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## **Performing the Black-White Biracial Identity: The Material, Discursive, and Psychological Components of Subject Formation**

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Performing the Black-White Biracial Identity: The Material, Discursive, and Psychological  
Components of Subject Formation

by

Travis M. Marn

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
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## **Dedication**

For 'biracial' people everywhere.

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## Abstract

The purpose of this *new materialist* study was to examine the subject performativity of ‘biracial’ individuals in an interview setting in order to disrupt the humanist assumptions of racial identity in psychological research. I also sought to promote *critical resistance* to subjectification to examine ‘race’ without reifying participants’ raced subjects. Four research questions guided this study: How does the researcher, researched, and interview intra-activity serve to instantiate the biracial subject? Under what material alterations to the interview process do different subjects come to be? Which subjects come to be or fail to come to be in the interview intra-action? How does *purposeful entanglement* function during the interview process?

In this *experimental critical qualitative inquiry* study, I interviewed five ‘black-white biracial’ undergraduate students three times each while enacting a series of *agential cuts* within and between each interview. By altering the flow of material during the interviews, I provoked multiple identity instantiations and analyzed the process of subjectification/individuation. Grounded in Barad’s *agential realism*, and guided by Simondon, Foucault, and Butler my analysis of this data suggests that humanist models of ‘racial’ identity are insufficient, and findings further suggest that a *posthumanist* and *post-qualitative* account of ‘biracial’ identity offers more insight into the performativity of ‘raced’ subjects. This research provides a path for psychological identity research to ethically evolve past the linguistic and ontological turns.

## **Chapter One:**

### **Introduction**

There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all. (Foucault, 1985, p. 8)

#### **Prelude**

Before beginning this dissertation, it is useful to consider the boggart, from the third book in the Harry Potter universe, as a conceptual tool. The Harry Potter wiki page defines boggarts to be elusive spirits, always hidden from view in cupboards and closets (“Boggart”, 2004). Once encountered, they become what the person fears most. As they are never visible until they are suddenly encountered, their original form is indeterminate. The boggart does not seem to exist until it is observed, and once observed, it begins its process of becoming. Professor Lupin further described the creature:

So the boggart sitting in the darkness within has not yet assumed a form. He does not yet know what will frighten the person on the other side of the door. Nobody knows what a boggart looks like when he is alone, but when I let him out, he will immediately become whatever each of us most fears (Rowling, 1999, p. 133).

Asking what a boggart’s form is exterior to its intra-action with an individual is unproductive as it is only visible in the action of becoming what a person fears—it is only in relation to others that it comes to have an observable form. Subsequently, a boggart’s form is

neither singular nor infinite, but rather, the boggart's form is multiple—it exists in as many forms as there are bodies with fears (e.g., spiders, snakes, Voldemort, Snape), and these fears are iteratively repeatable. A boggart cannot simply be defined as a snake, a spider, or Voldemort; it can only be understood through the condition by which it instantiates in relation to the material present. Once a particular intra-action ends, the boggart's form again becomes indeterminate while awaiting another intra-action, another dephasing.

What the boggart becomes gives meaning to the intra-action of the moment. For example, Professor Lupin's intra-action with a boggart shifts its form to that of the moon—something that, as a werewolf, he fears the most. The meaning of the boggart is only interpretable with an analysis that includes Professor Lupin, what he brings to the intra-action, and the other material conditions that give rise to that boggart's form—it is not the intrinsic nature of the boggart nor even the moon that it becomes that has meaning. It is the intra-action itself that has meaning to examine.

My dissertation takes up biracial identity as a boggart—its form is indeterminate until it is materially intra-acted within each moment. Biracial identity is, likewise, performative, a non-being that hides from sight until made visible through the process of becoming—an intra-active becoming that is also multiple. Asking the question 'what is the biracial identity' is as unproductive as asking what the boggart looks like when hiding from sight. The biracial identity does not exist outside of the conditions by which it comes to be performed. It cannot be decontextualized or analyzed in transcendent terms.

The question for my dissertation is not 'what is the biracial identity;' rather, this study examines how the biracial identity is iteratively performed in relation to the material-discursive

intra-actions in the moment—how the boggart shifts forms and under what material conditions, how the biracial identity comes to be made singular and made multiple.

In the following sections, I will use concepts and terms specific to my theoretical framework without preceding definitions. I could not communicate my understandings without drawing on these terms, but to assist in the reading of this chapter, I will bold specific terms and provide page numbers where I introduce their definitions.

## **Chapter Overview**

I begin this chapter by providing a summary of the issues of racial identity, humanism, and labels in biracial research. Subsequently, I describe the purpose of this study, list my research questions, and provide an introduction of my theoretical framework. I close this chapter by defining key terms and providing an overview of the remaining chapters.

## **Statement of Problem**

Race has never been a unified concept (Smedley & Smedley, 2007). It is continually defined and redefined without a clear or consistent vision of its composition and demarcations (Molnar, 2003), with some pointing towards its incoherence (Pascale, 2008). Despite this, ‘everyone’ knows what races ‘are’ and what they ‘mean’. As Pascale states:

The “self-evident” nature of race is evidence that race *has* meaning, rather than that it has any particular meaning shared by all people. Common sense secures the social, historical, political, and economic spaces that give race its materiality by producing race as a matter that requires no thought—which leads people to believe they simply see race (Pascale, 2008, p. 733).

Race has sedimented so deeply into the discourses of the United States that it no longer requires individuals to ‘compare notes’ on their understandings of race. However, race is a

multiplicity of meanings layered on top of each other—the discourses of race have become so familiar that the messy **entanglements** (p. 41) of meanings associated with them produce race as omnipresent even as it is always more-than-one. The attendant task of dividing the discursive concept of race into specified component elements (e.g., black, white, biracial) likewise produces results in multiple.

**Race:** “This modern phenomena of classifying people was initially attached to a biological basis” (Phillips, Odunlami, & Bonham, 2007, p. 796).

**Race:** “The idea of ‘race’ has always carried more meanings than mere physical differences; indeed, physical variations in the human species have no meaning except the social ones that humans put on them” (American Anthropological Association, 1998).

**Race:** “In popular discourse, racial groups are viewed as physically distinguishable populations that share a common geographically based ancestry. "Race" shapes the way that some people relate to each other, based on their belief that it reflects physical, intellectual, moral, or spiritual superiority or inferiority” (American Sociological Association, 2003).

**Black:** “Black is not a question of pigmentation. The Black I'm talking about is a historical category, a political category, a cultural category. In our language, at certain historical moments, we have to use the signifier. We have to create an equivalence between how people look and what their histories are. Their histories are in the past, inscribed in their skins. But it is not because of their skins that they are Black in their heads” (Hall, 1991).

**Black:** “We categorized race and ethnicity into black (non-Hispanic African Americans) and white (non-Hispanic white patients). If patients did not fall into either of these two groups, they were classified as other” (Lathan, Neville, & Earle, 2006, p. 414).

**Black:** “Blacks with wildly divergent subjective racial identities will nevertheless select ‘Black or African American’ as the monoracial category that best represents their overall racial self-categorization when presented with a forced-choice question, as in the Census” (Hitlin, Brown, & Elder, 2006, p. 1299).

**White:** “As such, whiteness has come to be understood as an empty category, constituted only by the absence and appropriation of what it is not” (Green & Sonn, 2005, p. 480).

**White:** “It affects the everyday fabric of our lives but resists, sometimes violently, any extensive characterization that would allow for the mapping of its contours. It wields power yet endures as a largely unarticulated position” (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995, p. 281)

**Biracial:** “What is new is the way in which individuals who have one Black and one non-Black parent understand their racial identities and how they are understood by others” (Rockquemore, 2002, p. 485).

**Biracial:** “In this data set we rely on parents’ race in classifying babies as mixed race. That is, an infant is coded as mixed race if one of his or her parents is listed as white on the birth certificate and the other is listed as black” (Fryer, Kahn, Levitt, & Spenkuch, 2012, p. 625).

**Multiracial:** “In contrast to many other studies that seek to define some objective criteria for multiracial classification (e.g. the child of parents belonging to different single races), our study takes the subjective nature of racial identity seriously and simply attempts to

compare two different subjective forms of racial identification, one implicitly embedded in a person's ancestral identification and the other, more explicitly, in their response to the official race question" (Gullickson & Morning, 2011, p. 499).

The preceding definitions demonstrate that race and racial groups do not have simple definitions and obvious meanings; rather, definitions serve to create the group they seek to describe (Butler, 1997); that is, group identities are not naturally occurring but are created through the *disciplinary power* (Foucault, 1995) of labels —labels that create their identities rather than merely describe them. The label of biracial, likewise, has been variously defined in academic research through the process of operationalization—biracial research creates its group of study rather than simply naming a 'naturally occurring' group. This problematizes a psychological examination of any racial identity or racial groupings if the groups themselves conceptually/practically unravel. As Latour noted:

The choice is thus clear: either we follow the social theorist and begin our travel by setting up at the start which kind of group and level of analysis we will focus on, or we follow the actors own way and being our travels by the traces left behind by their activity of forming and dismantling groups (2005, p. 29).

Latour correctly pointed out the difficulties of beginning with groups and beginning with individuals. However, even as this dissertation is about 'biracialism,' I have chosen to start at the level of **becoming** (p. 33) biracial. That is, I neither follow the actors nor deduce from the groups. For this dissertation, I choose instead to draw upon the label of biracial to examine the 'biracial' person and the ensuing becoming, unbecoming, and layering of racial **performativity** (p. 27). In this way, like the boggart, process is the place where I begin and end this study.



In recent years, interest in biracial research has continued to grow. The increased visibility of ‘biracial’ people (e.g., Barak Obama) and the ever-growing population of individuals of more than one racial heritage (US Census, 2011), has courted the attention of both popular culture and academic research. Despite this spike in research, the results of inquiry on these ‘biracial’ individuals are frequently partial, inconclusive, and contradictory (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). I posit that these difficulties stem from the following three assumptions made in the course of biracial research (and to some extent, psychological identity in its entirety): 1) the reliance on the humanist self in biracial research, 2) the lack of a material-discursive analysis in that research, and 3) that research begins with the biracial identity and works backwards to create a teleology of ‘identity development.’

### **Humanism, Materiality, and Identity Teleology in Biracial Research**

“What is being called into question here is the very nature of the ‘self,’ and in terms of not just being but also time. That is, in an important sense, the self is dispersed/diffracted through time and being” (Barad, 2012, p. 213).

As a field, psychology centralizes the concept of the human self (Rose, 1998). The humanist self is posited in psychology to be constantly developing through time, integrating, ordering, and providing stability to the mind (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Racial identity is viewed as part of the sense of self (Leary & Tagney, 2003) and the label of biracial, and its incorporation into academic research, is representative of a humanist assumption that attempts to unify the biracial identity into a singularity. This singular biracial concept becomes just another grouping variable to be used in triangulations, statistical analyses, and studied as if free from the conditions of its production in research. This attempt at compression, this attempt to represent the depth or demarcations of biraciality as an aspect of the human self, has served to create

epistemological and ontological dissonance in the body of academic research. I believe this is one of the causes of the inconsistent results seemingly endemic to biracial research. Rather, there is no ‘true’ or ‘natural’ biracial identity to study; the biracial identity is only what comes to be in **intra-action** (p. 41) with material, discourses, and other bodies.

Identity, in the humanist tradition, is represented as something an individual has, constructs, and develops (e.g, Marcia’s ego-identity status, Erikson’s identity model). Racial identity models, in psychology, have followed a similar trajectory—an individual *is* white or an individual *is* black (e.g., Cross’ Nigrescence, Helm’s black identity development model). As these identities are believed to be part of an ultimately stable self, they can then be operationalized, quantified, and studied in abstraction. This belief has fueled a corpus of literature that centralizes agency solely in the possession of the human and marginalizes the materiality of the social world. As a result, a **posthumanist** (p. 24) account of biracialism, as enumerated in this dissertation, is needed to account for the flow of agency from the human to the material; that is, this research seeks to examine the multiplicity of biracial identity as it is **materially-discursively** (p. 34) contingent.

Psychological identity research begins with the assumption that by examining the endpoint of an identity (i.e., an individual with a racial identity able to speak for itself), studies can then examine how it developed. That is, a study will operationalize an identity in advance, recruit participants with that identity, and examine that identity and its development. In working backwards, identity research assumes that those identities are the natural end state of a particular process rather than only one possible resolution of a system under tension (Scott, 2014). The system of identifying then “harbors potentials that are incompatible because they belong to heterogenous dimensions of being” (Combes, 2013, p. 4). Resolutions to this tension produce a

temporary, messy, porous, identity that is always in the process of becoming and unbecoming. The label of biracial is a temporary resolution, a limit that is analogous to a clay mold. As Combes (2013) enumerates “clay is not informed by the mold from without...it harbors within it a positive property that allows it to be deformed such that the mold acts as a limit imposed on these deformation” (p. 5). My questionnaires and the interviews in this dissertation study act as a type of molding that meets with the deformable, performable biracial identity that has the inherent capacity to meet its social worlds—meet its limiters.

The label of biracial is a limiter rather than something meaningful or truly descriptive. Identity cannot be examined by its endpoint, its temporary resolution, its **metastable** (Simondon, 1989) state. Rather identity “can only be adequately known only from its middle, by seizing it at its center” (Combes 2013, p. 2). As previously noted, I chose the label biracial as a ‘mold,’ but instead of examining the biracial subject as what is ultimately formed in the process of molding, I seek to disrupt this settling into a metastable state through the flow of material in the research process. In this way, I grasp the center of identity rather than its ‘end.’ I do this to demonstrate both how identity is contingent on the materials of research and to disrupt the psychological literature that presumes and is complicit in the ‘stability’ of race and identity—literature that retains and reify humanism.

The purpose of this dissertation is to decenter the human subject from biracial research, establish a new materialist account the biracial subject, and demonstrate the efficacy of agential realism (Barad, 2007) and Simondon’s (1989) theory of individuation in the analysis of the **becoming-biracial** (the moment to moment instantiation of the biracial subject, p. 32) and **ontogenesis** and **individuation** (the birth and decay, p. 47) of the biracial subject. I do this to

seed a future empirical, posthumanist view of identity and to provide an inherently ethical way of studying race.

### **The (Bi)Racial Label**

Labeling practices are not innocent (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016) but instead serve to create groups rather than simply name ‘naturally’ occurring groups. Drawing on Althusser’s process of hailing/interpellation (Butler, 1997), I posit that subjects are only ever called into being and do not represent some stable, always-already existing identity or subject. These labels, this coming into being, like the categories they purport to represent, are indicative of an existing regime of power (1997)—the resulting groups come to be in the process of being named, examined, and institutionally disciplined (Foucault, 1995). The label of ‘biracial’ likewise produces what it seeks to name—labeling and attempts at representation are performative acts and, as such, are iterated; each label (e.g., biracial, multiracial, mixed-race, mixed-heritage, multi-ethnic, hybrid) is evocative of some particular aspect of the supposed composition of biraciality (e.g., biracial implying two race, multiracial implying more than one, multi-ethnic emphasizing ethnicity and not race while still referring to those of more than one race)—these labels are exemplars of identity in multiple and make clear the absence of a singular biracial self. The resulting ‘biracial identity’ is a mangle of constructs, definitions, contradiction, and iterated reconfiguration—a multiplicity of multiplicities. Gilbert’s words (2005) in reference to ‘mixed-race’ identity gain special importance for this dissertation as “what should be understood is that identity may be strategic, uneven, unstable, fragmented, heterogeneous; always in the process of change, never static, always in the state of ‘becoming’” (p. 65). Gilbert further stated, “Indeed any attempt to resolve the question of identity is a fallacy” (p.65). Research can only ever call into being what it seeks to study.

## Researching Biraciality

While race has been commonly associated with physical characteristics (e.g., skin color, phenotype) and a sense of shared history, “multiraciality poses a problem because it possesses neither” (McKibben, 2014, p. 184). As a result, viewing biracialism as something exterior to the conditions by which it instantiates or is called into being is problematic. The biracial identity has the form of other taken-for-granted ‘races’ (e.g., labels, mechanisms for identification, stereotypes) but seemingly has none of the underlying components used to essentialize races (i.e., shared history, country of origin, or physical characteristics). What biracial research has examined when instancing a biracial sample is questionable as biraciality is what is done rather than what an individual is. If biraciality is a doing, then the effects of identity performativity on any estimation of the biracial population, the eliciting of a sample for research, and the subsequent results of that research, are ultimately uncertain.

Researchers have seldom examined the ways in which their research is entangled with the biracial identity performances they intra-actively produced—how the researchers themselves are implicated in their results. Those who have approached this notion of researcher-researched intra-activity have done so through reflexivity (e.g., Pillow, 2003). Reflexivity is a common practice of qualitative inquiry (Fontana, 2004), but similar to previous conceptions of humanist research, reflexivity centralizes notions of the stable, knowable self (Pillow, 2003). As such reflexivity continues to trap qualitative research in humanism. Subsequently, reflexivity, as an operation of the human subject, has no place in posthumanist research. Instead, the entanglement I articulate in this dissertation is the irrevocable, ever-changing imbrication of the researcher into all aspects of a study (e.g., in the data collection process, as a site of meaning making). In

keeping with the always-already intra-activity of all social bodies, reflexivity does not nor is capable of revealing the ‘researcher-self’ in research.

Further, the materiality of the researcher and of the research methods used in the study of biracial individuals has not been well examined nor adequately incorporated into analyses—results on biracial individuals are reported as disconnected from the means by which they were produced. Without an analysis of the materiality of the research process used in the study (hence, the process of hailing and individuating the biracial subject into being), I believe the onto-epistemological problems will continue to produce results that are equivocal or contradictory. Both the reliance on reflexivity and the decontextualization of data/results belies the ever shifting, unstable, uneven self/subject/identity/researcher/researched in biracial research.

The materiality of biracial individuals has not been wholly ignored in research. However, I believe that these analyses have not accounted for the full measure the material-discursive intra-activity of the biracial identity performance—that is, the examination of the materiality of biracialism is limited to the reported experiences and narratives of participants and has not extended to the research process itself. When researchers have accounted for some of the material conditions of biraciality, these efforts focused on skin tone and phenotype (e.g., Renn, 2004), racial symbols (Khanna, 2011a), and ads for recruitment (Paragg, 2014) —these are typically analyzed only one or two at a time and always in connection to an abiding sense of self (the essentialized biracial individual). While this materiality (e.g., skin tone) surely matters, it only gains meaning through material-discursive intra-activity (Barad, 2007).

In this dissertation, I extend this line of material inquiry and complement it with philosophical insights from new materialism, poststructuralism, and posthumanism to further analyze the ‘biracial’ identity performance as materially contingent. Coupled with a material-

discursive analysis, I will theorize the process of individuation (onto-genesis) of the biracial subject—how the biracial subject comes to know itself, how it comes to rise from dust. Instead of focusing on questions of who is and is not biracial, what is and is not biracial, I designed this study to examine the material-discursive conditions in which the biracial identity performance instantiates.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the identity talk and subject performances of ‘black-white biracial’ individuals during interviews and through new material additions (e.g., interview style, Implicit Associations Test) during the interview process. As the biracial identity is already enmeshed and bounded in the world that it defines and is defined by, I will also examine the various entanglements that materially intra-act to serve performative identity. In the process of this research, I will also critique existing humanist, psychological theories of identity as they apply to biracialism, enumerate a novel post-qualitative methodology, and seek to theorize a new materialist interpretation of the individuation of biraciality.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How does the researcher, researched, and interview intra-activity serve to instantiate the biracial subject?
- 2) Under what material alterations to the interview process do different subjects come to be?
- 3) Which subjects come to be or fail to come to be in the interview intra-action?
- 4) How does **purposeful entanglement** (p. 22) function during the interview process?

## **Critical Resistance**

As part of my ethical stance, I believe that I cannot, nor would I seek to, hold myself as merely an aloof, impartial researcher of my participants. Instead, I choose to be responsible for the outcomes of my research—for what I render possible or impossible. As there can be no interviewing without intervention of some kind (Wolgemuth & Donahue, 2006), I choose to take on this responsibility by seeking to foster critical questions and *critical resistance* (Hoy, 2005) to subjectification in my participants. That is, it is my hope that, by partaking in this research, participants adopted or will adopt more ambiguous and less fixed racial identities and seek to resist the idea that they must or should desire to ‘have’ a racial identity—monoracial, biracial, or other.

As this dissertation is explicitly new materialist in orientation, there is no human core that offers a site of transformation or emancipation. I have theorized that engaging in this type of posthumanist research is part of a *purposeful entanglement* (Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017). That is, we each sediment into the other’s assemblages of our identities (Barad, 2007). As I remain entangled with participants, they remain entangled with me. The biraciality I perform, my very thoughts of becoming-biracial cannot be separated from my interviewing in my previous biracial research, and I must be responsible for the entanglements to come. I will further elucidate my ethical stance in chapter three (p. 98).

## **Theoretical Foundations**

This dissertation is grounded in what has been variously termed post-representation (MacLure, 2013), new materialism (Hird, 2009; Coole & Frost, 2010), new empiricism (Clough, 2009), postconstructionism (Lykke, 2010), feminist materialism (Rosiek, 2013), posthumanism (Braidotti, 2013), ontological turn (St. Pierre, 2013) and among many other terms. Authors who



have written in a similar vein but predate the naming of these projects (e.g., Mol, Deleuze) have been retrospectively included in these traditions (Taguchi, 2012). In addition, new materialism shares some similarities to pragmatism (Rosiek, 2013) and what also has been called *hybrid perspectives* (Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes, 2009). The extent to which each of these terms describes the same tradition is uncertain as each of the component projects (e.g., Latour's Actor-Network Theory, Barad's Agential Realism, Bennet's Vibrant Materialism) employed their own methods, theorizations, and individual ends. St. Pierre (2013) has questioned the severability of new materialism from the material analyses of poststructuralists (e.g., Butler, Foucault).

While the theoretical comparability of these projects is still under debate, these orientations all similarly seek to decenter the human subject as the sole agent and promote the role of material in the social world (Mazzei, 2013a). For the purpose of this dissertation, I will refer to these material analyses collectively as new materialism and posthumanist. This is not to attempt to collapse these multiple projects into a singular, hegemonic theory or to ignore the nuances present, but rather, the labels of new materialism and posthumanist allow an ease of communication in contrasting these theories with the humanism I reject.

While I consider this dissertation as part of the posthumanist and new materialist orientation, it must be noted that posthumanism is a goal or horizon to reach rather than a truly 'meaningful' category at the present moment. Though some have troubled the unity of the self (Murris, 2016), conducted multispecies inquiry with birds (Rautio, 2017), and vivified the never existing (Wolgemuth et al., 2017), I believe that there exists no actual scholarship that has decentered the human subject nor is this scholarship forthcoming. A 'true' posthumanist scholar is unknowable, uncommunicative, and eschews research methods as currently employed.

Envisioning a ‘true’ posthumanist dissertation sees words become gibberish and the humanist concept of a dissertation as a site of meaning making crumble. This is, perhaps, analogous to Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) body without organs (BwO) wherein the only true possessors of a BwO is an extreme drug user dying in the process—becoming a BwO is then something to strive for rather than truly desire. Posthumanism is then, similarly, something to strive towards in the pursuit of responsibility (Peterson, 2011) rather than something of which to grab hold. It is a kind of irony then that:

What calls itself “‘posthuman’” is thus not yet posthuman precisely because it claims to be posthuman, because it claims for itself either a present or a future whose unforeseeable iterations may prove either more or less peaceful, either more or less perfect, but never totally without violence, never without the possibility of corruption. (Peterson, 2011, p. 138).

Closely coupled with this posthumanist or new materialist orientation is *post-qualitative inquiry* (MacLure, 2013). If posthumanism is the decentering of the human as the prime agent (Barad, 2007), post-qualitative inquiry is the decentering of the human as the creator of normative methodologies (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013). Where qualitative inquiry relies on humanist conceptions as part of its underlying assumptions (Lather, 2013), post-qualitative inquiry enables the exploration of novel methods (e.g., Bridges-Rhoads, 2017), the subversion of methods (e.g., Koro-Ljungberg, 2016), and erasure of methods in their entirety (e.g., St. Pierre, 2013). Through this, new materialist and posthumanist conceptions find a methodological lease. Post-qualitative inquiry, as the methodological framework for this dissertation, is further detailed in chapter 3. In the following sections, I will describe posthumanism, performativity, and

introduce agential realism and Simondon's theory of individuation. After these sections I will describe the significance of this study and define key terms.

### **Posthumanism**

Not all of us can say, with any degree of certainty, that we have always been human, or that we are only that. Some of us are not even considered fully human now, let alone at the previous moments of Western social, political and scientific history. Not if by 'human' we mean that creature familiar to us from the Enlightenment and its legacy. (Braidotti, 2013, p.1)

Humanism, historically, began as a boundary making mechanism to draw a binary distinction between the human, seen as rational, agential, and capable of self-reflexivity, and the non-human, seen as much less and without the power of agency (Bennett, 2010). This distinction implied, and continues to sustain, an existing power relationship in which the human has rights of domination over the non-human. As a result, humanism implicitly enables the possibility of defining who is and is not human, and it is this conduit through which European imperialisms (e.g., Nazism) colonized portions of the world (Braidotti, 2013). The belief in humanism leads to the possibility of dehumanization and brutality that inevitably follows (Barad, 2011a). Humanism is not, and has never been, devoid of oppressive power relations. For this reason, posthumanism is, primarily, concerned with ethics and responsibility.

This humanist ideal has centralized agency in the individual and empowered the belief in the self as an extant and constantly integrating entity with a "set of static characteristics such as sex, class, race, sexual orientation" (Lather, 1991, p. 5). For example, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) centralizes the concept of the 'self' noting that "SDT begins by embracing the assumption that all individuals have natural, innate, and constructive tendencies to develop an ever more

elaborated and unified sense of self” (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 5). Other major psychological orientations similarly attest to the existence of the self and grant it similar stature (e.g., Sedikides & Spencer (2007). This humanist self has passed into psychological research and other social science research with some philosophical engagement (e.g., Waterman, 2013), but despite this engagement, continues unabated by the problems inherent in the conception of the human subject. Agency in humanist research is seen as “an innate characteristic of the essentialist, intentional, free subject that enables him to act on and in the world” (Mazzei, 2013a, p. 733). This has led to the implication that an individual with agency is “a voluntary actor making choices that are willed rather than determined” (p.733).

This hegemonic belief in the human as the sole agent marginalizes the material world in the production of meaning, and beyond this, enacts a false separation of the human from its social-material world. In reaction to the imperialism of humanist thought, posthumanist scholars have endeavored to contest the seemingly ‘self-evident’ nature of the human self. In doing this, posthumanist scholars have partially deconstructed the human and non-human binary (Coole & Frost, 2010). This has enabled a redistribution of agency from the human to the material, and this movement of agency forms the foundation of posthumanism. Posthumanism is not synonymous with trans-humanism, where ‘human’ qualities are extended and amplified—a radical reification of humanism. Post-humanism is a rejection of the universality of human qualities, and is related to anti-humanism (e.g., Braidotti, 2013) where the imperial and colonizing forces of humanism are awarded special scrutiny.

Humanism has also long been critiqued by postmodern and poststructural scholars (e.g., Butler) that employ linguistic analyses (i.e., the linguistic turn); posthumanism draws distinctions from these two orientations by noting the limitations of anti-foundationalism and linguistic

analyses respectively (Herbrechter, 2013). The posthumanist movement away from postmodernism and poststructuralism and subsequent reliance on material-discursive analyses has been termed the ‘ontological turn’ (e.g., Feely, 2016). This shift has impacted not only the theoretical frameworks of social science research but also caused a retheorization of qualitative methods and methodologies (e.g., Jackson & Mazzei, 2013; Koro-Ljungberg, 2015) under the umbrella term *post-qualitative*.

This movement against humanism is not alien to psychology, and postmodern scholars in the field have philosophically assailed the taken for granted nature of the human self and identity (e.g., Gergen, 1991). This postmodern psychology similarly centralizes a type of identity performativity that is, to some extent, distinct from the poststructural performativity I take up in this dissertation. The similarities of performativity and critical psychology, a related orientation, have not gone unrecognized (e.g., Teo, 2015). Despite these connections, poststructural and new materialist thought remain nascent in critical psychology. As a result, I do not position this research as part of the larger body of critical psychology, nor explicitly exterior to it; I choose instead to defer this labeling for this study even as this dissertation continues along a similar but iterated path.

This posthumanist orientation is ultimately and always about ethics—my responsibility to the other. This other is not just a subject or a participant, the other “is not just in one’s skin, but in one’s bones, in one’s belly, in one’s heart, in one’s nucleus, in one’s past and future” (Barad, 2007, p. 393). To move away from the human subject is to give up the human agent as the sole possessor and arbiter of ethics. I engage posthumanism to make myself responsible—responsible for the possibilities I create and what I render impossible, to make me accountable for the entanglements for which I am always-already in intra-action with.

## **Performativity**

As most of the new materialist projects have roots in poststructural feminism (St. Pierre, 2013), the nature of identity is typically conceived through Butler's (1990) enumerations of performativity based largely on Foucault's work on subjectivity. This dissertation, likewise, conceives of biracial identity through its performative actions. This concept centralizes the assumption that an identity is defined in its 'becoming' rather than in some essentialized intrinsic nature. For example, Butler's (1990) analyses of gender performativity held that individuals labeled female enacted a feminine performance in their social world through a process of becoming-female—applying makeup, styling hair, wearing dresses, enduring high heels. That is, an individual becomes female through the “stylization of the body and...[gender] must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds, constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (p.191). Femaleness, then, is not an inherent quality but a becoming—something that an individual does instead of what an individual is.

The action of becoming female is iterative through a self-similar repetition of those actions that have been discursively produced through relations of power derived from supposedly natural binary distinctions (i.e., male/female). These notions of becoming and performativity in feminism can be seen in racial identity just as the nature of the male/female binary is analogous to the black/white binary enacted in the United States—male is defined through its not-femaleness, white is defined through its not-blackness. Biracialism, as a 'product/fusion/hybrid' of a binary opposite can be understood through its performative acts. However, a biracial individual can instantiate a 'black' identity, 'white' identity, 'biracial' identity, and others by drawing on performative acts and discourses. New materialist theories, Barad's in particular,

take on this concept of performativity not only as an aspect of identity expression but also centralize performativity in the process of knowledge production and reproduction. Just as identity performances are multiple, knowledges produced are also multiple through the action of becoming rather than the stolid immutability of essentialism.

### **Agential Realism**

As this dissertation centralizes the concepts of entanglement and materiality in the instantiation of the biracial identity, I have elected to employ Karen Barad's agential realism (Barad, 2007). This framework was developed out of quantum physics and is an extension and elaboration of the works of Niels Bohr's experimental physics. Formed partially as a reaction to the domination of language following the linguistic turn (2007), this framework demotes the power of language as the primary unit of concern and amplifies the effect and impact of the material. While material has Marxian connotations, this use of materiality is, while not wholly unrelated, not the economic view of material (though economic analyses are possible in this framework). Material is further described below (see p. 34). In this framework, neither the human nor the non-human (matter) gains primacy in social analyses, but rather, it is intra-active entanglements of the material and the discursive that give rise to meaning—meaning that is in a constant state of iterative reconfiguration. This brings into question notions of “matter, discourse, causality, agency, power, identity, embodiment, objectivity, space, and time” (p. 26). These retheorizations led to the conclusion that “we are part of the nature we seek to understand” (p. 26). With these assumptions, researchers can no longer enact a separation of the material from the discursive, the researcher from material, nor the researcher from the discursive. Instead, researchers must examine all of these elements as mutually constitutive. Specific details and definitions of terms of this framework will be explicated in the review of literature (see p. 38).

## **Hailing and Individuation**

The insights provided by Butler's conception of performativity and Barad's agential realism create space to examine the 'biracial' identity through its performative actions. However, it alone is not adequate to fully examine the identity instantiations. Questions relevant to this dissertation cannot be addressed through these frameworks alone—questions like how does one come to desire to be biracial, what is the origin of the biracial subject, and how does it come iteratively performed linger. To address these types of questions, I have turned to Butler's (1993) use of Althusser's concept of hailing/interpellation and Simondon's theory of individuation (1989). Althusser's hailing describes the process of a subject being called into existence through exterior provocations with the individual eventually recognizing themselves in the call and responding by performing the called subject. While Althusser drew upon his conception of ideology as the disciplinary force of hailing, I am, instead, coupling this notion of calling with Simondon's theory of **individuation** (p. 46). This theory of individuation describes the tension and temporary nature of subjects' performances. Taken together, these two frameworks complement my use of agential realism.

## **Conclusion**

Research on biracialism has foreclosed on the assumption that there is a unified, stable biracial identity to study. As such, knowledge of biracialism is inherently bounded by this conception and is thus only capable of studying what it, unknowingly, called into being: a humanist, biracial subject. However, through posthumanism, I imagine a different set of possibilities for this 'identity' in psychological research. While a great deal of academic research has already examined biraciality, the problems in research suggest that alternate conceptions of this identity are needed. To this end, I adopt agential realism (Barad, 2007) and Simondon's



theory of individuation to provide a theoretical framework with which to: 1) view biraciality as a multiplicity of identity performances, 2) examine the materiality of both the experiences of participants and the research(er), and 3) account for the ways in which results are entangled with the means by which they were produced. In displacing the human subject and adopting a new materialist framework, this dissertation seeks to establish an opening for the transdisciplinary study of the biracial identity through a philosophically engaged empirical study.

