psychology, while also examining the work of Baumeister and Leary. The interviewer discusses what it means to belong, the history behind the original article and how it became such a profound work, and the implications it has beyond psychology. The article also explores Leary and Baumeister's work with others on how "belonging" is present in Educational Psychology, and what needs to be worked on and expanded in the field and discusses how identity denial is perhaps a subset of our inherent need to belong.

One of the key topics in the article is rejection. Because of our inherent need to belong, rejection and identity denial can have negative effects. Some of these negative effects include anxiety, depression, and negative self-presentation. When we face rejection, we undergo physical and mental changes that negatively impact us. In the interview, Baumeister and Leary describe pain and rejection as the same physical response of numbness. When we are rejected, we go through behavioral changes, that manifest themselves in intense amounts of anxiety, along with other negative effects. Yet, the reason for rejection is often unclear. Some research suggests that why we are rejected is "often implicitly, by characteristics that have nothing to do with a person's actual relational value as a friend, acquaintance, partner, coworker, or group member – such as their skin color, gender, or nationality" (Gaither et al., 2016). According to this article's interview, it is because of our evolutionary need to belong, and be a part of large social groups, that we as humans have created adaptations for culture that profit off of mutually beneficial relationships with strangers. This research shows that social belonging and identity denial are correlated with one another. Yet, some studies have suggested that the need to belong has a greater impact on identity denial than previously thought.

“Social Belonging Motivates Categorization of Racially Ambiguous Faces” – Sara Gaither, Kristin Pauker, Michael Slepian, Samuel Sommers

Groupishness and belonging are inherent motivators that have greater implications in today's society. In this article, “Social Belonging Motivates Categorization of Racially Ambiguous Faces,” Sara Gaither, Kristin Pauker, Michael Slepian, and Samuel Sommers, argue that social belonging is the main contributing factor in how we categorize racially ambiguous faces into social groups. The article seeks to understand the mechanisms and motivations behind selective social affiliations with majority white ingroup members compared to racially ambiguous members. They reason that members of a dominant social group with high social belonging need will be more motivated to police the boundaries of their groups and exclude unclear members compared to those that have low social belonging needs. This is the basis for their hypothesis that social motivators like belonging will cause biased racial categorizations from ingroup members that are trying to protect and maintain their ingroup, against those that are racially ambiguous.

They test this in a three-part study. Study One examines both proposed social motivations: white individuals' general need to belong and identification with their racial ingroup. Individuals that are white derive more value from affiliating with others and should have a greater motivation to protect their social identity and to exhibit more biased categorization of racially ambiguous outgroup members. In Study Two, they examine one of these motivations and directly threaten the white participants' general need to belong through manipulation of social exclusion in a lab setting. They predict that this threat will enhance the need to assert the subject's social identity and motivate them to adopt a more exclusive group boundary that is

measured through biased racial categorizations of racially ambiguous targets. In Study Three, they directly threaten the other proposed social motivation – racial identification. They threatened white participants' racial ingroup identity but also ameliorate this threat for some of the participants through self-affirmation tasks, predicting that the threatened participants' racial identity should prompt motivation to protect their ingroup and lead them to biased racial categorizations, but these categorizations should not happen with ameliorated threats.

The results of all three studies found that high group identifiers are motivated to protect ingroups by avoiding contamination (Study One), social exclusion caused people to categorize racially ambiguous targets as outgroups members more than ingroup members (study two), and threats to identity caused ingroup members to group members in outgroups to protect the identity with no remorse or “white guilt” (study three). The studies “demonstrated that social belonging needs -- derived from either a chronic need to belong, racial identification, or external social threats – may serve to activate selective affiliation” within ingroups and encourage more exclusive boundaries dependent on the group's status. Yet, their results are consistent with the idea that social belonging is a motivator for individuals to seek out selective affiliation with similar individuals who have experienced threats to their social belonging and react by choosing whom to let into their ingroups. But how do we understand the effects that rejection and identity denial can have on us and how do we measure this effectively?

“Developing a Measure of Sense of Belonging” - Bonnie M. Haggerty & Kathleen Patuskey

Belonging is not only important to our human psyche but is an essential part of the human experience. Yet, how we measure the sense of belonging regarding its negative effects is important for understanding how belonging and identity correlate with each other. According to

“Developing a Measure of Sense of Belonging” by Bonnie M. Hagerty and Kathleen Patuskey, “Sense of belonging taps a person’s inner psychological experience. Depression influences that inner experience and affect becomes a predominant focus” (Hagerty & Patuskey,1995). The article further explores this to develop a measure of a sense of belonging. The researchers developed a self-report instrument (a questionnaire) designed to measure the sense of belonging in adults. It was then put through the kyser-meyer-okin method in which they cross-referenced measures like loneliness, reciprocity, and social support with similar studies that resulted in two systems of measurement, SOBI-P and SOBI- A. One of the key results of this study was that there is a moderate correlation between the measure of belonging and social support in all three groups of loneliness, reciprocity, and depression, and advances the premise that belonging and social support may have influenced the others. However, there is a low but positive correlation between the depressed sample and the reciprocity and sense of belonging sample. Yet, the correlation between the antecedents to belonging and reciprocity was higher in the depressed sample. This study shows that measuring belonging is possible and can accurately predict how identity denial and belonging affect each other. It also shows how belonging is correlated to other emotional senses.

Now that we have explored the origins of identity, and identity denial, we can begin to discuss all the implications of identity denial and how it manifests in multi-ethnic and biracial people. Like the common factors and experiences of identity denial, and the mechanisms that influence identity negotiation/shifting, assimilation, and assertion.

Chapter 1: Identity Denial

Understanding why we feel the need to belong to groups is important in discovering our self-identity. When we are rejected by those groups it can have negative effects on our perception of self and how we interact with others. So, what are these effects and why are they important to know? As previously mentioned, identity denial is understood to be a social threat to the acceptance of someone's identity that happens when an individual does not match a prototype member of an in-group and that identity is called into question or is unrecognized by that group. This type of social rejection can take the form of physical rejection from a social group, constantly being questioned about racial or ethnic status and more. This chapter is dedicated to understanding identity denial and the different effects it can have on multiethnic and biracial people.

Threats to Identity

“Social Identity Complexity” – Sonia Roccas & Marilynn B. Brewer

Social Identity is complex and based on many different factors. People have different social groups and multiple group identities. Some of these identities can range from being a white, female, Christian, to being a male, Cuban-American that loves the Boston Red Socks. Every identity comes with social expectations that may have conflicting expectations with another identity. How we navigate those complexities is lesser known. The social identity complexity theory refers to the subjective representation of multiple identities. In “Social Identity Complexity,” Sonia Roccas and Marilynn B. Brewer investigate this concept by describing alternative models for how such individuals may incorporate those multiple identities in their overall social identity and how they conceptualize ingroups versus outgroups. They then

integrate these models with the social identity complexity theory and outline the antecedents and consequences that this theory may have.

Having group membership is more complicated than just being accepted and identifying with a certain group. Group memberships can be four different types: intimacy groups, task groups, social categorizations, and loose associations. These groups can vary in dimension on how we interact with them. For instance, “social categories are more likely to be based on symbolic attachment to the group as a whole rather than on personal ties that exist among specific group members” (Roccas & Brewer, 2002, page 89). However, having multiple identities can be complicated when trying to navigate social groups. According to Roccas and Brewer, multiple identity structures can be subjectively represented. The four structures include intersection, dominance, compartmentalization, and merger. Each structure operates differently when you look at social groups and identities. In the Intersection, an individual can achieve simultaneous integration of more than one identity and maintain a single ingroup relationship. In Dominance, an individual is in competing identities and must adapt to one group to which the other identity is subordinate. In Compartmentalization, if an individual has more than one group that is important to them, those multiple identities can be activated and expressed through differentiation and isolation. In Merger, an individual in a nonconvergent group is simultaneously recognized and embraced in their most inclusive form. Their model is very similar to the standard Biculturalism model. In Biculturalism, alternative representations of multiple identity groups are seen as either: hyphenated identities, cultural dominance, compartmentalization, and integrated biculturalism. Hyphenated identities are the equivalent of Intersection. Most commonly this is seen as where the ethnic ingroup is defined exclusively with their host residency (e.g. African American, Asian American, Latin American, etc.). Cultural

dominance is associated with the Dominance model, in which one identity is subordinate to the other. Compartmentalization is the same as the Compartmentalization model, in which there is perceived conflict between two identities and the individual must consciously activate which identity to use in different social settings. Lastly is Integrated biculturalism, which is equivalent to Merger as multiple identities are acknowledged simultaneously and can be integrated. Both models and their similarities are helpful when discussing social identity complexities and their mechanisms. Yet, these models are also similar to that of identity denial and its counterparts.

