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Mixed-Heritage Individuals' Encounters with Raciolinguistic Ideologies

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Abstract

Mixed-heritage individuals (MHIs) are known to face high levels of social exclusion. Here, we investigate how raciolinguistic ideologies related to one's heritage language abilities add to these exclusionary experiences. The results from 293 MHIs reveal frequent experiences of marginalization from members of each of their heritage communities because their racial appearance and language practices are perceived as deviant and outside imagined 'monoracial' norms. Specifically, over half of respondents described experiences of exclusion for not speaking their minority heritage languages with the same accent or manner or fluency associated with 'monoracial' native speakers of their heritage languages or dialects. Another subset described high pressure to speak 'proper English' in White dominant work environments. These results extend past MHI work by empirically documenting the 'monoracial-only', monoglossic, and 'Standard English' ideologies that contribute to the continued social exclusion of MHIs.

Keywords: raciolinguistics, language, race, mixed, ideologies, identity

Introduction

> I feel like [language] has disrupted my sense of belonging in both cultural groups. I cannot be a 'real' Latina because I am not fluent in Spanish. At the same time, I still face a lot of gaps in my white belonging because the English I learned as a child never quite matched the English of my white peers. –Becky*
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> **To protect the anonymity of participants, all names appearing after excerpts are pseudonyms.*

Mixed-heritage individuals (MHIs) like Becky are people who identify with multiple races or ethnicities and often brought up with exposure to multiple cultures and linguistic practices. Like Becky, MHIs often use language to negotiate their racial identities and gain acceptance to different communities, but their group membership is often denied or questioned by others (Albuja, Sanchez, & Gaither, 2019a, b). In the excerpt above, Becky expresses a sense of isolation and rejected racial identity due to her linguistic practices. Similar to many MHIs, she is often asked "But what are you really?" after describing her ethnic background (Gaskins, 1999). As Becky's statement suggests, her racial identity is often scrutinized based on whether she 'sounds' like a member of her racial or ethnic group(s). Indeed, hegemonic ideologies concerning race and language often require MHIs to pass a certain threshold of linguistic resemblance to 'monoracial' members of their heritage language(s) in order to be seen as a legitimate member of their parental racial/ethnic groups.

These hegemonic ideologies about race are problematic as they construct unrealistic expectations for MHIs regarding their identification with socially constructed racial categories. Because MHIs challenge existing monoracial/monoethnic structures, they often do not align with categorical expectations and are particularly vulnerable to identity challenges that can be psychologically stressful (Albuja et al., 2019b). For example, MHIs frequently encounter various

microaggressions that either pressure them to pick a monoracial identity, accuse them of not being monoracial enough, or deny them their multiple heritages (Harris, 2017; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Pew Research Center, 2015; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Further, MHIs' claim to their racial identities are constantly challenged when their linguistic behavior or physical appearance does not match a *listening subject*'s expectations (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Khanna, 2011; Nakashima, 1996; Root, 1996, 1998). Here, we invoke Inoue's (2006) term *listening subject*, to refer to the way interlocutors may hear the linguistic practices of a minoritized speaker as substandard or abnormal based on their perceived gender, ethnicity, or race. The observable physical characteristics of the speaking individual (e.g., skin color, hair texture, facial features) might be used by the listening subject to ascribe a racial group to the speaker and overdetermine their linguistic practices based on stereotypes associated with the group, an act called raciolinguistic profiling (Rosa & Flores, 2017). Thus, perceived racial/ethnic identity may influence an observer's expectation of language practices, and alternatively, language practices may then also influence perception of one's racial/ethnic identity. Specifically, when the speaking individual has an ambiguous racial appearance, a listening subject may use a speakers' linguistic practices to ascribe a racial/ethnic identity.

Past work has highlighted the way marginalized groups can enact their *agentive capacity* through language to claim alternative identities and establish themselves as legitimate speakers within different communities (e.g., Darvin & Norton, 2015; Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Norton & Toohey, 2010; Norton, 2013). *Agentive capacity* refers to the ability to transform social relations, shift power structures, or negotiate the constraints and opportunities of their social position (Darvin & Norton, 2015). For example, Norton Pierce (1995) describes how Martina, an immigrant in Canada, enacted her identity as a mother to reframe power relations with her

teenage coworkers despite speaking English as a second language. However, Flores & Rosa (2019) have criticized approaches that "place[] the onus on racialized people to undo their own oppression while presupposing that their efforts to inhabit new identity positions will be recognized as such by the listener" (p. 146).

The present work responds to Flores and Rosa's (2019) critique while examining the reflections of MHIs in the U.S. regarding their racial/ethnic identities and heritage languages. Here, we demonstrate how raciolinguistic ideologies are used to pressure MHIs into categorizing themselves using monoracial labels and serve to legitimize language as a tool that can grant or deny MHIs' community membership. As a consequence, MHIs often face double rejection from their heritage communities, have fewer opportunities to use their heritage languages, and struggle to find refuge from oppression or platforms for empowerment (Davis, 2001; Root, 1996; Waters, 1990).