### **Significance of Study**

In this study, I seek to critically engage the concept of racial identity through an empirical analysis of biracial performativity in a research setting. While I believe that providing more understandings the individuation and performativity of the biracial subject is inherently valuable, this study has implications that extend beyond biracial studies. By conducting empirical research using new materialism, poststructuralism, post-qualitative inquiry, and psychology, I aim to mete out space for scholars in the field of psychology to not only imagine identity differently (and, importantly, the ethics of psychological research on identity) but to be able to empirically examine concepts through this perspective—I seek to show that posthumanism does not need to just be a thought experiment in psychology; posthumanism provides for a deeper understanding of identity performativity while retaining the objectivity of scientific practices (though differently interpreted). I conduct this research to imagine what becomes possible, in social science research, when the human is decentered—what a new materialist methodology renders determinate or indeterminate in the process of psychological inquiry. I intend to map the methodological, **onto-epistemological** (p. 38), and ethical implications of engaging in psychological work from a posthumanist perspective.

## **Definitions**

### **Race and Ethnicity**

For this dissertation, I do not distinguish between race and ethnicity as these constructs share many similarities that make them appear mostly synonymous (Phinney & Ong, 2007) in the context of the United States; other researchers have suggested that they be merged into a single term (e.g., Cross & Cross, 2007). While other researchers have noted the similarities between race and ethnicity but choose to distinguish between multiracial and multiethnic (e.g., Sanchez, Shih, & Wilton, 2014), I do not believe this is a significant distinction in the study of black-white biracial individuals whereas it could be more significant in the study of other biracial groups (e.g., Chinese-Thai vs. Asian-White; Sanchez, Shih, & Wilton, 2014).

### **Subject, Identity, Racial Identity**

These concepts are highly related but represent different historical and discipline-specific origins. Identity is a modernist category in psychology that describes an aspect and expression of a stable, inner self (Sedikides & Spencer, 2007). Individuals have many identities (e.g., student, daughter, athlete, professor) that overlap and, supposedly, develop over time and through experience—identities are constructed, explored, and committed to (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Racial identity is a type of this psychological identity that focuses on the elements related to culture, phenotype, geographic origins, and other elements related to a ‘commonsense’ understanding of race. However, subject refers to how an individual is the ‘subject’ of particular regimes of power, discourses, and disciplining—that one does not develop a subject but is instead disciplined to accept these existing discursively generated subjects (Butler, 1997). Subjects are inherently fragmented and constantly created and recreated as they instantiate. This conception of ‘subject’ has origins in postmodern and poststructural thought. The difference

between the biracial identity and the biracial subject is, ultimately, a matter of underlying assumptions rather than a practical difference that could be manifested. Whether an individual has ‘developed’ a biracial identity or has been conditioned to accept a biracial subject, the expressed differences are few, perhaps none. For this dissertation, I will use all of these terms mostly synonymously as I employ psychological and poststructural thought, but it should be noted that the biracial subject is my preferred understanding of the phenomenon under investigation in this study.

### **Biracial**

Despite adopting a performative conception of identity, I believe that a definition of biracialism must be leveraged in order to link this research to other academic sources and to popular notions for the purpose of recruitment. For this dissertation, a biracial individual is any person with 1) one black and one white parent or 2) two black-white biracial parents. This definition, while perhaps problematic for truncating the potential population of ‘biracial’ individuals, is in keeping with the previous theorization in so much as it represents the biracial group as a multiplicity rather than a unified whole. I do not maintain a pretense that my sample is representative of a biracial population; rather, I believe these definitions enable a performative, material-discursive analysis.

### **Black, White**

For this research, these racial categories do not have a particular definition beyond the popular notions these terms attempt to represent. The exact nature of their definitions is in service to the understanding of the material-discursive entanglements of their identity performances—that is, how participants define blackness or whiteness does not tell me anything about the ‘black’ and ‘white’ racial groups in the United States, but rather, it does assist in my

understanding of how my participants position themselves relative to other groups and how this assists in the performance of their identity in the research process.

### **Becoming**

As part of my posthumanist conceptions, I reject the idea of being in favor of the Deleuzian concept of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988). The concept of becoming “explodes the ideas about what we are and what we can be beyond the categories that seem to contain us” (Sotirin, 2005, p. 99). Beyond desire, control, and possession, becoming is the imperceptible movement through the **pre-individual** (p. 48). Becoming is then the process of temporarily resolving the tension in the pre-individual and taking on a particular subject/identity that is metastable—imperfect and moribund.

### **Matter, Material, Material-Discursive**

Agential realism provides for a type of matter that exists objectively in a physical sense. As previously described, I make no attempt to represent that matter beyond the onto-epistemology that agential realism provides; that is, matter is never free from discourses and cannot be described only in its physical existence. My study draws upon bodies, computers, questionnaires, and other research tools as types of matter, but this framework does not define matter as just these mundane aspects of a physical world. Rather, “theorizing, like experimenting, is a material practice” (Barad, 2007, p. 55) and as such, where matter begins and ends is inexorably linked to the boundary makings of **agential cuts** (p. 43). Barad (2007) posited that discourse and material are inherently inseparable and must be understood through this inseparability. Barad highlighted this simultaneous articulation of matter and discourse with the term *material-discursive*. This concept is related to entanglements, intra-action, and **apparatus** (p. 43) as described in chapter two.

## **Outline of Remaining Chapters**

Chapter 2 begins with an enumeration of my theoretical frameworks, agential realism and individuation, and continues with a critical review of biracial literature. Through this critical review, I describe the research conceptions that have influenced my understandings of biraciality, provide an overview of the current identity models in psychological research, and critique this body of work through my theoretical framework. Chapter 3 describes my use of post-qualitative inquiry, the design and methodology of this study, and the ethics of purposeful entanglement. Chapter 4 presents the results of my study through a diffractive analysis of the five participants. Chapter 5 is a discussion of those results in connection to my posthumanist theoretical framework as well as an offering of methodological insights and recommendations.

## **Chapter Two:**

### **Review of Literature and Theoretical Background**

For alas, who reads philosophy today? (Scott, 2014, p.3)

#### **Introduction and Rationale**

In the previous chapter, I provided a rationale for my rejection of humanism, the self, and intrinsic identity in favor of a new materialist framework. As nearly all research on biracialism has drawn upon humanist assumptions, the usability of humanist biracial research to inform my dissertation is questionable. I am not aware of any research on black-white biracialism that has drawn explicitly on posthumanism. Without a body of research to directly draw upon, I have purposed this literature review to both detail my theoretical framework and to critically review potentially relevant existing biracial research even as that body of research does not align with this dissertation. While I neither intend to nor seek to discredit the results of existing biracial research, I believe a new materialist account of this literature raises two significant issues: 1) existing research has not examined the material-discursive intra-activity of their inquiries and 2) this body of research continues to cement conceptions of the self. I will briefly summarize these issues below.

As described in the previous chapter, the results of research must be interpreted through the means by which it was produced—knowledge cannot be separated from the nature of its performative production. Epistemology and ontology are, and always have been, entangled and must be considered solely through their inseparability (onto-epistemology). This problematizes

the results of biracial research that has not examined the ‘full’ materiality of its research process. Studies of biracialism have partially examined materiality, but this is typically limited to descriptions of instrumentations and reflexivity. As the agency of matter is central in a posthumanist account of research and research practices, biracial research is thus missing elements of paramount importance. In addition to these concerns about the materiality of the research process, this body of research retains the self, identity, and the notion of identity development. All of these elements are significantly critiqued in a posthumanist framework, as described in the previous chapter.

Taken together, these two concerns render the body of existing biracial research difficult to draw upon. I believe that these two issues could provide a rationale to fully reject this body of research owing to its humanist orientation. I have chosen not to go to that extreme. However, given these issues, I seek to treat existing research as parallel work to this dissertation—it neither informs nor is severable from this project. My intra-actions with the body of biracial research began during my master’s degree program—its values, knowledges, and implications formed the initial basis for my interested and initial inquiry into biracialism. Despite my partial turn away from these accounts, I remain entangled with those conceptions, results, and assumptions of research into humanist biracialism.

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first half of this chapter, I will review and detail my engagement with the Barad’s agential realism and Simondon’s ontogenesis and individuation. This serves both to establish the framework through which I view the biracial research and to further describe the framework I employed for this study. In the second half of this chapter, I will provide a critical review of biracial research that is entangled with this

dissertation. In this section, I provide critiques and commentary as needed to distinguish this dissertation from the larger body of biracial research.

## **Review of Theoretical and Philosophical Frameworks**

### **Agential Realism**

In the following sections, I provide my interpretations of Barad's agential realism (2007) framework. Agential realism was based on the work of quantum physicist Niels Bohr and seeks to decenter the human subject and amplify the materiality of research. Agential realism examines the non-hierarchical entanglements of material-discursive agents—that is, how material agents (e.g., particles, trees, light, memories) and discursive agents (e.g., research practices, masculinity, racial hierarchies) are imbricated in their mutual intelligibility. These agents are entangled in manner that renders them indeterminate and only become determinate in intra-action; agential realism examines these intra-actions through an account of the material-discursive conditions inquiry. Given the centrality and specificity of potentially unfamiliar terms and concepts in agential realism, I describe them in-depth below. To avoid the potential distraction of continually citing the same primary source sentence after sentence, I ask readers to assume that each of the proceeding sections are based on my interpretations of Barad's seminal work *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007). Any other scholarship I draw on in the following sections will be noted through citations.

**Onto-epistemology.** Agential realism centralizes the belief that what is known cannot be separated from the circumstances in which that knowledge was derived—that is, experimental knowledge only counts as knowledge in the context of the experimental conditions in which it was produced. Barad has termed the inseparability of epistemology and ontology as *onto-epistemology*. Materiality is centralized in this framing as a change in the material conditions of



an experiment alters the results of that experiment. This onto-epistemological foundation is based on quantum physics and experimentation with light as both a wave and a particle. As this experimentation with light is of paramount importance both for Barad's framework and the way in which I conceptualize the study of biraciality, I summarize it below.

Physicists attempting to understand the objective nature of light were initially unable to explain how light seemed to behave as a wave (interference patterns) in some experiments and as a particle (no interference patterns) in other experiments. Subsequently, the *double-slit experiment* demonstrated that the material configurations of the experiment altered the results. Previously, experimental configuration could only seemingly observe light as a wave or as a particle. That is, experimental conditions produced the interference patterns or rendered them impossible. The configurations of experiments themselves precluded the ability to measure the other 'properties' of light. Observing light as a wave physically prevents observing light as a particle as the experimental conditions of both cannot be simultaneously created (i.e., an experiment cannot detect movement [wave] and absolute location [particle] in one material configuration). Material configuration results in both the possibility of some manifestations and the impossibility of others. The experiments were not simply observing the properties of light, they were active agents in producing the properties of light in intra-action.

Light as a particle and light as a wave are held to be complementary in a way analogous to two sides of a coin. However, this coin analogy does not fully capture the complexity—that is, detecting light as a wave and light as a particle is part of a tradeoff, known as *Heisenberg's uncertainty principle*. Knowing more about one causes an observer to know less about another. Attempting to objectively state the nature of light becomes impossible without reference to the material conditions from which this knowledge is derived. Light is not simply a particle,

anymore than it is simply a wave. It is not, as some have suggested, both; as previously stated, being an absolute particle and absolute wave simultaneously is not possible as all experiments alter the results of those experiments. As a result, “we are just faced with the impossibility, in the analysis of quantum effects, of drawing any sharp separation between an independent behavior of atomic objects and their interaction with the measuring instruments which serve to define their conditions” (Bohr, 1963, as cited in Barad 2007, p. 308). This also entails mutual necessity (Barad, 2011b)—no discussion of heads would take place without the possibility of tails—no discussion of waves exists without particles—no discussion of black could take place without white—the becoming one is also the unbecoming of the other. Light is indeterminate until examined through specific material configurations. The question of ‘what is possible’ becomes ‘what becomes possible in a given experiment.’ The material conditions of inquiry must be mobilized in the analysis of results.

Barad extended this acknowledgement of the impossibility of objective knowledge disconnected from the conditions of its production into social science research. Researchers cannot ignore the intra-active effects of their studies on the produced knowledge, and these effects must be accounted for in the simultaneous production and analysis of knowledge. For example, the material conditions of methods like interviewing become especially relevant as all data must be interpreted through the materiality of the interview process. For instance, Nordstrom (2015) analyzed the effects of recording devices in qualitative interviewing through new materialist lens; other research has examined the intra-active effects of researcher bodies on transformative interviewing (Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017) and voice in interviewing (Mazzei, 2013a). As new materialism has a recent origin, the full extent of the materiality of social science research is still under examination (Coole & Frost, 2010).

Through this onto-epistemology of agential realism, I posit that identity performances are likewise inseparable from the material circumstances in which they were performed. Identity (racial or otherwise) could then not be discussed in transcendent terms nor decontextualized, as implied in humanist account. As identity takes on a materially specific configuration, the process by which identity is studied must likewise be examined in a materially specific manner. This corresponds with Butler's (1990) concept of performativity described in chapter one. I take up this onto-epistemological perspective by interpreting the results of this study through the material-discursivity of the methods (e.g., instruments, biracial' bodies, computer, recording device).

The onto-epistemology of agential realism does not require a rejection of science, questionnaires, or quantitative analyses. Rather, Barad sought to link the knowledge produced through such inquiries to the intra-action of the materiality of the inquiries themselves. To illustrate, the identity measured by psychological tools like the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992) is objective only when analyzed within the context of questionnaire itself (and the other material agent present)—once the context ends, the numbers cease to be objective. In this way, the identity performed when answering questions is inextricably linked to those questions—decontextualizing the answers is not possible and does not produce 'knowledge.'

**Entanglements, phenomenon, and intra-action.** The relational notion of agential realism's onto-epistemology is termed *entanglement*—light is in an entangled state with the experimental conditions that enable observation. For example, light as a wave and light as a particle do not independently interact with experimentation; rather, light is always already entangled with conditions of observation—light does not simply enter and leave entanglements;

the very possibility of observing light as a wave or as a particle is already entangled with the conditions by which light could be observed. This constant state of mutually constitutive elements (light/experiment, epistemology/ontology) is termed with the neologism *intra-action* by Barad to conserve the always-already interconnectivity and interdependence of elements. These intra-actions (matter/discursive, light/experiment, epistemology/ontology) form *phenomenon*, the basic constitutive unit of a non-essentialized reality—a reality that is not “observation-independent” (Barad, 2007, p. 11).

Entanglements are not bounded by geographic space, time, nor do they arbitrarily begin or end. Returning to light as a wave or a particle, researchers can alter the experiments that induces light to become observable as wave or a particle to demonstrate the endurance of entanglements. If an experiment maps the path of light, a particle is observed. If the path of light is not mapped, a wave (diffraction pattern) is observed. If the path of light is mapped and during the same experiment that information is erased or the mechanism by which the path of light could be measured is turned off, the observed light changes from a particle to a wave. The question becomes: how would light know the knowledge of its path was erased or that the machine for the path mapping was turned off? The answer to these questions has been termed *quantum entanglements* (a concept in quantum physics beyond agential realism). A material change to an experiment changes the results of that experiment in ways that seems to transcend time and space—the intra-action changes, the entanglement changes, the results change.

These quantum entanglements can be taken to sustainable, logical extremes—light that has taken billions of years to travel across space has indeterminate values until it is measured. Once measured, the properties appear to travel back in time and across the vast chasms of space to where the light was generated and seem to alter the initial properties. The entangled nature of

that light persists over that distances and timelines of that scale. It is not that that past has actually been altered by measurement, but that “the past was never simply there to begin with and the future is not simply what will unfold; the “past” and the “future” are iteratively reworked and enfolded through the iterative practices of spacetime-mattering” (Barad, 2007, p. 315).

These notions of entanglement and quantum entanglement are especially relevant to social science research. Individuals are born in intra-action with their social and material world. Their identities shaped through discourse and relations of power (Butler, 1997), but this shaping is done in intra-action with the material—their genetic code and the physical bodies intra-act with the material of others in social space to provoke identity performances constantly entangled with their past and present. This intra-action similarly transcends space and time by enabling individuals to re-interpret their past and beliefs of their past. These reinterpretations alter future identity performances through entanglements. The past and present are entangled and identity performances affect and are affected by these durable entanglements.

**Apparatus and agential cut.** To understand the nature of the material-discursive intra-activity, the term *apparatus* is employed as a boundary making concept. Specifically, Barad’s apparatuses “are the material conditions of possibility and impossibility of mattering; they enact what matters and what is excluded from mattering” (Barad, 2007, p. 148). These apparatuses enact boundaries within phenomena, and these boundaries articulate specific subjects in those phenomena. Apparatus is related to Foucault’s concept of *dispositif* as a way in which power can be understood in diverse material-social assemblages (2007). The boundary making process (e.g., between subject/object, observer/observed, researcher/researched) are termed *agential cuts* in describing specific boundaries.

Apparatuses and their concomitant agential cuts are specific material-discursive practices—these are not just laboratory set-ups that “embody human concepts and take measurements” (Barad, 2007, p. 146). Rather, apparatuses are dynamic across space and time without intrinsic bounds—this is related to the previously described positions that what is known or knowable is directly related to the material conditions that give rise to specific phenomena. Discursive practices are ongoing agential cuts that intra-actively reconfigure boundaries of phenomena. Apparatuses represent the inherent and iteratively reconfiguring nature of material-discursive intra-actions—intra-actions beyond the simple ability of humans to easily determine and unendingly manipulate.

In this research, the interview process itself was an apparatus in which the shifting role (Mazzei, 2013a) of researcher/researched, biracial/non-biracial was iteratively reconfigured through the ongoing questioning/experimenting. For example, administering the Implicit Associations Test changed the phenomenon through material alterations. Instead of being questioned by me (whom participants assumed to be biracial), they were examined by a computer program. The agential cut enacted in this process changed the apparatus of the interview from ‘biracial-to-biracial’ to an apparatus of ‘biracial-computer.’ Whereas humanist research would view the biracial identity as stable, intrinsic, and material-independent, this research examined how the performativity of the biracial identity shifted through the agential cuts and apparatuses during the interview.

**Diffraction.** The complexity inherent in material-discursive analyses problematizes the foundational philosophical concept of representationalism—the “belief that words, concepts, ideas, and the like accurately reflect or mirror the things in which they refer” (Barad, 2007, p.86). Questioning representationalism results in questioning those overarching concepts that

seem to serve as labels for particular entities—biracialism, like other identity conceptions, can serve only to reproduce the particular knowledge that is already part of its composition—this is analogous to reflective practices (e.g., reflexivity) that serve only to continually reproduce the self-similar knowledge. To escape the optics of reflection, researchers have used diffraction as an alternative to reflection (e.g., Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Whereas reflexive methodologies serve to establish similarities, diffraction serves to intra-actively examine differences (Barad, 2007).

Diffraction, a physics term, describes the action of waves (e.g., sound waves, light waves) as they intersect. When two waves intersect (e.g., waves on a beach), their resulting superposition at particular points either serve to increase or diminish their collective amplitude. Light (as previously described) passing through a two-slit experiment produces a diffraction pattern as it similarly experiences collective changes in wave patterns. As the materiality of the experimental condition changes, the resulting diffraction pattern changes. As previously noted, certain alterations can make diffraction patterns disappear (e.g., light as a particle) and reappear that the material conditions of experiments change (e.g., quantum erasure experiments). Rather than relying on reflection and presupposition of the inherent nature of knowledge, a diffractive conception serves as a way to examine the performative nature of knowledge and knowledge production. Diffractions offers “alternative vocabulary and different technology for critical inquiries” (Kaiser & Thiele, 2014, p.166) and has impacted critical qualitative inquiry (Lenz Taguichi, 2013) as a method of data analysis. In this way, diffraction acts both as a lens to view the nature of difference and as a method of analysis.

**Agential realism and biracial research.** Agential realism is the most prominent (Hein, 2016) of new materialist theories, and has influenced methodological studies (e.g., Mazzei, 2013a), early childhood studies (e.g., Petersen, 2014; Søndergaard, 2016), feminist research

(e.g., Ringrose & Renold, 2014), gendered subjectivities works (e.g., Juelskjaer, 2013) and philosophical commensurability works (e.g., Hein, 2016; Taylor, 2016). Despite the impact of this framework, I found little research that employed agential realism (or any other type of new materialism) in the study of race or biracialism. This dissertation may be the first to examine biraciality after the ontological turn.

In the next section, I detail my philosophical engagement with Simondon's theory of individuation and ontogenesis. Following this section, I will review empirical research on biracial identity and lens this empirical research through my theoretical framework. In doing this, I position my research relative to the field of biracial studies while suggesting what may become possible through the use of agential realism and Simondon's philosophy.

### **Simondon.**

By way of introduction, Simondon's work is still relatively unknown. Despite being a major influence on Deleuze, Stiegler, Massumi, and Latour, most of his work has not been translated and only, by 2013, approximately three works have been translated and published in English (Combes, 2013). However, Simondon's work has seeped into poststructural and new materialist thinking without being directly cited or engaged. Elements of his influence are perceivable in Barad's agential realism which has significant ties to Deleuze, a scholar that drew extensively on Simondon. As such, these theories are widely in agreement. As such, I employ his theories of individuation and ontogenesis in conjunction with Barad to analyze the becoming and unbecoming of the biracial subject.

Before proceeding, I must address my use of Althusser's concept of interpellation/hailing/calling in concert with Simondon's philosophy. Both orientations are concerned with the individuals, individuating, subjects, and the coming into being of subjects



(subjection). However, Althusser mobilized the concept of ideology in the governmental disciplining of individuals—individuals are always-already subjects from this perspective (Scott, 2014). This privileging of the individual (i.e., that it precedes subjects) is “diametrically opposite” to Simondon’s framework (2014, p.74). This is potentially problematic, especially as this dissertation draws heavily on Foucault and Butler’s conception of subjectification and subsequently performativity, which are indebted to Althusser. However, I do not draw upon hailing through its ideological framing and thus do not assume the preceding of individuals to subjects, I hold that these two orientations to subjects can be placed in *superposition* (Murriss & Bozalek, 2017) rather than effect some misguided attempt at parsing notions of commensurability. I employ these conceptions to imagine identity free from its humanist core; I believe there is something of value to be created in this attempt despite these issues.

**Individuation and ontogenesis.** Simondon’s philosophy of individuation is a rejection of *hylomorphism*, an Aristotelian concept that holds being is matter meeting form, and *atomism*, the concept that all beings are the conglomerations of atoms (Scott, 2014). Hylomorphism and atomism both assume the presence of already individuated elements—that matter and form are already independently articulated when they give rise to being. Simondon rejected this always-already articulation of unified and independent elements in the creation of an individual and turned instead towards the process of individuation—the individual is something created and never given in advance. This led Simondon to seek “to know the individual through individuation rather than to know individuation starting from the individual” (Simondon, 1989, p. 12). Individuation is then the site of analysis rather than the individual. However, this process of individuation does not solely produce the individual. Rather the particular individual/subject is only one result of individuation; that there are other elements produced in process of

individuation. This process does not produce a final, stable, always unified subject; that “one does not pass rapidly through stages of individuation to finally realize...the individual, perfect and self-contained and exhausting being” (Scott, 2014, p. 5). Working backwards from the individual, an almost byproduct of individuation, would establish a teleology of the subject—as if the individual that becomes at the end of individuation was the only possible outcome. This teleology of the individual would foreclose on possibility and limit inquiry on subjects to only what is already known rather what could become knowable in the process of individuation (Scott, 2014).

This ontogenesis of the individual, seized from the process, seized from the center, liberates subjects/identities/individuals from its otherwise teleological conception. This ontogenesis of the individual, or individuation, stands in stark contrast with a psychological view of identity and individuals. Simondon’s philosophy is inimical to psychology in general as psychology assumes the presence of a fully self-determined individual that can attest truthfully to its development. Identity research similarly begins at the end of identity and attempts to chart its development. Simondon, and this dissertation, hold this to be a mistake.

**Pre-individual.** Simondon’s philosophy begins with the *pre-individual*, that which precedes any individual/subject/identity. It is a site of constant tension and radical possibility that energizes becoming. It cannot be communicated with nor will ever take on definitive form—it is the unbecoming of being, an *obscure zone* laying between articulations of form and matter (Scott, 2014). It is neither an identity nor the absence of identity. This pre-individual is the possibilities of identities, subjects, and individuals. This analogous to one’s DNA. DNA is a “set of *potentials*, which can unfold in various directions, and which do not attain form except in the

actual process of unfolding” (Shaviro 2006, para. 3). As DNA precedes the unfolding of a human, the pre-individual precedes the individual/subject/identity.

As identity is multiple, the excess or remainders after the performative becoming of an identity is always contained in the pre-individual. That is, one does not permanently lose the ability to become multiple subjects. As such, the undifferentiated, heterogenous, unstable collection of subject pieces (e.g., entanglements, memories) are contained in the pre-individual, and individuation never results in the complete dissolution of the pre-individual. This establishes how an individual can iteratively perform a black, white, biracial, and other subject. They are in constant tension in the pre-individual, and always lurk in the undercurrent of any particular identity performance. The *supersaturation* (Combes, 2013) of the pre-individual renders it always becoming and unbecoming.

The pre-individual is always created during the process of individuation—the remainder of the tensions inherent in a system of subjectification. As identity is always more than one and the pre-individual is omnipresent, each identity/subject/individuated one is always a threat to its own becoming—the simultaneous becoming and unbecoming of identity in multiple. Analyzing particular subjects/identities is thus unrevealing of a stable, inner self. Each is simply one temporary and fragmented, but vocal, resolution of a system under tension, and these resolutions are always and irrevocably moribund through its own becoming. The pre-individual, the energizing and catalyzing force of becoming and its entanglements, is all that remains when identity performances end; for this reason, Simondon analyzes the process of individuating rather than the temporary, unstable, perishing identity/subject/individual.

**Metastability, dephasing, milieu, and good form.** Though Simondon pointed to the constant ebb and flow of identity/subjects and the tension inherent in the pre-individual, he did

not suggest that there is never (tentative) unity, or a moment of stability. Simondon suggested that a temporary resolution to this system could iteratively occur, but this resolution was fated for decline and not some permanent social installation in the self. To do this, Simondon drew upon the physics concept *metastability* (Combes, 2013). Metastability describes a physical system that is in a state of false equilibrium in which any alteration to any parameters causes the system to collapse. For example, super-cooled water (i.e., water below freezing temperature) remains liquid despite the tension it is undergoing. This metastable state appears stable but any introduced impurity isomorphic to ice or change of conditions causes the super-cooled water's structure to collapse and, at an instant, turn to ice (2013). Perhaps a simpler analogy is to imagine a house of cards. When correctly stacked they reach a metastable state, but an errant gust of wind or a curious housecat causes the system to fragment and the cards to fall—the cards only seemed stable, but their destruction was simultaneously fated with their articulation. Like any metastable resolution, any identity or subject, the house of cards was destined to fall; it is axiomatic that the super-cooled water would eventually turn to ice—all that would remain is the pre-individual, the set of potentials for the system. Identities are then held in a metastable state. They appear, they speak, but they are only iteratively temporary—a house of cards that can be rebuilt again and again, but never in the exact same way, never impervious to the housecat.

As identities/subjects continuously rise and fall, Simondon' employed the term *dephasing* (Scott, 2014) to describe these changes in state during individuation. Dephasing, in thermodynamics, refers to changes in state of a physical system. The poststructural concept of becoming is highly related to dephasing and likely could be used synonymously. However, for this dissertation, I distinguish between the two. For example, becoming-biracial, for this study, describes the specific path of individuation. Dephasing is then the disruption of the becoming-

biracial and alteration into another, potentially unnamable, metastable state. Becoming-biracial is the particular end of individuation; dephasing is the collapse and reformation of the system. While this distinction is, perhaps, arbitrary, I believe it enables a more thorough and clear examination of the subjects of this dissertation.

Subjects/identities do not simply instantiate on their own. Rather each identity has an associated *milieu*, a material-discursive context that is its complement. Each identity is subsequently inseverable from its milieu as it is a condition of instantiation. Identities and their milieus are simultaneously created in the process of individuation. For example, a crystal can only grow in a particular solution. Absent this solution, the crystal would not grow and, moreover, would not exist. Biracial identity performances are likewise instantiated in a particular milieu, a material-discursive social world. Other identity performances (e.g., black, white, male, female) are imbricated in their complementary milieu.

Not all metastable resolutions of a system are equal in stability. That all identities will collapse is axiomatic, but some identities are, seemingly or practically, more stable than others or more resistant to the adulterations that would spur dephasing. For this reason, certain identity forms that are iteratively repeated and seemingly given do not instantly collapse under its interior and exterior pressure. Race, with its supposedly commonsense existence, is stable to the extent that it does not face the force of unbecoming directed towards identity categories less widespread. Coupled with this notion is a, to my estimation, ‘fictional’ ideal state Simondon’s termed the *Good Form*. The Good Form is responsible for organizing knowledge (Simondon, 1989) through its supposed perfection; it is “the perfect state of equilibrating those forces otherwise conflictual, not equalized and made compatible” (Scott, 2014, p. 40).

This Good Form is analogous to Foucault's *Man-Form* (Foucault, 1970), and visible in other forms as well (Scott, 2014). The Good Form is resistant to all impurity that would otherwise cause a metastable system to collapse and it cannot be altered nor does it face entropic decay. As such, it is not realizable, nor it is a 'true' potential end point of individuation—it would be the death of individuation and bring a final, fatal resolution to the system. The pre-individual would evaporate and becoming would cease. However, it is truly stable and not metastable, and as such, remains an energizing force to the system of individuation. The Good Form is implicitly desired by the process of individuation and desire, not only energizes and organizes the system, but *haunts* (Derrida, 1993) the pre-individual as well.

**Simondon and biracial research.** Similar to agential realism, no research using Simondon's philosophy has examined 'biracial' identity nor has race been heavily treated (if treated at all). As a result, there is little to draw upon to think through biracial research aside from the same critiques of humanism enabled by agential realism. This dissertation may be the first to interpret race through this posthumanist view of subjectification.

I draw upon Simondon's work to complement my interpretation of Barad's agential realism. Agential realism enables a new materialist analysis of the interview process and grounds my post-qualitative methodology, but it does not offer a theory of subjectification sufficient to analyze the resulting identity instantiations. Similarly, Althusser's hailing can explain the calling into being (hailing) of the biracial subject, but it is not capable of assisting me to think through how identities find alterity. Through the use of all three theoretical frameworks, I can analyze the interview intra-action and resulting ebb and flow of identity instantiations in that process.

## **Review of Biracial Literature**

### **Rationale**

As previously noted, existing humanist research on biracialism does not ‘inform’ this dissertation—my theoretical framework problematizes nearly all existing accounts of biracialism. As such, the utility of reviewing this biracial research is questionable and perhaps only serves to maintain humanism in this project—that is, perhaps starting with humanism (i.e., humanist biracial research), even while critiquing it, limits the possibilities of this field of study. Perhaps, rejecting this body of research is the path to generativity rather than endless critique. Perhaps the gravity well of humanism prevents even a ‘posthumanism’ project from moving past the human constraints in research—in reviewing humanist scholarship, humanism is unavoidably reaffirmed.

In conducting this literature review, I must critique this body of research and in so doing, etch my framework in the negative space offered by critique. My framework is then inseparable from the research I critique—my view of biracialism carried forward in intaglio. As a result, critique envelopes this dissertation. Like Latour (2004), I tire of this constant need to weaponize critique and wish instead to be ‘purely’ (perhaps naively) generative—to focus on the possibilities of posthumanist inquiry into ‘biracialism’ rather than devote text to parsing differences with research only in prosthetic relation.

While the act of deleting the proceeding biracial literature or compressing it into lengthy endnotes (e.g., Bridges-Rhoads, 2011) are both appealing, I have chosen to devote part of this chapter to reviewing potentially relevant humanist biracial literature. Despite my previous critiques of humanism and the critiques of research on biracialism in the next sections, biracial research and scholars are always worth defending. As such, rather than stridently casting aside

existing research, I choose instead to preserve this research here as it is inherently valuable and widely influential elsewhere. This reasoning is not academically satisfying, nor it is, perhaps, anything other than a representation of my values as a scholar. However, the enemy of generativeness is certainty, and rather than displace this research, I choose to displace certainty.

**Overview.** A variety of fields and academic disciplines have examined the ‘biracial’ population, and despite extensive scholarship, few consistent or reliable conclusions have been reached (e.g., Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Quantitative analyses have produced decidedly mixed results (2005) and attempts at producing multiracial specific measures have been only partially successful (e.g., Salahuddin & O’Brien, 2011; Yoo, Jackson, Guevarra, Miller, & Harrington, 2016). Research employing quantitative methodologies have typically drawn upon positivist or post-positive frameworks, and as such, philosophical engagement is limited, if present at all. Qualitative investigations, far more common in this subfield, have likewise produced results difficult to draw conclusions from (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). These qualitative inquiries have typically drawn upon interpretivist or social constructivist frameworks that, while overtly philosophically engaged, maintain a humanist core.

