

LIGHT, BRIGHT, AND OUT OF SIGHT: HOLLYWOOD'S REPRESENTATION
OF THE TRAGIC MULATTO

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The purpose of this research is to examine the longevity of the stereotype of the tragic mulatto in American film history. Specifically, my research focuses on the portrayals and perceptions of biracial actresses. Media informs, entertains, and influences how we, and especially youth, self-identify and interact with others.

This research focuses on the portrayal of biracial actresses throughout film history. It is also important in its investigation of the perpetuation of the one-drop rule. In this research, I will examine if historical stereotypes of tragic mulatto are apparent in contemporary Hollywood film. The methodologies used in this research include a content analysis of films with biracial actresses and an online survey of respondents' perceptions of four actresses. Statistical techniques used for analysis include ordinary least square regression and multinomial logistic regression. Findings suggest that the tragic mulatto stereotype is not blatant in contemporary Hollywood film, but issues of colorism may be apparent.

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(Matthew 19:26).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Amazing! You managed to get through 20 minutes of commercials and previews. Lights are dimming and the sound system is working at its full capacity. Popcorn and soda are within reach and you are ready to be entertained. The first scene includes an ambiguous-looking female. Immediately you wonder, “What is she?” No, this is not a sci-fi film in which she could possibly be an alien. She is a human and the setting is somewhere in the United States. She is the protagonist in the film. Do you as the spectator relate to her because of her gender, socioeconomic status, or race? What if she doesn’t fit neatly in some of those categories? What kind of perceptions will you place on her?

As a black-white biracial child, I didn’t have many characters to relate to. As I watched television and movies, I saw a plethora of white women in various roles, and occasionally I would see roles featuring African American actresses. In rural Wisconsin, no was like me, and the media available to me verified that. I did not have visual examples to relate to. I didn’t have a role model to show me how to “act” biracial. I simply tried to make my way in a white social environment. The ridicule and torment that I received by other children in my class led me to teach and study what I do today—race relations and racial identity. This research is an attempt to answer questions that I have had since childhood. Essentially, this dissertation investigates how media contributes to how we perceive racial signifiers.

Previous research strongly suggests that media portrayals of black persons depicted in their various and differing environments and experiences have had significant impact upon facilitating changes in race relations in the United States (Gamson, Croteau, Hoyness, & Sasson,

1992; Hartman & Husband, 1974; Entman & Rojecki, 2001). However, this previous research largely concentrates on race relations between Blacks and whites. None of the work has specifically addressed perceptions of those persons who are biracial, i.e. the progeny of black and white parents and how these people “fit” into the schema of race relations within the U. S. These are people considered the “Other” when checking boxes on forms, applications, and surveys for “race/ethnicity.” With the inclusion of a “mark all that apply” option on the U.S. Census, will the perceptions of racial observers expand in ways that consider biracial identity as valid?

The purpose of my dissertation research is to examine the longevity of the stereotype of the tragic mulatto in American film history. Specifically, my research modifies Bogle’s innovative typology from *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks* (2001) and focuses on the portrayals and perceptions of biracial actresses. My dissertation is focused on issues of biracial identity and the social construction of race. I explore how media visuals of biracial persons influence cultural perceptions on a macro level and personal identity among biracial individuals on a micro level.

This research is significant because media informs, entertains, and influences how we, and especially youth, self-identify and interact with others (Littlefield, 2008; Wilson and Gutierrez, 1995; Lawson, 2006). Media messages inform their consumers about race relations. We know how to interact with those in our racial and ethnic groups through face-to-face interaction. We do not know persons in out-groups through face-to-face interactions when we live in homogeneous environments. We know how to interact with out-groups through media messages (Gilman, Valentino, & Beckman, 2002; Sigelman & Welch, 1993). By not knowing

how to process a bombardment of messages, young consumers and possibly a large proportion of adults will not recognize that they are being persuaded by messages that are often thought of as mere entertainment (Considine & Haley, 1999).

Media messages have significant effects on our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. For example, research has demonstrated that violent and aggressive behavior correlates to the consumption of violent media messages, and negative body image is linked to internalizing beauty standards dispensed through mass media (Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerstein, Huesmann, Johnson, Linz, Malamuth, Wartell, 2003; DeBraganza, Hausenblas, Millard, 2009). Anderson et al. (2003) found that short-term exposure to violent media increases the probability that children will be physically and verbally aggressive, and have aggressive thoughts and emotions. In their longitudinal study, results suggest that long-term exposure to violent media in childhood resulted in aggressive behavior later in life.

DeBraganza et al. (2009) investigated body image satisfaction among Caucasian and African American women. Both groups were shown media images of the ideal physique and images that were used as controls. Subjects were given a pre-test and post-test to measure anxiety, depression, anger, and body dissatisfaction. Findings demonstrated that African American women did not report differences in body dissatisfaction, while Caucasian women reported higher body dissatisfaction. Both of these examples illustrate that media contributes to our behavior and values.