We first explain the centrality of language to racial/ethnic identity by introducing the raciolinguistic perspective. Next, we provide participant and survey methods before presenting major findings from our analyses. We conclude with a discussion of the racial and linguistic ideologies that were expressed to MHIs that we refer to as monoracial-only (Harris, 2016, 2017), monoglossic (Garcia, 2010), and myth of standard English (Lippi-Green, 2012). These ideologies respectively refer to the beliefs that 1) humans can be categorized into a hierarchy of distinct 'monoracial' categories, 2) that true bilinguals are native-like in both languages, and 3) that there exists a 'standard English' that racialized groups need to learn in order to become educated, respectable members of society. Finally, we discuss the consequences of these insights for our understandings of how these ideologies are used by 'monoracial' White individuals, racial/ethnic minorities, and internalized by MHIs themselves.

Raciolinguistics: Expressing and Inscribing Racial/Ethnic Identity Through Language

Most language scholars agree that identities are created and reproduced through language. The emerging field of raciolinguistics further examines intersections between language, race, and power while raising awareness about the ways White dominant culture has co-constructed language and race since the era of colonial expansion (Rosa & Flores, 2017). Past work highlights the ways individuals use multiple languages, dialects, borrowed words, accents, or other linguistic resources to express their racial/ethnic identities (Alim et al. 2016; Kubota & Lin, 2009). Therefore, a person may use language to highlight their race/ethnicity for the purposes of expressing solidarity with a group (Alim and Smitherman, 2012; Canagarajah, 2012; Giampia, 2001; Ibrahim, 1998). For example, Alim and Smitherman (2012) documented the way former President Barack Obama of mixed Black/White heritage was able to combine "standard English" with "Black Preacher Style" speech in a way that did not alienate White audiences, but felt familiar to Black audiences.

Another focus of raciolinguistics is to demonstrate how listening subjects inscribe racial/ethnic identities onto speakers based on raciolinguistic ideologies that associate language practices with certain races/ethnicities (Alim et al., 2016). Notably, individuals who physically present as racially ambiguous may be subject to increased scrutiny or miscategorization. For example, Alim (2016) describes the way he was 'raced' nine different ways through his use of five different language varieties across five days. In addition, Roth-Gordon (2016) illustrates the way Brazilian people were racialized differently based on their employment of various linguistic practices to appear more or less White.

Here, we suggest that individuals with ambiguous racial appearance or who claim mixed heritage may receive more linguistic scrutiny from listening subjects who, consciously or

unconsciously, try to categorize their race. Evidence of this is readily apparent from the public discourse surrounding former President Barack Obama. Specifically, the way he was repeatedly described as 'articulate' and capable of 'White-talking' (Alim & Smitherman, 2012) exemplify how his language practices and behaviors were used to determine whether he was a "true" member of a particular racial group.

Raciolinguistics and Idealized Linguistic Practices

Raciolinguistic ideologies create certain language expectations from listening subjects, such as the expectation that minoritized racial groups speak 'broken' or 'uneducated' forms of English even when they speak the idealized 'standard' forms, a practice Rosa (2018) calls *raciolinguistic enregisterment*. As Flores and Rosa (2015) demonstrate, one consequence of these raciolinguistic enregisterment is the portrayal of 'nonstandard English' speakers (e.g., speakers of African American or Chicano English) and heritage language learners (e.g., Latinx Americans learning Spanish) as deficient.

People who are raised in households that do not speak 'standard English' (hitherto abbreviated as *SE) are often taught to code-switch into 'appropriate' forms of English used by White dominant educational institutions (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Even though linguists have discredited the idea that certain language varieties can be objectively superior to others (Hill, 2008; Lippi-Green, 2012), the *SE myth persists in public discourse and education. Furthermore, even when racialized individuals speak *SE, they are still perceived as deficient by *white listening subjects* (Flores & Rosa, 2015).

In the U.S., heritage language learners (HLLs) also have a history of being perceived as deficient because they often do not gain balanced levels of proficiency in both English and their home or heritage language. While there are many definitions of HLLs, they are typically thought

of as "a language student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English" (Valdés, 2005, p. 412). Historically, some linguists referred to HLLs using derogatory labels such as *folk* or *circumstantial* bilinguals because they use two or more languages to meet their everyday communicative needs (Ortega, 2019; Valdés, 2005). Moreover, HLLs have a history of being perceived as deficient in their multilingual abilities because they are compared with practices of elite, privileged bilingual individuals, who have opportunities to develop academic proficiency by choice rather than by survival (Flores, 2013).

Many MHIs are heritage language learners, speakers of 'nonstandard English', or otherwise exposed to communities where multiple languages or dialects are used. Here, we examine the raciolinguistic ideologies encountered by MHIs to document how MHIs' linguistic practices are often devalued because their racially 'divergent' appearances and/or identities do not fit monoracial-only ideologies.