- Intersection/Hyphenated Identities = Identity Assertion
- Dominance/Cultural Dominance = Identity Assimilation
- Compartmentalization = Negotiation

Merger/ Integrated Biculturalism has no equivalent when discussing terms of identity denial because identity denial is there to refute the idea of intercultural identity. The simultaneous acceptance of social, ethnic, and personal identities in oneself and one's multiple in-groups is hard to achieve. One may lump it into assertion, but this is what individuals and social networks should strive for in intergroup acceptance and tolerance. But acceptance and tolerance are intricately affected by "groupishness" or Social Identity, especially when threats to the group and personal identity happen.

"The Context and Content of Social Identity Threat" – Nyla R. Branscombe, Naomi Ellemers, Russel Spears, & Bertjan Doosje

Identity and threats to acceptance are important pieces in how we understand how identity denial affects multiethnic and multiracial people. Personal, social, and group identities are parts of human existence that are directly related to social belonging. But social belonging only makes up part of the story of identity denial. For identity denial to fully take place, a threat

to one's acceptance must be made. In “The Context and Content of Social Identity Threat,” Nyla R. Branscombe, Naomi Ellemers, Russel Spears, & Bertjan Doosje explores the different social identity threats displayed by ingroup thinking and how it affects group value and acceptance.

They use social identity theory to propose that there are four forms of “threats”:

1. Categorization threat (being categorized against one's will)
2. Distinctiveness threat (group distinctiveness is prevented or denied)
3. Threats to value (the group's value is undermined)
4. Acceptance threat (one’s position within the group is undermined)

All these threats are different forms of identity denial that can take place on a group or individual level. But because social belonging plays an integral role in our identity makeup, threats to identity are bound to happen. We self-categorize ourselves naturally, whether on a micro or macro level, but it “also is the case that every individual could be categorized in many different ways, and people might prefer to be considered in terms of certain social groups rather than other group memberships” (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje, 1999). Looking back on the example of the New York Yankee and Boston Red Socks fan, this fan might not want to be lumped into being a Red Socks fan or a Yankees fan. He can simply prefer to be just a fan of baseball able to enjoy any team he wants to watch and cheer for. However, when “internal and external categorizations are inconsistent or incomplete, defensive reactions can result”. Just the act of simply categorizing people can be a threatening experience if it is wrong, inconsistent, or undervalues one's self-identity. Social identity theory also introduces an “explicitly socio-motivational” driving element for group distinctiveness. This is because “we derive part of our self-esteem from our social identities and positive social comparisons with other groups, it follows that social comparison with similar outgroups could threaten group distinctiveness and

social identity” (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje, 1999). When it comes to minorities, they will strongly identify with their distinctive group rather than a majority group because of the large overlap between social and personal identity. However, because of this distinctiveness, minority groups are often seen as inferior to majority groups. This doesn’t stop intergroup comparisons from happening between majority and minority groups.

Some of the research that will be discussed in the next part of this chapter has shown that threats to distinctiveness come from intergroup comparisons that arise from groups that are like the ingroup. These threats are typically seen by high group identifiers who will see these comparisons as crucial to their group distinctiveness. Those with low group identification will see the comparisons between their distinctive group and the similar group as less crucial. These comparisons are key when discussing group value and acceptance. When ingroup value is threatened, high identifiers will attempt to defend the importance of group membership. These members are trying to protect and maintain their group's distinctiveness, and the value that they have given it. Being compared to similar outgroups can threaten the group’s value because the distinctiveness, and perceived value, of the ingroup, is a part of their identity. This is the same when threats to group acceptance occur. However, threats to group acceptance are more internal threats than external ones. Acceptance must come from the majority ingroup, so when only one person receives negative feedback from the ingroup and is excluded, or denied acceptance, it can raise the question of acceptance among other members of the ingroup. The reaction to this negative feedback amongst the group is to negotiate or shift their identity to fit the group norm so that one is not perceived as a threat and doesn’t risk being denied. But if acceptance of the ingroup only happens amongst a few members and not the majority, those “accepting” members are more likely to be cast out or denied membership from the “rejecting” members.

It is normal, claim the authors, to “view one’s group more positively than a relevant comparison outgroup, at least one group-defining dimensions, conforming to perceived ingroup expectations of this sort might seem to be an effective means of securing greater acceptance on the part of the more established group members” (Branscombe et al., 1999). In other words, it is normal to compare one’s in-group as more relevant than to a similar out-group when using the characteristics of your own in-group as the comparison. This way of thinking will likely secure your acceptance in the established in-group as well as exemplifying the ingroup’s behavior, or mannerisms, to indicate your preferred identity. However, even displaying a preferred ingroup identity does not always guarantee ingroup acceptance. The need to belong, group identity, and personal identity are not always the same. Sometimes they coincide with each other or are at odds. In the next section of this chapter, I will be discussing how threats to identity lead to identity denial.

Denied

As we have discussed, group identity plays a major role in how we identify ourselves. We know that belonging is an inherent need that comes with millions of years of group benefits and that because of this groupishness mentality, we feel the need to belong in groups that resemble, act, and value the same things as us for means of safety, comfort, and survival. Yet, with the evolution of groups comes the development of group identity.

Group identity is not a bad thing but is another means of how we identify ourselves outside of an intra-personal perspective. In today’s modern context, the boundaries of groups are being blended more than ever due to the expedited movement of people not previously seen in human history. This movement of people can have negative effects on social group identity

because we see those threats as personal attacks on our values and need for group acceptance. These threats to identity are the leading cause of identity denial because those that don't fit into the normative group identity are perceived as threats.

This section of the chapter is dedicated to discussing what identity denial looks like and what the effects are on those who experience it from a minority lens. It will also explore what it means to be a part of a white identity group, how denial of this group is received, and what the effects of this denial are. In this first article, we will explore how the white identity is a non-negotiable part of the American group identity.

“Identity Denied: Comparing American or White Identity Denial and Psychological Health Among Bicultural and Biracial People” – Analia F. Albuja, Diana T. Sanchez, & Sarah E. Gaither

When people think of a stereotypical American, they often picture someone that is white, with blonde hair and blue eyes. They wouldn't be necessarily wrong as the majority of Americans according to the US Census are white, and mainstream media perpetuates this by mostly showing blonde haired blue-eyed people as being American. But how do these white Americans view non-white Americans? Do they fall into this group mindset that values group autonomy rather than shared identity?

In this two-part study by Analia F. Albuja, Diana T. Sanchez, & Sarah E. Gaither, “Identity Denied: Comparing American or White Identity Denial and Psychological Health Among Bicultural and Biracial People,” the researchers seek to understand identity autonomy, the perceived compatibility of identities, and social belonging as mediators to how “Identity Denial” and “Identity Questioning” appear to the majority Bicultural and Biracial people. The

studies focus on monoracial bicultural people (those with only one racial identity but with multiple cultural identities that were born/live in America) and American biracial people (those that have either one, or both parents of two, or more race identities that live/born in America).

In study one, the researchers distributed a survey to participants that measured how often they experienced interpersonal identity denial and questioning with the mediators of identity integration, stress, and depressive symptoms. The participants were given a second survey that measures identity autonomy that reflected freedom in cultural or racial identification. Study one reveals that in both samples, denial, and questioning were significantly correlated to participants that reported being asked about their background more often. Stress and depressive symptoms were also strongly and positively correlated. The study also showed that bicultural and biracial participants who reported more frequent experiences in identity denial and questioning reported feeling less able to choose their own identity freely and had perceived greater conflict between their two identities. This is because unlike other social identity threats that result from stigmatized group membership, identity denial, and questioning are prompted by exclusion from a group important to one's self-identity. These results suggest that there is a negative impact on bicultural and biracial people from identity denial and questioning by white people.

Study two aimed to replicate study one but extend it by including social belonging as a mediator. Participants again were issued a series of surveys to measure denial and autonomy and asked to report how often they have had experiences of identity denial in their lifetime and if the perpetrators were strangers, acquaintances, or close others. The results from study 2 revealed that nearly half of the bicultural and biracial participants reported that identity denial and identity questioning experiences happened most often with strangers.

Both studies reveal that there is converging evidence that the association between identity denial and questioning and mental health is positively correlated by providing an integrated model for members of either two racial or cultural groups. Study 1 and Study 2 essentially reaffirmed the adjacent study's goal that identity denial and questioning have negative effects on the psychological well-being of bicultural and biracial people. The results show significant predictors of psychological well-being and mediators of these relationships like social belonging. These studies are also an extension of previous works that highlight the process of the underlying negative effects that identity denial and identity questioning bring forth.

Yet, this study brings forth two questions. First, are some racial and ethnic groups more accepting than white people? Second, do those who prefer to identify with minority groups, and do not care for acceptance by white people, also experience impacts on their mental health? It is unclear from this study if one group is more accepting than the other and if those who do not care for white acceptance also experience impacts on their mental health. Further research on this would be required, but what is clear is that bicultural people with a white racial background, and biracial people with an American background, do experience identity denial from white Americans.

Now that we've established that identity denial is happening amongst bicultural and biracial people, we can begin to look at this phenomenon in more detail. The following article looks directly at a singular minority population rather than the population as a whole.