The media provides messages about treating others. By understanding the consequences of consuming particular negative or dangerous messages, individuals and possibly communities will take action and be encouraged to create and produce images of the

self (Hoeschman & Poyntz, 2012). Doing so will increase the variety of images and allow transition away from stereotypes. Media may also help to establish the validity of racial and ethnic groups.

My research is significant because it is the first to focus on the portrayal of biracial actresses throughout film history. It is also important in its investigation of the perpetuation of the one-drop rule. Because of the one-drop rule, it is assumed that biracial actresses play black characters that exude African American stereotypes. Thus, because of the media's influence on our perceptions, biracial individuals are regarded as only black and biracial identity is not validated.

This research examines if historical stereotypes, such as the tragic mulatto, are perpetuated in contemporary media—and if so, how. A subset of research questions for this project is as follows:

1. Is the stereotype of the tragic mulatto persistent through American film history?
2. Are representations of biracial actresses influenced by racial historical milestones?

To address these questions and issues, this dissertation is organized as such: Chapter 2 discusses the social construction of race. The one-drop rule and the perpetuation of the binary between blackness and whiteness are explained. How biracial identity is understood today is also explored. Chapter 3 investigates the role of media in constructing race and shaping the way race is perceived. Included in Chapter 3 are discussions of how media is a primary tool of socialization, how black, biracial, and white racial groups are represented in film, and how biracial identity is performed as the “tragic mulatto” in classic and contemporary film. Chapter 4 is the methodology section. It gives a detailed account on how the content analysis and online

survey were constructed to answer the previously mentioned questions. Chapter 5 will provide the analysis. Findings from the content analysis used ordinary least squares regression to determine if characteristics of the tragic mulatto are demonstrated through film history. The online survey was used to determine if respondents could recognize stereotypes of the tragic mulatto in films from different decades. The discussion and conclusion are found in Chapter 6. Chapter 6 is a further discussion of the findings from this study, implications of this research, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

RACE AND BIRACIAL IDENTITY

To understand how media shapes perceptions of race and biracial actors, it is essential to grasp the meaning of race and how it is socially constructed. This section of the literature discusses how race is a social construction and how colorism is a form of discrimination. The longevity of the one-drop rule and fear of interracial sexuality are examined. In addition, factors that contribute to biracial identity are addressed. Feminist theory is used to shed light on how racism effects the racial formation of biracial women in particular.

Race and Skin Color

Race is a highly contentious topic in the United States. Race(s) can be defined as groupings of human beings based on average differences in biological characteristics that are given social meanings (Korgen, 1998). Racial traits are transmitted from generation to generation by the genes of both parents. This is different from culture and ethnicity. Cultures are group patterns of behavior and beliefs, which are transmitted in the process of socialization. Ethnicity refers to the customs, language, and social views usually associated with a particular ethnic group (Korgen, 1998).

Race as a biological reality is a myth. The function of race is to reinforce and perpetuate social differences, organize social life, and reaffirm power relationships (Winter & DeBose, 2003; Harris & Sim, 2002). Races are organized into a hierarchy where physical features are tied to cultural and character traits. Its importance stems from the social, cultural, physical, and legal consequences that emerge in our racialized society. These consequences are created by people and their interactions with each other. At a personal level, race is very much in the eye

of the beholder; at a political level, race is in the service of economic and social privilege of the dominant group (Root, 1992). This also applies to how we define multiracial individuals. How multiracial individuals are characterized depends on how races are defined (Morning, 2003). Because biracial individuals do not fit any one racial category, biracial individuals place challenges on American definitions of race (Johnson, 1992).

While race is deemed a social construction, racism is a social and political reality (Zack, 1993). Racial distinction is a tool used to dominate and subordinate a group that is seen as different. In America, the dominant group is white and the subordinate group is all those who are not white. The definition for labeling someone as white has changed over time. Again, this demonstrates that race is not biological, but rather a social construction.

A general definition of racism “refers to any attitude, belief, behavior, or institutional arrangement that favors one racial group over another” (Davis, 1991, p. 42). Racist ideologies used science to justify slavery. According to this belief, some races are superior to others based on physical or mental characteristics. Racist ideologies assume these physical or mental characteristics cause cultural and temperamental differences. Racial mixing is also frowned upon. Racial mixing is thought to cause biological and cultural erosion of the superior race (Davis, 1991). Racism is used to maintain the sociopolitical and economic position of those in power.