Raciolinguistic Ideologies Impact on MHIs' Identity and Sense of Belonging

Although the majority of studies on MHIs tend to focus on participants' 'internal' sense of racial/ethnic identity (AhnAllen et al., 2006; Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001; Khanna, 2010, 2011), many also recognize the influence of context and societal factors. For example, while MHIs in the U.S. have diverse linguistic repertoires, many share similar experiences of being othered due 'nonstandard' linguistic practices (Pao, Wong, & Teuben-Rowe, 1997; Shin, 2010). However, only a few studies have specifically focused on MHIs' linguistic resources. Shin (2010) and Pao, Wong, and Teuben-Rowe (1997) observed that many MHIs who were raised monolingually were discouraged from learning their heritage languages because their parents wanted to protect them from prejudice and discrimination. Unfortunately, these parental

decisions did not shield their mixed-heritage children from racial discrimination, feelings of shame, or isolation since they still faced questioning about their heritage. On the other hand, bilingual MHIs were able to find social acceptance using language as a passport to each culture. Thus, Pao et al. (1997) concluded that "native-like mastery of the languages of both languages is key to a positive sense of self" (p. 629). However, this conclusion assumes that all MHIs want to identify with all their heritage groups, and also places the onus on MHIs to achieve their own social acceptance. This conclusion is one example of the way monoglossic ideologies have shaped academic and social discourse, positing that the only people who can be considered legitimate bilinguals are those who develop monolingual native-like proficiency in two languages (Garcia, 2009; Ortega, 2019).

The Current Study

While the accumulated literature indicates that MHIs come from extremely diverse contexts and language experiences, it also indicates that MHIs are racialized based on ideologies related to what a race looks and sounds like. In this exploratory study, MHIs in the U.S. were asked to describe encounters they had in negotiating their identities as it related to their language abilities. This is the first study to document the way raciolinguistic ideologies may impact MHIs' negotiation of identity.

Method

Participants

The data used for this study was a subset from a larger project exploring the social experiences of MHIs. Participants were recruited through email, university participant databases, and online social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) from September 2018 to August 2019. The Office of Research Integrity Assurance for Georgia Institute of Technology (Protocol #: H18380)

and the Campus Internal Review Board of Duke University (Protocol #: 2019-0119) approved the study. Knowing there is variation in how MHI's identify, participants were eligible if any of the following were true: 1) identify as multiracial or multiethnic, 2) have parents from different racial or ethnic backgrounds or 3) claim multiple races or ethnicities. The larger, original project was mixed methods and originally aimed to collect data from a minimum of 200 participants of mixed heritage to get representation from a diverse set of MHIs and in order to conduct quantitative analyses on the largest mixed-heritage groups (i.e. East Asian/White, Black/White, Latinx or Hispanic/White; using a priori power analyses, 200 participants would achieve 90% power for a one-way ANOVA analysis; Faul et al., 2009). The survey was closed after one year, which was the deadline for data collection. After removing 25 incomplete responses and 3 participants who were not eligible, this resulted in a final sample of 293 participants. There was a disproportionately high number of females—71% female, 25.6% male, and 3.4% non-binary. While this gender gap was large, past work shows that women are roughly twice as likely as men to identify as multiracial (Davenport, 2016). Participant ages ranged from 18 to 70 (M = 29.7, SD = 10.0, Median = 27, Mode = 25). More than 60% of participants were under 30 and less than 5% of participants were over the age of 50, which is representative of Census data indicating that the average age of multiracial Americans (19 years) is younger than the average age of monoracial Americans (38 years; Pew Research Center, 2015).The racial/ethnic make-up was as follows: 25.3% (n = 74) East Asian/White, 15.7% (n = 46) Black/White, 14.3% (n = 42) Hispanic/Latinx/White, and 6.1% (n = 18) Southeast Asian/White (see Table 1).

Table 1

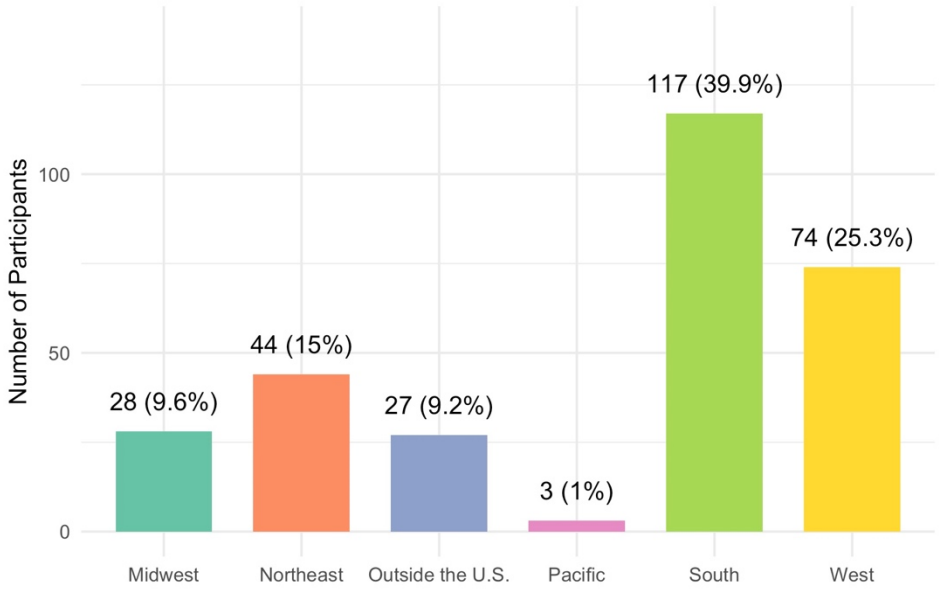
Most Common Racial Backgrounds of Participants