“On Becoming ‘Chinese Americans’: The Complexity of Navigating Two Worlds” – Hsin-Yu Chen and Yanhong Liu

In this article, Hsin-Yu Chen and Yanhong Liu, explore what it means to be a Chinese American in the United States from the perspective of adoptees and immigrants. “On Becoming a ‘Chinese Americans’: The Complexity of Navigating Two Worlds” is a discussion article that highlights the lived experiences of Chinese decedents who grew up in the United States. These Chinese decedents face additional challenges when developing a sense of self because of their multicultural exposure of being both Chinese and American. For instance, at home, they adhere to the customs and practices of what it means to be Chinese, whereas at school or in public places, they display American mannerisms. The article explores the complex and dynamic interactions that come with navigating Chinese and Euro-American Cultures. These decedents are constantly being told they are “not American enough” or “not Chinese enough” while also dealing with negative stereotypes that come with being an atypical version of what an American looks and acts like. In the discussion, the authors talk about the Complexity Bicultural Experience, the stereotype of being the “Model Minority,” foreignization and the marginalization that comes with it, and why bicultural socializations are important in clinical and social practices.

When discussing identity denial, it is important to discuss how stereotypes are perpetrators of identity denial. Stereotypes are widely held fixed beliefs of an oversimplified image of a person or thing. In the case of minorities, they are often negative and prejudiced outlooks of all people belonging to that minority group. This offers a reason for ingroup members to deny acceptance to those that are ambiguous to the ingroup, in the case of being Asian and American. The authors note that many Asian Americans in the United States have dealt with some form of the “model minority myth” that is portrayed against them. That Chinese

Americans are “intelligent, hardworking, successful, and having a high socioeconomic status despite being racially minoritized” (Chen & Liu, 2020). This is true for both adoptees and American-born Chinese decedents. “Both groups seem to encounter microaggressions like ‘Where are you really from?’ and disclose feelings of discomfort” when their identity is questioned and invalidates their identity as an American. One main discussion point that the article highlights is that for these Chinese decedents, because of their experience growing up in the United States, “China will never be ‘home’ for either group nor will they ever be Chinese enough in the traditional Chinese view” (Chen & Liu, 2020). This stark difference is highlighted by the families that many of these descendants are adopted into. One of the interviewees that the authors spoke to recalls feeling different from the other kids on the playground because one of the children asked if she had been “kidnapped” from her real family. Not only did this person experience identity denial at a young age but her family was marginalized and not seen as a “real” family because of her foreignization of what a traditional American family is supposed to look like. Another point the authors highlight is that of culture - specifically, the difference between a “first culture” and an “optional culture”. The first culture is described as the first culture you experience and are raised into. The second culture is a culture that you adopt or assimilate into due to living or working conditions. For the individuals in the article, those that grew up in Chinese immigrant households learned Chinese culture first and learned American culture from school. Whereas adoptees learned American culture first and view Chinese culture as optional. This is important because it widens the gap between identities in both groups, with one side of the gap not being Chinese enough and the other not being American enough. This gap is difficult to navigate and according to the article “Living ‘in between’ two cultures is challenging and requires more support and reorganization” (Chen & Liu, 2020). The article ends

by arguing that understanding the navigation of identity formation and the development of Chinese descendants is important because, in our current globalized societies, people construct their own identity far more multidimensional than it has ever been. Having these conversations and incorporating them into professional practice can help bridge the gap and create a more inclusive environment.

This article shows the realities of what identity denial looks like amongst minority people, particularly what members of these minority groups often undergo. The fact that Asian Americans in predominantly white America must deal with identity questioning, negative stereotypes, and navigating group identities results in negative psychological effects. The following article discusses these effects in greater detail.

[“Where are you really from?: Asian American and Identity Denial” – Sapna Cheryan & Benoît Monin](#)

This article, “Where are you really from?: Asian American and Identity Denial” by Sapna Cheryan & Benoît Monin, seeks to “explore the origins and manifestations of identity denial as well as the strategies that individuals deploy in reaction to it”. However, unlike “On Becoming Chinese Americans...”, this article is a five-part study that tests Asian American identity in different scenarios. The study follows a three-step process that inquires whether white Americans see Asian Americans as less American (study one: Who is perceived as American). It then explores whether Asian Americans are aware of this perception and whether it corresponds to their self-image (study two: Do Asian Americans see themselves as Americans and How do Asian Americans think they are seen by other Americans). It then brings the two parts together to see the everyday impact of identity denial on the social interaction of Asian Americans by

documenting common misconceptions (study three: Does Identity Denial Happen in Everyday Interactions), and then laboratory reactions to identity denial (study four: How do Asian Americans React to identity denial and study five: Do Asian Americans assert their identity through pride or practices). The overall hypothesis of the article is that identity denial precludes Asian Americans from being seen as fully American and that this thought of Asian Americans not being fully American does exist in American culture and is recognized by Asian Americans. All the participants for this study came from an undergraduate “Introduction to Psychology” class at Stanford University. Surveys were distributed to each participant before each study to see if they were a proper candidate for the study.

The results of the five-part study revealed interesting data on how Asian Americans interpret and react to identity denial. For instance, identity denial is happening in larger percentages among Asian American participants than among other minority groups like Black or Hispanic participants (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). Other overall key findings include that white Americans see Asian American as less Asian, Asian Americans see themselves just as American as white Americans, and Asian Americans know they are seen as less American based on daily interactions, and often must assert their identities through behavioral changes. The authors believe these findings may be due to ingroup and outgroup perspectives playing a major role because not all in-groups are homogeneous. Therefore, membership can change at any time even among “in-group” members. But a critical aspect that we learned from this study is that identity denial can happen within in-groups when basing group acceptance on stereotypical group autonomy. In this case, whiteness was the deciding factor in determining whether someone was American or not. If someone was not white or did not display features commonly associated with whiteness, then they were automatically denied an American Identity.

The previous two articles bring forth an interesting aspect of identity denial when it comes to “dual identities” of being Asian and American. The following article discusses the relationship between identity denial and dual identities among minority people being multiethnic or multiracial through a national identity lens.

“You are too ethnic; you are too National...” - Diana Cardenas, Maykel Verkuyenten, and Fenella Fleischmann

In “‘You are too ethnic, you are too national’: Dual identity denial and dual identification,” Diana Cardenas, Maykel Verkuyenten, and Fenella Fleischmann seek to understand the relationship between dual identity and identity denial when it comes to national and ethnic identity. In Study One, the authors measure dual identity in two ways: direct and indirect. Indirect dual identification was assessed by separately measuring ethnic and national identity and examining how they covary. A positive association between ethnic and national identity implies that an individual identifies simultaneously with two groups. Direct identification was measured with a scale assessing the extent to which individuals experience combined membership in the two groups. Study Two replicates study one, but has a larger sample, adds ethnic groups, and takes immigration into account. Study two also measures direct dual identification but with a different scale in the hope of conceptualizing study one.

The results from both studies show that there is a strong correlation between the direct measure of dual identification and ethnic identification whereas, the association with national identification was insignificant, or negative, in some cases. The association between ethnic identity and national identity in the indirect measure of dual identity was more positive among participants that had a high dual identity denial in both studies. Overall, this research suggests

that people with strong dual identities might be more susceptible to experiencing dual identity denial because they enact both identities.

Those who strongly identify with their groups may experience higher amounts of identity denial because of group thinking and social identity complexities. However, it is important to discuss how identity denial can also lead to positive reactions.

“Finally, someone who ‘Gets’ me! Multiracial People Value Others’ Accuracy About Their Race” – Jessica Remedios & Allison Chasteen

When constantly faced with identity denial, it is reasonable to assume that “others’ perceptions of their racial background are highly unpredictable” and that “multiracial people should desire accurate partners who verify their racial identity” (Remedios & Chasteen, 2013). This is the focus of “Finally Someone Who ‘Gets’ Me! Multiracial People Value Others’ Accuracy About Their Race” by Jessica Remedios and Allison Chasteen. Unlike the previous studies that sought to understand identity denial and its negative effects, this study shows that validation of identity can lead to positive experiences.

In this two-part study, study one partnered participants with a stranger that either “guesses” correctly the participant's racial/ethnic category or a response of confusion to measure the reaction of the participant. They hypothesize that multiracial, and not monoracial, participants will have a heightened interest in engaging with the accurate partner. In study two, they examine the underlying processes that multiracial individuals' reactions have to others' accuracy. They specifically test whether multiracial, but not monoracial, individuals perceive partners who are accurate about their race as more likely than partners who are confused about their race to fulfill their self-verification needs.

The results of study one revealed that multiracial participants whose partner “guessed” the participant's race correctly were more likely to have heightened interest in wanting to interact with the partner than those whose partner responded in confusion. This reveals that multiracial people regard race as an aspect of their self that requires verification from others. The results of study two showed that multiracial participants, but not monoracial participants, did report heightened interest in interacting with accurate partners to meet self-verification needs. This result reveals that multiracial people expect interactions with people who accurately perceive their race to be positive experiences because their self-verification needs are being met during these interactions.