Nearly all research on biracialism has assumed the existence of an inner self that is capable of representing the ‘truth’ of its experiences. This humanist assumption, as previously described, limits the possibilities of this research, and as such, analyses from the linguistic and ontological turns are virtually non-existent. Psychological analyses of biracialism (e.g., Renn, 2003) provide little, or no, philosophical engagement with this population beyond typical theoretical frameworks (e.g., Bronfenbrenner). Of frameworks beyond postpositivism, studies of biracialism employing *Critical Race Theory* (Harris, 2016) have gone the furthest to bringing a discursive analysis to biracial research. However, this type of research is limited in number and it



too remains mired in humanism. What is possible or thinkable in this field of research when humanist assumptions are displaced is simply not known.

I begin this critical review of empirical black-white biracial literature by describing who counts as biracial in research. I will subsequently describe the historical and contemporary research paradigms applied to biracialism, describe the ‘one-drop rule’ in biracial discourse, and review biracial identity research related to biracial fluidity, malleability, and expression. These topics will all be lensed through my posthumanist framework. As this project is focused on the black-white biracial subject and centralizes racial discourse as they relate to blackness, whiteness, and mixedness, I will focus on biracial research that is specifically about black-white biracialism. However, many studies focus on multiple biracial ‘types’ (e.g., Hispanic-black, Asian-white) in the search of a generalized ‘biracial’ experience. As a result, some of the reviewed research, while containing black-white biracial participants, is not limited to this group.

**Counting as biracial.** The identification of biracial individuals has proven difficult for researchers and no consensus exists on the best way to do so (Robbin, 2000). Defining who should be considered multiracial is likewise not clear (Harris & Sim, 2000; Root, 1992). Researcher have used various definitions to establish biraciality including self-identification as multiracial (Harris & Sim, 2002), self-selecting more than one race on questionnaires (Brunsma, 2005), having inconsistent child-parent racial agreement (Kao, 1999), and having biological parents that identify as different races (Xie & Goyette, 1997). The effects that these different operationalizations of biraciality may have on analyses are not certain, but at least one study has demonstrated that different methods of capturing this identity influences outcomes (i.e., self-identification versus interviewer perceptions; Burke & Kao, 2013).

The extent to which any definition of biraciality can capture the ‘biracial population’ is dubious considering that, as previously noted, no definition of who is and is not biracial has been agreed upon nor is consensus definition forthcoming. In addition, not all of those with mixed-heritage are always willing to self-identify as multiracial (Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009), and other research has suggested that those of middle class and higher background may be more willing to identify as biracial rather than identifying monoracially (Townsend, Fryberg, Wilkins, & Markus, 2012). This may result in individuals being counted as biracial in some analyses but not in others. The extent of this issue is not known, though one study indicated that this may not be a significant problem (i.e., Campbell, 2009). However, recent research has problematized the extent to which biracial individuals are capable of expressing an external identity that matches internal perceptions (Howell, Gaither, & Ratliff, 2014; Marn, Mahoney, Tan, Ramirez, & Velasco, 2018) further clouding the issue of identifying who is and is not biracial.

Among the population estimates that have been made, the United States Census is the most widely reported. The 2000 US Census was the first to allow individuals to select more than one race (Qian, 2004), which was presumed to allow multiracial individuals the opportunity to make themselves visible. This census indicated that 7 million Americans indicated that they were of more than one race (Lusk, Taylor, Nanney, & Austin, 2010). The 2010 US Census showed that this number had grown by 2 million to bring the total ‘population’ to 9 million (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). There is no reason to suspect that this number is indicative, or even an adequate estimation, of the total population of multiracial individuals as identifying as biracial is not mandatory—research has demonstrated that biracial individuals will change their racial self-identity in order to secure advantages, avoid disadvantages, and that some ‘biracial’ individuals

would have other reasons to not identify as biracial (Brunsma, 2006). Other research has suggested that identifying on a questionnaire may be a rote rather than introspective process for ‘biracial’ individuals (Marn, Mahoney, Tan, Ramirez, & Velasco, 2018)—that is, a ‘biracial’ individual may arbitrarily decide on a response to a questionnaire rather than ‘introspectively’ responding. ‘Biracial’ individuals must be willing to self-identify as biracial to be counted in population estimates and, typically, no verification is made to ensure that only those with ‘actual’ multiracial heritage would be included in this counting. As the ‘biracial’ identity exists in multiple, what a verification process would look like is uncertain—such a process would inherently validate only what it sought to create.

Despite these issues, at least one estimate suggested that biracial individuals will grow to be a large percentage of the United States population (Smith & Edmonston, 1997). Even if this prediction does not come true, the multiracial population will continue to grow as groups continue to mix and migrate (e.g., the current ‘biracial baby boom’; Bratter 2007). The question for inquiry on ‘biracials’ becomes: if academic research cannot clearly establish who is and is not biracial, how can any sample of biracial individuals be at all ‘representative’ of a population? There is no answer to this question as there is no ultimate authority to determine the limits of biracialism.

Questions of what ‘racial’ percentages an individual must have to be called ‘authentically’ biracial harken back to a racist past in which discussions of blood quantum, quadroons, and octoroons become relevant again. Researchers have typically (but not always, e.g., Rushton, 1999) wisely elided such discussions (at least as they concern sampling). The extent to which these sampling techniques target the same population is dubious, leading to a variety of questions that cannot be readily answered: if an individual self-identifies as biracial,

but their racial ancestry does not ‘seem to’ support that, are they not biracial? If an individual with biological parents of different races identifies only as monoracial, are they not biracial? If a person is one-quarter ‘black’ and three-quarters ‘white,’ are they biracial? One-eighth black? Should only those that self-identify as biracial/multiracial/mixed be labeled as such? What if they stop self-identifying as biracial at some point—do they no longer count as biracial? If allowed to ‘check-all-that-apply,’ and biracial participants choose to check all boxes (Renn, 2004) how could research possibly screen their data for this group without resorting to questions of ‘authenticity’? These complex questions of identity have not found sufficient answers in the existing body of research, and if biraciality is performative, as held by this dissertation, answers to these questions would be partial and always deferred.

If a posthumanist account of identity is adopted, the unstable, inconsistent, and partial nature of biracial identity research becomes, not an error, but indicative of the process of biracial identity performativity and individuation. Researchers would not need to contend with the impossible task of defining who is biracial, but instead, studies could examine how the biracial identity is instantiated through material-discursive intra-action. The performativity of biracialism should be the focus of investigation, rather than attempting to provide for transcendent knowledge about the natural/stable/definable biracial ‘population.’ This would lead to understanding the multiplicity of biracial identity rather than the singularity of it. To that end, I have turned to Simondon’s (1989) philosophy of individuation.

Agential realism and Simondon’s theory enables me to posit that the act of defining who is and is not biracial for the purposes of inquiry is not a simple matter of naming a group that ‘naturally’ exists. Rather, the biracial subject is called into being through the act of defining the identity and elicitation of a sample based on their definition. As such, defining who is and is not

biracial, who should or should not be counted, is a performative act. From a Baradian perspective, biracial research does not ‘know’ about the reality of biracial group; rather, biracial research creates an apparatus-specific biracial and ‘knows’ about that subject—the subject it created in the action of its research. For this reason, this project explicitly examined this process of calling/hailing subjects in research.

**Approaches to biracial experiences in research.** Existing empirical research on biracial individuals in the United States can be divided roughly into four major theoretical approaches: 1) problem approach, 2) equivalent approach, 3) variant approach, and 4) ecological approach (Rockquemore, Brunσμα, & Delgado, 2009). Each of these approaches have different assumptions about the experiences of biracial individuals (beyond the humanism these approaches all share) and the compatibility of these studies is unclear. As all biracial research, historical and contemporary, has roots in one of these approaches, all results must be lensed through the assumptions held by its respective approach. As such, I will briefly describe these four approaches in chronological order below.

One of the original approaches to the study of biracial individuals, the ‘problem approach,’ was widely adopted in the early 1900s. This approach theorized that a mixed-race individual faced negative outcomes due to their believed marginality between two groups (e.g., too black for white groups and too white for black groups). Being biracial was viewed as inherently problematic. This problem approach was most readily visible in the works of Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935), but these conceptions of the biracial group continues to be influential in some research (e.g., Fryer, Kahn, Levitt, & Spenkuch, 2012). Studies influenced by this approach have typically posited that the biracial experience is inherently negative and is connected to the belief in the ‘tragic mulatto’ who suffered psychological confusion as a result of

their mixed-heritage (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995). This othering and inherently negative view of biracialism is part of what has been termed *epistemological violence* (Teo, 2008), which continues to be a frequent component of biracial research conceptions. This approach has studied biracialism mainly in connection to negative outcomes (e.g., risky sexual practices, fighting in school; Fryer, et al., 2012) and the ‘cost’ of being biracial.

Macro-level attitudes towards race shifted due to the impact of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s in the United States. These shifts became especially salient for biracial individuals as anti-miscegenation laws were struck down in 1967 (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Research on biracial individuals similarly shifted and moved away from the ‘problem approach’ to the ‘equivalent approach.’ Rather than viewing biracialism as a type of marginal existence, research from the ‘equivalent approach’ held that biracial individuals would identify with their minority component group. Black-white biracial individuals were believed to be part of the black population and could then be understood wholly through existing black identity theories (e.g., *Nigrescence*; Cross, 1995). This approach highlighted the influence of the ‘one-drop’ rule (described below) as part of its framework, and this approach has had a significant impact on research conceptions as much of the literature on biracial individuals has assumed that they are part of their minority rather than majority group. This minoritarian influence continues to form much of the foundation of research on biracial individuals.

The decades that followed the ‘equivalent approach’ saw the development of the ‘variant approach’ which conceptualized multiracial individuals as a distinct racial group that could not be understood through existing monoracial identity perspectives. This approach was distinct from the previous conceptualizations by emphasizing that biracial individuals had different experiences than ‘monoracial’ minority groups. Rather than critiquing notions that biracial

individuals linearly developed an identity, this variant approach led researchers in the 1990s to attempt to create identity development models that were specifically designed for biracial individuals (e.g., *Biracial Identity Development Model*; Poston, 1990). This variant approach began to incorporate the belief that biracial individuals could identify with any of their component groups rather than just the most subordinated component racial group.

The fourth and most current approach in humanist research has been the ‘ecological approach,’ which has emphasized three assumptions: 1) a multiracial individual’s identity is context specific, 2) does not develop predictably nor is there an optimal identity endpoint, and 3) one biracial identity type is not better than another. This is one of the dominant lenses through which the biracial identity is currently viewed in contemporary humanist research (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Deldado, 2009). This ecological approach posited that the biracial identity is affected at multiple levels beyond those most proximal to these individuals. In this framework, the one-drop rule, so influential to past research, serves here as only a single element amidst additional contextual factors like home, community, large-scale discursive expectations, and changes over time.

This ‘ecological approach’ share some similarities to the conceptions of this dissertation. I similarly believe that the biracial identity is context specific and doesn’t simply ‘develop’ as in most humanist accounts of identity development. In addition, as it is a contextual model, discursive elements (e.g., disciplinary practice) could be incorporated into an analysis of biracial identities. These elements make the research from this approach somewhat relevant to this study. However, the ecological approach centralizes the self as the site of identity development, and as such, the human, with its ultimate agency, remains the focus at the cost of the material (and subsequent imbrication of the material and discursive).

Despite this chronological review of these paradigms, contemporary research continues to be produced out of each of these approaches providing further complications to biracial research conceptions. For example, studies out of the problem approach have typically examined negative traits (e.g., problem behaviors [Fryer et al., 2012]) whereas studies from more recent research paradigms have focused additional attention on positive functions of biraciality (e.g., increased friendship networks [Quillian & Redd, 2007]). While there is highly influential work from all approaches, work from the ecological approach is the most theoretically consistent with this dissertation. As the ‘one-drop’ rule and other discursive factors remains a significant part of contemporary biracial research discourse (Jordan, 2014), I will describe these below.

**One-drop rule and discursive expectations.** The ‘one-drop’ rule, known formally as hypodescent, remains one of the most salient and large-scale discursive expectations for black-white biracial individuals (Ho, Sidanius, Levin, & Banaji, 2011). This informal but highly influential implicit social expectation compels individuals with any black heritage (e.g., ‘one-drop’ of black blood) to identify solely with their black racial group (e.g., ‘equivalent approach’) despite any other affiliations (Roth, 2005). The one-drop rule was enumerated in the 1800s as a response to the then increasing population of mixed-race individuals (2005). In order to prevent the black-white biracial children of white slave owners from participating in political and social institutions, and to prevent any discussions of inheritance from taking place, the one-drop rule was widely adopted and legally codified in the United States.

Additional discriminatory and societal practices were legally incorporated through Jim Crow legislation to limit the social power of the biracial population, and these discriminatory and negative perspectives on biracialism have been utilized by the various research paradigms. It was commonly advanced (e.g., ‘problem approach’) during this time that mixing blood across races



would produce biologically unhealthy, psychologically fragile, and inferior children (Kahn & Denmon, 1997) legitimizing the prohibition of interracial unions. Anti-miscegenation laws prohibited interracial marriage in multiple states until 1967 (Roth, 2005) to restrict the creation of biracial children. Though anti-miscegenation laws and Jim Crow legislation more generally have been struck down, the influence of these measures, and especially, the one-drop remains strong (Gullickson & Morning, 2011). For example, in 2009 a Louisiana justice of the peace refused to grant a marriage license to an interracial couple (Jolivet, 2014) due to his opposition to interracial marriage as he believed it would produce confused, damaged children. This incident demonstrated that much of the discourse surrounding the biracial group is still inherently negative.

Research that has employed the one-drop rule has frequently produced studies that assumed that black-white biracial individuals are minorities and should be understood as such. Research on this group performed before 1990s (i.e. from the problem approach and equivalent approach) used this one-drop as a foundational element. More modern research from the variant approach and ecological approach have moderated the influence of this expectation on conceptions and findings and have questioned the extent of the modern influence of the one-drop rule (Campbell, 2007). Regardless, the one-drop rule continues to be one of the most studied and influential concepts in biracial research (Brunsma, 2006).

As a new materialist account focuses on the intra-activity of the material and the discursive, the one-drop rule, as a powerful discursive element, remains highly relevant. The performance of the black-white biracial identity has always been linked to the one-drop rule. As such, to be biracial is to also know the expectation that they should or should desire to embody a black subject despite any other feelings. The role of the one-drop rule can be amplified or

diminished depending on the material present (e.g., perceived race of those present) and cannot be stated in absolute terms. Empirical research on the biracial identity, including the effect of the one-drop rule, is described below.

**Biracial-specific fluidity and identity models.** Biracial individuals are posited to undergo a unique process of identity development containing challenges not faced by monoracial groups (Root, 1998; Shih & Sanchez, 2005; Shih, Sanchez, & Garcia, 2009). Research on the expression of the biracial identity has led to a number of models of biracial identity development or identity types. The majority of these models incorporate the idea of identity malleability or fluidity. This fluidity of the biracial identity has been frequently discussed as a concept, but few studies directly examining this concept exist (Shih, Sanchez, & Garcia, 2009). In the next sections, I will review the significant fluidity research and describe biracial-specific identity models and types.

Terry and Winston (2010) analyzed the patterns of racial identification among adolescent multiracials using *Race Self Complexity Theory*, which nests the lived experiences of individuals within a personal narrative detailing their meaning of race in their lives. The authors posited that multiracials would show unique fluidity in racial self-identification over time and in different contexts. From a larger sample of 1,482 families participating in a longitudinal study, 31 multiracial adolescents were selected for analysis. Nine of these 31 multiracials were excluded due to missing data. The final sample of 22 adolescents was analyzed over three data points over the years 1991, 1993, and 1997. From these three data points, only 6 participants (27%) maintained their same racial self-identification for each of the three years (e.g., identified only as black for all three collection years). The other 16 participants (73%) changed their self-identification at least once over the three observed years (e.g., black-white to black). Two

participants changed their racial self-identification in each data collection year. These results suggested that the identity of biracial individuals could be malleable over time as the authors posited that racial self-identification itself is a personality characteristic that likewise changes over time. These results are consistent with other research that similarly shows biracial identity fluidity over time (e.g, Hitlin, Brown, & Elder, 2006).

Doyle and Kao (2007), analyzed Waves I and III of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) to assess the stability of the multiracial identity over time. The results of this analysis demonstrated that the identity choices of multiracial individuals were more malleable as compared to monoracial groups. The racial choices of those multiracial individuals with black heritage were significantly influenced by physical appearance. For black-white biracial individuals, phenotype almost entirely explained their volatility. These results also demonstrated that increased maternal education as a proxy of socioeconomic status (SES) was associated with higher racial stability.

A similar study (Smith, Kohn-Wood, & Nicolas, 2016) of black-other multiracials similarly employed *Race Self Complexity Theory* (Terry & Winston, 2010) to examine racial identity malleability and well-being. This quantitative analysis of 125 black-other multiracials' (including 73 black-white biracial individuals) responses to the *Malleable Racial Identification* measure (Sanchez, Shih, & Garcia, 2009) indicated higher levels of racial malleability than previous research has shown. Additionally, despite the perceived connections in some research (i.e., research conducted from the 'problem approach' previously described) between 'unstable' racial identity, identity fluidity, and well-being, the results of this study did not indicate that black-other multiracials were at an increased risk for stress or have lower levels of well-being.

This fluidity research shares some similarities to the concepts of dephasing and performativity advanced in this dissertation. By focusing on the potential for shifting expressions of racial identity, this literature provides, conceptually, for the possibility of indeterminate identities or (admittedly) vague notions of the pre-individual. However, as this research still focused on the malleability of racial identity between stable poles (i.e., black, white, or biracial), it retains the humanist conceptions of identity as something possessed. Rather than viewing racial identity as stable, if switchable, I posit it is more efficacious to conceive of biraciality as something that comes to be—rather developing multiple complex, stable identities that demonstrate unique ‘fluidity,’ it is more intuitive to posit that these ‘identities’ instantiate as needed in each moment.

Literature from the humanist tradition on biracial individuals has posited the existence of identity types specific to this group. Of this body of literature, Rockquemore and Brunsma have produced some of the most widely cited and influential literature on black-white biracialism (Khanna, 2011b). As such, this research is relevant to any discussion of biracial identity research, and it is part of my entanglement with biracial research. Subsequently, I will review this body of literature and compare it to my research orientations.

Rockquemore (1998) employed in-depth interviewing of fourteen participants to suggest that black-white biracial individuals identify with four types of racial identities: 1) monoracial identity (either monoracial black or monoracial white), 2) protean identity (contextually shifting between possible identities), 3) border identity (an exclusively biracial identity; both the border and protean identity are related to Anzeldúa’s conception of border crossing), and 4) transcendent identity (eschewing racial classification; Rockquemore suggests this is in keeping with Park’s ‘marginal man’ [Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005]). The border identity was further

subdivided into validated and unvalidated, related to the extent to which identities are either accepted or rejected by others.

Research using this identity model has suggested that the border identity is the most prevalent among black-white biracial individuals (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). These identities are not held to represent some finality of biracial identification—Rockquemore suggested that there is no true end point nor clear path to an end state for biracial identities, and additional literature has focused on the daily interactions and underlying process that spur or hinder development of these identity types (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Faegin, 2008).

Rockquemore has also advanced the *Continuum of Biracial Identity* (COBI) model to describe an individual's biracial identity. This model is a continuum of identities with monoracial black and white on either end and a 'blended' biracial identity in the middle (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). This research by Rockquemore, and others in this field, map identity models where an individual's self-perceptions interacts with the perceptions of others in contextual models (e.g., Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model [Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006]). In keeping with the idea of malleability, other research has also advanced the belief that biracial individuals may hold multiple identity types and processes at once (Renn, 2003) or have one racial identity at home and another in schools (Harris & Sim, 2002).

This highly influential body of research contains some similarities to this dissertation as well as significant differences. My dissertation also centralizes the processes of biracial identity—how the 'biracial' identity comes to be rather than the question of what it is. However, whereas Rockquemore and others map an identity state (e.g., a individual has a border identity), I posit that these identity states are transitory, metastable, and are under constant iteration. An individual does not have an identity so much as inhabit a point of discontinuity. In other research

(i.e., Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017), I have suggested that identity, rather than a state of being or a form of possession, is a line of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988) that is indeterminate until a specific material-discursive configuration renders a particular identity performance intelligible. I posit that these individual performances can fall along lines similar to those advanced by Rockquemore and Brunsma—a individual can be seen to enact a monoracial, biracial, blended, or other racial identity types under specific material conditions. This conception differs from Rockquemore’s protean conception (where an individual dephases between racial ‘types’) by removing stability and certainty from this process. In this posthumnist account, a ‘biracial’ person is not any one ‘type’ of identity but is potential all of them or none of them or not something yet recognizable. Identity is always contingent upon the material-discursive intra-actions of each performative moment and abstracting identity into types free from these conditions is potentially unrevealing.

**‘Doing’ race.** Researcher have continued to employ Rockquemore’s conceptions and obtained results partially relevant to this dissertation. Khanna (2011b) conducted semi-structured interviews of 40 black-white biracial individuals (ages 18-45), and from these results, posited that individual have public identities and internalized identities. That is, biracial individuals develop a ‘performative’ (not in a Butlerian sense as advanced in this dissertation) identity and an identity that is privately held. Khanna further suggested that these identities are based on self-perceptions of an individual’s phenotype (biracial body) in connection to what an individual believes others see their phenotype as.

Other research has similarly suggested that a biracial individual’s physical appearances (e.g., hair texture, skin tone, facial features) can vary significantly and attendantly, can affect self-conceptions (Herman, 2004; Rockquemore, 1998; Root, 1990). Subsequently, researchers

have examined the effects of physical appearance on biracial identity choices. Brunsma and Rockquemore (2001) examined a sample of 177 biracial participants to determine the extent to which skin color and perceptions of skin color affected the racial identity of participants. The authors found that self-perception of skin color did not have a significant effect on biracial participant' identities. However, there was a significant association between identity and how a biracial individual believed their physical appearance was perceived by others.

The work of Khanna most closely resembles the framework advanced in this dissertation. It is somewhat telling that her academic book on this subject was subtitled *Forming and Performing Racial Identity*. While this work does not employ the Butlerian conceptions of performativity of the type I am drawing upon, Khanna still holds that the biracial identity is a type of identity work—what one does and not what one is (2011a). This work also, significantly for the field, centralizes symbols of race as a method of doing biracialism—symbols like whitening or darkening skin tone, wearing Abercrombie clothing to emphasize whiteness, and selectively associating with black or white individuals. This control over the material of biraciality is in keeping with the new materialist conceptions that 'matter matters.' Khanna further noted that these racial symbols (material) are in interaction with the 'one-drop rule' (discourse).

Khanna's conceptions of biraciality are relevant to this dissertation and may represent a point of relative commonality between humanist and posthumanist scholarship. Despite this possible, potential overlap, the humanist assumptions intercede in any significant interconnection between this research and the present dissertation. My orientation to this work is not meant as a statement of its value; rather, I seek to avoid such valuation until more clarity is brought to a posthumanist framing of biracial identity and identity more generally. I am, for this dissertation,

unable to adequately assess the potential for humanist biracial research to ground a posthumanist account. As such, I find it preferable to defer rather than suggest certainty now.

**Summary.** Humanist biracial research contains some similarities to the theorizing in this dissertation. In particular, the focus on the materiality of the physical appearance of biracial individuals, identity symbols, the ‘doing’ of race, and notions of identity fluidity is somewhat consistent with this dissertation. This dissertation could be seen as a possible continuation and iteration of this portion of biracial research. Instead of ending inquiry with the racial symbols and biracial body (and retaining a humanist core), this new materialist analysis examines all of the materiality (e.g., the researcher body, questionnaires) of the ‘doing’ of race. Despite the linkages described above, I cannot directly draw upon humanist biracial research to ground this dissertation or to further provide for a foundation of an analysis of biraciality following the ontological turn. I do not suggest that this humanist research is either unimportant or useless; rather, it is my hope that even this research can be mobilized to foster creativity and generativity in biracial inquiry while maintain communicability.



## **Chapter Three:**

### **Methodology and Research Design**

Called by an injurious name, I come into social being, and because I have a certain inevitable attachment to my existence, because a certain narcissism takes hold of any term that confers existence, I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially...only by occupying—being occupied by—that injurious term that I can resist and oppose it. (Butler, 1992, p.104)

#### **Making Friends with Methodology**

This dissertation is informed by new materialism, posthumanism, and post-qualitative inquiry—each of these perspectives problematizes notions of representation and the taken-for-grantedness of any gestures toward a ‘true’ accounting of events. As such, it is disingenuous to describe this chapter as anything other than a story of my methodology, data collection, and data analysis—a story as partial, uneven, and shifting as the stories my participants told me. Writing about uncertain ‘data’ should also be uncertain, tentative, and refusing of finality. As the past is reshaped by present intra-actions and the future is not simply what is yet to come, I posit that this chapter is also an intra-active reconfiguration—that this chapter is a post-hoc fiction that suggests what I (may) have done in the process of my inquiry. This belief undermines the utility of writing a methodology section at all; if my results and my design sections are just stories, then their cause and effect relationship is questionable.

In quantum physics, events that seem to share a cause and effect relationship can be switched in time (Oreshkov, Costa, & Brukner, 2012)—cause can become both cause and effect; effect can become both cause and effect. It is possible here to describe time, cause and effect, before and after, as performative becomings—as intra-activity (Barad, 2007), but these issues are beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, causality can be temporarily resolved through observation—the indeterminate becoming temporarily determinate (as in a Bohrian account). I imagine my dissertation in much the same way: an agential cut enacting a temporal boundary through the writing process. Until I had written these sections, the cause and effect relationship between my methodology and results was indeterminate. Perhaps my results are the cause and my methodology was the effect—perhaps these chapters should have been reordered. All of this to note that methodology is not simply what precedes results and results are not simply the effect of methodology. I write in past tense, but I find myself slipping into the present as well. Methodologizing is a doing, both what I had ‘done’ and what I do now.

The issue of causality and spacetime mattering (Barad, 2007) in writing a dissertation is troubling and, perhaps, only ever arbitrarily addressed (or addressable). I have considered alternative ways communicating my methodology and design to readers, but the costs of implementing these are substantial—to give up what is familiar is also to limit intelligibility. The more I problematize, deconstruct, and resist the urge to methodologize here, the more I efface the communicability of this dissertation. This may be the same drive that leads others to question the utility of traditional qualitative methods (e.g., St. Pierre 2013). However, like Vagle (2017) I wish to break up with methods but still try to be friends. So, perhaps, I can also be friends with written methodology sections and tell here a story of my design.

## Preserving Method

The rejection of humanism has moved some scholars (e.g., St. Pierre, 2013) to suggest that researchers should no longer draw upon methods that were developed under humanist assumptions—that “standard methods are often extremely good at what they do, they are badly adapted to the study of the ephemeral, the infinite and the irregular” (Law, 2004, p. 4). Subjects, identities, and the process of individuation are well described by words like ephemeral, infinite, and irregular. The vast majority of methods, or perhaps all of them, would then appear to be inadequate for a posthumanist inquiry. The turn away from method and empiricism leads to a ‘pure’ philosophical inquiry free of the grip of empiricism. This drive towards a ‘purely’ philosophical inquiry is not without its appeal. Throughout this dissertation, I have been critical of research that has assumed the existence of an inner self and problematized the postpositive assumption that questionnaires are able to measure rather than create their results. However, this critique is only arbitrarily limited—it could be extended to any method, no matter how creative; researchers are then left with the impossible task of trying to *method* themselves out of the problems of method. Turning to a purely philosophical inquiry appears sensible, but I believe that the ruins of method still hold something of value.

Pure philosophy is not an escape from humanist entanglements; that “as we produce knowledge, we are all located somewhere, in our practices and in our bodies” (Law, 2004, p. 68). To enact some kind of detachment from humanism, as a philosophical inquiry intimates, is not possible. It is, perhaps, as Law stated, an exercise in “self-delusion” to believe otherwise (p. 68). I am not certain I would go as far as Law did with his critique, but I am certain that there is no view of everything from nowhere (Haraway, 1991). If there is no ultimate escape from humanism, as previously described, there can be no escape from the humanism in method.

Rather than running from the intra-activity of method, I have chosen instead to adopt *post-qualitative inquiry* (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013) and employ the remains of empiricism offered by my Baradian framework. I seek to disrupt the proscriptive nature of traditional methods and imagine what becomes possible or thinkable when I re-theorize, re-methodologize, and re-method the interview, questionnaires, and the IAT.

In taking up post-qualitative inquiry, I sought a type of *speculative pragmatism* that “takes as its starting point a rigor of experimentation” (Manning, 2016, p. 38). This speculative pragmatism is at once familiar but devoted to what remains in the overrun of order. Rather than attempt to excise excess as done in the traditional use of method, speculative pragmatism is “interested in what this excess can do” (p. 38). Speculative pragmatism engages the familiar in the event of its familiarity. That is, “what mobilizes the rigor of a speculative pragmatism...cannot be a method imposed on the process from without. The rigor must emerge from within the occasion of experiences, the event’s own stakes in its coming-to-be. Technique is necessary” (p. 38). To repurpose qualitative methodology, a qualitative method must be used, contorted, and thrust backward. Post-qualitative inquiry and speculative pragmatism shatter the order of method and radical possibility results.

In the ruins of method, though, techniques remain. Technique is simply a tool, an object of ritualized action. The potential of a tool, as action embodied, cannot be understated, but a technique, on its own, is without function, meaning—a subject without a pre-individual, a shovel without a hand to wield and purpose it. Technique, then, is always coupled with its technicity, a “modality for creating out a system of techniques the more-than of system” (Manning, 2013, p. 32). Manning (2013) further clarified that “where technique engages the repetitive practices that

form a composing body—be it organic or inorganic—technicity is a set of enabling conditions that exact from technique the potential of the new for co-composition” (p. 33).

Technicity is then, for example, “that which marks the difference in the event of gardening, an event that, on the surface, uses the same techniques whether in November or in May.” The turn to post-qualitative inquiry unseats the traditional technicity of qualitative inquiry that guided familiar techniques like interviewing. Instead of dismantling techniques, which is unneeded, I deform the technicity co-constituting them. In doing this, time comes unstuck and the past is remade. As in Barad, the past is not simply what preceded the present, it is constantly made and remade in the action of the present and in entangled memory. This is not a “denial of the past but as the quality of the more-than of the past tuning towards the future. Time loops. The past now carries a potential that was always there but was backgrounded” (p. 33).

In altering technicity, the ecology of the techniques, familiar techniques, have new possibilities or rather, their always-already possibilities are recognizable. For example, this dissertation takes up the interview for its capacity to instantiate subjects and make visible their performativity. In a post-qualitative and posthumanist orientation, interviews always had this technical use. Absent this framing, the interview is simply a method to record the story of participants. Technicity matters. New frameworks and creative methodologies, like post-qualitative inquiry and *experimental critical qualitative inquiry* (ECQI) described below, do not necessarily require new methods/techniques to enable something new. Moreover, it is the familiarity of these techniques that enabled their adroit use. Techniques matter as:

Technique comes out of practice as much as it is what goes into practice. In this regard, techniques are hard to come by—they demand the patient exploration of how a practice best comes into itself. Technicity is the dephasing of technique—is the experience of

technique reaching the more-than of its initial application. Technicity is a craft—it is how the field of technique touches its potential. From technique to technicity we have a transduction. Technicity is a shift of level that activates a shift in process. This is how techniques evolve. (Manning, 2013, p. 33)

The movement of technicity both conserves and fundamentally alters techniques. For example, the intra-action of the interview remains the same; people talk, words recorded, and transcriptions done, but under the post-qualitative, post-humanist makings of technicity, the interviews take on ‘new powers’ of subjectification and render identity performances visible. In retaining familiarity to me as a technique, I can draw upon my expertise at interviewing to fuel my intuition and memories of the future (Manning, 2016). Technicity not only alters a technique’s past, it reconfigures its future—the always-already and always-becoming. In this way, I can intuit a possible future when using the interview method, an outcome based on my knowledge of its always-becoming. As dancer has knowledge of the next step, I can similarly imagine what could come next in interviewing. These memories of the future will never, can never come to pass, but they enable way forward, the potential to draw upon the interview and to evolve it.