East Asian / White	25.3%
Black / White	15.7%

Latinx or Hispanic / White	14.3%
Southeast Asian / White	6.1%
East Asian / East Asian	3.4%
Black / Latinx or Hispanic	2.7%
South Asian / White	2.3%
Latinx or Hispanic / Latinx or Hispanic	2.0%
Native / Black / White	2.0%
Black / Black	1.7%
East Asian / Black	1.7%
Middle Eastern / White	1.7%
Black / Latinx or Hispanic / White	1.7%
Latinx or Hispanic / Southeast Asian	1.0%
Native / White	1.0 %
East Asian / Latinx or Hispanic / White	1.0 %
Other racial mixes (n < 1%)	16.4%

Figure 1

Distribution of Participants' Reported Hometowns in the U.S.



Note: Regions are based on the U.S. Census Bureau (2010)

Location

The majority of participants reported growing up in the U.S. (see Figure 1) with 9.2% (*n* = 27) outside the U.S. including Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Iraq, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Thailand, and the U.K. All participants reported speaking English.

Survey

All participants completed a Qualtrics survey and were entered into a raffle for a $50 Amazon gift card for their participation. Participants answered 10 demographic questions (e.g., race/ethnicity, place of residence, gender, and age). Next, participants answered 17 open-ended questions, which were developed based on published MHI experiences related to their belonging and physical appearance (e.g., Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001; Khanna, 2010;), language practices (Pao et al., 1997; Shin, 2010), and experiences of being challenged about their racial/ethnic identities (Albuja et al., 2019a,b). The survey questions were revised after two rounds of piloting with approximately 10 additional MHI participants to ensure the questions had face validity. Eight of the question responses were chosen based on their relevance to our research questions and coded for the present study (see Table 2; Gaither, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2015; Root, 1996).

Table 2

Open-ended Survey Questions

Focus	Questions*
Language	1. Did your mixed heritage influence your choice of what languages to learn or speak? 2. Have you ever felt the need to change the way you speak in order to fit in? (Yes/No/Other) – If yes, in what way(s) have you felt the need to change the way you speak in order to fit in? 3. Have you ever felt that the language(s) you know or do not know has affected your sense of belonging?

Appearance	4. Do you think your physical appearance affects your racial identity? 5. Are there times you wish you could change your (racial) appearance?
Experiences of identity being questioned or challenged	6. Has your mixed background impacted your sense of identity and belonging? 7. Have you ever felt the need to 'prove' your racial identity in order to gain acceptance? (Yes/No/Rarely) – If so, what do you do when you have felt the need to 'prove' your racial identity in order to gain acceptance? 8. Have you been asked questions like "What are you?" or "Where are you from?" by strangers? (Yes/No/Rarely) – If so, how do you typically respond to be being asked "What are you?" or "Where are you from?"

*Multiple-choice questions are followed by the choices in parentheses. If respondents chose any option besides "No," they were asked the subsequent follow-up question.

Analysis

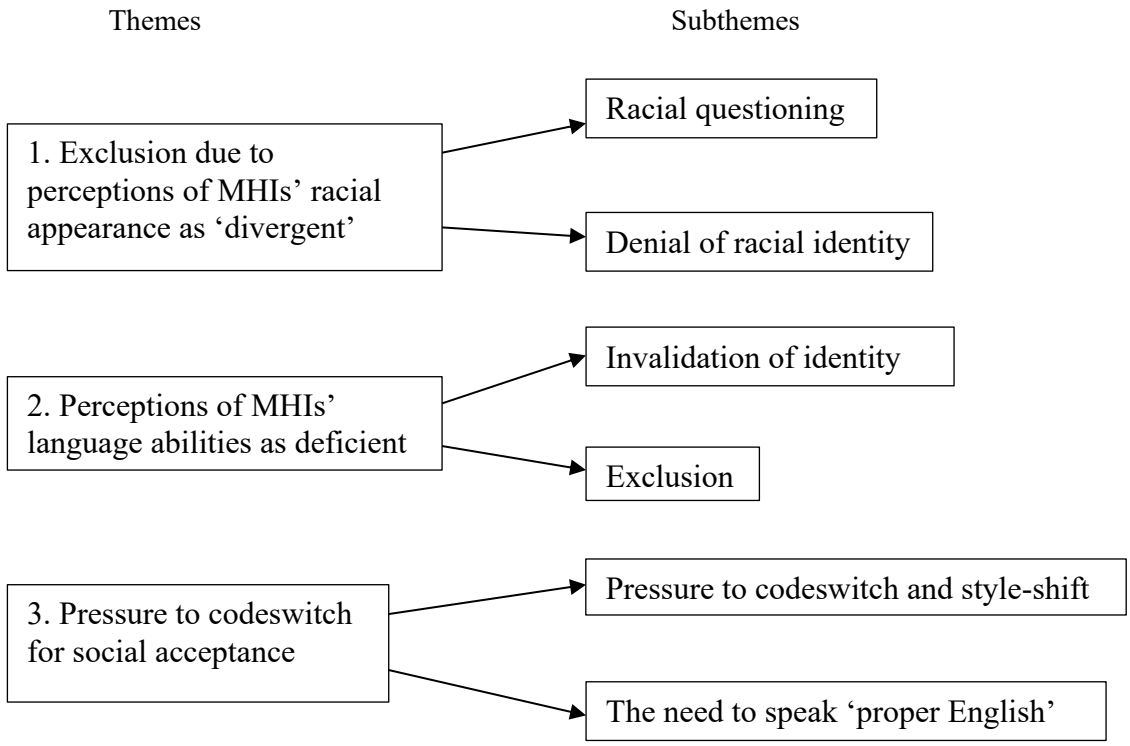
Thematic analysis was conducted on the open-ended responses to the eight focal survey questions following guidelines by Braun and Clarke (2006) with a software package called 'R for Qualitative Data Analysis' (RQDA, Huang, 2018, Version 0.3-1). The first author read the data while searching for patterns relevant to the research questions related to racial/ethnic identity, language and racial appearance. To be more systematic in code interpretation, a codebook was created with code names, definitions, and examples (see Golafshani, 2003). First, '*a priori*' codes were created based on past work (e.g., 'language-based racialization', 'one-drop rule') as well as '*in vivo*' codes which emerged frequently in the data (e.g., 'proper English', 'need to code-switch'). Data that fit a code description was highlighted and tagged with the appropriate code using RQDA. The same open-ended response could be tagged with multiple codes if it represented more than one pattern. This process generated 66 initial codes. Next, the first author