Because identity denial plays a significant role in interactions with others, it can be inferred that multiracial people who have experienced this confusion, or denial of their identity, dislike these interactions with confused people because it does not meet self-verification needs like that of interacting with an accurate person. The “need to belong” is relevant in this article because it shows that interacting with accurate people when discussing racial identity can be a positive experience for people who regularly are met with identity denial or racial confusion, for once to be recognized and validated in their experience.

“Blood Quantum: Native American Mixed Bloods” - Terry P. Wilson

Even though one can experience validation in the face of identity denial, being validated through one's in-group, as we have read, is just as complicated within the in-groups as it is for those belonging to both in and out-groups. A justification method for identity denial within ingroups is the measurement of “Blood Quantum.” This use of measuring isn't a new means of maintaining racial and ethnic purity. One of the most famous methods for measuring racial

impurity is the “one-drop rule” in the United States. In this rule, it was deemed that even if you had one drop of African blood, you were considered Black in race in the eyes of the US government. This continued for more than a century until the end of segregation in the 1960s, specifically in the Loving v. Virginia supreme court case that deemed the rule unconstitutional. This, however, did not stop people from measuring their racial and ethnic heritage in numerical terms.

For a minority population, like that of Native Americans, with an already dwindling population from years of government interference, disease, and lack of resources, it is difficult to maintain this population, let alone maintain a “pure” ethnic heritage, without some “mixing”. In the article by Terry Wilson, “Blood Quantum: Native American Mixed Bloods,” Wilson explains early modern Native American histories concerning counting Native populations in America, while also exploring early instances of identity denial in mixed bloods, assimilation processes for pure and mixed natives, and what the future of how to count Native American populations holds.

Wilson tells the story of how a former student of his was a staunch supporter of “full-blooded” and “pure” Native American heritage in populations and didn’t support mixed bloods being considered Native. However, one day this student discovered that the “pure” Native American heritage that she believed to possess was not true as one of her grandparents was half-white. This turned into a sort of Identity crisis for this student because all of her life she believed and was told that she was of “pure” native heritage. However, her belief before this discovery was that those of mixed heritage do not have the same importance or identity as those with pure heritage. This is the basis for the Blood Quantum argument being used in Native American populations to ascribe not only validity to identity but how important one’s voice is in the community. Wilson describes this after talking with his former student, “No more knotty issue

preoccupies Indian country than that of Identity. Before one can address the issues such as tribal sovereignty retained by various groups of Native Americans it is necessary to determine membership within Indian groups. This process hinges heavily on blood quantum, or the degree of Indian ancestry expressed in fractions such as one-fourth or three-eighths.” (Wilson, 1992). This measurement of identity is a form of identity denial because it places a value on identity and essentially promotes identity denial. Wilson then goes on to describe this promotion of identity denial in mixed bloods in recent history by recounting the way that African Americans were treated during the time of Slavery and Emancipation. That people of African and Native mixed heritage were “peculiar” and “misplaced in time and space, almost white, but unable to assimilate into the mainstream” (Wilson, 1999). Native Americans already had a difficult time being recognized by the United States government during this time, so recognition for those of mixed heritage would be even more difficult. Wilson argues that “the question of federal recognition has remained confused, inextricably linked with the Indian Identity issue, itself clouded by popular and scholarly notions of blood quantum, phenotypic appearances, and past treaty relations” (Wilson, 1999). However, this doesn’t stop the conversation of who is Indian and who is not. Membership within Indian groups is also debated upon tribe by tribe. Wilson describes it best that “there is no fixed list of characteristics that when totaled equals ‘Indian,’ nor is there a rational means to certify blood quantum that one is Native American – ‘traditional’, ‘acculturated’, or whatever” if we can accept the reality that many around us will always disagree (Wilson, 1999).

Going unrecognized by a government and in turn, your social group is identity denial. The use of “Blood quantum” is not a means of resolving identity denial in people, but further promoting separation. As someone who is of native heritage, it is hard for me to claim this

identity without facing some sort of denial internally and externally. I have no affiliated tribe, I do not understand the culture or hardships, and the only connection I have to this part of my identity is what a DNA test kit can provide me. Internally, I feel proud to be of native heritage, recognizing that part of my ancestor's past was once part of the history of this country, but externally, I do not meet the requirements to apply for scholarships, accept benefits from the government, and do not possess the cultural right to express this identity. This denial doesn't come from a statement of disapproval but from a place of recognition and understanding. Psychologically, it hurts all the same as confusion and rejection are some of the feelings I get when I talk about my native heritage.

Chapter Discussion

Identity denial is complex in terms of how it operates, whom it operates on, and whether it has positive or negative effects. This literature has shown that identity denial operates on what appears to be a systemic basis that is perpetuated by white spaces. Now it may not be intentional but mainstream media shows that it is happening and that we know it is happening. A popular American TV show called "Mixed-ish" shows a family of one white parent and one black parent living in 1980s America. The show often portrayed scenes of the mixed children of this family being excluded, bullied, and experiencing identity denial from their peers because of their mixed heritage. Often when the children experienced these instances of identity denial, they were in predominantly white spaces like school. I can relate to the experiences on this show as some of the first instances of identity denial I experienced were in school. Being teased about my hair, comments about my eyes and skin, and repeatedly being asked where I or my family was from,

only reinforced this denial experience. The way I reacted to it often depended on the type of infliction.

Many multiethnic and multiracial people deal with identity denial in a variety of ways. In this chapter, the literature has shown us that identity denial has very real effects psychologically and that minorities face the challenge when put into white spaces. The following chapters are dedicated to exploring the ways that multiethnic and multiracial people react to identity denial, what implications it can have on them, and how it relates to how they navigate their identity in predominately white spaces.

Chapter 2: Identity Negotiation & Shifting

Multi-ethnic and biracial people are constantly having to deal with identity denial, but when in certain spaces, particularly white spaces, they often undergo Identity Shifting or Negotiation. Identity Sifting or Identity Negotiation is the process by which one alters their actions, speech, and appearance to adjust to the cultural norms within a given environment (Jackson, 2022). By shifting their identity to fit that of the space they are in while also dealing with stereotypes associated with them, they present to the world a different self or image that an individual perceives will be more acceptable to others. Not only does it involve changing one's appearance and speech, but also one's behavior. It is often a conscious act of code-switching designed to mitigate the chances of the negative effects of identity denial, but can also be done unconsciously to fit in with the dominant social group.

The focus of this chapter is to understand Identity Negotiation/Shifting when in predominately white spaces. As discussed in the introduction, white spaces are traditionally spaces that promote and uphold "whiteness or Eurocentric" culture. The following articles will explore how minorities navigate these spaces and transition into how this can relate to how multiethnic and multiracial people operate in these spaces. The articles in this chapter will explore Negotiation and Shifting through the lens of being a black minority in a white institutional space with supplementary works to expand this reaction.

"Street Smart and Book Smart: Charismatic Black Males Culturally Navigating a two-Year Predominately White Community College" – William R. Turner Jr.

Looking back on the Introduction, white places are a cultural norm in many Western cultures. These spaces can range from neighborhoods and professional offices to academic

institutions and government spaces. Predominately White Institutions, also known as PWIs, are often places that are inherently exclusionary towards minorities. “At PWIs, the prevailing culture of the campus is typically White or Eurocentric in nature. Such cultures tend to be individualistic in their orientation and employ ideologies that intentionally or unintentionally mask race and racism” (Berrey, 2011). The navigation of these Institutions is the focus of the article by William Turner Jr., “Street Smart and Book Smart: Charismatic Black Males Culturally Navigating a two-Year Predominately White Community College”. In this article, Turner Jr. focuses on how the “racial and religious components of Christian Black males’ culture allow them to navigate a predominately White community college through the alternation model, which foregrounds various core components of culture, socialization processes, and processes of marginalization and minoritization”.

Turner's study is conducted through qualitative interviews with, as they describe, “Black Charismatic men” that come from traditional religious backgrounds in the African American community. The model that this study uses is that of the “alternation model” which proposes that “individuals can competently participate in two distinct cultures by alternating their behavior to culturally navigate varying social contexts”. If this sounds familiar, that is because we discussed this alternation, or biculturalism, in Chapter One when discussing the article “Social Identity Complexity” by Roccas and Brewer, specifically when discussing “compartmentalization.” Those with multiple identities will often take on the identity with the social space, favoring one identity over the other.

The results of this cultural navigation of white spaces show three distinct themes: First, the student background “in the hood” helped them develop a “distinct cultural orientation” achieved from significant religious and racial socialization. Second, aspects of their experience

in “the hood” served as a framework for persistence and resistance. Third, they were able to negotiate support during academic or social challenges. When comparing these findings to the alternation model, we can see that they have negotiated their existence in these white spaces using their “street smart” and translating it to their “book smart”. The very act of having to resist negative and racial microaggressions in their academic experience is a form of identity negotiation and shifting because they are negotiating parts of themselves, while also using their knowledge and experience, to navigate these spaces.