I used the intuition provided by the interview technique to predict/prognosticate/augur/divine the potential outcomes of this project. I was able to intuit what certain agential cuts, what material alterations would provoke particular subject instantiations. I used these memories of the future to design this dissertation. The interview and other techniques employed in this dissertation are *enabling constraints* (Manning, 2016). That is, these techniques turn “multiplicities into emergence” (Manning, 2013, p. 347). As previously described, the biracial subject is dispersed, uneven, messy, fragmented, only called into being. It

is always multiple, never singular—never just an object to be examined. The interview technique forces the ‘biracial’ subject into instantiating, into visibility; the interview constrains me, the study, and participants into knowable, intuitable constraints—the multiple forced into temporary emergence. These constraints are productive. The enabling constraint of gravity allows the dancer to dance (Manning, 2013). Without gravity, dancing could not occur. Without the interview technique, this dissertation, with its purpose, disintegrate. Intuition is vital as “intuition is never separate from technique. It is a rigorous process that consists in pushing technique to its limit, revealing its technicity. Technicity: the outdoing of technique that makes the more-than of experience felt” (Manning, 2016, p. 50).

### **Methodology: Experimental Critical Qualitative Inquiry**

The purpose of this research is to enable difference in the study of biracial identity rather than attempt to determine the unity of the biracial subject. I do not assume the existence of “essential voices and the foundational nature of authentic lived experiences” (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 630). To that end, this research decenters traditional qualitative research methodologies—what Lather (2013) called the liberal humanism of “QUAL 1.0” (p. 634). Rather than relying on the longstanding traditions of qualitative methodologies, I position this study as part of the post-qualitative research movement and consistent with the conceptions of *methodologies without methodology* (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). Koro-Ljungberg (2016) describes *methodologies without methodology* as:

...methodologies without strict boundaries or normative structures—methodologies that begin anywhere, anytime, but by doing so can create a sense of uncertainty and loss (or mourning of stable, fixed, preconceptualized, or historical knowledge). Methodologies

without methodology bring about methodological challenges and examples that may push current research practices and question rigid methodological tradition (p. 1).

I did not engage in this research assuming methodological purity or enforcing supposed (in)commensurability of qualitative/quantitative, experimental/interpretivist paradigms, science/not-science. I engaged in this research to open a new dialogue of what is possible in biracial research—I pursued difference and did not assume the unity of experience. I sought to employ the various methods to “triangulate many with many. Triangulate the triangulation (s)...Let triangulation reflect/run/move into many different directions and use all these directions and variations” (M. Koro-Ljungberg, personal communication, August 13, 2015). It was with these words and in keeping with my onto-epistemology that I employed qualitative methods (interviews) and quantitative methods (IAT, questionnaires) irrespective of methodological ‘purity’ and with informed ambiguity (Wolgemuth, 2016).

Attempting to provide an easy, unproblematic label to the overall design of this study is difficult as labels matter and bring a sense of determinacy to what is porous and messy. However, labels cannot and should not be avoided (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016) as they connect this work to the larger conversations even as I push back against some of those conversations. As I engaged in semi-structured interviewing, this research could be called *qualitative inquiry*. As I employed standard materials in unstandardized ways to provoke/invoke/observe identity instantiations, this research was experimental—not experimental in the postpositivist tradition of the ‘gold standard’ (e.g., Cartwright, 2007), but in the colloquial meaning of a tentative, uncertain procedure that produces an effect. As I situated this research, to some extent, in critical psychology and share in many of its notions of power relations and performativity, this work is *critical*. Rather than attempting to ablate this unstable mangle of terms, I have chosen instead to



place them uncomfortably together in a label under tension: *experimental critical qualitative inquiry*. As the act of naming this methodology is neither fully revealing nor proscriptive, I engage in this naming process as a working, rather than stable methodology.

## **Research Questions**

From my experimental critical qualitative inquiry methodology, I created the following research questions:

- 1) How does the researcher, researched, and interview intra-activity serve to instantiate the biracial subject?
- 2) Under what material alterations to the interview process do different subjects come to be?
- 3) Which subjects come to be or fail to come to be in the interview intra-action?
- 4) How does purposeful entanglement function during the interview process?

## **Participants**

### **Preamble**

As previously described, rather than engaging in a purely philosophical or conceptual analysis of biraciality, I chose instead to recruit participants and collect data. In doing this, I must contend with the philosophical difficulties of studying what I, at least partially, caused to come to be. That is, I posited that the biracial identity is only performed in intra-activity and is only ever called into being. This ‘hailing’ of subjects is how I posit ‘biracial’ individuals discursively learn to be recognizable as biracial. Subsequently, my recruitment email was a type of hailing, and only those that recognize themselves in my hailing of the biracial subject could possibly believe they were the individuals I was looking to find. This leads to a number of questions that are difficult or impossible to answer. If a ‘biracial’ individual does not recognize themselves in

the call, even when the intent is understood, does their biraciality differ from those that do recognize themselves in the call? Do those non-responding individuals operate from a separate set of material-discursive understandings that alter the nature of their recognition of the call? Is their performative biraciality incomplete? Do their entanglements make a certain ‘type’ of black-white biracial individual less responsive to types of hailing? I cannot answer these questions nor adequately anticipate potential answers. While these questions may represent limitations to my research, I believe that they demonstrate the continued need for empirical research, and further, these thoughts have spurred my use of participants in this study.

I did not choose participants on the basis of their ability to represent their identity (e.g., the ‘lived experience’ of ‘being’ biracial), but rather, I chose participants that were able to respond to a ‘hailing’ of biracial individuals—whether or not they ‘are’ biracial, are socially accepted as biracial, or personally accept a biracial identity, the capacity to respond to a biracial hailing indicates that they may have an understanding of the discursive drives of the biracial subject. It is these discourses that I am primarily concerned with. As such, I did not ask participants for ‘proof’ of their biraciality as such proving practices are central to biracial discourses, are distasteful, and represents a form of epistemological violence (Teo, 2008).

### **Inclusion Criteria and Participants**

As finding a sample of black-white biracial individuals had proven difficult in my previous studies and in biracial research more generally (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002), I relied upon convenience sampling as commonly done in other studies of biracial individuals (e.g., Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009). To recruit potential participants at a large, southeastern university, I made recruitment announcements in several large classes and sent a mass email (Appendix A) to the college of education’s undergraduate students. Using my

professional network at the university, faculty members at several colleges on campus also recruited potential participants.

Inclusion requirements for this study were: 1) participants must be an undergraduate student between the age of 18 - 25 and 2) they must have one biological parent that self-identified as black and one biological parent that self-identified white. The first criterion was to limit the potential generational variation in the biracial subject that may have otherwise impacted the findings. The second criterion is a very basic definition of biraciality and one that I have previously adopted (e.g., Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017) and has been used by other scholars (e.g., e.g., Aspinall, 2009). Other definitions of biraciality exist (e.g., personal acceptance of a biracial identity). I selected the 'biological' basis as it is seemingly the most intuitive. As I do not authenticate or in-authenticate identities, I do not believe that my definition is the most 'correct' one. Rather, I saw it as part of how a 'biracial' individual would instantiate a biracial performance (e.g., I am biracial because my parents are from different races). Other definitions of biraciality may lead to different outcomes, which underscores the continued need for empirical post-qualitative inquiry. No other screening of participants was done as I do not question the 'validity' of an individual's identity.

Five individuals (under the pseudonyms Callie, Tony, Juliet, Michelle, and Anouk) met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate. One participant (Tony) did not meet my initial inclusion criteria as he was the child of two black-white biracial parents. As I am not attempting to generalize a biracial experience and his data represents a type of 'biracial' identity that is no less 'authentic' or 'biological' than the other participants that met the inclusion criteria, I found no significant reason to exclude Tony. I employed his data to diffract his perspective with the perspectives of 'first generation' biracial participants.

As the black-white biracial population is very small, I will not provide a full description of each participant to protect their privacy. The participants were all in their late teens or early 20s and represented multiple majors across the university. Four of the participants self-identified as female with Tony being the only self-identifying man. I hesitate to describe their skin tones as it is purely subjective and skin tone is part of intra-action and loses its significance in isolation; also, it is distasteful to lens my participants through their skin tone—they were much more than their skin tone. Callie was very friendly and easy to talk to—we frequently went over our allotted time during the interviews. Juliet was thoughtful, polite, and conscientious. Anouk was upbeat and made me laugh even when transcribing her interviews. Michelle was engaging and introspective. Tony was infectiously cheerful, excited, and voluble. I prefer to think of my participants this way rather than turning them into a raced body, but despite my reservations, skin tone matters in the United States; my participants made frequent references to their perceptions of their skin tone and how they believe other perceived them. Skin tone was frequently mobilized in identify instantiations during the interviews and, while I am more interested in how they employed their perceptions of their skin tone in these identity instantiations, my subjective account of their skin tone may provide needed context for a reader.

Callie, Michelle, and Anouk all shared the expected ‘ambiguous’ racial physicality commonly associated with biraciality. They each had light brown skin tone, similar to my own, with curly brown or black hair that could have suggested black, white, or Spanish heritage. Tony had a much darker skin tone, and it would have been easy to assume that he was ‘fully’ black in heritage—I, automatically, doubted his black-white biracial heritage to some extent upon initially seeing him but this thought quickly passed. Juliet, however, stood out the most from the other participants. She warned me through email that she appeared white despite her ‘biracial’

heritage, and upon meeting her, I understood why. She had very pale skin, even compared to ‘white’ individuals, and straight brown hair. I immediately doubted her ‘biracial’ heritage, and I wanted to ask for ‘proof’—I wanted something to explain the complete absence of physical traits commonly ascribed to ‘biracial’ people. I quickly brushed away these doubts, though they still linger to some extent even now.

## **Data Collection**

### **Reflexivity<sup>1</sup>**

In an era of rampant reflexivity, just getting on with it may be the most radical action one can make (Lather, 1991, p. 20).

I<sup>2</sup> am not certain how to talk about my ‘reflexivity.’ My ‘biracial’ body was present during all of the interviews and continues to function as part of the narrative of this dissertation. In adopting a new materialist framework, my materiality is as much a part of the results and conception of the study as everything else. No amount of reflection or bracketing is going to remove my biracial body, or me ‘talking white,’ from the research intra-actions. Rather than shy away from this, I use/d my body to mobilize my theoretical and philosophical understandings in the service of this work.

Similar to previous studies (e.g., Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017), my participants came to my study expecting me to be biracial due to my interest in this subject, and once they physically saw me, they concluded that I was most likely biracial—black-white biracial like they professed to be. They did not come to my research free from the discourses that define biraciality—they were already enmeshed in that phenomenon. During the course of the study, I did ‘confirm’ my black-white heritage (through my parents’ racial self-identification). The knowledge of my heritage reconfigured both what is possible and impossible during the interview intra-action. Just as

Barad (2007) states that “we are a part of the nature we seek to understand” (p. 26), my materiality and entanglements with participants are part of what I seek to understand. I make no attempt to ‘bracket out’ (e.g., Tufford & Newman, 2012) my subjectivity, nor do I maintain pretenses of an observer exterior to an experiment, but I examine how I, as an agent and material agent, am a part of the phenomenon and apparatus of this research.

### **Interview Design**

As this study was designed to examine biracial performativity during the research process, I employed a semi-structured interview format and made material alterations to those interviews (e.g., by including psychological questionnaires) to provoke the ebb and flow of subjects (black, white, biracial, and others). Seemingly ubiquitous in qualitative research, the semi-structured interview enabled me to mobilize this familiarity to ground my research design (in keeping with Manning).

As this study explores sensitive issues (e.g., race, potential sources of conflict, childhood memories), the need to maintain the trust, rapport, and confidence of participants was paramount. In order to address this issue, for the first interview, I employed Roulston’s (2010) concept of the *romantic* interview. The romantic interviewer seeks to “generate the kind of conversation that is intimate and self-revealing” (p. 217). This romantic style served the dual purpose of both establishing/maintaining rapport and allowing for material control of the interview entanglement. To enact this romantic style, I sought to materially alter the flow of the interview through active listening, restatement, asking for elaboration, and avoiding critical examinations of the responses of the participants. I attempted to consciously limit my behaviors to those that gave the participant the impression that I was solely interested in hearing their history and beliefs (e.g.,

smiling, offering gentle affirmatives). This could be viewed as a more traditional, interpretivist interview.

For the second interview, I employed what Roulston (2010) termed the *postmodern* interview. This interview style differs from the romantic interview through a focus on the multiple meanings and the non-unitary selves of interviewer and participants. The postmodern interview centralizes the “belief that data collected is always partial, arbitrary, and situated, rather than unitary, final, and holistic” and serves to “attempt to open up spaces for new ways of thinking, being, and doing” (p. 220). Whereas the romantic interviewer is materially more passive and affirmative, the postmodern interviewer offers critical engagement with the participant and pushes back against the narratives provided by the participant. This more active interviewer includes bringing the performativity of the biracial identity into the explicit awareness of participants. With the rapport established by the first, romantic interview, this style enabled me to begin to disrupt the performativity of my participants in order to possibly bring different, previously unobserved performances to the forefront. I did not fully engage my participants during this interview, adopting instead an activity that was somewhat critical but not directly explicit in my contestation of their identity talk. I choose this level of activity in order to continue to develop my rapport with participants and to provide them with the basics of critical resistance and critical questioning in keeping with my ethical stance in this dissertation.

For the third interview, I engaged in the process of *purposeful entanglement* (Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017). Purposeful entanglement is a new materialist/posthumanist reinterpretation of what Roulston (2010) conceived of as transformative interviewing (e.g., Wolgemuth & Donohue, 2006). This interview style is concerned with the responsibility of the researcher to be aware of the non-linear inculcation of themselves into the participant’s entanglements—the

researcher, being responsible for the subjects they render possible, impossible, and differently-possible, must centralize their ethical responsibility to the other. In this way, I sought to foster in my participants' *critical resistance* (Hoy, 2005) to categorization—my intent to become entangled in my participants is meted out in the moment. I sought to foster critical resistance (Hoy, 2005) to subjectification through the process of purposeful entanglement—to bring participants to a place “of less entrenched social identities” (Wolgemuth et al., 2014, p. 6).

The mechanism of action of purposeful entangling is uncertain. With Jenni F. Wolgemuth, I created the concept of purposeful entanglement to describe the permanent effects of intra-action on the future subject performances. We leveraged Barad's theorizing that the past is constantly reinterpreted by the present, and attendant, in altering the present, the past and future change as well. I asked my participants to ‘relive’ their past through the stories they told in the first interview. Each ‘revisitation’ of the past reinterprets it, alters it, and it is never again the same. In the second interview I pushed back against their identity talk, probed the assumptions in their stories, and brought their performativity to into their explicit awareness. Again, their past is reinterpreted, but now it includes concepts of critical resistance, and the memories are altered again. Finally, in this purposeful entangling and third interview, I became a full active element to the interview contesting the notion that my participants must have a racial identity, must respond to hailings, and embody the discursive subjects they were disciplined to have. Purposeful entangling is continual process and seeding of reinterpreting the past to make race less real, less tangible, and something no longer seemingly self-evident.

As future subject performances are cued by material-discursive hailings and instantiated with past performances, the reinterpretation of those past performances leads to subjects that are no longer as they were before my interviews—that the black, white, biracial, and other



performances are entangled with my interview hauntings and my promotion of critical resistance. Purposeful entangling then acts at the level of the pre-individual—part of the uncommunicative swirling tensions of subject possibilities. As such, I cannot be certain purposeful entangling ‘works.’ However, interviews can (e.g., Roulston’s transformative interviewing) and always do intervene. With purposeful entanglement, I choose to become responsible for those interventions and seek to serve my ethical stances in this dissertation.

As I sought to observe/provoke/instantiate various identity performances, I selected these three interviewing styles in order to provide the space needed to enact these performances and to draw upon my memoirs of the future (Manning, 2016). The first interview was designed to promote rapport and to allow participants to perform subjects in response to the interview material. The second interview was designed to unsettle/disrupt/complicate the rhythm of the identity performance of the first interview. The third interview was for me to become accountable to the identities instantiated during the interview process and examine the falling apart/together of identity in multiple. As a result, the premeditated order of a romantic interview, a postmodern interview, and a purposeful entangling interview was needed to enable the critical examination of identity performances sought by the research questions. These three interview styles were materially different and enabled the results of the types of interview to be analyzed through their material engagement with participants.

### **Interview Structure**

Appendices B-C contain the structured questions I used during the three semi-structured interviews. Each interview was guided by the questions, but the interviews became less structured as they proceeded with the third and final interview being mostly unstructured. This decrease in structure was intentional and designed to gradually increase my participation in the

interview conversation. The second and third interview build upon the materials and interview talk of each of the previous interviews. I interviewed each participant, in person, for approximately 60 mins per interview, all of which were held in a room on the university's campus. All interviews were audio-recorded, and I transcribed them for meaning and clarity.

**Interview one.** The purpose of this interview was to establish rapport with my participants and gain biographical information and uncritical perspectives on their racial identity to ground the proceeding more critical interviews. As part of this first interview, I asked participants to complete the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Appendix E) and demographics questionnaire (Appendix F) partially based on the work of Rockquemore and Brunson (2008) as well as take the black-white Implicit Associations Test (IAT). During this initial interview, participants all suspected that I was biracial (e.g., have parents that self-identify with different races), but I did not confirm this until the final interview. I conducted partial cognitive interviewing for the MEIM and demographics questionnaire.

**Interview two.** The purpose of this interview was to bring into participants' explicit awareness any contradiction and multiple narratives provided by them during their identity talk and performance. This interview was guided by structured questions, but our conversations followed the identity talk from the first interview and emergent topics from this interview. As part of this interview, participants took the black-white IAT for the second time and the Multiracial Experiences Measure (MEM; Appendix G). After they completed the MEM, I conducted a cognitive interview of this questionnaire by asking participants to describe their thinking when they answered the questionnaire.

**Interview three.** The purpose of this interview was to bring together the intra-actions, identity talk, questionnaire results, and IAT results from the first two interviews of the present

study to foster participants' critical resistance to subjectification. I sought these purposeful entanglements as part of my ethical stance as previously described. As this process was mostly contingent on the individual participant's interview process, I engaged in a most unstructured interview, but I did employ a few guiding questions.

## **Instruments**

### **Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure**

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Appendix B; MEIM; Phinney, 1992) is a widely used measure of ethnic identity strength in social science research (Phinney, & Ong, 2007). While not a numbered question, respondents must first specify a primary ethnic group by answering the question "In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be \_\_\_\_." Items 1 through 12 use a Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly disagree to 4 = Strongly agree) to score individual's ethnic identity strength. These questions are divided into two subscales: 1) identity exploration and 2) identity commitment.

These subscales have roots in Erik Erikson's notions of identity crisis (Erikson, 1968) and James Marcia's (1980) expansions on Erikson's conceptions. The MEIM assumes that an individual's identity strength can be assessed by examining the extent to which individuals have explored their stated identity's norms (e.g., understandings, traditions) and the extent to which individuals have committed to an ethnic identity (e.g., feelings of belonging, affiliation). Items 13 through 15 on the MEIM ask for the respondent's ethnicity, father's ethnicity, and mother's ethnicity. As this study's sample was restricted to black-white 'biracial' individuals, these last items will be omitted for brevity and to reduce potential confusion with answers given to these same questions in the demographics portion in this study. Previous research has shown the

MEIM to have good reliability with alpha scores above .80 (Ponterotto, Gretchen, & Utsey, 2003).

I did not take up the MEIM to assess my participants' identity strength as would be done in a humanist conception of identity. Rather, I employed this measure to provoke identity performances in my participants and to examine the narratives they drew upon when answering the questions. From my posthumanist philosophy, the questions do not measure participants' identities, rather questionnaire creates the identities it would seek to measure (i.e., through hailing). However, my participants viewed the questions through a humanist lens, and I believed they answered them as 'honestly' as they could contingent upon the materiality of the questions.

### **Implicit Associations Test**

The Implicit Association Test (IAT) provides a measure of the strengths of automatic associations made implicitly by participants through a computer-based performance test (Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003). The IAT involves measuring the reaction time of participants as they classify words and pictures into categories. Respondents are shown stimuli that they must sort into the proper category as quickly as they are able. By measuring reaction time, factors like social desirability are, purportedly, obviated. Race-based IATs allow individuals to sort visual stimuli (positive and negative words) with pictorial images of black, white, Asian, and Latinx individuals. The reaction time or 'latencies' are logged for each of the trials. The trial latencies are then compared, and composite 'd scores' are generated using the most recent IAT scoring algorithm outlined by Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji (2003). D scores range from -2 (maximum non-stereotype score) to 2 (maximum stereotyped score). These d scores represent the relative strength and direction of implicit associations made by participants.

These automatic associations (e.g., associating the picture of an African-American boy with the word smart) are believed to be subconscious and not subject to the conscious decision making of the participants. The IAT procedure operates with the assumption that an established association (e.g., stereotype) requires a shorter time to reactivate than an association that violates an established association. For instance, a respondent is likely to take less time to react to paired stimuli that includes a picture of a flower and the word 'beautiful' whereas they would likely take more time to react to a paired stimulus of a picture of a spider with the word 'beautiful.' Thus, the measured reaction time to paired stimuli (e.g., flower and beautiful) can, supposedly, reflect the strength of an established association.

Psychological research is commonly limited by the volitional nature of answers given by respondents to questionnaires (Cunningham, Preacher, & Banaji, 2001). Endemic to these explicit answers are questions of veracity and social desirability. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is, purportedly, one of the few empirical measures available to social science researchers and is one of the most prominent (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998; De Houwer, 2001; de Houwer, Beckers, & Moors, 2007; Brendl, Markman, & Messner, 2001; Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003). I do not take up the IAT for its ability to measure implicit attitudes, though I do believe it likely can do so. Primarily, I employed the IAT as an agential cut (Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017) to disrupt the typical flow of the interview conversation. As participants positioned me as a fellow 'biracial' person, their identity performances were contingent on those perceptions of my materiality. The IAT, neither biracial nor 'human,' disrupted this becoming-biracial process and enabled other identity instantiations to occur.

### **Multiracial Experiences Measure**

The Multiracial Experiences Measure (MEM; Yoo, Jackson, Guevarra, Miller, & Harrington, 2016) was designed to measure the psychological experiences of multiracial individuals. This measure is one of only two (the other being the Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011) that has shown some quantitative validity. The MEM contains five subscales: 1) shifting expressions (e.g., I shift how I racially express my identity around certain people [e.g., talk and dress].), 2) perceived racial ambiguity (e.g., I get asked "What are you?"), 3) creating third space (e.g., I am picked on for not looking or acting like a certain racial group.), 4) multiracial discrimination (e.g., I am active in multiracial organizations or groups.), and 5) multicultural engagement (e.g., I live in more than one culture.). The MEM uses a Likert-type scale that ranges from one (almost never) to five (almost always). I employed the MEM to examine what discourses and identity narratives participants drew upon to defend or elaborate on their answers. In doing this, I was able to analyze the dephasing and becoming of their subjects while engaging in this identity talk.

### **Cognitive Interviewing**

As part of this study, I engaged participants in *cognitive interviewing*, a technique used in the evaluation of survey instruments to determine the psychological processes respondents undergo as they answer questionnaires (Willis, 2004). Cognitive interviewing typically either asks participants to 'think-aloud' while they answer questions or to respond to verbal probes of their answers. The intent of the 'think aloud' method is to understand the thought processes while participants are initially experiencing them to ensure the validity of questionnaires (Willis, 2006). The more modern verbal probing procedures rely on an active interviewer engaging participants in further conversation related to their selected answers. These active interviewers

ask questions to examine the participants' comprehension and recall. Cognitive interviewing is based on four states (Tourangeau, 1984) of cognitive response process: 1) comprehension, 2) retrieval, 3) decision/judgment/estimation, and 4) response. The final state, response is explicitly noted an attempt "to match an internally generated answer to the response categories provided or expected by the investigator" (Willis, 2006, p. 10).

Cognitive interviewing is not unlike other forms of interview or narrative inquiry (Willis, 2006). Whereas narrative inquiry probes for participants to tell a story of their experiences (e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), cognitive interviews enable participants to produce a post-hoc story of their answers to the questions. As this dissertation was focused on the coming into being of the 'biracial' subjects and the entanglements that fuel its becoming, cognitive interviewing provided a way to probe and disrupt the resulting identity talk. Rather than relying on cognitive interviewing to improve survey instrument designs, I sought to understand the process by which various subjects instantiated during the interviews. I employed a modified form of cognitive interviewing during interviews one and two. After participants respond to the MEIM and MEM, I probed their answers to facilitate more identity talk on the topics offered by the questionnaires and to provoke identity performances based on the materiality of those questionnaires.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Philosophical Engagement and Analysis.**

As new materialism is still a developing philosophical frame, many practical question of how to analyze empirical data remain unsettled (Fox & Alldred, 2015). As such, few tools for analyzing such data exist, and as most or all new materialist research also has adopted post-qualitative methodologies, analysis practices remain in flux. Many common data analysis techniques (e.g., coding) are explicitly eschewed (Mazzei, 2014) in the post-qualitative

framework. Similarly, few psychological studies have employed new materialism or post-qualitative inquiry and as such, there was no significant existing body of literature to draw upon to ground my data analysis. As a result, I choose to examine my data through philosophical engagement rather than through proscriptive techniques. Specifically, I employed *diffraction* (as described on p. 44), *thinking with theory* (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), and portions of *Critical Resistance Analysis* (CRA; Wolgemuth, 2014).

Drawing upon three methods of data analysis was difficult and diffracting the results of these methods was similarly messy. Each required that I employ my philosophical and theoretical framework to analyze my data and decenter the humanistic notion of generating ‘meaning’ from that data. I drew upon these techniques to “avoid being seduced by the [humanist] desire to create a coherent and interesting narrative that [was] bound by themes and patterns” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p.viii). Through this dissertation, I do not provide themes or tell the ‘truth’ of my participants’ lives. Rather this data analysis merely articulates an alternative perspective on biracial performativity.

**Thinking with theory.** To analyze my data, I employed Jackson and Mazzei’s concept of *thinking with theory* (2012) to ‘plug-in’ the conceptual tools described in the introduction and literature review. In particular, I analyzed my transcripts by thinking through my data using writings on agential cuts, apparatus, entanglements, diffraction, intra-action, individuation, metastability, subjectification/desubjectification (Foucault, 1997; Butler, 1997) and other writings on new materialism (e.g., Bennet, 2009; Mol, 2002; Pickering, 2010; Latour, 2005).

**Critical resistance analysis.** I engaged my data using portions of Critical Resistance Analysis (CRA; Wolgemuth, 2014). As I posited that biracial individuals shift between desiring, resisting, creating, and recreating subjects, this analysis is uniquely suited to examining how



these subjects come to be. In particular, I drew upon *Deconstructive Trace Analysis* and *Resistance Analysis* bring into relief the discourses that participants employed to fuel identity performances and identity talk.

*Deconstruction trace analysis.* Drawing on Derrida (1997) and Boje's (2001) conceptions of the deconstruction of binaries, deconstruction trace analysis searches for implicit and explicit dualities (e.g., biracial/monoracial, black/white) in data and analyzes the relationships between these binary elements. This analysis can yield memos noting how binaries are resisted or troubled, "how they break down, and how they are restored or reconceptualized" by participants (Wolgemuth, 2014, p. 8). As 'biracial' individuals occupy a space (i.e., the pre-individual) in which they constantly are creating and recreating subjects (i.e., black, white, biracial, all possible choices), searching for the binaries that are partially responsible for making the indeterminate determinate was paramount to this analysis. I have previously suggested (Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017) that at least two types of biracial subject may be at work in these discourses, a subjectified biracial identity that desires to be (bi)raced and a desubjectified biracial identity that resists the desire to be seen as a subject. Deconstruction trace analysis enabled an analysis of these conceptions in addition to the more typical racialized subjects.

*Resistance analysis.* This analysis focuses on the extent to which participants resist or critically resist the various constructed subjects. As previously noted, biracial individuals, in indeterminate identity space, could critically resist categorization (e.g., desubjectified biracial identity) or submit to racial discourses and adopt the identity talk of a racialized subject.

Resistance analysis examines "the participants' constructions of subjects to address questions of subordination, complicity, and resistance" (Wolgemuth, 2014, p. 10).

## **Validity Criteria**

The question of what makes qualitative research valid/truthful/trustworthy has been widely discussed by researchers, and while numerous answers have been proposed, (e.g., Creswell, 2007, Lincoln & Guba, 1985), little consensus exists (Bochner, 2000). Qualitative researchers have typically critiqued realism and scientific empiricism, and have, instead, set out to establish paradigm-specific notions of validity (e.g., Tracy, 2010). However, the antifoundationalism of the linguistic turn brought withering critiques to the notion that research can be categorized by the binary of valid/invalid—that validity is always “multiple, partial, endlessly deferred (Lather, 1993, p. 675). The movement from the linguistic turn to the ontological turn (i.e., posthumanism) has further fueled this discussion of validity as decentering the human subject also decenters traditional notions of ethical behavior, a traditional component of validity (Tracy, 2010). Notions of validity become especially problematic as inquiry from the ontological turn has begun to partially deconstruct qualitative research itself (e.g., Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). The purpose and efficacy of interviews, a central qualitative research method, has been questioned as “human accounts can no longer be accorded validity on the basis of their ‘authenticity’” (Fox & Alldred, 2015, p. 409).

In the presence of redefined ethics, methodological challenges, and the decentering of the human subject, establishing absolutes of validity is difficult, impossible, or perhaps just unneeded. I have sympathy with Bochner (2000) when he stated that using criteria of validity to find failure in what was new or in alternative conceptions was “silly” (p. 268). However, I employ Lather’s transgressional validity to move my work into a space in which multiplicities of possibilities become thinkable and potentially ‘valid.’

**Transgressive validity.** In addition to materialist conceptions of objectivity, I take up Lather's (1993) transgressive validity as part of my validity criteria. Transgressive validity is explicitly poststructural in orientation, but I believe, similar to my use of CRA, that diffracting transgressive validity with my Baradian conceptions of objectivity, enables the type of analysis I am seeking to employ. Lather (1993) employs four 'frames', described below, of transgressive validity: ironic validity, paralogical validity, rhizomatic validity, and voluptuous validity.

*Ironic validity.* Drawing on Baudrillard's (1994) notions of simulacra, copies without originals, Lather described ironic validity as "using simulacra to resist the hold of the real and to foreground radical unknowability, the invisible can be made intelligible via objects that are not about nonobjecthood" (Lather, 1993, p. 677). Ironic validity is the process by which "the distinction between the copy and real ceases to have meaning" (1993, p. 677). This action foregrounds the problems of representation and language. This, perhaps, can be viewed by imagining biraciality as a copy without an original—the iterative instantiations of a becoming rather than a solid, stable identity to 'have.'

*Paralogical validity.* Lather (1993) described paralogical validity as the destabilization of verisimilitude "in a story offered as transparent" to foster "heterogeneity, refusing closure" (p. 679). This form of validity is the attempt to "search for instabilities and the undermining of the frameworks within which previous "normal science" has been conducted" (p. 679). Scholarship becomes valid when it is concerned with "undecidables, limits, paradoxes, discontinuities, [and] complexities" (p. 686). I seek to bring into my analysis the tentativeness of results and the paradoxes of both instantiating biraciality and questioning its existence.

*Rhizomatic validity.* Drawing on Deleuzian conceptions of the rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983), Lather described rhizomatic validity as the subversion and unsettling from

within the framework itself—the search for paradoxical objects that disrupt notions of order and consistency. The “rhizomes work against the constraints of authority, regularity, and commonsense, and open thought up to creative constructions” (Lather, 1993, p. 680).

*Voluptuous validity.* This frame was described as the ‘going too far’ in the imagination of the extreme maternal/female other (Lather, 1993). This rampant other is a challenge to traditional validity by creating space in which the multiplicity of the other becomes thinkable. By drawing on the inherently excessive/explicit/risky (e.g., Lather’s clitoral validity), foundational limits become unreadable. While I cannot engage in the self-reflection of the female other, I will seek to bring my voices of my becomings (e.g., biracial, male, black, white, researcher) into my analysis to contribute to the voluptuousness of this research.

I do not take up transgressive validity as a script (Lather made clear that was not the purpose of her work). I take up these conceptions to help me think through the space I have created between/within/without discourse, matter, poststructuralism, new materialism, identity, the self, entanglements, ethics, and the intra-actions to come. Transgressive validity is in search of the unthinkable—counter-practices to simultaneously re-inscribe and question what I know. Ultimately, I believe that my work gained ‘validity’ through my onto-ethico-epistemology—the imbrication of my ethics, my epistemology, and ontology in my study is the method by which my work can be evaluated.

### **Ethical Considerations and Responsibility**

“The point of challenging traditional epistemologies is not merely to welcome females, slaves, children, animals, and other dispossessed others (exiled from the land of knowers by Aristotle more than two millennia ago) into the fold of knowers but to better account for the ontology of knowing” (Barad, 2007, p. 378).

This study gained the approval of the University of South Florida's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and abided by the American Psychological Association's (APA) Ethical Principles. There are historical and institutional justifications for following these two ethical guidelines, and I remain entangled with the desire to conduct myself in a manner recognizable as ethical (e.g., minimizing harm). I will always remain accountable to my APA and IRB ethical orientations, but I will also describe my ethical principles beyond those. My ethical principles as a new materialist researcher entailed additional considerations that “run through the marrow of being” (Barad, 2007, p. 394). My ethical principles are tied to my knowing—my onto-epistemology is imbricated into my ethics as it was for Derrida (1993). To know, to question knowing or what counts as having been known, is part of my responsibility to the others (Koro-Ljungberg, 2015).