reread all excerpts of a given code 10 times to make sure it represented a consistent pattern. Data that did not fit the code's definition were recoded into another category or removed. Codes that overlapped with each other were consolidated into one code, while codes that appeared less than 5 times were removed if they did not express a shared experienced among MHIs, resulting in 61 codes.

Codes were next combined into themes and sub-themes in relation to the research questions and used to explore the significance of each theme in connection to raciolinguistic ideologies. Specifically, codes were arranged into overarching categories that expressed MHIs' descriptions of marginalization based on ways their language practices and racial appearance were perceived. Subthemes were informed by a raciolinguistic perspective and mixed-race identity literature. For example, the codes 'need to justify identity', 'need to prove I'm X', and 'you don't look X' were categorized into a subtheme called 'challenges to identity.' Once a set of 6 main themes and 20 candidate subthemes were created, collated extracts were reread to consider whether they formed a coherent pattern. Themes and subthemes were reviewed, refined, and consolidated based on coded data extracts. The first author continued this process until the themes and subthemes 'accurately' reflected meanings in the data set as a whole (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). This resulted in three main themes and 2-3 subthemes under each main theme (Figure 2).

Figure 2

MHI's Encounters with Raciolinguistic Ideologies: Themes and Subthemes



Trustworthiness

Because the first, second, and third authors respectively identify as females from Asian/White, Latina/White, and Black/White biracial backgrounds, we recognize that our own experiences influenced the data analysis. While this was seen as a potential strength to help understand the findings (Hill, 1996; Root, 1992), we also recognize that there are many experiences shared by MHIs that are different from our own. For these reasons, we engaged in member checking, where the first author presented a summary of results and interpretations to a smaller additional pool of 30 MHIs with no overlap with the participant sample who provided feedback. Member checkers were shown a table of each theme, subtheme, and 1-2 anonymized

excerpts from survey responses that expressed each subtheme. They were then asked if the data matched their own experiences or their understanding of "the mixed-heritage experience." Member checkers overwhelmingly confirmed our first two themes and subthemes. Approximately half of checkers could relate to the third theme (Pressure to codeswitch for social acceptance), but those that could not attributed this to only speaking 'standard English' in their household and communities growing up. Because the third theme and subthemes demonstrate the diversity of linguistic experiences within MHIs, we decided it was still important to keep them. Ultimately, member checking did not result in any changes to the themes and subthemes; however, we did incorporate some suggestions members made for alternate words to describe themes (e.g., 'minoritized' instead of 'racialized', 'feel fake' and 'pressure' in addition to 'imposter').

Results

The overarching themes emerging from the MHIs' responses were 1) Exclusion due to perceptions of MHIs' racial appearance as 'divergent', 2) Perceptions of MHIs' language abilities as deficient, and 3) Pressure to codeswitch for social acceptance (see Figure 2). This section will describe MHIs' encounters with raciolinguistic ideologies related to their physical appearance, followed by a more detailed description of how these ideologies portray their language practices as inferior.

Exclusion Due to Perceptions of MHIs' Racial Appearance as 'Divergent'

MHIs described many experiences of exclusion due to perceptions of their racial appearance as 'divergent', which we define as deviating from societal expectations of stereotyped racial appearance. While many MHIs described themselves as 'white-passing' (i.e., physically presenting in a way that they could be perceived as a monoracial White person) or

having light-skinned privilege (19.8%), others described themselves as minority-passing (9.9%) or racially ambiguous (69.3%). However, many also explained that their ability to 'pass' for one race or another also depended on the diversity of the area in which they were currently residing or other contextual factors. Because their racial appearances could be described as 'passing' or 'ambiguous', we refer to their racial appearances as 'divergent' to express the fact that their appearance often diverges from social expectations.