Negotiating support and the development of resistant identities is one of the ways that minorities navigate traditionally white spaces. PWIs are some of the first places where minorities, multiethnic, and multiracial people will experience identity denial. The next most common place is the workplace.

“Navigating the workplace: The Cost and Benefits of Shifting Identities at Work among Early Career U.S. Black Women” – Danielle Dickens and Ernest Chaves

It is no secret that minority people have often undergone disparities while in the workplace. Often, they are met with resistance, microaggressions, and discrimination. The following article explores this with a focus on Identity Shifting in young black women that work in predominately white settings. Although its focus is on black women, it does give an indicator of how even in White spaces, minority people shift their identities to accommodate the space.

“Navigating the Workplace: The Cost and Benefits of Shifting Identities at Work among Early Career U.S. Black Women by Danielle Dickens and Earnest Chaves is a study that was conducted mostly through interviews that were then codified to show that most participants see identity sifting as either a positive or negative experience. Many of the women that were

interviewed expressed how stereotypes play a major role in how they are viewed in the workplace and how they shift their identity to mitigate those experiences. For example, the stereotype often associated with black women in the workplace is that they are “angry and difficult” which then puts pressure on these women to “represent all black women” to make sure that their behavior is not playing into the stereotype. The article then goes on to explain how there are “costs and benefits” of identity shifting like that of building and maintaining relationships while in certain careers but also the toll that it takes on mental health like the double consciousness effect where they are aware of their identity, and the identity that others have of them. Other costs include being psychologically paralyzed and mentally checking out of conversations, removing oneself from conversation to avoid confrontation or microaggressions, and the frozen effect where one self-silences to create and maintain safety within relationships.

These are just some of the effects that black women have described in their interviews. From this study, we see that the cost of identity shifting is a negative psychological effect as well as the perceived benefits. Constantly changing behaviors, and battling stereotypes on an everyday basis, can wear one’s mental health down, but the benefits might outweigh the costs in terms of movement in one's career or building personal relationships. However, this research says that it doesn’t matter how much one changes their identity to fit the space. These spaces have inherent racism that will always deny those that do not conform or adhere to whiteness.

“Black Women in White Institutional Spaces: The Invisible Labor Clause and The Inclusion Tax”- Tsedale M Melaku

Like “Navigating the Workplace...”, “Black Women in White Institutional Spaces: The Invisible Labor Clause and The Inclusion Tax” by Tsedale M. Melaku, explores Black women in

law offices and how they are forced to adhere to the predominately white culture of these white institutional spaces that are systemically racist. Melaku discusses how these white spaces have inherent racism and how Black women lawyers often undergo identity denial and shifting to appease the people in the spaces that are most often their peers and superiors. That the normalization of white experiences is “another decisive issue that Black people and people of color face in white institutional spaces are negotiating how dominant white culture functions to normalize the white experience, thereby excluding all other racial groups” (Melaku, 2022). This can be seen in places like law firms that have specific social interactions that often exclude black women and people of color from networking events like “golfing or skiing” which in turn maintains the culture of the white space. Maleku says the “inclusion tax is meted out when black women lawyers are forced to make whites comfortable with their presence” (Melaku, 2022). This experience is not uncommon for people of color, multiethnic, and multiracial people.

Like the “Double consciousness effect” that was described in Dickens and Chaves, Maleku describes the “othering” identity that black women take on to fit into these white spaces. Navigating these spaces has the same negative effects seen in the Black women from Dicken and Chaves as the Black women lawyers in this article say they “are forced to expend emotional, cognitive, and physical energy working to carve out space that includes them” (Melaku, 2022). If these Black minority women experience negative effects in predominately white institutional spaces, then one can assume other multiethnic and biracial minorities also experiences these same effects.

Calling back to the articles mentioned in Chapter One: Identity Denial, some of the researchers found that many multiethnic, biracial, and even multi-national people undergo identity shifting/negotiation when experiencing identity denial. When it comes to ethnic and

national identity, many “dual identifiers” would “perform behaviors relevant to the norms and values of their ethnic community and also want to assert their national identity by engaging in typical national practices and demonstrating majority cultural awareness” (D.Cardenas et al., 2021). However, this can also make them more susceptible to criticism and identity denial by showing their simultaneous membership in two groups.

For other minority members, instances of identity negotiation and shifting might stem from how they perceive their multiple cultures. In the article “Bicultural Identity Integration (BII): Components and Psychological Antecedents” by Veronica Benet-Martínez and Jama Haritatos, BII, and cultural-frame switching may be linked. For instance, in their study, “Chinese American biculturals high on the BII (those who perceive their cultural identities as compatible) exhibited culturally congruent behavior when presented with external cues associated with one of their cultural backgrounds” but “Chinese American biculturals with low BII (those who perceive their cultural identities to be in opposition), behave in non-culturally congruent ways when exposed to the same cues” (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). This means that these individuals displayed a type of “behavior reactance” when faced with identity denial cues. In other cases of other minority group members like Asian American, some undergo Identity Assertion when faced with an instance of identity denial. This will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

Chapter Discussion

Some of these experiences that we have discussed are not unfamiliar to me. While attending a PWI, I often played up my whiteness in favor of fitting in with the people in the space. Going so far as to recollect the experiences I had as a child, so as not to repeat them as an adult. I changed the way I spoke, how I dressed, and even how I behaved in groups so I wouldn't

be excluded. However, sometimes no matter how much I altered myself, and was a part of the same extracurricular activities, or Honors Classes, it wasn't enough. The space that I was in was built to promote whiteness and, as someone that was part white, I would never fully be admitted to the space no matter how hard I tried to change myself or identify more with my whiteness.

Having to balance my majority and minority identities caused a lot of strain on me mentally. I often felt like I was the only one experiencing this, yet American television continues to validate my experience. In the HBO comedy series, "Insecure", created by Issa Rae and Larry Wilmore, we often see the characters shift their identity to fit into the white space or sometimes their refusal to shift. The show focuses on racial politics in the U.S. workplace and highlights the frustrations that Black individuals undergo in those spaces. The frustrations in the show are the same that we have read from the articles: stereotyping, microaggressions, and negative psychological effects.

This negotiation and shifting to blend in and mitigate negative repercussions are not unusual given the evolution of humans. We once punished group members for being antisocial or aggressive to protect group integrity. Yet, as groups become more diverse, and we continue to evolve, those means of protection have also evolved. The lines between minority and majority groups are blending and being perceived as a threat to the majority. The majority group behavior is not unfounded given the history, but how minorities react and change is important to discuss.

From these articles, we can see evidence of Identity Negotiation and Shifting happening in predominantly white spaces. Even though the subjects in this research did not identify as being white, they did have to negotiate their identities to accommodate whiteness. If they did identify as white, we can assume that they might react in the same way as a mechanism to mitigate identity denial. Because of the space that minority men and women find themselves in, it is

guaranteed that they will or have experienced identity denial. To avoid confrontation, microaggressions, and even blunt racism, they shift their identities, negotiate support, and more to protect themselves in these White Institutional spaces.

From this chapter and the examples that are given, it is reasonable to assume that PWIs and white spaces inherently maintain groupishness and promote identity denial. Minorities face a very real problem and have different perspectives from the majority because their experience of schools and workplaces is different from the white experience. Multiethnic and multiracial individuals having to negotiate and shift their identity is a negative experience and puts undue strain on those that frequently go through this. In the next chapter, we will be discussing how, like negotiation and shifting, assimilating into a new identity can have differing effects on multiethnic and multiracial people when it comes to being in a white space.

Chapter 3: Identity Assimilation

In the previous chapter, we discussed examples of identity negotiation/shifting that took place in minorities like Black women and Asian Americans. Part of negotiation and shifting is like Identity Assimilation. Identity assimilation is referred to as “the interpretation of salient experiences in terms of established cognitive and affective schemas about the self” (Sneed & Whitebourne, 2003). Essentially, it is the process that individuals use to maintain a sense of self-consistency in the face of discrepancies like that of identity denial. Minorities, multiethnic, and biracial people have recently undergone debate on how they have assimilated their ethnic and national identities.

“Is there assimilation in minority groups’ national, ethnic, and religious identity” – Lucinda Platt

As this paper has explored and explained, ethnic identity is a key part of psychological function and is widely regarded as an important part of society. When it comes to minorities, ethnic and religious identity has been a topic of debate in European societies because it often goes against the traditional national identities of the majority. In the article by Lucinda Platt, “Is there assimilation in minority groups’ national, ethnic, and religious identity?” this debate is further discussed and tested in British first and second-generation minority groups that include Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean, and Black African ethnic groups. According to Platt, “Minority ethnic identification has traditionally been regarded as part of wider sociocultural assimilation processes whereby the strength of minority identity can be expected to decline over time and across generations” (Platt, 2014). But how does this identification evolve through generations? Current research says that identity assimilation intensifies among first- to second-generation minorities and that when faced with discrimination, racism, and other negative

experiences not faced among the majority, an “ethnic revival” can take place in second-generation minorities. Other research suggests that “second-generation identities reflect a shift away from identification with parental ethnicity and homeland, not towards national majority but towards alternatives, less locally specific and more global identities” (Platt, 2014).