As previously described, my commitment to new materialism, posthumanism, and post-qualitative inquiry is about my responsibility to the ‘other’, the intra-actions I sought, the practice of my inquiry, the entanglements I mapped, the identities I become purposefully entangled with, and all the intra-actions to come. My posthumanist framework holds “a humanist ethics won’t suffice when the “face” of the other is “looking” back at me is all eyes, or has no eyes, or is unrecognizable in human terms” (Barad, 2007, p. 392). My responsibility cannot be to the ‘human’ participants in my research; rather, my ethical principles require me to be accountable to the world in its differential becomings. This accountability transcends/distorts linear time as “no justice seems possible...without the principle of responsibility, beyond all living present, within that which disjoins the living present, before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or are already dead” (Derrida, 1994, p. xix).

My ethics are in my use of posthumanism—my responsible for what I, as a purposefully entangling agent, contributed to entanglements and through my ghostly hauntings (Barad, 2012)

of participants. To be responsible for the effects of my research, I chose to foster critical resistance (Hoy, 2005) to subjectification in my participants. In this way, I sought to examine race without contributing to its reification—to push back against the raced subject I hailed in the process of my inquiry.

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup>At several points in this dissertation, words were struckthrough to indicate that I have placed the *under erasure* (*sous rature*). Developed by Heidegger and used extensively by Derrida, words *under erasure* are inadequate for the concept they represent but needed to facilitate written communication. In this way, words *under erasure* are both present and absent, crossed out but legible. I employ this device to indicate my suspicion of particular concepts like reflexivity.

## **Chapter Four:**

### **Results**

Listen: Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time. Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back through that door to find himself in 1963. He has seen his birth and death many times, he says, and pays random visits to all the events in between.

—Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, 1969

In this chapter, I present a synthesis of my participants' performative becomings and dephasings during our interviews together. To address my research questions, I purposefully subverted a narrative account of participants' data. As a result, this chapter is sundered, fragmented, incomplete—the process of individuation seen only in the pieces. In keeping with my new materialist framework, the interview talk of participants entailed reconstructions of past events in intra-action with the then-present materials and discourses of the interview. That is, I did not analyze the memories as 'true' accounts of my participants, but rather, I analyzed them as reconstructions of events to understand how they performed their identities—the process of individuation in relief. In this way, what participants said was not evaluated on the 'truthfulness' of their recollections; that they choose to draw upon certain 'memories' and reconstructions during the interview intra-action makes these stories a site of analysis for this dissertation. The following sections describe the results of my interviews with participants. This portion is divided

into three parts: 1) materiality and agential cuts, 2) identity talk, and 3) purposeful entangling and interview effects.

## **Material Intra-activity and Agential Cuts**

### **Overview of Agential Cuttings**

As part of this dissertation, I sought to make alterations to the materiality of the interviews in order to both provoke identity instantiations and to disrupt the automaticity of metastable subjects. In doing this, I was able to analyze the extent to which the participants' various subjects were materially contingent. These alterations, as previously described, are known in agential realism as agential cuts (Barad, 2007). As part of my design, I engaged in four conscious agential cuts: 1) my researcher body, 2) psychological questionnaires, 3) implicit associations test (IAT), and 4) interview style alterations. I will describe the possible effects of the first three agential cuts below. I, however, will not describe the fourth agential cut as I have no basis with which to estimate or readily infer its effect. The interview style alterations between each of the three interviews cannot be easily described by transcription nor did I find I was able to pinpoint any single point that was 'certainly' reframed by my interview style alterations. I believe the effect of this agential cut is in the identity talk of participants in the full duration of the three interviews rather than in a particular, accessible part of the data. The effect of the interview style alterations seeped into the interviews themselves and cannot be extracted for recreation here; all I am left with is conjecture, which I leave to the proceeding chapter.

**Agential cut one: Researcher body.** Beyond the calling of the biracial subject during the recruitment process (as previously described), the first material alteration to their subject performances was upon meeting me and viewing my physicality. Most participants assumed I was a 'black-white biracial' individual upon seeing me. When I asked them why, most remarked



on my brown skin tone and curly hair as indicators of ‘being biracial.’ Tony noted that my hair matched his ‘biracial’ father’s hair.

Anouk seemed to provide an insight into the omnipresence of materiality in ‘being’ biracial. When asked what race she thought I was when she first met me, Anouk responded, “Just based off the way you look. We’re about the same color. You have curly hair, but not extremely coarse like typical black hair. So yeah. I don’t know. I pick up on biracial people really quickly.” I asked Anouk to elaborate and she responded:

I guess I immediately look for similarities and like I said, I always get super excited when I see biracial people so I’m always on the lookout. [chuckle] So I’m always looking around, seeing. So yeah. I don’t know. I’m just very good at identifying them and finding them, so. And then I get really excited, ‘cause there was [pause]. I was at the Outlets last weekend with my boyfriend and for the first time he got to see how excited I get. There was a little cute mixed girl and she had hair just like me and I had my hair open and my hair’s super curly and she comes up to me and she pokes me and she asks me if she can touch my hair. And I was like, “Sure”, so I bent down and she touches my hair and she runs away; so I was like, “Oh, no.” And she grabs her mom and brings her mom and I guess she’s really excited that I have hair like her ‘cause she’s like, “Mommy, she has hair just like me.”

Anouk suggested that she was constantly evaluating the physicality of others and that she was particularly attuned to ‘biracial’ characteristics, which seemed in keeping with her appraisal of my physical appearance. Tony, Juliet, and Callie also shared Anouk’s attention to physical ‘symbols’ of biracialism. Only Michelle indicated that she did not view me as a particular race upon seeing me, but when directly asked, she similarly drew upon my skin tone to position me as

‘biracial.’ This attention to racial materiality likely fuels their performative identities. As these participants possessed multiple subjects, they employed this constant appraisal of ‘raced’ bodies to hail their various subjects. As such, I posit my ‘biracial’ body intra-actively hailed their ‘biracial’ subject.

This agential cut rendered some of my participants’ assumptions about race visible. In pairing race with skin tone, participants seemed to readily draw upon ‘biological’ notions of race—that my skin tone was a marker of my ‘race.’ Later in the interviews, these same participants would describe race as a ‘social’ construction, noting its volitional nature. This inconsistency seemed to be related to the way in which participants constructed their subjects—that a particular subject can draw upon different assumptions about race.

**Agential cut two: Questionnaires.** For participants, responding to the demographics questionnaire and MEIM offered another agential cut in the interview process. Rather than responding to me, a person they assumed to be as ‘biracial’ as they ‘were,’ they were instead responding to questionnaires that they had never seen before. When speaking to me, they drew upon the verbal identity language they were accustomed to during our intra-actions, but when responding to the questionnaire, they were, at least partially, limited by the choices present; their metastable ‘biracial’ subject initially performed from the first agential cut seemed vulnerable to dephasing in intra-activity with this agential cut. As these were novel materials to them, their responses were not or less practiced or automatic.

The demographics questionnaire and MEIM each asked participants to respond to an explicit question of their ethnic/racial identity. Of the five participants, only Callie provided similar answers to both questions. For item six on the demographic questionnaire (Which of the following best describe your primary ethnic identity?) she selected the option ‘I consider myself

exclusively as biracial (neither black nor white).’ While filling out the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), she wrote in “Mixed” for the initial question (In terms of my ethnic group, I consider myself to primarily be: \_\_\_\_\_).

The other four participants all offered seemingly inconsistent answers to these two questions. Anouk selected the option ‘I consider myself exclusively as biracial (neither black nor white)’ and for the MEIM, wrote in that she was “black/white.” These responds are notable as the choice Anouk made on demographics question explicitly stated “neither white nor black” and yet she drew upon both to answer the MEIM question rather than writing in biracial. When I asked her to elaborate on her choices here she remarked:

I'm in the middle, that's what I feel. When I was little, I think that was a different story compared to what my mom tells me. I guess, she says we were shopping one day and we went on base, which is where the Americans are and I guess a lady said I was such a cute, little, black girl. I have really light palms, I guess, so I put my palms up and told her I'm white; this was when I was four or so [pause]. So, I guess, when I was little I considered myself white, I'm not sure 'cause I can't remember, but my mom always tells me that story, that I all of a sudden got really bold and told this lady I was white, because of my hands.

This was something of an unexpected story to reconstruct at this moment in the interviews. Instead of further discussing her ‘being-in-the-middle’ feelings, she related a story in which she drew upon her physicality to distance herself from a black identity. Moreover, this reconstruction was not a personal memory but one told to her by her ‘white,’ German mother. Rather than speaking directly of notions of mixedness and describing what she meant by ‘black/white,’

Anouk's 'biracial' performance seemed to be more of a disavowal rather than a performance of, as she indicated, 'black/white.'

Anouk's selections are complicated further as later in the interview, we had the following exchange:

Travis: So, is race biological or social?

Anouk: I think social.

Travis: Social?

Anouk: Mm-hmm.

Travis: So, I'm curious, what's to prevent you from filling in [on the demographics questionnaire]: 'Race is meaningless. I do not believe in racial identities?'

Anouk: I honestly did not see that. I didn't read that far down. I just checked biracial.

[laughter]

Travis: All right. So, how about I'm giving this to you for the first time, and I say, "Hey, could you fill out question six for me? Mark whichever one you most agree with"?

Anouk: I'd probably keep my answer the same.

Travis: Keep the answer the same?

Anouk: Mm-hmm. Because even though it is, I say social, I mean I guess it is biological in a way, but mostly social because of how big of a deal it is, especially in the States.

Yeah, I'd keep it the same, because at the same time I don't want discredit the races that I am. So yeah, I'd keep it the same.

Anouk admitted that she did not read all of the possible choices on the demographics questionnaire before responding. Rather than reading all of the choices and then selecting the one that she agreed with the most, Anouk selected the first workable option she saw. This selection is

layered with her belief that race is a social rather than biological element. Despite this belief, Anouk did not select the choice that seemed most in keep with that understanding; rather Anouk made her choice so as to not discredit “the races that [she was]” and not the one that may have been more in keeping with her identity talk in the moment. This suggests that thoughts and entanglements beyond ‘self-reflection’ were mobilized by Anouk to answer these questionnaire—that Anouk made a choice based on factors beyond her perceptions of her ‘identity.’

Tony selected the option ‘I consider myself biracial, but I experience the world as a Black person.’ For the MEIM, he wrote in “Caribbean” for the initial question. Both questions were written through the term ‘ethnic’ group, but Tony answered each one differently. The demographics questionnaire has a write-in option, but Tony did not elect to use it. Race, ethnicity, and region seemed to collide in Tony, though he grew up in the United States.

Michelle selected the option “I sometimes consider myself Black, sometimes, white, and sometimes biracial depending on the circumstances.” For the MEIM, she wrote in ‘black.’ For the initial question. It was curious that she noted a context-specific identity, yet performatively indicated a ‘black’ identity on the following page of the questionnaire (both questionnaires were stapled together). When I asked why she wrote in black instead of white or biracial she responded “I think because for the most part, like I said now, I think black more than anything else. I would have jumped to biracial before, but I don't know, [laughter] I don't know.” The reason for her black performativity seemed unclear even to Michelle.

I asked her why she did not select the option ‘I consider myself biracial, but I experience the world as a black person’ and she responded:

I think because I don't necessarily experience the world as a black person. I'm lighter skinned than what my dad is or my grandmother, they're both fairly dark. The way that they experience the world is different than how I experience the world, because I am [pause] This is a horrible, horrible way to say this, but an acceptable black person if that makes sense. I'm lighter than they are, so when I really experience the world as a black person, I don't get followed in a store or I don't get pulled over, or I don't get questioned if I could buy something being in the store; things like that, when I read the experience of a black person, that's what comes to my mind; so that's why I didn't put that one down because I don't necessarily have that experience.

Michelle, with hesitation, consciously drew upon stereotypical discourses of 'being black' remarking that she was "an acceptable black person." As she, to her knowledge, did not experience discrimination based on her physicality, she did not experience the world as a 'black' person. Despite this, she still indicated that she was 'black' on the MEIM.

Juliet was the only participant of the five to check the 'Other' option on item six on the demographics questionnaire. She subsequently wrote in "Race is typically meaningless, but in some situations, I consider [myself] either white or biracial." This seemed to be a mix of several of the provided options. Most notably, she seemed to draw upon the language of the option 'Race is meaningless' but she added the word 'typically.' Similarly, she seemed to draw upon the option 'I sometimes consider myself black, sometimes white, sometimes biracial depending on the circumstances' but altered it to just be white and biracial and only in "some situations." Taken together the use of 'typically' and 'some situations' seem to underscore the contextually contingent nature of her identity performances.

Adding complexity to her already considered response to the demographic questionnaire, she wrote in “White” for the initial question on the MEIM. In the span of about thirty seconds, Juliet shifted her identity performance from a ‘human-race’ subject (one for which race is ‘meaningless’) to a white subject. The materiality of the MEIM seemed to be one of the “some situations” that provoked a white performativity.

This white performativity seemed to rapidly dephase as when I asked her to elaborate on her answers in this exchange:

Travis: So, [on the MEIM], you said you primarily consider yourself to be white. And so, I am curious about the question ‘you have a lot of pride in your ethnic group’, you put ‘three’ down for that and for ‘I feel good about my cultural orientation,’ which kind of neutral feelings. So, what makes you pick those instead of feeling good about being white?

Juliet: It's mostly because I don't really know too much about my black side. And so, I know plenty about my white side and I can take pride in it, and, knowing more about it, but the fact that I don't really know a lot about half of my genes, it's hard to connect to it. And so, I'm not ashamed, I don't disagree, but I can't fully agree either, just because I don't really know. I'd like to know. If I did, I'm sure I'd be proud, but I just don't know.

Travis: So, when you answered this, were you thinking of yourself as a white person or as a biracial person?

Juliet: Kind of a mix of both. Like I say, I usually identify as white or biracial. So, some of the questions, I was thinking more biracial, and some of them more white.

Travis: Okay. So, ‘I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group,’ were you thinking biracial or white or black for that one?

Juliet: I was thinking black for that one, actually.

Not only were there seeming inconsistencies between questionnaires, inconsistencies and dephasings occurred between questions on the MEIM. Juliet rapidly progressed from white to biracial to black and to, as she claims, a white-biracial subject. Calculating a score for Juliet's MEIM is entirely possible, but an omnibus score would be meaningless. Juliet's process of individuation disrupts an easy, objective analysis like the one provided by a questionnaire like the MEIM.

These questionnaires, as agential cuts, seemed to cause various subjects to be performed within seconds of each other. I am not certain why the questionnaires seemed to have such a disordering effect on the participants' performativity. The questions have obvious reconfigurative power, but I cannot be sure what about the questions caused these inconsistencies. It is possible that the wording of each question provoked identities to instantiate in intra-active response. It is also possible that the instantiations were contingent upon multiple questions; that is, perhaps, one question dephased an identity while another question then provoked a subject performance—only in the intra-activity of two questions could that particular identity instantiation occur. Perhaps, alternatively, there was some cascading effect of all of the question together that disrupted/irrupted instantiations. Whatever the cause(s), it appears that casting a questionnaire as a 'unified' material with a singular effect is not sufficient.

**Agential cut three: IAT.** The Implicit Associations Test (IAT), given during each of the three interviews, redefined the boundaries of the interview through its non-human agency. Like questionnaires, it does not share common materiality with participants, but unlike the questionnaires, no 'introspection' need be employed by respondents. Participants merely took the tests and were subsequently given a number between -2 (maximum implicit bias towards the



black racial group) and 2 (maximum implicit bias towards the white group), with 0 indicating a ‘nonbiased’ score. I employed the IAT not for its ability to measure implicit bias, but rather, I intuited that my participants would believe that the IAT had that capability. Unlike me as the interviewer and the questionnaires, the computer based IAT cannot be reasoned with or lied to. Participants took the test, saw their results, and had those results interpreted by me—the numbers appearing as objective markers of their ‘true’ feelings about black and white groups. I then used that number to attempt to disrupt the performativity of the participants.

Callie’s IAT scores were the most consistent among the participants. For the first IAT, Callie scored a .53; Callie said that the score made sense and offered these thoughts:

It doesn't surprise me at all; it kind of shows where I've said recently I can see where I've been kind of naïve—where I have kind of put me being white in my mind—just identifying with white. I can see where I've done that for so long—that's just the norm for me. So, I could see where that's [pause]. Subconsciously, I'll do stuff like I'll be somewhere in the city and see a black guy walking on the street, and I lock my door, and I hate myself for that, I genuinely do I hate that I'm like that, but I subconsciously do it all the time and like I can see where my flaws are as far as that.

Callie was well aware of the stereotypes she seemed to draw upon when instantiating a white identity and the associated discomfort of hosting those stereotypes. When reflecting on her first IAT score during the second interview, Callie suggested that she was always aware of her bias against the ‘black’ group and had previously excused that bias by blaming her upbringing in a primarily ‘white’ town. For the second IAT, Callie scored a .46, nearly the same result as her first IAT result. Callie, again, suggested that these results made sense to her. For the third IAT, Callie scored a 0.38, the lowest of the three.

This type of consistency was seemingly unique to Callie. Not only did Callie maintain a consistent IAT score, she was also the only participant to maintain a consistent explicit racial identity on the demographics questionnaire and MEIM. This suggests that Callie's 'biracial' subject may be more durable or resistant to dephasing than other participants'. That whatever agency of the questionnaires seemed to dephase in the other participants, Callie was able to maintain the metastability of her 'biracial' subject.

Michelle's first IAT score was a 0.46, a moderately strong preference for white as compared to black. Having previously taken this IAT outside of the research context, she was able to interpret her own results. When I asked if her if this first result made sense to her she responded:

I think so. Yes, only because I grew up around more white people. Almost all of my friends are white, almost everything I saw on TV was all white people. So, I think I have an affinity toward white people because that's what I'm used to. I'm not really used to hang out with a bunch of black kids. Even though I have my dad and my grandmother, it's not like they were kids. Yeah, I think that's probably why, is because I'm around a lot more white people than black people.

Despite this seemingly clear sentiment, Michelle expressed an interest in wanting to get a neutral score. For the second IAT, Michelle scored a 0.2, a much more modest preference for white as compared to black. This score was seemingly in keeping with her previous score and seemed to fuel her continued 'biracial' rather than 'black' performativity—that she seemed to keep both 'white' and 'black' at a distance in reaction to her score.

For the third IAT, Michelle scored a 0.76, a strong preference for white compared to black. This third score was by far her highest, and rather than offering the 'reasons' for this

score, Michelle seemed genuinely confused by the results stating, “The other two made sense to me, but I have no idea why it's so strong...I have absolutely no idea. Honestly, I have no idea.” Throughout the interviews, Michelle seemed to avoid a white subject performance and explicitly suggested that she did not ‘feel’ white. Michelle maintained a consistent ‘biracial’ and ‘black’ performativity throughout, but these results seemed to suggest that Michelle’s ‘feelings’ may have been more complex than Michelle suggested or was, perhaps, consciously aware of.

Juliet’s IAT results followed a nearly identical trajectory to Michelle with scores of 0.43, 0.29, and 0.80 respectively. Juliet offered similar notions to Michelle suggesting that she wished to have had a neutral (0.0) instead, and similarly still to Michelle, the strength of her third score did not make sense to her and caused confusion—she could not offer an explanation for the growth of her third score. Unlike Michelle, who indicated that her primary identity was black, Juliet had indicated that her primary racial identity was white. Juliet’s scores seemed to fuel her ‘white’ performativity during the interviews.

For Tony, his first IAT score was a -0.29, a modest preference for black as compared to white. When I asked Tony if this score made sense, he replied:

When I took the test I really didn't know what was going to happen, I just got excited to take it because it was like "Yay, this is fun, it's like a game." It's like, "Yeah, oh, okay, okay, yeah, yeah, yeah." But when I saw the score, my initial thought was "Hmm. Interesting." and thinking about it, I would say that it's one that I don't disagree with because if I had to claim one like an exclusively one, I would claim black.

This response seemed somewhat surprising as, during the first interview, Tony often distanced himself from any racial group through both ‘human-race’ subject performances and ‘biracial’ subject performances. During the first interview, Tony explicitly noted that he did not identify as

black even as he was well aware of the effect his dark skin tone had in social spaces (e.g., his encounter with the police described below). Only when he saw his first IAT score did he claim a ‘black’ identity and a clear preference for that identity over a ‘white’ identity. In keeping with the notion of his frequently ‘human-race’ subject instantiating, I asked if he would have preferred a neutral result (i.e., no preference between white and black), he said he would not saying, “even though I’m biracial, I would prefer to be black rather than white.”

During the second interview, Tony noted that he was very interested in the IAT and that it stood out the most from the interview. His second IAT score was 0.04—a score indicating no preference. This score was notable for also changing direction. Tony did not seem to know why his score had changed but did suggest that it may reflect his increased interest in his ‘white side.’ When I asked which score he believed, he said he believed both and said, “I believe the first one was my thoughts initially and this one reflects my thoughts after the initial.” This type of ‘developmental’ attitude toward his implicit bias seemed somewhat inconsistent with his previous thoughts of his identity. He continued to suggest that he wanted to learn more about ‘white side,’ and when I asked him if he would willing to identify as white, he said, “Yeah, I don’t see why not.” Tony had never previously suggested that he would be willing to take on a ‘white’ identity—only after the two IAT scores did this possibility emerge.

During the third interview, Tony’s IAT score was 0.16 (a slight preference for white compared to black). Tony had scored a modest preference for black, a neutral score, and finally a slight preference for white as compared to black—a change in direction is unusual though not unheard of in biracial studies (Marn et al., 2018). Tony did not seem to know why his score had changed for a third time, and he was unable to offer a suggestion and noted that he needed time to reflect. This was quite different from the first and second IAT scores, which Tony both

defended and used to fuel identity performances. This third score did not seem to be taken up by Tony; rather, he seemed, like Michelle and Juliet, genuinely confused by the results. It was possible that Tony could have taken up the inconsistencies in his score to instantiate a ‘human-race’ or ‘biracial’ subject, but this did not occur. For Tony, the IAT seemed to disrupt the automatic, routinized function of his metastable subjects.

For Anouk, her first IAT score was a 0.05, a number indicating no preference between white and black groups. When I asked if that number was surprising to her, she responded while laughing, “that’s what I would expect honestly from a mixed person.” Anouk’s second score of -0.78, a quite strong automatic preference for black and as compared to white, was very surprising to her, and instead of assessing the potential for her implicit bias to be different from what she believed, she chose to blame test-taking errors for the change in score—the IAT was designed (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) to mitigate test taking errors like those Anouk suggested. A change in IAT score of that magnitude and direction was highly unusual. For the third IAT result, Anouk scored a -0.26, a much more modest preference for black as compared to white. Anouk, again, protested the results and blamed test-taking errors for the score. Anouk suggested that the second and third scores did not match her internal perspective whereas the first score did reflect her self-perceptions.

As Anouk’s first score ‘validated’ her biracial subject, her seemingly most metastable subject, she accepted the results at face value. The second and third scores, undercutting her biracial performativity, and her potential thoughts of the Good Form Biracial, were dismissed by Anouk as manual errors. As a potentially powerful agential cut, the IAT could have prompted Anouk’s biracial subject to dephase and instantiate in its place a ‘black’ subject performance. This did not seem to occur as Anouk chose to defend her ‘biracial’ subject. It is possible that

Anouk did not have a ‘black’ subject stable enough to perform; she previously noted that she lacked cultural knowledge of ‘being black’ and elaborated, “I feel like I’m different than an African-American person, based on experiences such as, I know a lot of people experience discrimination and have stories. I don’t have any of those.” Her words, coupled with her story of facing pushback against her ‘black’ heritage when pursuing a minority scholarship (described below), suggested that Anouk’s ‘black’ subject was possibly brittle, unable to instantiate. Anouk’s ‘biracial’ subject then pushed back against this possible dephasing, desiring instead its own continued subjectification.

The IAT, as an agential cut, seemed to function differently among the participants. For Callie, it seemed to only underscore what she already knew and did little to disrupt her ‘biracial’ performance. She neither offered surprise nor confusion at the results nor did her ‘biracial’ subject seem to dephase. Michelle and Juliet both offered confusion at their results. It is possible that this confusion stemmed from a kind of dephasing of their subjects—that in not being able to interpret or fully understand their results, they might have been unable to continue performing a particular, recognizable, and practiced metastable subject.

Tony was the only participant to see his scores appreciably change direction during (a switch in preference from black to neutral to white), and his resulting identity talk regarding the IAT varied widely. In responding to his first score, he revealed an explicit preference for being ‘black’ when he had previously avoided doing so earlier in the interviews. For his second score, Tony, for the first time during the interviews, suggested that he could see himself identifying as ‘white,’ something inconsistent with his previous identity talk; he previously explicitly said that he had not and would not identify as ‘white.’ Tony, like Michelle and Juliet, offered confusion at his final score seemingly unable to mobilize the results to fuel a particular becoming. For Anouk,

she embraced the first score to fuel her ‘biracial’ subject performance, and once the subsequent scores undermined her explicit identity responses, she critiqued the IAT program to defend her ‘biracial’ subject.

### **Cyborgian Biraciality**

Not all interview material was initially part of the research phenomenon as designed. Callie had emailed me a picture of her ‘black’ father before the initial interview as part of her ‘proof’ of her qualifications to participate in this study. At the start of the first interview, I first asked Callie about the picture she sent to me and she responded:

That's probably one of the only pictures of us. So, when people ask what my parents look like that's always what I show them. I look the spitting image of my dad, like with same facial features. People are always like ‘oh I didn't know you were biracial, I thought you were Spanish’ or whatever they say, and I showed them this picture to say, ‘these are my parents, I'm like in-between them’ but individually, I look more like my dad than my mom.

This picture, as material, served as a powerful link between Callie and her ‘biracial’ subject. She drew upon the notion of biology, through her family, to suggest that biraciality is a biological, rather than social concept. She further enumerated the importance of this pictorial material by indicating that in the small, predominantly white town she grew up in that “everyone says how white I talk when they first meet me; that’s a weird thing to say because I don’t know what that means”. She takes the seemingly lack of being immediately identified as ‘biracial’ as “kind of like an insult” but noted that she never directly says as much.

This picture, shown to me and to others in her life, acts as Callie’s way of proving that she is ‘biracial’—that is, in ‘talking white’ and ‘appearing’ Spanish, the ethnically ambiguous

‘biracial’ physicality (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001), she was not able to performatively instantiate a ‘biracial’ identity without this picture in some social contexts. Callie’s picture acts as a focal point to instantiating a biracial subject. Her apprehension about me and others not believing her ‘biraciality’ speaks to the seemingly illusiveness of the biracial subject—as if it cannot be ‘self-evident’ the way other races seem to be. This illusiveness suggests that biracial ‘hailing’ alone is not enough to call her biracial subject into being—materiality may be more necessary than discursive disciplining.

This coming into being of Callie’s biracial performance is materially linked to her skin-tone, that further seems to shift over time with Callie noting that she is “super light-skinned” in the winter and “super dark” in the summer. Callie suggested that everyone in her small, ‘white’ town knew her ‘white’ mother and were curious what her father looked like; Callie, subsequently, drew upon the picture of her father as ‘proof’ of ‘biracial’ identity.

Juliet similarly related the importance of a picture to instantiate her biracial subject. Juliet, in appearing ‘white,’ said that she frequently had to prove her ‘biracial’ identity. She noted:

They always want to see pictures. They are like, "I don't believe you, I want see your birth certificate." I don't show them my birth certificate, but I'll show them a picture of my father and I do look like him. I have his facial features and so usually just a picture is proof enough. But no one ever believes me unless I show a picture. So, I always have to prove it and if I don't feel like proving it, I won't prove it. But, usually, I'll just be like, "Okay, here's a picture" kind of thing.

She continued:



People think, "Are you sure that's your father? Are you sure? Was a blood test done?"

Things like that. A DNA test was done because he didn't claim me at first. My mom wanted child support, so they had to get a DNA test. But they will ask. They will be skeptical and say, "You sure you're not adopted?" Things like that.

Juliet seemed to be largely unable to instantiate a biracial subject without the pictures of her father and the knowledge of a DNA test. This material has become necessary to the point that, at times, Juliet would rather not go through the trouble and just perform a 'white' subject. This need to 'prove' her biracial subject through means beyond its performance was visible in her response to my recruitment email (our first intra-action). She eventually responded with the following:

I am not sure what this study focuses on, but my mother is Irish and my father is African-American, although my skin very much does not show it. If your study focuses on other's assumption of my identity, I may not be a good fit for your study as I am easily assumed White and am treated as so! Please let me know, as I would hate to skew any data if that is the case.

Other than speaking to Juliet's conscientiousness, this email and her stories during the interviews seemed to suggest that this material (DNA test results and pictures), serves as a type of cyborgian (Haraway, 1991) matter—that without this ancillary matter, Juliet would lose the ability to instantiate a biracial subject. Callie, with her brown skin, was likewise entangled with her cyborgian matter, but likely not to extent of Juliet. Callie's biracial performativity seemed to be aided by the picture of her father, but in most instances she was able to instantiate a biracial performance without this material.

## **Identity Talk**

In this section, I present the participants' identity talk and describe their subject performances, constructions of race, and use of racial discourses. Subjects are messy, fragmented, metastable, and as ephemeral as a house of cards; unlike a house of cards, however, subjects are not visible, tangible structures. Rather they are a doing, a coalescing of entanglements mobilized for a purpose, implicit or otherwise. Subjects are elusive and escape obvious visibility; subjects cannot be directly examined—even if they could be examined the process of examination intra-actively reconfigures those subjects as described in chapter two. In this way, subjects cannot be directly known, and I do not wish to maintain the pretense that I am certain of the results presented here. I have inferred the existence of subjects through the participants' use of discourse, their inconsistencies during the identity talk, rapid shifts in perspectives, and dualistic thinking. Some of these results come from the seeming collapse of a subject, the dephasing of an identity—the house of cards known through its ruins. These results, then, are a thinking through of a posthumanist account of racial identity using the interview data—I present below an opening for analysis rather than finality.

### **Constructions of Race**

Participants did not offer a singular understanding of race. At times, race was constructed through a biological account; that is, participants believed they were biologically 'black' and 'white', biologically 'biracial.' Some of these accounts were implicit, like in the use of pictures and DNA results—that their 'black' race was genetically passed down to them. Participants also explicitly suggested that race was biological. Other times, participants suggested that race was a social construct; that they actively performed a racial identity. None of the participants

maintained a clearly consistent construction of race and messily layered these discourses together.

During her first interview, I asked Anouk if race was biological or social and she responded very simply, “I think social.” I asked her to elaborate, and she offered this quite different response:

Because even though it is, I say social, I mean I guess it is biological in a way, but mostly social because of how big of a deal it is, especially in the States...I don't want to discredit the races that I am.

Anouk suggest here that race was both social and biological, but she seemed to be thinking it through while talking as opposed to having had an existing understanding of her assumptions. In response to her uncertain constructions of race during the first interview, I prepared these three statements to show her during the second interview: 1) I was born biracial, 2) I am biracial, and 3) I identify as biracial. I asked her if she thought these three statements were different and she responded that they were not. To continue this line of questions, I asked her how she was ‘born biracial’ and she responded, “I have one parent that's white and one parent that's black, meaning I'm the product of that and that would be biracial.” Anouk seemed to implicitly rely on a biological understanding of race to ground her ‘biracial’ performativity.

As we progressed through the interviews, Anouk seemed to become less certain saying of race that it was “more so a social construct, but now that I think about it, what does biological even mean?” Anouk continued to ‘think out loud’ stating, “But I don't know, there's something genetic-wise, or our makeup [pause]. Something's different because if not then we would all look the same.” We continued this conversation during the third interview. I asked Anouk how she felt after the second interview she responded. “We ended on talking about if race was social or

biological, which still confuses me because I don't know what I think.” In our dialogue, Anouk noted that she had never talked about this issue before. It appeared that, for Anouk, she drew upon both racial discourses—that race is socially experienced but passed down physically from parents. Her biracial subject then is something that is physically, biologically part of herself.

Unlike Anouk, Michelle was definitive in her belief that race was purely social. Throughout each of the interviews, she explicitly defined race as social and mostly avoided implicit notions of biology in her identity talk. When she viewed the same three statements described above she remarked on the implicit notion of biology in the statement ‘I was born biracial.’ Despite this, she did suggest that she was ‘born biracial’—as if it was a simple fact that she was born ‘biracial’ but socially performed a ‘biracial’ and ‘black’ identity. Like Anouk, she was biologically ‘biracial.’ This sentiment was echoed by Juliet—that being born biracial was “more of a factual statement.” This was somewhat surprising as on the demographics questionnaire, Juliet was the only participant to indicate that she believed race was meaningless. Similar to Anouk, Juliet had not significantly discussed this issue and was often ‘thinking out loud’ during the interviews.