When asked if physical appearance affected their racial identity, 84.9% of respondents replied "yes" and 47.4% expressed feelings of social exclusion due to their divergent racial appearance. Subthemes within 'divergent' racial appearance include 'racial questioning' and 'denial of racial identity.'

> People are constantly staring at me, trying to 'figure me out.' Strangers often come up to me and ask! My Japanese family thinks I look more 'American' and my Mexican American family thinks I look more Asian. In the end, I feel like I don't look like anyone. –Monica

Responses like Monica's were common, where MHIs expressed experiences of being othered and excluded due to their racial appearance. Almost all respondents (94.2%) indicated that they have been asked questions like "What are you?" or "Where are you from?" by strangers with 85.6% indicating they get these questions regularly. Open-ended responses indicated that half (49.7%) of MHIs did not mind these questions, while the other half (50.3%) resented them. MHIs who did not mind the question explained that people ask out of curiosity or that they were glad to have a chance to talk about their unique background. Those who resented the questions often described them as dehumanizing, frustrating, or othering.

> I hate these questions so much. They're so dehumanizing and insensitive and they take away my autonomy to disclose and express my identity on my terms. I know that whatever I say, people will put me in a weird 'exotic mix' box. It makes me so insecure also, because I'm always afraid people won't believe me or they'll tell me I'm just white. Telling people just gives them the power to cut me down. That's what I mean. Just asking that question takes away my power, and I hate it. –Diana

Moreover, even after explaining their ethnic or racial backgrounds, over half (64.3%) of respondents stated that they felt pressure to prove their identity in order to gain acceptance. These descriptions make up the subtheme, 'denial of racial identity.'

> People think I'm Asian, Latina, Native American etc. and how I'm treated depends on how they view me. A lot of people don't take me seriously if I say I'm Korean. Some of them think I'm lying! –Amy

> I'm not white passing, but I'm not obviously black either. I'm racially ambiguous, and a lot of people assume I'm Latina/Hispanic, and disbelieve my black identity. –Katarina

Comments like Amy and Katarina's demonstrate how listening subjects using a white normative lens have predetermined ideas about what a race looks like and are reluctant to bend these ideas when they meet someone outside their preconceived images of racial boundaries.

Perceptions of MHIs' Language Abilities as Deficient

Next, we explore how language plays a central role in whether or not MHIs pass a test of racial legitimacy with the subthemes of 'invalidation of identity' and 'exclusion'. In total, 57.3% of respondents reported that they could speak more than one of their heritage languages to some degree (this percentage excludes participants who could speak multiple dialects of English or

other languages). However, among respondents who could not speak their minority heritage languages, ‘exclusion’ and ‘invalidated identity’ were prominent subthemes.

> Not knowing Cantonese alienates me further from being Chinese. People seem disappointed when they learn I can't speak Chinese. I am lost at family gatherings. – Ruby

> People question my heritage because I didn’t grow up speaking Spanish. Some accused me of lying about my race since I didn’t speak Spanish. –Jill

MHIs’ descriptions revealed that they received these types of comments from their families, local communities, at school, in the workplace, or when traveling abroad from both White and racial/ethnic minority perceiving subjects.

Of those who reported multilingual abilities, 5.3% of these respondents claimed that their ability to speak more than one heritage language with confidence helped them find belonging: “I feel significantly more like an insider because of the languages I speak. For example, I feel that Koreans accept me better because I speak Korean” (Jack). However, even among MHIs who were multilingual, many expressed ‘invalidations’ of their identities during interactions. Specifically, they described exclusion or shaming because of the ways they spoke heritage languages differed from social expectations. These MHIs expressed that they were not only expected to speak their heritage languages to ‘prove’ their belonging, but also to speak with the same accent, manner and fluency associated with imagined monoracial native speakers of their heritage.

> I avoid speaking Korean to full Koreans so to avoid them questioning me on my mixed heritage or judging my accent. –Devon

> Often times my limited Spanish speaking abilities puts my Latina identity into question because I am not 'Latina' enough or remotely look Latina to some people. –Janice

Devon, who was raised mainly by their Korean family and identifies as 'Half German Half Korean', indicates that while they are able to communicate in Korean, they have been judged for having an accent that differs from 'monoracial' Korean individuals and bullied for not looking 'full' Korean. Janice identifies as Mixed Racial, Multiracial, Latina, Asian, or Hapa depending on the situation and describes her physical appearance as looking more 'Asian.' Her comment portrays the problems with the way racial appearance and language are often associated with each other, as many MHIs try to use their language abilities to gain acceptance, but are still rejected due to their racial appearance.

It is also important to note that a handful of MHIs attributed experiences of exclusion to a combination of both their language practices and racial appearance. Responses suggested that these were salient features used by listening subjects to position and exclude them, and that these ideologies were often encountered within heritage communities inside and outside the U.S.