In this study, Platt seeks to weigh these competing theoretical perspectives in a national survey by specifically asking three questions:

1. What evidence is there for identity assimilation across generations in Britain?
2. Do we find a substitution of religion for ethnic identities in the second generation?
3. Is there any evidence for a reactive ethnicity or religiosity?

The first question tests the claim of identity assimilation and both social and personal identification. When looking at whether the assimilation of specific ethnic identity is happening between first and second generations of minorities in Britain, according to the survey conducted, the second generation has higher identification for their nationality than the first generation because of the close association that their British citizenship plays to their identity. It also explores how people practice their religious identity in comparison to their national identity. Overall, the findings indicate an unambiguous trend of generational assimilation towards Britishness, rather than maintaining a minority identity, in the UK’s ethnic and religious groups.

The second and third questions aim to measure how religion and ethnicity may play a role in how assimilation presents itself in first and second-generation minorities in the UK. The religions that were tested were Christian, Hindu, Sikh, and Other. When it came to a substitution of religion for ethnic identities in the second generation, the study found that despite most of the religious affiliations, there was no increase or decrease of preference across the generations. The only group that had a favorable preference for religious identity was Indian Hindus. This is

interesting in itself because of how closely related ethnic and religious identities can be. But according to this study, there was not a shift of religion in any of the minorities tested except for the Indian Hindu group. The third question is closely related to the second in measuring the significance of religious and ethnic identity. However, question three seeks to measure the reactivity in the second generation of minorities when it comes to their religiosity. This study builds off the analysis that “perceptions of hostile/discriminatory contexts enhance co-ethnic or co-religious identification and reduce British Identification” and that this will be stronger in the second generation. Respondents were asked to give their perceptions of discrimination and unfairness to measure their reactivity. Despite these additional measures, the overall findings are that there is little evidence to say that there is “reactive ethnicity” in the second generation when it comes to religion.

The findings of this study are significant when it comes to the assimilation of minorities because it shows that assimilation is happening, despite instances of identity denial. According to Platt “while the perception of discrimination and prejudice was associated with lower feelings of commonality with British people, it made no difference to minority ethnic identification” especially when it came to first versus second-generation identification. Each generation still identified more with their British identity than with their ethnic identity. This change toward the majority in the second generation is not uncommon as the act of assimilating requires one to conform to the dominant culture's identity. Even though identity denial is still present when assimilation is occurring, assimilation can also be a source of identity denial. Seeing someone who does not look like a prototype member of the majority act and has the same mannerisms as the majority are a threat to acceptance and can cause identity denial to take place.

Assimilation as a source of identity denial is not a new idea. In previous chapters, we saw in some research that ingroup members did not see others as fully a part of the majority just based on their physical appearance. These members would then try to assert their identities because of how assimilated they are into the majority's culture. Chapter One briefly discussed this type of denial and how Asian American descendants (immigrants or adoptees) undergo identity denial due to their cultural upbringing.

“Choosing Ethnicity, Negotiating Race: Korean Adoptees in America” – Mia Tuan & Jiannbin Lee Shiao

Asian descendants face a unique challenge when it comes to negotiating their identity, specifically in America, as they are not seen as American or racially white by white Americans, but also not seen as a minority by people of color (Chen & Liu, 2020). In the book, “Choosing Ethnicity, Negotiating Race: Korean Adoptees in America” – Mia Tuan & Jiannbin Lee Shiao, discuss how Asian descendants, specifically adoptees and immigrants that grew up in America, face identity denial despite their identities as Americans. The book also focuses on how Korean adoptees navigate their Korean/Asian identity, on childhood experiences unique to foreign-born adoptees, on early and later adulthood ethnic exploration, and on how this affects their self-identification.

In the early chapters of the book, we see how the assimilation of adoptees from childhood experiences translates to their self-identity exploration in early adulthood. In early adulthood, adoptees will go through explorations of their identities in their personal and social in-groups. These explorations are fueled by like “Why do people think I'm more Korean than American? Why do some people dislike me because I am Asian? What do Koreans and other Asians think

about adoptees like me?” (Tuan and Shiao, 2011) However, in later adulthood, these explorations are less likely to take place because of prior experiences with identity denial, or lack of interest due to assimilation.

For adoptees who were raised in prototypical American households, ethnic exploration might not be of interest to them because they see themselves as just as American as their peers. This is due to a lack of interaction opportunities to interact with other Korean individuals and Asian descendants, “color blindness”, sometimes internalized racism from adoptees' families, and identity denial from childhood to early adulthood. One respondent told the story of her upbringing, that her parents decided that the best way to teach her about her racial and cultural difference was to not. That “people were people and that we are all individuals rather than members of a racial group”. However, they raised her with white values and white culture, even going so far as to have a preference for whom she dated saying, “My mom...didn’t want me dating any ethnic guys from other ethnic groups. She kind of treated me as if I was white” (Tuan & Shiao, 2011). This is an important contradiction in adoptees' families that show how race is seen in these nuclear units whereas the rest of the world is very keen on race. That these families assimilate these adoptees from the moment they are adopted into their families and do not teach them the realities of their identity.

In later adulthood, ethnic exploration is on a personal level or not explored at all. Most explorations come from trying to learn the culture, experience the food, and maybe learn to speak the language. For many adoptees, the culture into which they are adopted is the first and only culture that they know. Exploring this part of their identity later in life can be difficult to do and even difficult to accept that identity into one's perception of self. “To consider myself Korean...I would probably have to know a lot more about Korea itself... [Identifying as

American] means to me that I grew up in America...” (Tuan & Shiao, 2011). Other adoptees have an aversion to exploring their identity because they see it as irrelevant. They were raised in America, and they have American parents, values, and mannerisms, so what is the point? For other adoptees’, this aversion comes from not wanting to be different from their family in childhood, already feeling that they are immersed in their everyday lives and lack opportunities.

For those adoptees and descendants that do explore in later adulthood, knowing the language, the culture, and how that respective society runs itself is an important part of their assimilated identity because, for many of these descendants, American culture and mannerisms are the only identities that they know. As we saw in Chapter One, “On Becoming Chinese Americans...” by Hsin-Yu Chen and Yanhong Liu, even when dealing with identity denial amongst peers, their assimilation was so strong that they felt the need to assert their identity. Rattling off movies, television shows, and other American things would prove that they know and are a part of American culture.

Chapter Discussion

Assimilation is very similar to Negotiation and Shifting as it requires putting aside the minority identity in favor of complying and promoting the majority identity. You take on the mannerism, culture, and language of the majority and in a sense, become one of them. In the case of first and second-generation minorities discussed in this chapter, assimilation is a complicated process because, unlike the majority, and to the exception of second-generation minorities, being born and raised into the predominant culture is a critical part of assimilation.

For first and second-generation immigrants, assimilation is not the same. Their process of assimilation can be seen in their identity labels (e.g., Italian American, African American, and

Asian American). With each passing generation, that label transfers from bicultural to singularly assimilated (e.g., American). Having dual identities at home and school/work can cause strain on those that experience identity denial. As we have read, national and ethnic identity are not the same, and often individuals will favor one over the other depending on which they identify as stronger. The benefit of assimilation is facing less identity denial, living in the majority culture with ease, and general acceptance of the majority. But assimilation is not without its costs to identity. When constantly faced with identity denial in a predominate white race-centric world, the only means of feeling secure in our identity is to assert it. In the next chapter, we will be discussing how asserting one's identity in white spaces has its pros and cons for those that constantly face identity denial.

Chapter 4: Identity Assertion

It is important to discuss all the ways one reacts to identity denial to understand its effects and how individuals with multiple identities navigate predominately white spaces. We have discussed the initial act of denial, then its reactions of negotiation/shifting, and assimilation. The last reaction and most positive of the four is Assertion. Identity Assertion is different from Negotiation/Shifting and Assimilation. Identity Assertion is a process in which one tries to prove to others that they belong to the in-group. In this form, it requires an active pushback on the initially denied identity to assert that one does have a claim.