Callie was definitive and consistent with her belief that race is biologically based, and like the other participants, being ‘biracial’ was a statement of fact. Even with this explicit use of race as biology, Callie, perhaps more than any other participant, spoke of the performative nature of racial identity with statements like “I feel like I don’t know how to be black, as crazy as that sounds.” Callie seemed to hold a layered account of race; that race was both biological and social even as she made explicit statements of race as biology.

Tony constructed race and biracialism as primarily social and seemed to hold the concept of race itself at a distance during the interviews. However, Tony did occasionally suggest a

‘biology’ to biraciality. To illustrate, during the first interview Tony noted that his ‘white’ side was just biologically a part of him rather than claiming any social ties to that subject. Tony made this type of blending of social and biological discourses clear during the third interview in stating, “to be biracial, in a sense, you should be born biracial. Though I do feel like it can be acquired...It's like a 60-40 split. 60%, it can be acquired; 40%, couldn't.” Similar to the other participants, Tony’s view of race was, in some ways, inconsistent within and between interviews.

All of the participants conceptualized race differently, but they each seemed to draw upon both social and biological discourses of race during their interviews and identity talk. For most, their ‘biracial’ identity was something they were born with—that being biracial was part of their physical makeup. Even those that complicated notions of biology in their identity talk, seemed to ‘accept’ the notion that they were ‘born biracial.’ Most significantly, Juliet, who explicitly stated that race was meaningless accepted her ‘biracial’ birth.

### **Subject/Identity Instantiations**

Despite common ‘biracial’ births, participants did not all instantiate the same subjects; each performed their subjects in relation to their entanglements and the material-discursive intra-activity of the interviews. Like the participants’ constructions of race, subject performances appeared to be constantly shifting—layered and messy. Below I will describe the ‘biracial’ subjects constructed during the interviews and will subsequently describe the non-biracial subjects that were performed during the interviews.

**The biracial subject.** The biracial subject was the most commonly occurring performance during the interviews. This is intuitive, as this dissertation (e.g., recruitment email, demographics question) and their assumptions of me as a biracial individual hailed this subject. Even as all of the participants spoke from this ‘biracial’ subject, the construction of the ‘biracial’

subject was not uniform. It seemed to be performed in intra-activity with others to serve a particular purpose.

For Callie, her ‘biracial’ subject seemed to instantiate in response to misidentification. Callie noted that it was surprising to others that she was ‘biracial’. She noted, “a lot of people always try to talk to me in Spanish, and I’m like yeah, no. So, I think a lot of people ask if I’m Spanish or if I am Cuban or Hawaiian; that’s usually what I get.” As previously described, Callie readily shows others a picture of her family to instantiate a ‘biracial’ subject and dispel this misidentification. Callie further seemed to instantiate a biracial subject in response to negative assumptions made of her saying:

The town that I live in, it’s a predominantly white town and I grew up there. I’m like really a part of the white culture. That’s just all I really know, and everyone says how white I talk when I they first meet me; that’s a weird thing to say because I don’t know what that means. Like when people get to know me, they’re like oh I wouldn’t have taken you to be biracial. I think it’s kind of like an insult sometimes, but I don’t say anything about it.

As previously described, Callie constructed biraciality as simply what she was—that she was born ‘biracial.’ When that ‘fact’ is not recognized, she responds with a biracial subject performance—that these pressures hail her biracial identity.

Callie’s biracial subject seemed to be readily performed when explicitly identifying. As previously described, given the opportunity to select her own identity on the demographic questionnaire and MEIM, Callie selected the option “exclusively biracial (neither black nor white)” and wrote in “Mixed” respectively. Callie further said that ‘biracial’ has “always been a thing I bubbled in on tests”—an “automatic thing” rather than an ‘introspective’ one.

Callie's biracial subject seemed to be a default identity for her, a way to avoid feelings of guilt, and a way to not take a side when race is discussed. When I asked her if she was free to identify any way that she wanted she responded:

I kind of feel like I'm in a box. I feel like if I say I identify myself as white then they'll say 'well, you're not because you're half black, you have mixed skin.' If I identify myself as black they'll say you're really not because you generally identify yourself as white. So, I feel like I'm in a box. I feel like I have to say mixed because I don't know. I feel like I can't really lean either way. And I feel like I shouldn't either, but I think, self-consciously, I do a lot.

She followed-up this statement with the following:

I don't want it to ever be like a thing that I'm ashamed of being black. Because sometimes, I feel like that's how I feel, and it's not for any certain reason but there will be things that will happen and I'm like, 'that typical, you're making a bad name for everyone,' and I don't want something like that to happen and people look at me and are like "oh that's your people." I hate that feeling, and I've had people say stuff like that to me, and I'm like 'that's not my people.' Like, I'm a person. It can be on both sides but it happens more on the black side. Like when Black Lives Matter happened, I was spokesperson for everyone. Everyone wanted my opinion on it, and I don't have an opinion on it.

Callie's biracial subject seems to frequently instantiate due to its stability even as it seems associated with a level of guilt. In performing a biracial subject, she does not seem to face question of 'authenticity,' and in reaction to misidentification, she defends her biracial subject. In this way, Callie may default to a 'biracial' subject to ease her social encounters.

Tony likewise seemed to employ a biracial subject as a default when his ‘human-race’ subject dephased. Tony noted “I’ve always claimed being biracial, although I’ve never really felt a race, unless it was put on me by people.” Like Callie, the biracial subject allowed him to associate with either race to gain social advantage. Tony suggested that he embraces “the good of both [white and black groups]” and does not “identify with the bad of one or the bad of the other.” In this way, Tony could employ his ‘biracial’ subject to distance himself from racial groups when advantageous.

Michelle seemed to construct her biracial subject as just a melding of black and white—that it was not something distinct from the union of the component groups. She did not suggest that she performed the biracial subject to gain social advantage, but she indicated that it gave her “access to both sides.” She said of this issue:

I have access to not only both ways of thinking, but I have access to how my dad sees this issue and how my mom sees this issue and how they both got to, even though they both see it the same way, how they got to that point. And they have different experiences with the way they grew up, where they grew up, who they grew up with. They have different experiences, so they're able to explain things from both sides that maybe if I were all white or all black I wouldn't get the other side. So, I think that's what I appreciate the most is getting to see two sides of the coin.

This notion of ‘two sides of a coin’ and her words here, suggested that Michelle has not constructed a ‘biracial’ subject so much as layered her black subject and white subject together. Michelle’s biracial subject does not seem to exist without reference to these component groups.

Similar to Michelle, Anouk’s biracial subject seemed to be more of a layering of her black and German/white subjects, but unlike Michelle, Anouk’s biracial subject seemed to be



defined more by feelings of isolation from both groups—the disunion rather than union of both groups. Anouk seemed to be unable to perform a ‘black’ or ‘white’ identity during the interviews.

She related this story about identifying as black:

In high school, I applied for a scholarship that was you had to be at least half black or fully black, and I don't know, I felt a little uncomfortable applying for it, but I did anyway. And then, I noticed in the interview, it was a panel of black women and they started asking me questions that I couldn't really answer. They were like, what are some of the negatives that I've experienced as a black person and all, then, I was like, "Well, I'm not fully black and I honestly never had a negative experience, where somebody discriminated against me." So, I don't know, I felt like I wasn't [pause], I didn't get the scholarship either, but I felt like I shouldn't have gotten in if I did, because I don't know, I couldn't talk about the questions they asked me. And yeah, and then they asked another question of, who was an influential African-American person in my life other than family members? Most of my life, I spent in Germany and there really aren't black people and I didn't encounter any, so that was another question I couldn't answer.

Anouk, in attempting to identify as ‘black,’ described feelings of inadequacy; that she wasn’t ‘authentically black.’ This story was entangled with her ‘black’ subject, and it may have served to dephase Anouk’s subsequent attempts at performing a ‘black’ identity. Anouk’s ‘white’ subject equally seemed equally ‘inauthentic’ to her. In living in Germany for most of her early life, she suggested that she was never called upon to enact a ‘white’ identity, and now in the United States, she lacked the ‘culture’ of both black and white identities— that in not being “100% black and not 100% white,” Anouk would be unable to defend a ‘black’ or ‘white’ subject—when she had performed a ‘black’ identity, as in the story of applying for a scholarship,

she was unable, to her own estimate, ‘authentically be black.’ A biracial subject, then, appeared more stable and it readily instantiated from raced hailings.

Distinct from all of the other participants, Juliet seemed to purposefully avoid a ‘biracial’ performativity. As previously described, Juliet held herself to be ‘biologically biracial,’ but believed her skin tone to be “very pale, especially for a white person.” In ‘looking white’ and interacting socially with ‘white’ individuals, she performed a ‘white’ subject. The hailing of her ‘biracial’ subject seemed very painful for her:

The most that I feel when it comes to that [being biracial] is that [when] people find out, they will make the jokes, biracial jokes where, like typical stereotypes, like fried chicken and running fast, like "Oh, do you only run half a marathon?" or "Do you only eat half the fried chicken?" Things like that. Besides that, I don't really feel the effects of being biracial, because it's not really spoken, and people just assume that I'm white. I don't really tell the world that I'm biracial unless people ask. And so, it's mostly just a biological fact of myself.

The hailing of her ‘biracial’ subject is sometimes purposefully done by her friends as a type of ‘fun fact.’ Juliet expressed exasperation at these moments of ‘biracial’ subject hailing—that she would rather control the disclosure of her background rather than be confronted by it. She said that she had asked her friends to stop doing this and they “just roll with it. Take it [her request that they stop] as a joke, I guess.”

Her becoming ‘biracial’ seems outside of her control, like the moon hailing a werewolf, and rather than her biracial subject serving to ease her social world, it seemed to make it more difficult. When performing a ‘biracial’ subject under these conditions, she has to ‘prove’ her identity, contend with racist jokes, and deal with being stereotyped. These entangled conditions,

may be part of Juliet's seeming desire to avoid performing a 'biracial' subject. Coupled with this, Juliet seemed to have a troubled relationship with her ('black') father and she stated:

And so, it comes as a shock [finding out that she is 'biracial'] to those people, so people find it really fascinating, they want to know more about it. But I'm not a big fan of talking about it, especially because my father is not present in my life. And they usually want to see pictures and things like that, I don't really have too many.

She elaborated, "I'm fine with that biracial part, I'm fine with talking about that and telling people that I'm 'biracial,' I'm not ashamed of it or anything, but I don't like talking about my father specifically." It is notable that Juliet was both the least likely participant to instantiate a biracial identity (during the interviews and during her stories) and the one with the most cyborgian material 'proof' of her biraciality (i.e., pictures and DNA test results).

Juliet was consciously aware that that her 'biracial' subject was hailed under other circumstances, elaborating:

If it has to do with legal matters, when I'm making marks on paperwork and things like that, I always feel biracial when I'm going through those kind [pause], I think in the mindset of biracial. If I'm talking with friends who are biracial, I become [pause] I go into the mindset of biracial. If I'm just going through everyday life, I don't really think about it at all which is why I put meaningless [on the demographics questionnaire], I don't want to think about it. But in times where I'm forced to think about it, I either identify as white or biracial in situations where they demand a race [pause], that's why I put meaningless. When I'm not forced to think about it, I kind of just don't really think about it.

This avoidance of a biracial subject seemed to extend to questionnaires that did not involve the legal system. When I asked Juliet if she pursued scholarships for people of color she responded:

If it's for African American students or something like that, I would feel guilty because I know a lot those have a discrimination part to them and for minority parts to them and because I am seen as white... Besides the federal systems, they know that I'm biracial, but when it comes to everyday activity I'm seen as white and so I'm not treated as a minority or treated any differently, and so I feel guilty taking that away from someone who has gone through experiences concerning minority or discrimination.

Juliet continued a 'white' subject performance by speaking of "African Americans" and implying few feelings of affiliation. Juliet was always very polite and considered in her speaking, but her use of 'African American' stood out as she uses 'white' instead of Caucasian, European American, or some equally respectful, parallel term. It seemed that this 'white' performance of Juliet's was highly conscious of its whiteness and perceptions of how it may be judged by its treatment of race. As such, Juliet seemed unable or unwilling to perform a 'black' subject, on questionnaires and during her identity talk.

Every participant's biracial subject is unique, however, diffracting these subjects together provides some insights into the different processes of biracial instantiation. Tony and Callie most readily spoke from a 'biracial' subject that was, to some extent, distinct from their component groups. Michelle and Anouk, conversely, seemed to instantiate a 'biracial' subject that only existed in connection to the component groups. For Michelle, her 'biracial' subject seemed to be a layering of her 'black' subject and 'white' subject. For Anouk, she did not seem to be able to instantiate a stable 'black' subject or 'white' subject and in that way, her 'biracial' subject was more stable than either of those subjects. Juliet seemed the most unwilling to perform a 'biracial'

subject. Her pale skin, difficult relationship with her ‘black’ father, perceptions that she had not been discriminated against, and the painful memories of previous biracial hailings, seemed to compel Juliet to avoid ‘biracial’ subject performances, on questionnaires, in social spaces, and during the interviews.

**Non-biracial subjects and the good form biracial.** Identities beyond the ‘biracial’ subject instantiated during the interviews. These subjects often took on recognizable labels, typically ‘black’ and ‘white.’ Like the ‘biracial’ subjects these were often individually constructed without consistency between participants. Not all performed subjects were easily labeled, and some identity talk, while unmistakably related to race, could not be given to a clear subject. As such, I describe here the subjects beyond the ‘biracial’ that instantiated and could be recognized during the interviews. This is not to be an exhaustive accounting of every subject instantiated as every word and act was part of a subject performance. An exhaustive accounting would see every transcribed word attributed to a particular subject—a thoroughly unrevealing task. Rather, I attempt to provide a synthesis of the other subjects each participant instantiated and interpretations of how and why those subjects came to be during the interviews.

Tony resisted categorizing himself as ‘black,’ ‘white,’ or ‘biracial’ during the interviews. He was clearly aware of the social pressure to identify, but he frequently avoided explicitly identifying with a particular racial group saying, “I don’t put myself in any category. I just see myself as me.” Tony seemed to perform a ‘human-race’ subject—a subject that actively worked to resist categorization. This ‘human-race’ subject occasionally faltered. I asked Tony why he did not select the ‘race is meaningless’ option on the MEIM and he stated:

Well, because though I myself don't necessarily [pause], I won't say I won't believe in it. I do believe there are racial identities, but I also think that they don't matter. But I

experienced life as a black person because that's how society has treated me—as a black person. They don't see the white, they just see the black.

Tony at once seemed to be resisting racial categorization while, in some ways, reifying their existence. Tony seemed well aware of his dark skin tone and how it seemingly 'compelled' him to experience the world through that dark skin. I asked him how his skin tone influenced his experiences. He relayed this story:

I was at my friend's house. He wasn't home yet, though he was on his way home from, I believe, work. And so, I was sitting outside just waiting for him, and I have a truck, so I sat on my truck, like the back of my truck and the neighborhood that we were in was a predominantly white neighborhood. And so, someone had actually called the cops on me because I was waiting there and when the police arrived they questioned me asking why I was there, what I was doing in the neighborhood. I told them, "Hey, my friend lives here." And they needed proof, and so, I did give them proof. I called my friend. I was like, "Hey, maybe you should get here a little quicker 'cause I might get arrested." And my friend had to give them all his information. And then I wondered like, "If I was white, would that same situation have happened?"

Despite this event, an all too typical experience of 'black' people in the United States, Tony did not seem to perform a black identity, nor speak of it, during this story. Rather than speaking from his 'black' identity, Tony only suggested the racial component of this story at the end and only in connection to his darker skin rather than his 'black' identity. When I asked him how he felt about being assumed to be 'black,' he noted that he was not bothered or offended by his treatment or assumptions put upon him. He then stated:

I myself, even though someone might dislike it about me, I myself look past it and look past their prejudice because, in my mind, what I do and the life I live is supposed to be higher. And by that, I mean I don't want to be associated with the word black as in a male or a female because society has turned that word into not something I'd want to be associated with. They make it seem as like we're aggressive or we are violent people and I'm not like that.

Tony continued by stating that he wanted to be “better than the stereotypes. I want to prove them wrong.” In Tony’s talk, his ‘human race’ performance momentarily cracked when he spoke of ‘we’ in connection to black stereotyping but quickly reverted to his ‘human race’ performativity. Tony’s ethic toward his racial identity seemed to be entangled with his ‘biracial’ father:

My dad has been to jail 11 times, but towards the latter years of his life, he's turned everything around. He's now a supervisor at a big organic food company. He's doing way better for himself and he's always told me, "Son, I don't want you to be like me. I need you to be better than me." And so, I've always kept that in my mind as my motto. I need to be better than him.

Tony’s ‘human race’ performativity seemed disciplined in him through his father’s desire to subvert prejudiced social expectations of race. Rather than hailing and disciplining a racial subject in Tony, his father has possibly hailed these ‘human-race’ fragments in Tony. Possibly as a result, Tony’s ‘biracial’ subject, like his ‘black’ subject, seemed to instantiate very infrequently and did not take a particularly stable state. His ‘biracial’ subject was highly materially contingent and seemed to be something communicable mostly through written material. Tony’s ‘white’ subject was nearly completely absent; it is possible that Tony did not possess a stable enough ‘white’ subject to perform.

Juliet, like Tony, performed a ‘human-race’ subject, but unlike Tony, Juliet’s ‘human-race’ subject was primarily in response to the demographics questionnaire (i.e., her response that “race is typically meaningless, but in some situations, I consider [myself] either white or biracial”) rather than in identity talk. Dissimilar still to Tony, Juliet readily connected this ‘human-race’ performativity when responding to the demographics questionnaire to her ‘white’ and ‘biracial’ identities, and Juliet’s subject dephased and became a ‘white’ subject on the next questionnaire (MEIM). As previously noted, Juliet rapidly shifted between subjects ‘black,’ ‘white,’ ‘biracial,’ and, as she suggested, a ‘biracial-white’ subject when responding to the MEIM. Despite ‘race being meaningless,’ Juliet was able to perform a range of raced subjects.

The performative nature of a ‘biracial-white’ subject was not entirely clear in Juliet’s identity talk. It could possibly be the extremely rapid shifting, layering of a ‘white’ and ‘biracial’ subject or it could possibly be a distinct subject—one with its own metastable state. If the ‘biracial-white’ is a distinct subject, then that was Juliet’s principal performance during the interviews. If it is the rapid, messy becoming-white and becoming-biracial, it speaks to the stability of both of these subjects and the practice Juliet had in instantiating both subjects.

Juliet’s identity talk seemed to provide more evidence for the latter conceptualization of the ‘biracial-white’ subject. As previously described, Juliet’s pale skin tone enabled her to ‘pass’ as ‘white’ rendering a ‘biracial’ subject unneeded to navigate Juliet’s social world for the most part. In addition, Juliet’s becoming-biracial is typically an unpleasant process filled with racist jokes and entanglements with a strained paternal relationship. She said of her friends bringing up her ‘biracial’ heritage unexpectedly:

They kind of use it as a joke point, and so they don't ask me genuine questions about my black side. Really, it's kind of more just like, if a question or something like that would



come up, it was like, "Oh, well maybe Juliet knows or maybe she'll know half the answer", and things like that. But they basically reference it as kind of like a joke, now that I think about it.

She continued:

Sometimes, if I actually feel like getting into it, because like I said, whenever it is mentioned to pull the conversation, they want to know everything, and they want proof and all that stuff, and so if I'm willing to do so, then I'll tell them "Well actually, I am biracial." But sometimes I'll just brush it off if I don't really want to get into it or I know that they'll respond negatively, because I know some friends are less accepting than others, or some peers even.

Juliet did not seem to feel shame or anxiety related to her biracial identity and said as much during the interviews. It appeared that she was fully capable of performing her 'biracial' subject as needed and decided in each intra-active moment whether to allow or attempt to suppress that performativity. During these moments, she still must enact a 'white' performance as the racist jokes are likely about all of her subject rather than just one (e.g., the previously mentioned 'joke' 'does Juliet eat half of the fried chicken') and must discuss 'white' symbols (e.g., her skin tone, talking 'white'). It may be these unwilling intra-active moments that may orient Juliet to rapidly mobilize both a 'white' and 'biracial' subject almost simultaneously.

Juliet did not readily perform a 'black' subject. Juliet spoke of her 'black side' but usually in connection to how little she knew about it. She did not speak from a 'black' subject during the interviews keeping that identity at a distance. Instantiating a 'black' subject seemed rare for Juliet as even when talking about her 'black' side, her friends were not asking 'genuine' questions about it. As such, Juliet seemed to have few opportunities to perform a 'black' subject

and little cultural connection to that identity. Like Anouk, is possible that Juliet did not have a 'black' subject stable enough to perform.

Michelle's non-biracial subject performances were somewhat inconsistent during the interviews. She readily instantiated a 'black' subject both when responding to the MEIM and during the interviews. She said:

I think I'm between biracial and black. I think when I was younger, I would have jumped to say biracial rather than [pause], because I wouldn't have said white. I would've said biracial but now I'm kind of between either I'd say biracial or I'd say black, but I've recently been saying black more often than not as the first response to who am I, what am I, [laugh] so to speak.

She specifically stated that she does not and had never identified as 'white' yet following her IAT score indicating a strong preference for white as compared to black, she noted that she had an "affinity" for 'white' people, grew up around 'white' people and that most of her friends were 'white.' This suggested that she can perform a 'white' subject, and while she did not frequently speak from this subject, she occasionally did during the interviews; she constructed herself as biologically 'white' and with 'lighter skin.' It is interesting that Michelle also said, "I've never thought about myself as white."

It is curious that Michelle 1) selected the demographic questionnaire response 'I sometimes consider myself black, sometimes white, and sometimes biracial depending on the circumstance,' 2) wrote-in Black for the MEIM, 3) scored a preference for white on all three IATs, 4) claimed never to identify as white nor had ever thought about it, 5) explicitly suggested a preference her 'black' identity, and 6) claimed to have access to both 'black' and 'white' perspectives. It is possible that Michelle's 'white' subject performance is not recognized by

Michelle—that she navigates her primarily ‘white’ social world by enacting a type of whiteness. This thought was largely based on her IAT preference for ‘white,’ her demographic response that she ‘sometimes considers herself white,’ and her construction of herself as biologically ‘white’ with ‘lighter skin.’ As Michelle’s ‘white’ performativity was limited during the interviews, I cannot be certain about the presence or absence of Michelle’s ‘white’ subject exterior to the interviews.

Of the participants, Callie offered the most complex web of subjects and feelings about those subjects. Callie frequently presented herself as ‘biracial’ and readily spoke from that subject, but her ‘biracial’ subject always seemed accompanied by other identities; it seemed as if Callie was in active conflict with her subjectification and the messy performativity was the result of both resisting and desiring her various subjects. Through her identity talk and performativity during the three interviews, it seemed clear that Callie’s ‘white’ subject always lingered in her other subject performances and threatened to unseat them.

For Callie, a ‘black’ identity rarely instantiated during the interviews, and she explicitly suggested that she more readily identified as ‘biracial.’ Despite a ‘black’ identity not readily instancing for Callie, she noted her annoyance at others that made “black jokes” around her and stated, “especially at home people, are so used to me identifying as white that they kind of forget that I’m half black—that’s still a part of me, and so, I think I sometimes forget that as well.” During this story, Callie’s performance during the interview shifted rapidly. In quick succession, she implicitly distanced herself from a ‘black’ identity by noting that she is ‘half-black’—that because she is ‘half-black,’ the jokes are an annoyance rather than simply racist. Then, most interesting here, she noted that she sometimes forgets she is ‘half black’ and directly stated that

she identified as ‘white’ at home—something she said previously during the interview that she never does.

This rapid shifting seemed to be intermingled with a sense of guilt. She said that during the 2016 election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, she heard stories of people of color under racist pressure from the individuals mobilized by the candidacy of Trump. She said:

The day after the election there was all these things on Twitter about people that were getting harassed, like one lady got to the gas station and some guy came out and said that they were going to kill her, that she was wasted breath. I called my mom bawling my eyes out say that I've never had to deal with something like that, and I feel so bad for people that do and I think that really opened my eyes. I feel like I'm really privileged to an extent; like, I've never been pulled over at home and never been worried that something's going to happen [pause], that a lot of people have these problems that I've never been scared of and I don't know. I was like really upset. I cried for like 3 hours. I was like ‘Mom I've just never had that problem as a black female because when you look at me that's what I look like no matter if you talk to me or not. Someone's just going to look at me and say whatever they want to say to me, but I've never but I've never been scared until this moment [with the election of Donald Trump].’

Here, Callie noted that in not having had the experience she ascribes to being ‘black’ (i.e., fear, being terrorized), she was in some way privileged by ‘being biracial’. Yet further in the conversation, she noted that she was a “black female” and that she appeared as such. This was one of the rare occasions that she instantiated a ‘black’ subject during the interviews, and it was

comingled with feelings of fear and anxiety—that her formation of a ‘black’ subject was associated with only these feelings as she “doesn’t know how to be black” otherwise.

These feelings of guilt seem further intermingled with her ‘black’ subject performance. Her hometown and peer-group were predominantly ‘white’ and she was raised primarily by her white mother. She continued to note that “most of them just always said I talked white.” When asked what talking ‘white’ meant, she said:

I honestly wish to ask people [pause], it's not like I'm over[ly] sophisticated because I'm not. I'm just an average adult, but it's surprising how much I've gotten that throughout the years. When I'm like in a group of black people they're like ‘oh, you talk really white’ or say ‘you must be from a white family’. I don't know what the hell that means. It's just kind of how my mom raised me. It's just the education; I'm going to school to be an education major. I feel that has nothing to do with my mom being white, that's just how my mom raised me as a general parent.

Callie immediately connected this ‘talking white’ to her ‘black’ father and step-mother:

It's frustrating, and I think that's why I feel like I don't feel like I fit in as much. Because even when I'm home with my dad and stepmom, they kind of feel the same way. It's a weird feeling to feel. Like, I mean I know my dad and stepmom love me regardless, but I can tell they make jokes like ‘oh, your mom's got you in that country, little town’ and they do say stuff like that. I feel like that's why I kind of feel that way even within my own parents. I feel like I still don't fit in.

Despite Callie explicitly identifying as biracial, Callie’s identity talk seemed to suggest something else, and we engaged the following dialogue:

Travis: So, your interviews are confidential, no one knows that you're participating in this study; there is just the two of us here. If you had to just write down what race you consider yourself to be, what would you write down?

Callie: Realistically it's white, but I always write down biracial.

Travis: Do you feel like you must write down biracial?

Callie: Yeah.

Travis: Where does that feeling come from?

Callie: I don't know. It's kind of always been, but you fill out the boxes when you take a test, and there's the 'other' [selection option] and I'm just 'so, I'm black and white and it's always just been my identity', just been biracial.

Travis: Do you think I would have believed you if you're just written down white?

Callie: I feel like if I write down white and someone sees me they'll think 'oh, why did she write down white.' You know what I'm saying? I don't want that kind of feeling either 'why the hell she write down white when she's not white.'

Callie appeared to be consciously aware that she would identify as 'white' were she not entangled with these others that shadow her, watch her fill in questionnaires, and judge her words during the interview—the haunting of the *Good Form Biracial*. Her belief that she would identify as white only came when I tried to sweep away these ghostly others by noting that we (two 'biracial' people that, supposedly, understand the identity struggles of 'being biracial') were the only ones there. In making this unanticipated agential cut, this 'white' identity performance seemed to be enabled, but it was quickly placed back in the penumbra of the ghostly others entangled with her subject performances.

This messy layering of identity, feeling that she ‘doesn’t know how to be black’, ‘talks/feels white,’ and consciously selecting ‘biracial’ when identifying all point to the instability in her racial subject performativity. Her biracial subject then, may be her most stable identity. That is, her ‘white’ subject and ‘black’ subject are quickly sundered by friends, family, the Good Form Biracial, and racial hailings. However, her ‘biracial’ subject is not a target of similar pressures suggesting a reason for its durability. The cost of identifying as white, even as it seems to her to be the most ‘authentic’ one, seems too great for Callie to typically bear, except during the romantic (Roulston, 2010) interview with me.

Despite Callie’s feelings of inability to adopt a ‘white’ identity performance, she suggested that was possible for her to instantiate ‘white’ identity performance by altering her materiality. She suggested that wearing Guy Harvey clothing or Simply Southern clothing (which are associated, to Callie, with whiteness) and continuing to ‘talk white’ she could readily instantiate a ‘white’ performance. She similarly believed that she could instantiate a ‘black’ subject by speaking Black English Vernacular. This suggests that Callie was aware she was performing identities and that she could manifest those subjects through material alterations.

Throughout the interview, Callie continued to say that she was ‘just a regular person’, didn’t “feel like [she’s] talking white or black,” and was ‘just Callie.’ This ‘human-race’ performativity was similar to Tony’s, but whereas Tony seemed to resist categorization, Callie seemed willing to take on and speak from black, white, and biracial subjects. Callie’s ‘human-race’ performativity may ultimately serve her ‘biracial’ subject when haunted by the Good Form Biracial; that is, in being ‘just Callie’ she may have been attempting to establish that she balanced her identities—her ideal ‘biracial’ form.

Anouk's identity performances beyond 'biracial' were noticeable in their absence. On the demographics questionnaire, Anouk selected the option 'I consider myself exclusively as biracial (neither black nor white)' and this answer seemed largely consistent with her identity talk; Anouk was perhaps the only participant whose questionnaire response seemed to correspond to both my interpretation of our performative intra-actions and to her stories during the interview.

Anouk did offer some conflicting thoughts to the questionnaire response, but these seemed more an issue of extemporaneous speaking rather than subject instantiations. For example, when asked if she felt black or white, she responded,

Both, but I think [pause], I don't know, it's always like, if I hang out with a group of white people, I feel like an outsider. But then if I hang out with a completely group of black people, then I also feel like an outsider.

She suggested she feels both 'black' and 'white' yet the demographic questionnaire option she selected explicitly states '(neither black nor white).' When I asked her to elaborate on her response of 'feeling' like both, she did not talk about feeling of affiliation nor did she instantiate a 'white' or 'black' subject; instead, she spoke of alienation. I asked her if 'feeling white and black' was the same sentiment as biracial and neither black nor white and she responded, "I think so, yeah. I don't know, I'm in the middle, that's what I feel."

Anouk almost never instantiated a subject other than her 'biracial' subject throughout all three interviews and, uniquely among the participants, actively resisted my attempts to facilitate the dephasing of her 'biracial' subject. As part of the first interview, I asked participant to fill out the MEIM a second time thinking of themselves as different identity than the one they wrote in. For Anouk, I asked her if she thought she could take the MEIM again thinking of herself as 'black.' She told me no, saying that she could not get into that mindset. The other participants



could readily take the MEIM again, a testament to the multiplicity of their racial identities.

Taken together, I posited that Anouk did not have ‘black’ and ‘white’ subjects stable enough to instantiate—that her ‘biracial’ identity was the ‘absence’ of these subjects and not the ‘presence’ of them.

### **Critical Resistance, Purposeful Entangling, and Interview Effects**

As previously described, the purpose of this dissertation was to examine the performative becoming of the biracial subject in psychological research. To study race is to potentially reify its existence, something I found to be inherently problematic. To address this issue, I aimed to both examine participants’ raced subjects while pushing back against the taken-for-granted nature of race. To that end, I sought to purposeful entangle (Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017) with my participants’ various subjects. I sought to complicate my participants’ notions of race, push back against the reification of race, and bring their racial performativity into their explicit awareness. It was my aim to promote, in my participants, desubjectification—emancipation from the discursive domination of their identities (Hoy, 2005).

My participants all noted that they did not frequently get an opportunity to talk about race and even fewer opportunities to talk about biracialism. These interviews were likely the longest and most in-depth conversation participants had had on these topics. Even Tony, with two ‘black-white biracial’ parents and full siblings, said that he had very few conversations about race and biracialism with his parents. During the first interview, he said, “You’re the first person I’ve ever really discussed it with.” As a result, participants had not completely examined their orientations to race and biracialism and the attendant discourses. I suspected that this may have facilitated notions of critical resistance in my participants as they had less entrenched perspectives.

As described above, Callie's identity talk was marked by inconsistencies, and she seemed aware of those inconsistencies. This awareness provided Callie ample opportunities to question her assumptions. Callie seemed to become more aware of her biases and her use of stereotypes during the first interview stating that she 'hated herself' for drawing on 'black' stereotypes. Callie seemed to be (re)interpreting her identity talk during the second interview and said of the first interview:

[It] made me realize how bias I tend to be sometimes when I don't to mean to be...I kind of realized when I was talking to you (Travis) that I am more comfortable in the white community, which I'm okay with but I feel like I don't want to feel uncomfortable in the black community either [pause], a lot of stuff we were talking about, I really sat down and thought about for a while.

The interviews seemed to afford Callie space to voice her biases and then critically question them. Through the interview she became aware of how little she 'knew' about 'black' heritage and further seemed to become explicitly aware of her racial performativity. She stated:

I kind of walked away [from the first interview] thinking that I don't know a lot about black Heritage. I know the basic stuff slavery and Martin Luther King, and I know the things that everyone knows. I never make Black History Month a big thing, even though I can, it is still a part of me I never do. I feel like I pick and choose essentially when I want to be black.