> In Japan, I never feel like I belong enough because I don't look fully 'Japanese' or speak with an 'accent'. In Chile, I automatically get put in another box even though I know enough Spanish to communicate (not fluent, but intermediate). In the US, I feel like I don't really fit in. –Ana

> Physically speaking if I spoke Tagalog, I still feel like an outsider because I don't 'look Filipino'. I get less of that treatment when I speak Japanese, but my Japanese is not fluent enough to pass as a local. So I feel this constant pressure that if I am fluent that I [will] truly feel like I belong in this community . . . 90% of the time I feel like I don't belong anywhere. –Rei

Ana identifies as Japanese, Chilean, and Jewish and described being raised heavily by her Japanese mother, who spoke to her in Japanese and put her in Japanese school as a child, and she learned most of her Spanish as an adult. Despite her multilingual abilities, she described how she never fit in anywhere due to her repeated experiences of being questioned about her background. Rei identifies as Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, German, and American, and noted that because she looked very East Asian, she had a strong incentive to learn Japanese. She was made explicitly aware of her 'nonFilipino' appearance by her Filipino relatives, who often joked about how she must have been adopted. These examples both demonstrate how perceptions of MHIs' racial appearance and linguistic abilities impacted their sense of belonging.

Pressure to 'Codeswitch' for Social Acceptance

Finally, many MHIs also expressed pressure to 'codeswitch' (53%). Respondents used the term 'codeswitch,' which in this paper refers to changing their language or conversational style to match the culture of the group they are with. Subthemes include the 'pressure to codeswitch and style-shift' and 'the need to speak 'proper English.' Overall, the data revealed clear themes of MHIs' fear of rejection and exclusion due to the way their accents, language fluency, and manner of speaking is perceived by their listening subjects.

Pressure to Codeswitch and Style-shift

Some MHIs (32.6%) also described 'pressure to codeswitch and style-shift.' MHIs used the terms 'codeswitch' and 'style-shift' interchangeably to describe the need to speak different languages (linguistic codes) *or* change their dialect, accent, or mannerisms within the same language. Within this theme, MHIs described a need to codeswitch or style-shift in order to 'fit in' with family, peers, or colleagues due to experiences of bullying, teasing, or exclusion.

> Whether around white people or Latinos growing up I felt like I couldn't express myself in the same way around them otherwise they would make comments about how I didn't fit in or just kind of roast me about the way I spoke. –Maria

> I think that as a child I sometimes spoke 'incorrect' English because I learned from my mom and I was forced to speak more 'correctly' through ridicule from my peers. – Melanie

Maria, who identifies as 'Mixed', describes experiences where she was teased and othered by both White and Latinx communities because of the way she spoke. Melanie, who identifies as 'Mixed race' and 'half Chinese', describes the ridicule she received because her English was perceived as 'incorrect'. Overall, the responses of MHIs who engaged in style-shifting revealed themes of feeling excluded because of their 'nonstandard' language practices. These experiences pressure MHIs to develop style-shifting skills to navigate each community.

The Need to Speak 'Proper English'

To fit in within White communities, many MHIs also described 'the need to speak 'proper English'', which includes pressure to clean up their slang, 'speak whiter', or appear more intelligent.

> Being mixed, when around other Black individuals who 'fit the stereotype,' especially growing up, I felt pressure to 'talk like they did.' Similarly, especially being an adult now in academia, I feel sometimes I have to prove myself to majority group members that I'm intelligent. –Warren

Warren expresses how he felt pressure to change his speaking style to 'match the stereotype' in Black communities, but 'fought the stereotype' in White communities. In both

contexts, he tries to prove his belonging by style-shifting and feels particularly obligated to do so in academia because it was clear he was not seen as a member of the majority racial group (i.e., White). His experiences are not unique—many open-ended responses (14.3%) indicated that MHIs feel extra pressure to 'speak properly' in school or the workplace to be perceived as educated.

> I use code switching all the time, it's an effective tool to survive everywhere. I tend to use slang around minorities outside of my place of business, but don't use it elsewhere because it's the easiest way to get people in a professional setting to listen to me. –Janine

Janine codeswitches into 'proper English' in order to get others to listen to her in professional environments. Indeed, many MHIs described 'whitewashing' their speech not only to be accepted into White communities, but also 'in order to be taken more seriously' by peers, coworkers, academics, clients, and other people in positions of power.

These data demonstrate various types of pressures MHIs face to conform their language to community standards. In minority communities, respondents described adapting their language through strategies such as using more slang, hiding an accent, speaking 'less formally', speaking African American Vernacular English, or speaking a 'more broken version of English' to fit in with family or peers. However, in many cases changing their speech style was not sufficient because they were still othered or excluded due to their racial appearance.

Discussion

Combined, these findings reveal ways that MHIs often face more social exclusion than other racial and ethnic groups due to raciolinguistic ideologies that dictate how a racial/ethnic group should look and sound. Of the 293 survey respondents, 84.9% stated that their physical

appearance affected their racial identities, and almost half of these MHIs (47.4%) expressed feelings of social exclusion due to their divergent racial appearance and experiences of racial identity questioning. About one third of MHIs (32.6%) expressed exclusion and invalidated identities for not speaking their minority heritage languages with the same accent, manner and fluency associated with imagined 'monoracial' speakers of their heritage languages or dialects. In addition, roughly half (53%) of respondents stated they felt pressured to change their language or speech to prove their belonging. Some MHIs who were more comfortable speaking minoritized varieties of English (14.3%) felt obligated to speak 'proper English' in order to be taken seriously in school and work settings. Thus, MHIs described their language practices as highly scrutinized by both White and minority racial/ethnic groups due to their 'divergent' racial appearances and linguistic practices. Despite MHIs' multilingual, multidialectal, and multicultural skillsets, raciolinguistic ideologies continue to portray them as deficient members of their heritage communities, and in doing so invalidate their sense of identity and belonging. In the next sections, we summarize three major ideologies commonly encountered by MHIs that perpetuate their marginalization and exclusion from 'monoracial' communities. Although we did not directly use the word 'ideologies' within the survey questions, MHIs' reported experiences expressed these underlying belief systems.