“Where are you really from?..” Study 4, Cheryan and Monin

In the previously discussed article from Chapter One, “Where are you really from?” Cheryan and Monin share that identity assertion is one of two forms that Asian American participants would take when faced with identity denial. But they see identity assertion taking two forms. One, being the “straightforward way would be to embrace one’s in-group membership explicitly by increasing one’s reported self-identification with the group” and the other would be a more subtle way of “changing one’s behavior to appear more prototypical by engaging in prototypical behavior or displaying evidence of past prototypical behavior” like changing one’s speech patterns. The more “subtle” way can be interchangeable with Identity Negotiation/Shifting, but the more “straightforward” is mostly seen as Identity Assertion. In Study 4: How do Asian Americans React to identity denial, the researchers predict that one of the methods to protect against identity denial is assertion saying that “identity assertion could take the form of demonstrating familiarity with American culture, especially with popular culture as it may be more indicative of actually have grown up in the United States than formal knowledge” (Cheryan & Monin 2005). The results of Study 4 showed that “Asian Americans

were not passive in the face of such threats: instead, they tried too hard to dispel the misperception and to reassert their identity as Americans by demonstrating awareness of popular American culture...” (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). Even though these participants were not trying to assert their “whiteness” they were trying to assert their American identity. If we recall the article from previous chapters, White American participants showed to not consider Asian American as “actual Americans” strictly based on their physical features. When the researchers revealed this result to the Asian American participants, some of them said they were aware of this and would try to convince others of their American identity. One of the ways that Asian American participants try to assert their American culture was to recall popular tv shows. The threat to their acceptance and identity as an American served as a motivation to recall those shows had the intended results of showing that Asian Americans are just as American as white Americans because they felt they had something to prove. This claiming technique was also seen in Study 5: Do Asian Americans Assert Their Identity Through Pride and Practices? The study showed that when Asian American were threatened with identity denial, they used their identity assertion techniques as a form of claiming American participation practices. Yet, even when explicitly told they could not participate in the study because they were not American enough, they reported high instances of participating in American practices while also not distancing themselves from their Asian identity. This can be explained by the previously mentioned article in Chapter 2: Identity Negotiation, “Bicultural Identity Integration (BII)...” that these participants have a high BII and see their identities as compatible. However, when faced with a categorization threat or in some instances identity denial, asserting one's identity does not always have positive results.

“My Choices, Your Categories: The Denial of Multiracial Identities” – Sarah Townsend, Hazel Markus, and Hilary Bergsierker

Identity Assertion may not always lead to positive results. Even though it is a positive way to react to instances of identity denial, it may cause more harm than we originally thought. When we undergo a threat to our identity, we often want to prove that we are part of the ingroup rather than take the chance of being an outlier, like in the previous article. This is especially true when we undergo categorization threats. Sometimes, categorization threats cause more harm to the individual because of the lack of assertion.

One study that measures reaction in multiethnic and multiracial is that of Sarah S.M. Townsend, Hazel R. Markus, and Hilary B. Bergiesker's study, “My Choice, Your Categories: The Denial of Multiracial Identities”. In this study, the authors make note that each year, thousands of students across the country take the SAT examinations and are forced to self-identify in the preliminary questionnaire. This can be a very tense and psychologically confusing experience for someone that comes from a multiracial background when they are asked to “mark only one” box when it comes to their racial category. “For students who identify with only one of the categories, this question doesn’t require a second thought, but for a growing number of mixed-raced students who want to identify with more than one racial background, answering such questions can be perplexing or constraining” (Townsend et al., 2009). This study aimed to build off the current research by exploring the types of identity denial that biracial and multiracial identify by examining their cognitive, affective, and motivational responses by completing a single-choice versus multiple-choice racial background questionnaire.

Both studies are conducted through a questionnaire. In study one, the researchers focus on the types of situations that individuals perceive as threats to their identity. Study two uses the

most frequently mentioned situations from study one to examine the impact of the denial of mixed raced individuals from the option of claiming their biracial or multiracial identity by varying the number of options available to the participants. The results of study one saw that the most mentioned category of denial was in their appearance, reporting that they often are “not black enough but also not white either”. The second most reported category was completing demographic forms on which selecting only one racial/ethnic group. Often feeling tension and forced to miscategorize themselves. The results from study two showed that compared to those who were able to choose multiple racial groups, those who were constrained to only one racial group showed lower performance self-esteem and motivation. Even after the restraint was removed, it still influenced participants' subsequent reports of their racial identities. Those forced to choose only one were more likely to report discrepancies between their chosen identity and social experiences. These results show that as mixed raced individuals assert their racial identities, they must inevitably do so in negotiation with their sociocultural environments.

Biracial and multiracial people encounter many difficulties when asserting their identities. For instance, not being able to accurately assert one's identities can lead to “lower levels of agentic feelings, lower state performance self-esteem” (Townsend et al., 2009). The experience of being forced to miscategorize oneself can “lead to feelings of having less control over and power to affect their social environments” (Townsend et al., 2009), which as we have read and discussed has multitudes of effects. Though Assertion can often be a positive reaction to identity denial, this article shows that even when one wants to assert their identity and is not allowed to, it can lead to negative psychological consequences.

Chapter Discussion

Unlike Negotiation/Shifting and Assimilation, Assertion is a proactive means of fighting against identity denial. However, it is not without its faults. We don't see white individuals walking around in white spaces, telling people why they deserve to be in these spaces. Their acceptance is guaranteed because of their whiteness. For multiethnic and multiracial people, this is not the case. From the readings, we have read that they often have to prove their "whiteness" using connecting with popular tv shows, music, or common "white experiences," to be accepted into the space and enjoy the same benefits as their white peers. However, this doesn't always guarantee acceptance and results in majority groupishness altering the criteria for group membership to exclude those who don't meet it. This is often in ways like survey reporting, single racial categories, and more.

We know that multiethnic and multiracial people prefer to be able to identify the way they see themselves, and this often results in having to persuade others that they do indeed have a majority identity. Having a single racial or ethnic survey option promotes identity denial. Every time I look at a survey and see "choose one" beside the race and ethnicity box, I immediately feel a sense of denial. Mentally, I have to switch my brain to either take on the white or "other" half of myself because being more than just one thing is not allowed. Having to constantly assert and validate my identity is not something that I want to do. Even though this benefits acceptance and a sense of value, it doesn't take away the fact that Assertion is a means to mitigate identity denial.

Conclusion

General Discussion

How we identify ourselves is a complex process that originates in human evolution. In our early Homo years, when phenotypic differences were not so discernable, groupings of individuals came to be because of necessity. The chances of survival greatly increased when prosocial behavior, cooperation, and conformism in the group were prioritized, and thus we developed the need to protect against those that were antisocial and aggressive, eventually excluding them altogether. This need to protect is almost as strong as our need to belong. The need to belong is the elusive third motivator when it comes to our survival as a species as it pushes us to form these prosocial groups. As we continued to self-domesticate ourselves, we started to become stricter and more protective of those in, and out of our in-groups. We as humans felt the need to protect our in-groups from potential members that could bring harm to the group. As more and more groups began to form, the distinctiveness between them also began to grow. We started to develop different phenotypic features, skin color, languages, and religions. In today's modern world, those boundaries between cultures are being blended, and "groupishness" has taken on a new form of identity denial.

Ambiguous members pose potential threats to an ingroup and the value that members place upon membership. When threats to social identity occur, identity denial is soon to follow to maintain that group's autonomy. The act of identity denial comes in many forms like questioning, rejection, and discrimination that are elicited through social interactions. These interactions vary depending on the space in which those with multiple identities find themselves. The spaces where minorities, multiethnic, and multiracial people seem to encounter identity denial experience the most are predominantly white. In predominately white spaces, these spaces

will inadvertently promote and protect whiteness while causing identity denial in those with non-singularly white identities. When this identity is not accepted by others with the same identity, we undergo the reactions of Negotiation, Shifting, Assimilation, and Assertion. These reactions each have criteria and mechanisms for dealing with identity denial, but all act to mitigate and prevent it. Yet, each reaction and experience of identity denial is different. Identity denial between Asians, Black, Natives, and Hispanic people in white spaces are varying degrees and is even more varied based on the generation/immigration and natural/foreign-born status. As some of the literature has shown, who is American and racial categorization heavily depends on what the criteria, made up of the majority, consider acceptable for in-group membership. This criterion is initially based off facial features, then moves to speech and culture associations. When neither of them is met, then denial altogether is preferred. When denial occurs, minority identities will either adjust to the space they are in to be accepted, assimilate those identities as their first and preferred identity, or assert their identities regardless of the space or denial experience. This change in identity due to identity denial experience has been shown to cause negative psychological effects. Some of the effects that we have seen in the research are social anxiety, depression, psychological paralysis, and disassociation.

Identity denial is a complex phenomenon that can happen to anyone that has a preferred identity. So how do multiethnic and multiracial people navigate their identities when in predominately white spaces? The sample answer is that it depends. It depends on the space, the identity/identities that the individual currently identifies with, and their personal experiences with those identities and identity denial. As some of the research has presented, not every identity will react with negotiation, shifting, assimilation, and assertion. Some may choose one or the other, and others will experience all three in varying ways. My theory is that navigating

white spaces is predetermined by the experiences that one has had with identity denial in childhood and early adulthood. From those experiences, the initial reaction using negotiation/shifting, assimilation, and assertion became the bases of future reactions for multiethnic and multiracial people. However, they are not bound to use that initial reaction for the remainder of their lives. These reactions are interchangeable because of the spaces that multiethnic and multiracial people will find themselves in. These reactions are then reinforced by being in predominately white spaces where the majority identity directly goes against the minority identity. Even though multiethnic and multiracial people may possess a white identity, an identity that is not white is seen as a threat. They experience questioning, ridicule, microaggressions, and discrimination from people they consider to be their peers. When denial ultimately takes place, their rejection from the group has negative psychological effects of anxiety, depression, imposter syndrome, and more. Yet, they can't escape these spaces because these spaces are their schools, sports clubs, places of work, and high education institutions. With each new space that a multiethnic and multiracial person enters, the cycle of identity denial and its repercussions continues to occur.