Callie appeared to realize that she performed a 'black' identity when it was advantageous, and further seemed to become aware that she drew upon racial symbols (e.g., 'talking white,' wearing clothing associated with whiteness, using Black English Vernacular) (e.g., controlling her materially to instantiate a black or white subject) to instantiate these subjects as needed.

During the third interview, she continued to critically reflect on her identity talk from the previous interviews. Callie spoke of writing a paper in-between the second and third interview in which she thought about what she was going to pass along to her future ‘biracial’ children. She seemed to offer a more nuanced view of race than she had previously done by stating:

I'd realized I was being more biased or sometimes even being more racist. And, I think now I can see where that is because I don't want to be like that, I don't want to feel like I have to pick a side. When I was writing that paper that I was telling you about before to my unborn child, it's one of the things I said, I was like, "You're more than likely going to be biracial," and I'm like, "I never want you to feel like you have to pick a side because I did. I want to raise you to not feel like that."...Because now that I've been through it, and no one's really ever talked to me about it, I can see where I formed my own opinions on it.

Callie seemed to, at this point in the interview process, realize that she had been driven to have a racial identity, but was not aware of the source of this impulse. She suggested that she would wish to spare her ‘biracial’ children of the drive to a particular racial identity. The subsequent identity talks remained primarily about accepting her imaginary child’s identity, whatever it turned out to be, rather than pushing back against race or the desire to identify. However, Callie offered a more nuanced vision of a potential future in which “one day people don't always feel the need to ask me where I'm from and what my parents look like.” This seems to suggest a more uncertain, less concrete view of race than previously seen in her identity talk.

The interview process seemed to have had significant effects on Callie. About six months after the end of our interviews, Callie sent me a follow-up email, the majority of which is included below:

Just wanted to see how your dissertation was coming along! I was just talking about you yesterday to my mom. It's funny because although you were just using me to help [write] your paper, you actually changed my life. Which I know sounds slightly crazy because you honestly just asked me questions about my life but it did allow me to talk about things that I never do and let me kind of see where I stand on certain issues. Since then I haven't been so scared to talk about how I truly feel about things that go on in the world. I can't thank you enough for that.

Callie did not describe how I 'changed her life,' but it may be that, in providing space for her to perform her identity talk with me, critical resistance was germinated.

Unlike most of the participants, Tony seemed to already be critically resisting racial categorization before participating in this research. Tony suggested at the start of the first interview that he did not 'put himself in a box' and that he only felt like a particular raced subject when forced into one, like when the police questioned why he was in a predominantly 'white' particular neighborhood. Tony's 'human-race' subject, his seemingly most stable subject, seemed to act as critical resistance to the desire to be recognized as a particular race. I asked Tony if he could imagine not 'having' a racial identity, and Tony responded, "Yes. I'd imagine myself to be just as I am now."

However, I seemed to have given Tony some of the language that could be employed to resist subjectification. In the second interview, we engaged in dialogue about how an individual comes to 'know' their 'race.' During the third interview, we revisited the topic. I asked him how individuals get the notion that are born with a race, and he responded, "I think it's because that's how, like you said, society implants it in us. Since we were born, we've been given the label of a race or multiracial." I asked Tony if he believed individuals should participate in the

implantation of race and he responded, “I don't think so, I don't think we should go along with it, because it brings up biases and things of that nature as well as prejudices and things like that.”

Tony suggested here that in ‘implanting race’ biases and prejudices are similarly implanted.

During the third interview, Tony echoed sentiments from his first interview stating that he wished to be seen as ‘just Tony’ as opposed to a racialized subject.

These statements seem in keeping with notions of critical resistance to subjectification, but Tony also suggested that, as a result of the interviews, he was more curious about race and biracialism. He also, as previously described, stated he was more open exploring his ‘white’ identity. Tony’s movement to a place of less certainty about race was in keeping with critical resistance, however, the notions that he has racial identities to explore is not—it seems to suggest a continuing desire to be subjectified.

For Juliet, the interviews had been ‘eye-opening’ as she had never before engaged in an in-depth conversation on race. During second interview, I asked her how she felt after the first interview and she said:

A little confused. [laughter] Just because I didn't realize, like I just said, how much I didn't know. ... I know all about my white side and very little on that [black] side, I felt like half of me just wasn't present. And I have so many questions, I've so many [pause] I wasn't even sure how I can get those answers, because I've tried to in the past and it was very limited what I could find. And I was like, "What do I do at that point? What else can I do?" except accept that I am biracial, accept that I am half-black, but accept that I can't get all the answers? I'm not [pause] I was just a little confused.

The first interview seemed to have enabled Juliet to become somewhat aware of her performativity by suggesting that ‘half of her’ was absent during the interview. She further

seemed to complicate her understanding of ‘what’ she ‘was.’ Juliet was the only participant to indicate on the demographic questionnaire that ‘race is meaningless,’ and as such, she may have been, to some extent, critically resisting racial classification already. Other than this written response, Juliet did not readily perform the critically resisting ‘human-race’ subject. However, during the third interview, she seemed to take on a ‘human-race’ performativity and suggested that individuals should resist being put into racial boxes. She stated:

Honestly that would be better in my opinion for people not to have racial identities. I guess other identities I can't go by or make people feel stronger towards a religion or if they feel like they're an artist or different things like that. Things that people can choose that anyone can be. Like race, you're kind of put into a box when you're born and then like [pause] But there's other identities that you can choose yourself that can identify people. So, I don't feel like race really is necessary anymore or ever.

She continued:

I have a very limited racial identity. I am mostly just curious about my identities, but when it comes to picking one, I don't really have a preference for any of them, whichever one is easiest in the moment I guess.

Juliet seemed to be aware of her performance of race—the momentary, ‘meaningless’ instantiations that serve to help her navigate social spaces rather than expressing the ‘truth’ of her identity.

When asked how she believed participating in the three interviews affected her she responded:

I think I've always faced like I said passed as white and kind of how I'm referenced unless I was asked to specify, "Oh no, I am black and white." It made me think about it more

and it made me realize that I am being made fun of by my friends and not really understood by my friends. I never really thought too much about it, I just found it annoying and distasteful. But, I never really thought about it too much that I feel like it is kind of a form of racism.

Juliet noted that in the intervening time between the interviews, some of her friends asked her to see a picture of her family to ‘prove’ her identity and she refused their request. She said that she does not feel compelled to provide ‘proof’ of her identity to others any longer.

Michelle, for the most part, did not seem to be significantly affected by my attempts to foster critical resistance. However, the interviews did seem to offer her the opportunity to examine her assumptions and perspectives of race. She said:

I've never had to think about how I feel about my race, how I identify... If I'm proud of my race. If I identified as white would I feel different. I'm not used to thinking about all that. I've never sat down and actually like, "I wonder what I am. I want to think about." I haven't really done that before. And I've definitely never sat down and talked it out with someone for this long before. Really, ever. It's like I said, most of the time, if I talk about race it's current events.

When I asked her if she found the interview beneficial, she responded:

Yeah, beneficial...I think it made me question myself a lot more. So, me going back over my answers it was like, "Well wonder how that got there? I wonder why I think this or why I think that." So, I was questioning myself a lot more than I usually do.

Due to our conversations in the first and second interviews, Michelle seemed to be grappling with the notion of ‘biological’ race and her ‘thinking out loud’ during those interviews.

Michelle was adamant in belief that race was ‘purely’ social, but she also held race to be most immutable. This contradiction seemed to trouble her. She said:

When I was talking about it the first time, and I was saying the whole, like, biological thing, because I've never like thought about it before, like lined up these phrases or anything like that, the way that I said it, like when I walked out, I was like, "That's not what I meant." Like it doesn't [pause], That came out like, I think it's one way, but it's not.

Her uncertainty seemed to continue throughout the third interview. Michelle suggested that an individual can change their identity, but that individual could not change what they were ‘born’ as, which seemed contradictory. I asked directly about this contradiction, and Michelle responded:

That sounds biological again. The phrasing is messing me up. Okay. See? Jeez. I'm trying to think of how to put this so it doesn't like I think it's biological, because I don't think it's biological but [pause] Jeez Louise. How do I put this? I think[pause] And does that make sense in your head, read that back. [laughter] I don't think you can change what you're born as. Race isn't a biological thing, but the constructs of being black or white or biracial are there when you're born. It's what like what people tag you as. It's not what you think of yourself as, because you're a kid, like you're not thinking that way, but other people will see you some way. So, I think you're kind of tagged with something when you're born, but you can identify differently.

Due to our conversation, Michelle seemed to reflect on her assumptions and the interview seemed to provide space for her to ‘think out loud’ about her perceptions. While she did not engage in the type of critical resistance I sought (e.g., questioning the need/desire to be racially



identifiable), she appeared to be less certain of her beliefs and aware some of her assumptions about race.

Of all the participants, Anouk was the least critically resistive as her ‘biracial’ subject seemed to be fully subjectified—Anouk believed she simply was biracial. She did not seem to shift her thinking nor question her assumptions about race during the interviews. If anything, some of my questions seemed to have had the opposite effect; Anouk seemed to actively defend her positions rather than reflect on her assumptions or identity talk. She seemed to be more certain of her positions on the ‘self-evident’ existence of race. When I asked if she could imagine herself as not having a recognizable ‘racial’ identity, she responded that she could not and said, “I don’t know is that socially acceptable? They’d probably look at me like I’m crazy.” Anouk’s identity seemed to be ‘externally’ controlled; that is, Anouk’s Good Form Biracial, her idealized ‘biracial’ identity, was fully subjectified by racial discourses. Anouk did seem to question her understandings of the ‘biology’ of race—that during the third interview she suggested that she was no longer certain of what was biological about race.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I attempted to demonstrate that the ‘taken-for-granted’ nature of race was far removed from the performative instantiations of my participants’ ‘racial’ identities. Rather than simply ‘having’ a ‘self-evident’ race, my participants iteratively performed a variety of ‘raced’ subjects with some having recognizable labels (e.g., ‘black,’ ‘white,’ ‘biracial’) and others eluding popular labels (e.g., human-race). These subjects ebbed and flowed in intra-active response to me the researcher, me the ‘biracial’ body, the interview questions, the agential cuts, the research process itself, and perhaps more--perhaps materiality I did not think to account for;

there is nothing to suggest that subjects, their performativity, their ‘purpose’ in ‘being,’ has to align to that which is currently thinkable.

The performed subjects did not sit still; they answered questions, drew upon discourses to defend themselves, and on occasion, even assailed the research process when challenged. Yet, these subjects were messy, unstable, inconsistent, and anything other than ‘self-evident.’ These results suggest that ‘racial’ ‘identity’ is far more complex than that “which leads people to believe they simply see race” (Pascale, 2008, p. 733). In the proceeding chapter, I attempt/ed to think through my frameworks and ‘results’ to discuss the ‘biracial’ individuation process--to analyze the boggart while hidden in its cupboard.

## **Chapter Five:**

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Nathan: [points to painting] You know this guy, right?

Caleb: Jackson Pollock.

Nathan: Jackson Pollock. That's right. The drip painter. Okay. He let his mind go blank, and his hand go where it wanted. Not deliberate, not random. Some place in-between.

They called it automatic art. Let's make this like Star Trek, okay? Engage intellect.

Caleb: Excuse me?

Nathan: I'm Kirk. Your head's the warp drive. Engage intellect. What if Pollock had reversed the challenge. What if instead of making art without thinking, he said, "You know what? I can't paint anything, unless I know exactly why I'm doing it." What would have happened?

Caleb: He never would have made a single mark.

Nathan: Yes! You see, there's my guy, there's my buddy, who thinks before he opens his mouth. He never would have made a single mark.

Nathan: The challenge is not to act automatically. It's to find an action that is not automatic. From painting, to breathing, to talking, to fucking. To falling in love.

(Macdonald, Reich, & Garland, 2014)

...that must be our cure,

To be no more; sad cure; for who would lose,  
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,  
Those thoughts that wander through Eternity,  
To perish rather, swallowed up and lost  
In the wide womb of uncreated night,  
Devoid of sense and motion?

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1667

## Overview

The purpose of this dissertation was to displace the human subject in biracial identity research and examine the material-discursive process of identity performativity and individuation during an interview study. I turned away from a humanist, psychological view of race, identity, and development and towards a new materialist, agential realist, and posthumanist account of subjects, subjectification, and individuation. To do this, I assembled a motley crew of qualitative (i.e., interview), quantitative (i.e., IAT, questionnaires), and post-qualitative elements to create the post-qualitative ~~methodology~~ *experimental critical qualitative inquiry* (ECQI). I interviewed five participants three times each while employing psychological tools (i.e., IAT, MEIM, MEM) and other materiality as agential cuts. I sought to change my interview style (Roulston, 2010) to disrupt the dephasing and performative becoming of ‘black,’ ‘white,’ ‘biracial,’ and other subjects during the interviews. I sought to both examine race and to undermine its unity in my participants through the process of *purposeful entanglement*. I attempted to provide my participants conceptual genesis of *critical resistance* as part of my ethical stance in this project. I sought to address the following research questions:

- 1) How does the researcher, researched, and interview intra-activity serve to instantiate the biracial subject?
- 2) Under what material alterations to the interview process do different subjects come to be?
- 3) Which subjects come to be or fail to come to be in the interview intra-action?
- 4) How does purposeful entanglement function during the interview process?

I will address these questions directly below and following these sections, I will offer further discussions of identity questionnaires, implications of a posthuman theory of biraciality, suggest future directions for research, and provide a tentative/momentary closing section for this dissertation.

### **Research Question One: Instantiating a ‘Biracial’ Subject**

All participants were able to recognize themselves in the hailing of this dissertation and were able to instantiate a ‘biracial’ subject. However, those ‘biracial’ subjects were not all the same with each participant performing a uniquely constructed ‘biracial’ subject. Callie responded consistently as a ‘biracial’ subject for the demographics questionnaire and MEIM, but her biracial performativity during the interviews was tentative, seemingly fragile; when struck by the impurities offered by the agential cuts, her biracial subject quickly dephased in favor of her more stable ‘white’ subject. Tony performed a ‘biracial’ subject only to the extent he believed he had no choice; his dephasing from this performativity in favor of his ‘human-race’ subject spoke to the fragility of his biracial subject. Anouk and Michelle seemed to construct their biracial subject solely when drawing on component groups. However, Michelle seemed to layer her ‘white’ subject and ‘black’ subject under the label biracial—that her ‘biracial’ subject was the mobilization of these two subjects. Anouk, however, did not seem to have a ‘white’ or ‘black’

subject stable enough to perform—that her ‘biracial’ subject was constructed out of the absences of these subjects rather than their presence.

Based on their responses to the MEM, all participants were aware of discourses like the ‘one-drop’ rule, aware of the importance of ‘biracial’ material (e.g. skin tone, hair) and other ‘biracial’ discourses. These discourses intra-acted with each participants’ entanglements, memories of the ‘past,’ and predictions of their future performativity. The ‘biracial’ subject only comes to be during these intra-active moments—each moment a new, if iterated, process of individuation. As a result, not only do ‘biracial’ subjects vary in composition participant to participant, these subject performances constantly varied for each participant—the biracial subject performance never the same again. This is intuitive as each ‘biracial’ subject is always uniquely hailed under unique material-discursive circumstances and the entanglements that intra-act with those circumstances are constantly reconfigured. This extreme multiplicity of the ‘biracial’ identity defies the humanist assumptions of stability, growth, and development.

The ‘biracial’ subject instantiates for a reason. That is, it is never innocently hailed; it is hailed in order to act, whether to answer questions, take questionnaires, prove one’s heritage, or contend with whatever else is needed in each moment. Tony’s ‘biracial’ subject acted to distance himself from a racial group or bring him nearer when convenient. Callie’s ‘biracial’ subject seemed to act as a way to move through social spaces when her seemingly more stable ‘white’ subject complicated them. The hailed biracial subject can instantiate unwillingly, as it seemed to do with Juliet whose ‘biracial’ subject was often met with derision, racist jokes, and extraordinarily personal questions of her birth.

My interviews likewise caused these biracial subjects to instantiate for a reason during the interviews. Me, as the researcher, me the ‘biracial’ body, and my interview design are thus

implicated in the becoming of the ‘biracial’ subjects of my participants. As a result, the ‘subjects’ produced by this research are not necessarily revealing on their own; the observed subjects would not have been performed as they were if I had not been there, if my interview materials were absent. It is the process of individuating as ‘biracial’ subjects that speaks to the intra-active nature of ‘biracial’ instantiation. My participants did not simply have a ‘biracial’ subject; rather, they created and recreated that subject, and many others, as needed in response to material-discursive changes during the interview. I posit that this constant process of hailing, creating a biracial subject, and iterating that subject in response to changes in circumstance is the same individuation process that occurs in settings beyond these interviews.

### **Research Question Two: Agential Cuttings**

Subjects are hailed through the material-discursive configurations of a particular milieu. The research setting of this project, a quiet room on a university’s campus, entanglements with the recruitment email, and other material-discursive elements produced the milieu in which participants instantiated their subjects—and in which I instantiated my subjects as well. Subjects are contingent upon their milieu, and as such, changing the milieu changes what subject performances are possible. As a result, I posited that only in altering the milieu, resphasing the boundaries of the research phenomenon, could I provoke a multiplicity of subject performances. To that end, I enacted a series of four agential cuts using interview materials: 1) researcher body, 2) questionnaires, 3) IAT, and 4) interview style.

As I had intuited, these materials had an effect on the identity performances and subject instantiations during the interviews. The presence of my ‘biracial’ body altered the milieu of the interview as soon as my participants saw me. They were immediately aware of my light brown skin and curly hair. I cannot subvert my ‘biracial’ body—my physicality will always betray my

‘heritage.’ My physicality seemed to more readily instantiate the ‘biracial’ performativity of my participants. I believe that ‘biracial’ individuals are particularly attuned to analyzing the bodies of other to fuel their subject performances—that bodies, as material-discursive agents, hail particular subjects. It is unknowable how and to what extent my physicality altered the interviews, but all intra-actions leave traces—subjects reconfigure and are reconfigured in their meeting. Despite not know the ‘true’ effect of my biracial body on the results of this dissertation, the potential effects of my physicality on the interviews must be conserved—my ‘biracial’ body bracketed in rather than out.

My ‘biracial’ body cannot be removed from the research phenomenon and interview apparatus, but the questionnaires seemed to, however, temporarily suppress the effect of my physicality. As such, the questionnaires were particularly effective as agential cuts. Instead of intra-acting with me, someone my participants held to be biracial like they were, they were intra-acting with psychological questionnaires, something perhaps not biracial. The demographics questionnaire seemed to cause participants’ initial ‘biracial’ subjects to dephase, and ‘black,’ ‘white,’ ‘Caribbean,’ and ‘human-race’ subjects all instantiated in intra-action with the questionnaires. Only Callie’s ‘biracial’ subject, and possibly Anouk’s, seemed not to be appreciably shifted by this agential cut.

While I could reasonably intuit the effect my ‘biracial’ body would have on my participants, I could not intuit the outcomes of questionnaires. I suspected that inconsistencies would occur but not to the extent that they did. Most significantly, I would have intuited that only one subject would be called by each questionnaire. Juliet suggested that she instantiated at least three subjects when responding to the MEIM; I would not have thought that possible. This raises the possibility that more participants were shifting between subjects in ways not as



recognizable. With this notion, researchers may be able to intuit and better tune their use of interview materials to view this identity cascade in intra-action with questionnaires.

The IAT was similar to the questionnaires in that it too seemed to suppress my ‘biracial’ body, but its agency, its ability to deform participants’ subjects was surprising to me. I intuited that the IAT could disrupt participants’ performativity and dephase subjects, but the effect was more extensive than that. For Juliet and Michelle, the IAT, and the results from it, did not seem to simply hail other subjects; rather, the IAT seemed to somewhat impede the hailing of any recognizable subject. Rather than taking on a particular identity performance to defend (e.g., Callie) or attack (e.g., Anouk) the results, Juliet and Michelle seemed unable to perform a subject with a ready label. They expressed confusion at their results and stated that they needed more time to consider them. The IAT seemed to possibly bring them into a space in which none of their existing subjects were adequate and readily called into being. Outside of this milieu, perhaps they could have instantiated a particular subject, but in the interview milieu, nothing seemed recognizable after they took the IAT for the third time. Tony’s IAT results were the only ones that switched sides (from prefers black, to neutral, to prefers white). This seemed to give him access to a ‘white’ subject that he been explicitly unwilling to embody throughout the interviews.

As an agential cut, the IAT can disrupt subjects (e.g., Michelle and Juliet), hail them (e.g., Tony), stabilize them (e.g., Callie), and provoke a subject to defend itself (e.g., Anouk). I am not certain it is possible to intuit anything beyond these notions at this point. There is simply no way to predict what subjects will be disrupted or hailed by the IAT scores nor is there a guarantee that what it intra-actively does in one encounter it will do in the next. The researcher

does not control agential cuts nor subjects' intra-actions with them. Agential cuts, have agency—are agency.

The final premeditated agential cut, changes in interview style, is more difficult to interpret. I attempted to progress from a relatively quiet, uncritical interviewer to an active interviewer drawing on my own critically resistive 'human-race' subject (or something similar) to intra-act with their subjects. In analyzing my transcripts, I believe that I had been somewhat successful in carrying this out. Beyond that, I am not certain what effect it had, but I will conjecture here that this progress may have been vital to the pursuit of desubjectification (Hoy, 2005).

Through the impartial, romantic interview, I established a relationship with my participants and built rapport (something vital and ethically necessarily even in a posthuman account). Beyond this, the romantic interview enabled participants to intra-actively describe their assumptions of race and their entanglements through stories and answers to uncritical questions. The second interview, the postmodern (Roulston, 2010) style, served to raise the level of discourse in the interviews. Rather than just storytelling, the assumptions and biases of those stories became the topics of conversation—the restraining of my 'human-race' subject slipping. This enabled the participants to reflect, and potentially critical question their subjects, on their memories, stories, and entanglements. In this way, I believe I began to become entangled with my participants—not just generally as all intra-actions leave permanent marks but specifically in those racially charged topics.

The final interview style, transformative (Roulston, 2010; Wolgemuth & Donohue, 2006) and purposefully entangling (Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017), saw an intra-action between my participants and my 'human-race' subject given full lease. This again raised the level of

discourse from the notions of biases and entanglements to the subjects themselves, the becoming-subjects, and need and desire to be identifiable as a raced subject. This raise in discourse is necessary as critical questioning does not necessarily result in critical resistance (Wolgemuth, 2007). I posit, or perhaps conjecture, that this gradual raising of discourse called potentially more complex subjects into being; that participants could draw on their reflections and critical reflection from the first and second interview to fuel more critical subjects than previously hailed. I further posit that only these more critical subjects would be ‘capable’ of the desubjectification I sought to promote. I believe that most of the participants did create more critically reflective subjects; however, this did not seem to happen with Anouk. I cannot be certain that the interview style changes, as agential cuts, promoted the hailing of these more critical subjects. More research examining the effect of agential cuts on performativity is needed.

### **Research Question Three: The Coming and Unbecoming of Subjects**

Subjects only became knowable after the individuation process; they appeared as little more than shadows and were lensed through language during the interviews—their existence only ‘inferable’ by me and in the materiality of responses to agential cuts. I attempted to provide organization to these different becomings during the interviews in the previous chapter, but there are no absolutes. I cannot say with certainty which subjects came to be or failed to come to be. In this section, I offer possibilities, a place to think through the potential outcomes of individuation based on my results.

All participants instantiated a ‘biracial’ subject. Those without a ‘biracial’ subject would not, could not respond to the hailing done by this dissertation. Beyond that, subject performances were diverse among the participants; not every participant seemed to be able to manifest every subject during the interviews and the strength of the expressed subjects did not seem consistent

between participants. The process of dephasing from a subject to the pre-individual and back to a temporarily stable subject is the same for all, but what results from that process is not the same. That is, one 'black' subject is not the same as another 'black' subject, despite carrying the same label. What is mobilized to instantiate a 'black' subject was unique participant to participant. Tony's 'black' subjects, one ill met by racism, is something Tony did not seek to embody—he is 'made' black, called into being. Michelle readily accepted a 'black' identity, and it did not seem entangled by racism like Tony's. Michelle readily defended/was defended by her 'black' subject. Tony seemed willing to let his 'black' subject dephase.

All participants performed a 'black' and a 'white' subject or provided stories in which they had done so. I believe that in order to instantiate a 'biracial' subject, an individual must 'have' a 'black' and a 'white' subject. That is, I believe the hailing of a 'biracial' subject necessarily involves both 'component' discourses. This is intuitive as an individual with a 'monoracial' subject would be unable to defend/be defended by a 'biracial' subject—they would likely be without the 'biracial' discourses that fuel performative biraciality. Such a pseudo-subject would quickly dephase if it could be performed at all.

All 'biracial' participants necessarily have both component subjects, but it does not seem to matter how stable those subjects are. Michelle, with an explicit 'black' identity, actively defended it during our interview and through it, resisted some of my attempts at fostering critical resistance. I conjecture that her 'black' subject was quite stable—that is, it did not easily dephase. Anouk, with an explicit 'biracial' identity, did not readily perform a 'black' identity; even when I attempted to hail her 'black' subject, she resisted—she could not seem to instantiate her 'black' subject to take the MEIM. Only when I directly read her a question and waited for an answer did she perform a 'black' identity and only very reluctantly. Once she answered my

vocalization of a MEIM question, her ‘black’ subject seemed to instantly dephase. Both Michelle and Anouk have a ‘black’ subject, but they seemed to be of wildly different stabilities.

The process of individuation and subject performativity extends far beyond the interviews—individuation is both always-already occurring and unending. My interviews did not prompt individuation; rather, my interviews served to hail particular subjects, to intra-actively alter the outcomes of always-already ongoing processes of individuation. As such, participants were already performing subjects when they came to my interviews. Once in the milieu of the interview, the individuation process continued to occur in relation to the material-discursive phenomenon present (i.e., the interview apparatus).

Participants performed a variety of subjects and identities during the interviews; some of those subjects were familiar and readily nameable (e.g., black, white, and biracial). Certain subjects did not appear to align to existing labels but seemed metastable (e.g., ‘human-race’ subject). For some of the identity talk, I could not be certain what subject was being performed nor can I be certain why those subjects were not readily knowable. More research is needed to analyze the subjects-in-between, those mundane navigators of each individual’s sociomaterial world.

#### **Research Question Four: Purposeful Entangling, Ethics, and the (Re)Interpreting of Success**

As previously described, I attempted to foster critical resistance and desubjectification (Hoy, 2005) in my participants through my use of purposeful entanglement (Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017)—a posthuman reinterpretation of the transformative/emancipatory interview. I do not know if I ‘succeeded’ in ‘transforming’ my participants nor am I certain what ‘evidence’ would provide an indication of ‘success.’ Purposeful entangling is meant as the seeding of

critical resistance. In this way, it is future oriented, meant to change subsequent, rather than current performativity. As a result, it is difficult to see or know the action of purposeful entangling during the interviews. Participants remarked that these interviews changed their perceptions of identity, race, and biracialism, but I do not know what those words mean for their subsequent performativity.

Some of my participants did seem to adopt more critical subjects as the interviews progressed. They questioned their biases, their assumptions, and seemed aware of their performativity. Whether those critical subjects were permanent or could instantiate in a milieu outside the research phenomenon, and without my 'human-race' performativity intra-actions, is uncertain. Desubjectification is not linear, it progresses, regresses, shifts, and fades without predictability and without regard to typical perceptions of time. Perhaps a critically resisting subject, a desubjectified subject, is capable of changing milieus without dephasing. More research is needed to understand whether or not this can occur. How does a subject cross milieus without dephasing?

For Tony, he seemed to have directly adopted some of my language during the final interview. That was not my desire. I wanted participants' subjectified identities to collapse on their own through their critical reflection and critical resistance. Instead, I seemed to have partially, perhaps temporarily, deformed part of Tony's performativity. That is, our subjects intra-acted, and my 'researcher-biracial-human-race' subject was perhaps more stable than Tony's and when we intra-acted, his subject, his assumptions and discourses, gave way rather than mine.

Subsequently, I am not sure if I behaved ethically with Tony—if in the pursuit of an ethical project, I may have unintentionally conducted myself unethically. I was and am

responsible for the intra-action I sought out and the outcomes of those intra-action, even if I did not ‘control’ what occurred. Agency was distributed, it was not centralized in my hands. All intra-actions leave lasting effects, and any interview would have caused Tony to change in some way, and I do not believe he was left worse off for our encounter—rather I believed he used some of my language to further his ‘human-race’ subject—if that was not my goal, what was?

However, the kind of critical reflection I sought was exemplified by Anouk, the participant that was seemingly least affected by my attempts at purposeful entangling, in her questioning of her assumptions about the biology of race. She initially seemed to implicitly suggest that she believed that races were biological in nature. As I brought this to her explicit awareness and in our conversations, she moved to a less certain place, finally wondering, “what does biological even mean?” It is my hope that from our interviews and intra-actions with me, these moments of critical reflection would cause her subjects to move to a less entrenched place—potentially to dissolve in her later raced performative moments. That purposeful entanglement would be a catalyst for the emancipation of/from subject.

Callie seemed the most moved by our interviews. When she was able to voice her biases, she became very concerned by them and expressed feelings of shame. She seemed already aware of these biases, and openly stating them only furthered her desire to extinguish them—expel them from her performativity. Through our three interviews, she seemed less certain of race, and in her thinking about what she might pass on to her future children, she seemed to waver on the need to racially identify, hoping for a ‘brighter,’ less racialized future.

She seemed to carry forward her experiences past the interviews, and as previously described, she sent me a follow-up email (previously quoted and quoted below) about six months after the interviews had ended. In it, she said:

You actually changed my life. Which I know sounds slightly crazy because you honestly just asked me questions about my life, but it did allow me to talk about things that I never do and let me kind of see where I stand on certain issues. Since then I haven't been so scared to talk about how I truly feel about things that go on in the world. I can't thank you enough for that.

I was gratified to receive that email, but it was, and still is, difficult for me to understand the full significance of it. Many questions remain about the long-term effects of my interviews and my purposeful entangling. If I intended to intervene in my participant's lives, does this email mean I was successful? What evidence would constitute 'proof'? She noted that I changed her life, but changed it to what? From what? Under what circumstances? For how long? I don't know, and I didn't ask her. Purposeful entanglement was always meant to be an ethic or a method with which to approach my research; I am not sure if it can be described by dualisms like success and failure.

I am glad to believe that, whatever the effects of our interviews together, something good came out of them, even from Callie's subjective point of view. That my interviews seemed to help all of my participants question or critically question their assumptions is perhaps enough. Purposeful entanglement evades a simple binary of success and failure, but perhaps these small moments of possibility are enough to consider that my efforts to foster critical resistance may have borne fruit, even in the absence of absolutes. My intent was to study race while pushing back against the concept. I believe I may have done so.

### **The (Dis)Function of Identity Questionnaires**

During the interviews, I employed three questionnaires as agential cuts. The demographics questionnaire and the MEIM both asked participants to indicate their ethnic/racial



group. These questionnaires were given at the same time (stapled together) and the racial identity question was the last item on the demographics questionnaire and the first item on the MEIM. As these questions were answered uninterrupted by other items or conversation, it is intuitive to believe that participants would provide consistent answers to these similarly phrased questions. Participants, however, did not answer consistently between these two explicit questions of identification. Only Callie provided consistent answers to both questions, though not exactly the same (Biracial & mixed respectively).

The other four participants drew upon different concepts and discourses when answering both questions. Michelle indicated a context-specific identity on the demographics questionnaire and then wrote in 'black' for the item on the MEIM; Michelle did not consciously seem to know why she provided inconsistent answers. Anouk, apparently, did not read all of the possible choices on the demographics questionnaire—she stopped at the first recognizable answer and then moved on. Anouk further suggested that her response did not necessarily match 'internal' perspectives, but she made that choice so as to not 'discredit' race as a concept. Tony indicated a 'black' experiencing 'biracial' identity and a Caribbean identity on the MEIM. Juliet, in addition to the inconsistency between the two questions, seemed to dephase between item on the MEIM performing 'white,' 'black,' 'biracial,' and a 'white-biracial' subject depending on the question asked.

The question becomes, if Juliet was dephasing between items, what would a subscale number from her MEIM represent? Were the other participants similarly dephasing between items? These inconsistencies suggest that quantitative results from identity questionnaires may be untrustworthy for statistical analyses. For 'biracial' individuals, identity questionnaires served to instantiate subjects rather than simply measuring an existing subject. Moreover, these

questionnaires are perhaps hailing multiple/layered/fragmented subjects further problematizing the results of these questionnaires.

When coupled with the inconsistent identity talk of my participants and the performance of subjects that are not readily namable by exiting raced labels (e.g., ‘human-race’ subject), the extent to which identity questionnaires could provide a ‘true’ representation of a participant’s ‘internal’ perceptions is dubious. The metastable nature of subjects renders questionnaires, as approximations of the measures of the ‘biracial identity, of limited value if viewed through a traditional conception. However, I believe that questionnaires can be employed to fuel posthumanist cognitive interviewing (Willis, 2004) as done in this dissertation. The process of individuation can only be analyzed, made temporarily visible, in the performative act. Through these performative acts, inconsistencies, subject performances, and the discourses drawn upon by participants can then be brought into sharp relief. Questionnaires, then, can be employed for their ability to materially alter the interview process rather than their typical function.