Monoracial-only Ideologies

Findings demonstrate the pervasiveness of the *monoracial-only paradigm*, or the belief that people can be categorized into only predetermined monoracial categories (Harris, 2017). This was evidenced by MHIs' descriptions of being asked racializing questions by strangers, being stared at, having people (often incorrectly) guess their race or ethnicity, and being denied their claimed identities. Because perceiving subjects may have difficulty placing a MHI's

appearance into one of the socially constructed images of existing 'monoracial' categories, they explicitly or covertly ask MHIs to not only 1) choose monoracial racial labels to identify themselves, but also 2) prove they are a legitimate member the race(s) they choose. These findings are consistent with the types of microaggressions other studies have found frequently encountered by MHIs (Harris, 2017; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Pew Research Center, 2015).

Monoglossic Ideologies

A second hegemonic ideology that continues to marginalize MHIs is the belief that "the bilingual is (or should be) two monolinguals in one person" (Grosjean, 2008, p. 4). This has been referred to as a *reductive view* of bilingualism and is rooted in monoglossic ideologies, which views 'acceptable' bilingualism as separate and full competencies in each language (Garcia, 2009). Findings indicate how MHIs' accents, language fluency, and manner of speaking is frequently questioned, challenged, or denied by listening subjects adhering to White normative ideologies about language and race. Additionally, these data suggest that when MHIs cannot speak their heritage languages like a monolingual native-speaker, they are marginalized as deficient members of their heritage communities (Flores, 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Ortega, 2014, 2019). As Flores and Rosa (2015) point out, this view is inherent within 'appropriateness-based' approaches in U.S. bilingual education and is still prevalent among many researchers and educators.

'Standard English' ideologies

Findings also highlight the way some MHIs are, like many Black, Latinx and other racialized minorities, pressured to learn and use 'standard English' (*SE) in order to succeed in academic and professional workspaces. Even though the existence of a distinct, agreed-upon set of conventions for 'proper' use of spoken and written English has been debunked (Bacon, 2017;

Hill, 2008; Lippi-Green, 2012), the myth of *SE has been perpetuated through raciolinguistic ideologies that stigmatize racialized populations and their linguistic practices (e.g., African American English and Chicano English; Flores & Rosa, 2015).

In sum, these results reveal that many MHIs feel overwhelming pressure to use 'proper English' in order to gain access and acceptance within White-centric spaces. While many of the MHIs in this study recognized the oppressive nature of this ideology, they also recognized the need to conform to White cultural standards or risk losing the respect and semiotic resources that come with acceptance from those in higher power positions, or simply to survive in a White society.

Implications

Language is a powerful tool for acceptance and rejection—especially for MHIs as they navigate their memberships to multiple racial/ethnic groups. Because of their often-contested multiple-group membership, many MHIs may experience double rejection (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Ultimately, these experiences culminate as threatening and stressful episodes for MHIs which is related to negative health outcomes such as increased cortisol levels (Albuja et al., 2019). Thus, these findings support the need to reconceptualize multilingualism and current conceptions of 'legitimate' language practices. In fact, Flores and Rosa (2015) suggest the importance of shifting the focus of scrutiny to the white listening subject—only by taking a critical heteroglossic perspective can we recognize and celebrate the multilingual and multidialectal skills of minoritized individuals who are able to adapt their language styles to navigate diverse cultural contexts.

Importantly, most MHIs reported regular experiences of racial questioning due to their 'divergent' racial appearances and linguistic practices. When MHIs are racially 'othered', it may

severely limit their agentive capacity; namely, by stripping them of opportunities to forefront a multitude of other identities to express solidarity with a group, such as occupation, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. This means that when MHIs are 'othered', they are not only being denied 'legitimacy' as members of existing monoethnic/monoracial groups, but are also denied opportunities to express solidarity with their interlocutors through other held identities. Thus, it is crucial for future research on language and identity to continue examining how raciolinguistic ideologies may grant or deny racialized individuals access to other desired identities and community memberships.

As the first paper to examine linguistic ideologies among MHIs, these findings extend our current understandings surrounding raciolinguistic ideologies by demonstrating how our perceptions of race and language are founded on the belief that humans can be categorized into distinct 'monoracial' and monolingual categories. Even when individuals are adept at using multiple languages and dialects to negotiate identity, monoracial-only ideologies are so strongly rooted within society that multilingual and multicultural skillsets do not guarantee MHIs recognition as legitimate members of their heritage communities. It is therefore critical to foster heteroglossic perspectives and critical language awareness that work to identify, destabilize, and counteract ideologies that perpetuate appearance and language-based racism.

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