Why does this matter? The society we live in today is stratified and at the forefront of news because of social media and access to technology. Every time we turn on the news screen, open our social media apps or read a news article, we are likely to see something about the polarization of politics, protests for equality, and racial injustices that are happening against minorities, people of color, and immigrants. This is disheartening for someone who identifies as a multi-ethnic person. I feel like I constantly must juggle which identity hat I am wearing dependent upon the space I am in and hyper-aware of who is also in that space with me. I also am aware of how I am dressed, how I am speaking, what I should say and shouldn't, and even

what others might think of me. All my life I have been questioned stared at, and even denied because of my racial ambiguity, and have often wondered if anyone has ever experienced or had the same thoughts as me. Through this research, I have found that I am not alone, but that there is indeed more to be learned.

Paper Limitations

The literature that I presented to create this theory has taken multiple viewpoints of minority identities to try and create a holistic identity that encompasses what it means to be a multiple-identity (multiethnic & multiracial) person in a white space. The limitations to this are that I have no primary data to validate this theory, and the qualitative and quantitative data that was sourced is not always from the same race or ethnic minority group. This is a challenge because, as previously mentioned, not all experiences are equivalent between racial and ethnic people.

Other limitations are that my personal experience with identity denial is not the same as others' experiences of identity denial. How I react in these situations, and the degree to which I experience them, are different from what other minorities, or multiethnic and multiracial, people experience. I, however, have tried to take that into account throughout the paper and use my personal experiences as complimentary examples to the literature.

Future Research

Some of the aspects of identity denial that I would have liked to explore more or didn't mention are the history of social categorizations, if different racial spaces deny the same or differently from white spaces, and how genetics and blood quantum factor into racial and ethnic categorizations. These topics, although mentioned briefly, deserve to be talked about more in-

depth to create a full picture of how identity denial came to be, how society reinforces and promotes it, and the full extent of effects it has on individuals.

Further future research of this paper that I would pursue would be to conduct a study that observes and measures multiethnic people's identity denial, and how they navigate white spaces. This would require a full study incorporating survey collection and ethnographic observation. Part one of the study would be the ethnographic fieldwork that would entail identifying predominantly white spaces and observing how presumably multiethnic and multiracial people operate in them for a set amount of time. The second part of the study would be to recruit, interview, and collect survey data to measure the navigation of the spaces.

Works Cited

- Albuja, Analia F., et al. "Identity Denied: Comparing American or White Identity Denial and Psychological Health Outcomes Among Bicultural and Biracial People." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 45, no. 3, Mar. 2019, pp. 416–30. *SAGE Journals*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167218788553>.
- Allen, Kelly-Ann, et al. "The Need to Belong: A Deep Dive into the Origins, Implications, and Future of a Foundational Construct." *Educational Psychology Review*, vol. 34, no. 2, June 2022, pp. 1133–56. *Springer Link*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-021-09633-6>.
- Andersen, Susan M., and Serena Chen. "The Relational Self: An Interpersonal Social-Cognitive Theory." *Psychological Review*, vol. 109, no. 4, Oct. 2002, pp. 619–45. APA PsycArticles, 2002-18225-001, *EBSCOhost*, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.109.4.619>.
- Baumeister, Roy F., and Mark R. Leary. "The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation." *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 117, no. 3, May 1995, pp. 497–529. APA PsycArticles, 1995-29052-001, *EBSCOhost*, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>.
- Baumeister, Roy, and Mark Leary. "The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation." *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 117, June 1995, pp. 497–529. *ResearchGate*, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>.
- Benet-Martínez, Verónica, and Jana Haritatos. "Bicultural Identity Integration (BII): Components and Psychosocial Antecedents." *Journal of Personality*, vol. 73, no. 4, 2005, pp. 1015–50. *Wiley Online Library*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2005.00337.x>.

- Berrey, Ellen C. “Why Diversity Became Orthodox in Higher Education, and How It Changed the Meaning of Race on Campus.” *Critical Sociology*, vol. 37, no. 5, 2011, pp. 573–96, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920510380069>.
- Branscombe, Nyla, et al. “The Context and Content of Social Identity Threat.” *Sepsis*, Jan. 1999, pp. 35–55.
- Brunsma, David L., et al. “The Culture of White Space: On The Racialized Production of Meaning.” *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 64, no. 14, Dec. 2020, pp. 2001–15. *SAGE Journals*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764220975081>.
- Cárdenas, Diana, et al. “‘You Are Too Ethnic, You Are Too National’: Dual Identity Denial and Dual Identification.” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, vol. 81, Mar. 2021, pp. 193–203. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2021.01.011>.
- Chen, Hsin-Yu, and Yanhong Liu. “On Becoming ‘Chinese Americans’: The Complexity of Navigating Two Worlds.” *Journal of College and Character*, vol. 21, no. 2, Apr. 2020, pp. 116–23. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2194587X.2020.1741399>.
- Cheryan, Sapna, and Benoît Monin. “Where Are You Really From?: Asian Americans and Identity Denial.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 89, no. 5, Nov. 2005, pp. 717–30. 2005-15658-006, *EBSCOhost*, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.5.717>.
- Darwin, Charles. “The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex, Chapter V.” <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2300/2300-h/2300-h.htm>, 27 Dec. 2021, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2300/pg2300-images.html.utf8>.
- Dickens, Danielle D., and Ernest L. Chavez. “Navigating the Workplace: The Costs and Benefits of Shifting Identities at Work among Early Career U.S. Black Women.” *Sex Roles*, vol. 78, no. 11, June 2018, pp. 760–74. *Springer Link*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0844-x>.

- Gaither, Sarah E., et al. "Social Belonging Motivates Categorization of Racially Ambiguous Faces." *Social Cognition*, vol. 34, no. 2, Apr. 2016, pp. 97–118. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.2016.34.2.97>.
- Haidt, Jonathan. "Why Are We So Groupish?" *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, Vintage Books, New York, New York, 2012, pp. 242–245.
- Hagerty, Bonnie, and Kathleen Patusky. "Developing a Measure Of Sense of Belonging." *Nursing Research*, vol. 44, Jan. 1995, pp. 9–13. ResearchGate, <https://doi.org/10.1097/00006199-199501000-00003>.
- Jackson, Ronald. "Cultural Contracts Theory: Toward an Understanding of Identity Negotiation." *Communication Quarterly*, vol. 50, June 2002, pp. 359–67. ResearchGate, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463370209385672>.
- Melaku, Tsedale M. "Black Women in White Institutional Spaces: The Invisible Labor Clause and The Inclusion Tax." *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 66, no. 11, Oct. 2022, pp. 1512–25. SAGE Journals, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642211066037>.
- Platt, Lucinda. "Is There Assimilation in Minority Groups' National, Ethnic and Religious Identity?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 37, no. 1, Jan. 2014, pp. 46–70. Taylor and Francis+NEJM, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.808756>.
- Remedios, Jessica D., and Alison L. Chasteen. "Finally, Someone Who 'gets' Me! Multiracial People Value Others' Accuracy about Their Race." *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, vol. 19, no. 4, Oct. 2013, pp. 453–60. 2013-15539-001, EBSCOhost, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032249>.

- Roccas, Sonia, and Marilynn B. Brewer. "Social Identity Complexity." *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, vol. 6, no. 2, May 2002, pp. 88–106. *SAGE Journals*, https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0602_01.
- Sneed, Joel R., and Susan Krauss Whitbourne. "Identity Processing and Self-Consciousness in Middle and Later Adulthood." *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, vol. 58, no. 6, Nov. 2003, pp. P313–19. *Silverchair*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/58.6.P313>.
- Townsend, Sarah S. M., et al. "My Choice, Your Categories: The Denial of Multiracial Identities." *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 65, no. 1, 2009, pp. 185–204. *Wiley Online Library*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.01594.x>.
- Tuan, Mia, and Jiannbin Lee Shiao. *Choosing Ethnicity, Negotiating Race: Korean Adoptees in America*. Russell Sage Foundation, 2011. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/duke/detail.action?docID=4386932>.
- Turner, William R. "Street Smart and Book Smart: Charismatic Black Males Culturally Navigating a Two-Year Predominantly White Community College." *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 89, no. 3, Summer 2020, pp. 328-341,382.
- Wilson, Terry P. "Blood Quantum: Native American Mixed Bloods." *Racially Mixed People in America*, Sage Publications, Inc, 1992, pp. 108–25.