I posit that questionnaires should be repurposed and not discarded. However, I do believe there are substantial ethical consideration in their use. Questionnaires can reify race as self-evident and, through their questions, contribute to the subjectification of respondents. It is incumbent on researchers using such questionnaires to adopt an ethical standard that takes responsibility for the consequence and entanglement, both intended and unintended, of their use. While I believe that my ethical principles of desubjectification and critical resistance provide such an ethical framework to continue the use questionnaires, it is not necessary for all identity researchers to adopt my framework. Rather, I recommend that exiting ethical frameworks be reconsidered in the wake of the ontological turn—if matter truly does matter, as viewed from a new materialist/posthumanist perspective and from the results of this dissertation, the least

identity researchers can do is reconsider the short- and long-term effects of their inquiries on participants.

### **Refusing a Posthumanist Theory of Biracial Identity**

My results and theoretical framework both suggest that humanist theories of biracial identity may no longer be, and possibly never were, sufficient. A humanist theory or model of biracial identity is inherently problem as it must start with a latent self—the humanist core. The self is a creation, hailed and disciplined like the ‘biracial’ subject. The label of the self cannot be employed to ground a theory of identity as labels create their attendant identities and not the reverse. To begin with a label is to presuppose an existing subject waiting to ‘develop’—identity as teleology. A humanist theory of biracial identity presupposes the existence of both a self and a ‘biracial’ identity. As such, humanist models of biracial identity are only able to examine what they called into being—the models themselves are unwittingly implicated in the becoming of subjects they would seek to ‘objectively’ describe.

This is not an issue limited to the study of biracial identity; rather, humanist models of identity are inherently problematic for the same reasons biracial-specific theories are insufficient. If humanism is unworkable, the obvious choice is to turn towards posthumanism and new materialism, but I am hesitant to fully embrace this movement. The turn towards a posthumanist biracial identity is appealing and offers a way forward for identity researchers that is both more revealing and more ethical. However, care must be taken to not simply replace elements of existing identity theories; rather, it is the notion of identity that must be displaced. In doing this, a posthumanist theory of biracial identity must begin and end with the process of becoming-biracial rather than ending with the biracial subject that would speak for itself and attest to its own existence.

This posthumanist turn in identity research is not without complications. A basic issue is: if the individuation process can result in the instancing of any possible subject, why does a biracial specific theory of identity need to be established at all? The temporary resolution of the pre-individual could result in a 'black,' 'white,' or 'biracial' subject; beyond this, my participants manifested subjects other than ones specifically based on typical notions race during their identity talk and in response to agential cuts. Moreover, there are no separate pre-individuals for each identity category. The pre-individual dephases into whatever metastable subject is hailed into being; man, woman, mother, graduate student, dissertation committee member, each a metastable resolution of the same pre-individual field.

If the biracial subject is materially-contingent and ever-shifting in response to material alterations and is an always unique creation, what value would a theory of biracial identity truly have? What notion of identity would free a theory from presupposing a terminus? Surely even the notion of a theory of 'biracial' identity presupposes just the end point I would seek to avoid. As described in the methodology chapter, naming practices are not innocent, value neutral acts; rather labels deform the topography of anything they would seek to 'objectively' name. What is biracial identity without both 'biracial' and 'identity'? Even the word 'subject,' with its origin in poststructural thought, conveys a sense of singularity, of finality.

To address this issue, I considered turning to Deleuzian deterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977) to denature and redefine the words identity and biracial to create a posthumanist theory of biracial identity. In this way, I could have attempted to salvage a theory of biracial identity, but I have chosen not to do so, though that may be the implicit purpose of this dissertation. I believe that the cost of sundering the communicability of this dissertation in favor

of the deterritorialization/reterritorialization of existing concepts is too great, at least for this present moment, for this present dissertation.

As a result of these choices, this dissertation sits messily in the mangle of conceptions that I both take-up and undermine while still utilizing the boundaries offered by these conceptions. I explicitly take-up ‘posthumanism’ while engaging in a humanist method (the interview) that retains its humanist boundaries regardless of my (re)interpretations. Similarly, I draw upon ‘human’ memory while describing the ‘past’ as constructed solely in the present. I turned away from humanism; yet, there is an ‘I’ that speaks throughout this dissertation—an ‘I’ that employs its ‘intuition’ (a humanist concept) to attempt to subvert humanism. This dissertation is then a compromise; ‘I’ am neither willing to leave humanism totally nor am ‘I’ fully convinced of posthumanism.

Despite these reservations, I believe that humanist biracial research is deserving of critique on ethical and onto-epistemological grounds, though I do not wish to critique for the sake of critique. As I briefly noted in my review of humanist biracial research in the second chapter, I am wary of ‘pure’ critique and seek instead to be generative. However, being ‘purely’ generative is not possible here given the important, unanswered questions about identity in a posthumanist framework. I do not believe I can suggest an immediate abandonment of humanist identity research in favor of posthumanism under such uncertainty. Instead of offering a posthumanist theory of biracial identity, I will enumerate some fragmented notions that may provide some understandings of the ‘biracial’ ‘identity.’ In this way, I hope to both disrupt the existing field of humanist biracial research and seed an on-coming field of posthumanist biraciality—one in which a new theory of ‘biracial’ ‘identity’ could find lease.

**The biracial subject is materially contingent.** The biracial subject is in constant relation to the material present and through that relationship, subjects are hailed/instanced/individuated. It is not simply that a particular material always calls a particular subject; rather, material is always-already in relation with discourses. The resulting matter-discourse, in a particular milieu, is then what hails subjects. For example, it was not the questionnaires themselves that hailed subjects during my interviews; rather, it was the questionnaires in intra-activity with my researcher body with the entanglements of my participants that hailed a particular performative subject in the interview milieu. This extensive, complex, messy, shifting material-discursivity is what makes the ‘biracial’ subject, and all subjects, fragile, metastable, terminating. Remove an element or change the milieu and the call changes as well—a different hailing, and subsequent dephasing is the result. This is the reason studies cannot abstract the ‘biracial’ identity from the conditions of its instantiations.

For researchers, studies of identity must take into account all forms of intra-active material. Researcher bodies, recording devices, interview space, questionnaires all agentively reconfigure identity performativity and call subjects into being that, in turn, answer questions in that milieu. Results from studies on biraciality that do not analyze and make clear the materiality of their process are problematic—the extent of these problems is, however, uncertain. Additional empirical research examining the material-discursive intra-activity of participants and the research process is needed to more fully analyze the coming into being of the ‘biracial’ subject in studies.

**The biracial subject is haunted by the *Good Form Biracial*.** As previously described, the *Good Form* was employed by Simondon (1989) to represent a truly stable, rather than metastable identity. For some of my participants, they seemed to be haunted by thoughts of a

‘perfect’ biracial identity—one that ‘truly’ balanced being ‘white’ and ‘black.’ Others seemed to implicitly state another ‘ideal’ identity that they sought to embody. The Good Form Biracial is an absent judge of identity, possibly bringing shame to those ‘biracial’ individuals that perform subjects ‘less’ than the ideal. This Good Form Biracial is not attainable, but rather it acts to tune (Pickering, 1995), to intra-actively narrow identity performances. It is the collection of partial discourses on ‘black,’ ‘white,’ and ‘biracial’ identities that each individual uses to construct their own ‘ideal’ identity. While the Good Form Biracial differs in content person to person, I believe that the notion of an ‘ideal,’ always individuated identity is part of biracial performativity.

Not all participants gave an indication that they believed a ‘perfect’ biracial identity existed, but I posit that notions of a ‘perfect’ ‘biracial’ identity may be a fundamental part of the ‘biracial’ subject generated by parental pressure. Participants spoke of their parents telling them that they must value and honor ‘both’ sides of their heritage—that they must both be ‘black’ and ‘white.’ To do less, is then to ‘forget’ and ‘dishonor’ one’s parents, something my participants seemed unwilling to do. Parents drove this thought, but they were unable to ‘tell’ their ‘biracial’ children how to do this tightrope balancing of racial identities with my participants saying that parent ‘do not know what it is like to be biracial.’ The Good Form Biracial is, perhaps, generated in this absence of passed-on knowledge of becoming; the Good Form Biracial then serves as a disciplining agent along with the pantheon of biracial discourses.

It is possible that the remains of the pre-individual following individuation are implicated in the creation and content of the Good Form Biracial—that the Good Form Biracial is as much a product of individuation as subjects are. That guilt and shame some of my participants seemed to have was, in some way, a result of the subjects they were not able to perform in each moment. Regardless, researchers should be aware of these idealized states and conduct inquiries to better

understand how they are created and how they function as they, at least partially, seem to guide the individuation process.

**The biracial subject is unique to each individual.** Solomon (2012) termed identities that are the same between parent and child *vertical identities* as they pass ‘unobstructed’ from parent to child. Identities that are different between parent and child are then called *horizontal identities* as the flow of identity is disrupted. For example, a mother passes her notion of ‘femaleness’ to her daughter while that mother, typically, does not similarly pass her ‘female’ identity to her son. More instructive are heterosexual parents with a homosexual child, Solomon’s archetypal example (2012). The transmission of a heterosexual identity between parent and child is blocked and those parents are left without the ability to easily discipline their child’s sexual identity.

Biraciality can similarly be conceived as a horizontal identity. The biracial identity is not passed down from parent to child as typically done with race. My participants suggested that their parents did not ‘truly’ know what it was like to be ‘biracial’ and subsequently, their parents were ill prepared to support a ‘biracial’ identity. Parents seemed to draw upon ‘biracial’ stereotypes (e.g., confusion) to ‘assist’ in the ‘development’ of their child’s ‘biracial’ identity. The use of these stereotypes seemed to create anxiety and feelings of shame and guilt in participants as their personal view of their identity clashed with their parents’ view.

Tony was the exception to this. As both of his parents were ‘black-white biracial,’ his ‘biracial’ identity was vertical, rather than horizontal. It was intuitive to believe that in having a vertical ‘biracial’ identity, he would have evinced the strongest, most well developed ‘biracial’ subject. This was not the case, as Tony offered the most critical resistance to racial categorization. Tony spoke of having pride in ‘being biracial,’ but he did not frequently, nor



particularly willingly, take on a ‘biracial’ subject. Tony often subverted race as a category and performed a ‘human-race’ subject during the interviews. In his stories, Tony drew upon his ‘biracial’ subject for its strategic value—to enable him to distance himself from ‘black’ and ‘white’ groups as convenient in social intra-action.

Research simply drawing upon the label ‘biracial’ without an analysis of how each participant constructs that identity is problematic. All of my participants were ‘biracial’ but as my results seem to suggest, there were few commonalities between those ‘biracial’ identities. Additional research further analyzing the individuation process of ‘biracial’ participants is needed to understand the implications of the multiplicities of the ‘biracial’ identity.

**The biracial subject is (probably) a subjectified/resistive identity.** As part of my ethical stance, I adopted Hoy’s (2005) notion of critical resistance to subjectification and Foucault’s desubjectification (1997). That is, I sought to push back against the reification of race during my interviews with participants. There is an importance difference between resistance and critical resistance; resistance entails acting against oppression to gain emancipation. Resistance is, instead, seeking the ‘freedom’ to be able to identify as a particular raced subject when otherwise prevented from doing so. Imagine a ‘multiracial’ individual forced to take on a ‘black’ identity due to their skin tone but longing to be seen as ‘biracial.’ Acting against that ‘black’ identity only to take on another racial identity is resistance—a submission to hegemony of race. Critical resistance, instead, undermines the need to be recognized as a subject at all. The critically resisting subject does not wish to take on those identities/subjects they are discursively disciplined to supposedly desire. Emancipation is then the dissolution of recognizable subjects.

The ‘biracial’ subject, seemingly exiting in the marginal space between two highly significant and supposedly natural identities (i.e., ‘black’ and ‘white’), could be a resistance to

racial binaries or it could offer critical resistance through its disruption of race as a category. That is, race is popularly held to be biologically based and racial identities are held to be mutually exclusive. As biracialism does not fit well into that conception of race, its marginality is inherently a resistance to these common notions. However, I posit that the ‘biracial’ subject does not critically resist race, but instead seeks to be recognizable as ‘biracial.’ That is, the ‘biracial’ subject may be simply another raced subject rather than a threat to the categorization of individuals into racial groups. It represents a subjectified rather than a desubjectified identity.

It is somewhat misleading to suggest that the ‘biracial’ identity is solely a resistive, rather than critically resistive, identity. As previously noted, subjects are porous, messy, and called into being—made and remade in each iteration. While I believe the label of ‘biracial,’ the subject that seeks to be recognizable/communicable in racial discourses, is part of racial categorization, each individual is able to instantiate other, less recognizable subjects. Those identities, like Tony’s ‘human-race’ subject, do offer critical resistance and seem to be, at least partially, desubjectified. These identities do not have racial labels and clear discursive expectations; as a result, these subjects are capable of critical resistance and, perhaps further, are the only ones capable of critical resistance as they cannot take on a racial label. A consciously known and stable ‘human-race’ subject would most likely resist identify itself racially as it would both not have a race and would not understand the question.

However, it is possible that a ‘human-race’ subject could be closely articulated to a ‘biracial’ subject. That is, an iterated ‘biracial’ subject might be willing to offer ‘imperfect’ racial identification (e.g., checking every box on a racial identity form but also explicitly identifying as ‘biracial’) and in so doing, functionally offer critical resistance to racial categorization. Inconsistent racial identification could be, perhaps unconsciously, conceived of as an act of

critical resistance. For example, Callie spoke of circumstances in which individuals would ask her to identify her race, and she would delay answering by posing questions back like ‘why does it matter’? This suggests that iterations of the biracial subject may partially critically resist racial categorization under certain circumstances. However, the ‘biracial’ subject that desires to be fully recognized as ‘biracial’ is not a critically resisting subject.

I believe there is an ethical dimension to this implication. That in studying ‘biracial’ individuals, researcher may be subjectifying participants further, driving them deeper into the discourses of race. Biracial participants may be especially vulnerable to this type of subjectifying power. The ‘biracial’ subject does not have the same type of inveterate discourses as found in, for example, gendered subjects; as previously described, that a ‘biracial’ individual must construct their own notion of biraciality and their own understanding of the Good Form Biracial suggests that discourses on biracialism are incomplete. Researchers, particularly those with ‘biracial’ subjects, may be seen by participants as experts on biracialism—expert ‘biracial’ people. Participants may accept being examined for their ‘biraciality’ as proof of their identity. The interview then becomes just another type of cyborgian biracial material to enact a ‘biracial’ subject. Researchers must be aware of this possibility and consider the ethics of their research as I have attempted to do here.

### **Rescuing Method and Experimental Critical Qualitative Research**

In my turn to posthumanism, qualitative methods and psychological tools that I had come to know and relied upon no longer seemed adequate to the task of studying the individuation process and the becoming of subjects. The unyielding, proscriptive nature of these methods seemed to limit the potential for ‘traditional’ tools in post-qualitative inquiry. I join many others in thinking this (e.g., St. Pierre, 2013; Vagle, 2017; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). The choice

between employing standard tools and methods or writing a ‘purely’ conceptual/philosophical dissertation loomed at the inception of this project, but the answer quickly became obvious: I was in the ruins of methods already. My Baradian framework already implicated method in intra-actively creating what it sought to ‘objectively’ study, and I could not pretend otherwise. Interviews, for their capacity to examine the ‘true’ experiences of participants, and psychological tools, for their ability to objectively measure an identity, no longer provided the grounding of identity that I held.

Even as I felt method crumble around me, a new thought took root. If I wished to examine the ‘biracial’ subject, I would have to make that subject instantiate. Only through that process could I examine the becoming of that performative identity. To that end, I turned back to the familiarity of methods, but I did not use them as I had before. I repurposed these familiar methods and tools as a conduit to intuit (Manning, 2016) a possible ‘future’—to gain the memories of the future that come with the practice of a technique. Through my experience with psychological tools, I predicted that ‘biracial’ subjects could be moved to instantiate if participants intra-acted with questions of racial identification and if given more than one opportunity to identify, inconsistencies could result. Such inconsistencies would provide an opening for investigation.

My familiarity with methods and psychological tools complemented my use of posthumanism and new materialism and rendered this dissertation possible. Without employing what was practiced and familiar, I would have been unable to account for the materiality of my research process. Methods created the possibility of this dissertation—the possibility to account for the materiality of my process through my *experimental critical qualitative inquiry* (ECQI). I employed interview materials not because I knew they were going to ‘work,’ but simply because

I thought they might make possible something different, something possibly unexpected—to disrupt automaticity, mine and my participant's. Methods, in ECQI, are a disordering tool, something to bring into relief the hidden dimensions of subjects, subjectification, and the individuation process. In ECQI, I experimented first, and then attempted to understand what I had done, what I rendered possible. ECQI is neither deliberate nor random but creative—a methodology without methodology (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016).

Conceptual or philosophical analyzes are persuasive and enticing, but they are limited by their milieu—such studies examine different ‘biracial’ subjects than done in an empirical account. They may suggest the multiplicity of biracial identity, but such studies cannot observe it. In having observed multiplicity of the ‘biracial’ identity, I have come to realize the probable extent of that multiplicity; the ‘biracial’ identity is wildly varied, much more so than I could have imagined before this empirical project.

Methods are worth defending, not for their intrinsic or traditional value, but rather, for the simple reason that researchers have practiced them to the point of routinization. Through that practice, a researcher can gain memories of the future (Manning, 2016) and use their intuition to ‘empirically’ study subjects following the linguistic and ontological turn. Using familiar methods to study something as philosophically dense as the pre-individual seems absurd on its face, and I doubt that Derrida could have conceived that quantum physics, of all things, could have provided evidence for his *hauntology*, as Barad (2010, p. 260) enthusiastically noted of the results of an experiment in quantum physics, “*this is empirical evidence for a hauntology!*” I believe the so-envisioned failure of method is actually the failure of imagination. Researchers do not need to discard their training, their methods, or their techniques, just their certainty.

## **Future Directions for Research**

The ‘biracial’ identity is not well understood, and this dissertation provides the openings for additional research and not the final word. I have previously suggested more specific areas for additional research, but I will offer some more general directions in this section. Research on ‘black-white’ biracialism should examine how the various subjects intra-act in milieus beyond the interview, beyond a room on a university campus. As the social world of a ‘biracial’ individual is not typically limited to those space, research on biracialism must strive to examine the ‘biracial’ subject in the mundane, routine, intra-action of daily life. Research must examine how these ‘biracial’ subjects (dis)function in school settings, in peer groups, and wherever a ‘biracial’ subject is hailed into being.

If this posthumanist account of the ‘biracial’ identity is to have some purpose beyond a creative, philosophical exercise (a surely important and necessary thing on its own), research must examine the ‘actuality’ of the ‘biracial’ subject. Tony’s story only underscores that the ‘human-race’ subjects can be shot like any other subject. Race matters, desubjectification matters, understanding the ‘biracial’ subject matters; the question researchers must answer is: how can this knowledge be mobilized to have an emancipatory effect when the pestilence of racism does not seem to care whether or not a person with dark skin critically resists their subjectification? I did not answer that question in this dissertation, and I hope future research can, in some way, provide a path forward for this line of inquiry.

Beyond this preceding paramount issue, the ephemeral, diaphanous nature of identities creates openings for future research rather than hindering them. I believe the ideas and implications I have described in the section above can be applied to other identities and not just other ‘biracial’ ones. Performative accounts of gendered identities have long been undertaken

and new materialist accounts are oncoming; yet, many other categories of identity, particularly those in psychology, remain mired in humanism, trapped before the linguistic and ontological turns. Future research should continue to disrupt the human/non-human binary in identity research, and my notions could provide a starting point, an entry point where there may not be one otherwise. Research should examine the extent to which all identities are multiplicities—a doing rather than something stable.

Regardless of the utility of the concepts in the above sections, researchers must continue to explore the ethics of identity research and examine their responsibility to their participants. Every intra-action has effects, is in some way permanent, and travels through space and time to reconfigure the past and future. Identities and subjects matter—they enable participants to navigate the eddies of their social world. To study those identities is also to change them, and researchers are responsible for some portion of that change—how much is yet unknown. Analyzing the short-term and long-term effects of identity research is of paramount importance. It is no longer sufficient for identity researchers to simply abide by IRB or APA ethical standards. These standards are surely important, but future research must be viewed as active agents with an ethic that extends beyond ‘minimal risk.’ In studying issues of race and ethnicity, researchers must take great care to not substantiate the ‘reality’ of race—participants cannot be left with the impression that because they took part in a study on race they are and will always be raced.

### **In Closing, In Indulgence**

Beyond the years in graduate school, this dissertation was decades in the making. I identified as biracial for most of my life without a second thought. It was obvious to me that I was biracial—my mother was black, and my father was white. Losing my biracial identity was a

comparatively recent occurrence—a painful experience, a quietly catastrophic experience, one that I was not alone in making. Now, my ‘biracial’ subject is nothing but a distant phantasm, but writing this dissertation brought it close again; I remember feeling the pain and guilt of not being recognized as biracial like Juliet did. I felt anger when Tony told me about the police being called on him for having dark skin. I also laughed when Tony told me how he used his ‘biracial’ identity to escape having to be put in either group when it was convenient. I commiserated with Callie when she told me she didn’t know how to be black. Entanglements are permanent; my biracial subject, though shattered, is not gone—not really; I can comfortably lapse into its performativity all too easily—its past and future visible to me even as I write these words.

I am grateful to my participants for being the wonderful people that they are and so generously spending time answering my questions. While I sought to become entangled in their lives and stories, so did they entangle in my memories—my past and future. As with Heisenberg, what we study we always change, and though I have used these words elsewhere, I am moved to reproduce them here, “Each one reconfigures the world in its becoming—and yet they never leave us; they are sedimented into our becoming, they become us” (Barad, 2007, p. 394). That is the power of empirical research: nothing is ever the same again—the past always in flux and the future to never come to be as envisioned.

I am struck by how much of myself I read in this dissertation. I had considered writing an autoethnography of my ‘biracial’ identity, but I feared it might be too self-indulgent. It is an irony of a sort that I seem to have done just that in this ‘empirical’ dissertation anyway. I had also considered writing myself in as a sixth participant, perhaps named Ron after my father, but I was wisely counseled away from this. Still, when writing some of the sections, I found myself thinking ‘I have the perfect story to contribute here,’ but as I have written above, I am not sure



what those stories mean anymore—as if meaning was something to mine and extract, something to purify and represent. I am pleased that something of myself still shines through. Only in writing this closing did I find out what this dissertation was about: the loss of certainty in research. But I let that all go here. I do not feel sad at the loss of certainty; rather, it is a joyful moment; what comes next is no longer written in advance.

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**Appendix A:**  
**Recruitment Email**

Hello,

I am studying black-white biracial undergraduate students' experiences and perspectives on their racial identities. Identity is a big part of who we are. For biracials, identity might be more complex. It is my hope that through this study, I can help make the lived experiences and voices of biracial individuals heard. I am looking for students who meet both of the following criteria: 1) have one biological parent who identifies as African American/black and another biological parent who identifies as Caucasian/white and 2) is an undergraduate student at the University of South Florida between the ages of 18 and 25.

Participants would be interviewed on three occasions (approximately 60 minutes each) at the College of Education building at USF's Tampa campus during a one month period and would be compensated with \$5 during each interview. This project represents not only an opportunity for biracials to reflect on their own experiences but an opportunity for participants to help other biracial individuals by sharing their perspectives. Interested students can immediately email me (Travis Marn, [marnt@mail.usf.edu](mailto:marnt@mail.usf.edu)) for more information.

All the best,  
Travis

**Appendix B:**  
**Interview One Guide**

1) Tell me a little about your immediate family (Ask for parents/siblings ethnic identity if not provided). Who in your family has been most important to your ethnic identity? How much of your ethnic identity has been shaped by your family? Which parent had the most effect on your ethnic identity? Why do you feel that way? [Ask for an example of when peers/family have influenced their identity.]

2) Do you feel black or white? Why do you think you feel that way? Do you feel like you reject the other group? [probe answer “Why do you feel that way? Can you give an example?"] Have you felt biracial in the past? Do you feel biracial now? Why has it changed? When do you feel biracial? Has your identity shifted over time?

You mentioned in the survey (6) that the ethnic identity that best describes you is....

3) How would your family react if you told them you were [white or black depending on their answers to above question]? Why do you think they would feel that way? How would your friends react?

4) In adolescences (12-16 or so), did your neighborhood friends know that you had parents from different ethnic groups? How did they know? [Probe differentness related to skin color, race and racial identity]

Were your school peers the same group of friends as your neighborhood peers? How did they know that you were biracial? [Probe differentness related to skin color, race and racial identity]

Did you go through a period of time where you felt you had to decide your race?

5) How do black males treat you when they find out you are biracial?

How do black females treat you when they find out you are biracial?

6) Have you ever had to “prove” your ethnic identity to others? To whom? Can you give me an example? Why do you think you had to prove your identity?

7) Have you ever attempted to hide your mixed heritage? [From whom? Why? Were you successful? How did that make you feel? Do you still attempt to hide your mixed-heritage?]

8) What do you say when someone asks you what your racial/ethnic background is? Has this changed over time? Do the behaviors or attitudes of others change depending on how you answer? [Probe change; e.g., How much of your behavior or attitudes are affected by whom you are around?"] Can you provide me an example of when your behaviors/attitudes have changed depending on who you are around?

9) Have you felt pressured to date African Americans? Caucasians? Where did this pressure come from? Have you wanted to date another ethnic group but were not able to because of external pressures? [Ask for example(s) if possible to help provide more context.]

10) Have you felt a connection to biracial individuals? Do you still feel a connection? Can you provide an example of someone who you feel a connection to who is biracial? Why do/don't you feel a connection?

11) What do you like about being biracial? What has been hard about being biracial? [Ask for example(s) if possible to help provide more context.] Have you ever wished you were not biracial? Can you provide an example?

12) What advice do you have for parents of biracial children and other biracial children?

13) How does your IAT score make you feel? Were you surprised by the result? What score did you expect to get? Why do you think you scored that way? What score would you have wanted to get? Why that score instead of the one you got?

14) Is there anything else that you would like to add?

**Appendix C:**  
**Interview Two Guide**

- 1) Was there anything that has come up since the first interview that you want to talk about?
- 2) Did the interview make you think about your racial identity after you left? If so, in what ways?
- 3) Thinking back to past conversations you have had about race, how were they different from how we talked about it? (PROBE Who? Under what circumstance?) How have you discussed your racial identity after our first interview? (PROBE Who, what did you say?)
- 4) How did you feel after the interview ended? How do you feel now about the interview? In what ways do you think interview impacted you? (ex. Was it beneficial, harmful)
- 5) What was the one aspect of the interview that stuck with you most? (PROBE what, why?) Was there anything else from the interview stuck with you more than the rest?
- 6) How did the interview make you rethink your racial identity? (PROBE what, why, how?)
- 7) What race did you think I was when you saw me? Since I am biracial as well, was there anything you felt more comfortable telling me that you wouldn't have told an interviewer from a different racial background? Anything you didn't feel comfortable telling me because I am biracial?  
(PROBE why?)
- 8) What else would you like to tell me about the interview? What else would you like to tell about being biracial?
- 9) Would you be willing to fill out this questionnaire? (Give MEM sheet)
- 10) [Look over responses with participant and ask them to elaborate on their responses and talk about their thinking during the selection of their responses.]
- 11) Have you ever taken questionnaires like this before? How do you feel, in general, when filling them out?



**Appendix D:**  
**Interview Three Guide**

- 1) Was there anything that has come up since the second interview that you want to talk about?
- 2) How did you feel after the interview ended? How do you feel now about the interview? In what ways do you think interview impacted you? (ex. Was it beneficial, harmful)
- 3) What was the one aspect of the interview that stuck with you most? (PROBE what, why?)  
Was there anything else from the interview stuck with you more than the rest?
- 4) How did the interview make you rethink your racial identity? (PROBE what, why, how?)
- 5) Why do you feel the need to identify with any racial group? (PROBE where did they get their thoughts from)
- 6) Do you feel as though you are playing identities?
- 7) What else would you like to tell me about the interviews? What else would you like to tell about being biracial?

## Appendix E:

### Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

**In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to primarily be:**\_\_\_\_\_

Please use the full range of numbers below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). For each question, circle only one number.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I have spent time trying to find out my ethnic group such as its history, tradition, and customs.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.	1	2	3	4	5
8	In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5

10	I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix F:

### Demographics Questionnaire

Instructions: Please answer all of the following questions as they describe you.

Today's date: \_\_\_\_\_

1) Age:\_\_\_\_\_ 2) Gender:\_\_\_\_\_

3) College Major:\_\_\_\_\_

4) Parent/Guardian Educational Obtainment

	Biological Mother	Biological Father
Is active in your life (circle one):	yes or no	yes or no
Race/Ethnicity (circle one):	black or white	black or white
What is each parent's highest education level?	Place an X in only one of the boxes below:	Place an X in only one of the boxes below:
some elementary or middle school		
some high school		
high school graduate/GED		
some college		
technical/nursing school		
Bachelor's degree		
graduate degree (master's/Ph.D.)		

5) What was the largest racial/ethnic group in your high school (place an X on one of the following):

\_\_\_\_\_ Asian or Asian American (Including Chinese, Japanese, and others)

\_\_\_\_\_ Black or African American

\_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic or Latino (Including Mexican Americans, Central Americans, and others)

\_\_\_\_\_ White, Caucasian, Anglo, European American; not Hispanic

\_\_\_\_\_ American Indian/Native American

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (write in): \_\_\_\_\_

6) Which of the following best describe your primary ethnic identity (place an X on one of the following):

\_\_\_\_\_ I consider myself exclusively black (or African American)

\_\_\_\_\_ I consider myself exclusively white.

\_\_\_\_\_ I sometimes consider myself Black, sometimes white, and sometimes biracial depending on the circumstances;

\_\_\_\_\_ I consider myself biracial, but I experience the world as a Black person;

\_\_\_\_\_ I consider myself exclusively as biracial (neither black nor white);

\_\_\_\_\_ I consider myself exclusively as my other race (not Black or biracial);

\_\_\_\_\_ Race is meaningless, I do not believe in racial identities;

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (write in): \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G:

### Multiracial Experiences Measure

**Directions:** The following statements are experiences that you may have had because of your multiracial background. Using the 1-5 scale below, indicate how often you have encountered these events/experiences. Please be open and honest in your responding.

Note: *Multiracial* refers to having more than one racial background, including White, Black/African American, Asian/Asian American, Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino(a)/Chicano(o), and Native American/American Indian.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5

Almost

Rarely

Sometimes

Often or

Almost

Never

Frequent

Always

***Due to my multiracial background,***

1.	I shift how I racially express my identity around certain people (e.g., talk and dress).
2.	I get asked “What are you?”
3.	I am active in multiracial organizations or groups.
4.	I am picked on for not looking or acting like a certain racial group.
5.	I get asked “Where are you from?”
6.	I live in more than one culture.
7.	I celebrate holidays/celebrations of more than one culture.
8.	I change the way that I racially describe myself to other people.
9.	I am not accepted by other racial groups.
10.	I change how I describe my racial identity in different settings (e.g., work, home, and school).
11.	I identify with cultural beliefs of multiple groups.
12.	I read multiracial literature (e.g., articles, books, and internet websites).
13.	People are curious to know my background.
14.	I am friends with people from different cultures.
15.	People say I’m exotic.
16.	People have started fights with me (either verbally or physically).
17.	I am pressured to pick a race.
18.	I connect to other multiracial individuals through the internet (e.g., facebook and myspace).

19.	I participate in cultural practices (e.g., special food, music, and customs) associated with different cultures.
20.	I get asked about my racial background.
21.	People make jokes about me.
22.	I create my own space (e.g., formed social groups) with other multiracial people.
23.	I change the way that I present myself to other people.
24.	I attend multiracial events and social gatherings (e.g., Loving Day).
25.	I act different depending on where I am at (e.g., home, school, and work).

**Appendix H:**  
**IRB Letter of Approval**



RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE  
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669  
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799  
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

October 14, 2016

Travis Marn

Educational and Psychological Studies

4202 E. Fowler Avenue, EDU105 Tampa, FL  
33620

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**

IRB#: Pro00027648

Title: The Material-Discursive Entanglements of Researched Bodies: A Posthumanist Analysis of  
Becoming-Biracial

**Study Approval Period: 10/13/2016 to 10/13/2017**

Dear Mr. Marn:

On 10/13/2016, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

**Approved Item(s):**

**Protocol Document(s):**

[BW Dissertation Protocol v0.01.doc](#)



**Consent/Assent Document(s)\*:**

[BW Informed Consent v0.01.docx.pdf](#)

\*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the approval period indicated at the top of the form(s).

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

- (6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
- (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristen Salomon', followed by a horizontal line.

Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson

USF Institutional Review Board