Like races that are “Othered,” whiteness is socially constructed (Anderson, 2003; Foster, 2003). Benshoff and Griffin (2007) propose that whiteness encompasses characteristics of individuals or groups belonging to the Caucasian race. Brooks and Herbert (2007) assert that whiteness refers to the invisible or subtle cultural, social, and ideological practices that protect

the power and privileges of White people. These practices and privileges are unmarked and unnamed in contemporary society. Whiteness is different from other race descriptors in that it is invisible. Ironically, when the word “race” is heard, immediately “non-white others” are brought to mind, specifically blacks (Lewis, 2004; Foster, 2003). Whiteness is defined by what it is not (Bernardi, 2001; Anderson, 2003). White is not black. What is black is created from the white identity reference point (Anderson, 2003). The presence of blackness is used to mark an “outsider” of whiteness (Foster, 2003, p. 31).

Those that possess whiteness are thought to have better life chances and more privileges than other races within a structure based upon racial stratification (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). Doane (2007) posits that American culture is denoted by white hegemony. Whites historically controlled major institutions and have appropriated the normative cultural and social practice to make white meanings and social interactions the American standard. He argues that American beliefs are really about what the dominant group believes, and America rarely is the “melting pot” it claims to be. Minority ideals are often token voices or silenced completely. Several scholars contend that whiteness is the universal standard against which all other races and ethnicities are measured (Dyer, 1997; Negra, 2001; Anderson, 2003; Brook & Herbert, 2007; Stam 2000). This leads both whites and non-whites to believe that this created racial hierarchy is natural and fixed (Yancy, 2004). Ferber (1998) claims that privilege and oppression in the United States are linked, resulting in white Americans having the highest position on the racial hierarchy.

Skin color is one of the primary signifiers used to determine race (Maddox & Chase, 2004). Whiteness and blackness not only distinguish the color of one’s skin, they also connote

symbolic meanings. Stereotypes of white people are reversals of racist stereotypes that assume that people of color are more physical and sensuous than white people (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). These stereotypes are the progeny of racist beliefs of the past. For instance, the color white is equated with “goodness” and the color black is equated with “evil” (Dyer, 1997, p. 57). In addition, some stereotypes suggest that whites are more intelligent, civilized, and moral than blacks (Lawson, 2006). Dark skin is associated with poverty, violence, and lack of intelligence (Jones, 2000; Hunter, 2007; Wade, 2005; Keith, 2009; Hughey, 2009). Dyer (1997) expands upon this claim by arguing that when a white person is bad, they are failing to be white. When a black person is good, it is a surprise; when a black person is bad, they are just fulfilling expectations.

Hunter (2003) asserts that colorism is an internalized form of white racism originating from colonization and enslavement. Within a system of racial stratification lies a system of color stratification—colorism (Hunter, 2002). Colorism typically infects communities of color and determines social capital by the color of one’s skin (Jones, 2006). This ideology is used to create hierarchies within communities (Herring, Keith, & Horton, 2004). Harris (1998) contends that colorism is “another racist divide-and-conquer tactic. By engaging in colorist behavior we collude in keeping white supremacy in place” (p. 67). Those who have lighter skin are perceived as having more social status. Hunter (2007) contends that African Americans’ obsession with skin color is derived from colonization and enslavement by Europeans. Light-skinned slaves received privileges that dark-skinned slaves did not. After slavery ended, the light-skinned population wanted to keep their status and privileges (Hunter, 2003; Bernadi, 2001). Thus, the black community became stratified.

African Americans with dark skin defended themselves by attacking lighter-skinned individuals for not being black enough and inauthentic (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992; Punyanunt-Carter, 2008). Light skin represented illegitimacy, vanity, being uppity, flightiness, and undependability (Spikard, 1989). These and other negative connotations, such as trying to assimilate into a white culture, lacking a racial consciousness, and having an inauthentic ethnicity, are tied to light skin (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992). Hunter (2003) suggests that because of this judgment, light-skinned individuals may feel marginalized by their own communities.

Individuals with lighter skin were privileged with upper-class status and somewhat less White discrimination. Blue vein societies were created to exclude all those who did not meet the strictest of color guidelines (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 2013; Korgen, 1998)¹. Rockquemore and Laszoffy (2005) contend that light-skinned blacks have not only had different privileges than other black people, but they also have higher social mobility than darker-skinned blacks. This indicates that colorism, or a hierarchy based upon skin color, is a reality. Those who appear the closest to whiteness are afforded rewards.

Dark skin is also stereotyped. Dark skin is associated with savagery, irrationality, ugliness, and inferiority. Placement of these characteristics on people of color justifies institutional and individual discrimination by whites. These stereotypes are the exact opposites of how white skin is characterized. Individuals with white skin are assumed to be civil, rational, beautiful, and superior (Hunter, 2003).

¹ Blue vein societies are an outcome of institutional practices of color prejudice within African American communities. African Americans with light skin were separated into an elite group that garnered privileges not afforded to African Americans with darker skin. Entry into blue vein societies was largely determined by the color of one's skin and whether or not blue veins were visible through the skin.

African Americans with dark skin report more discrimination than those with light skin (Spikard, 1989). Hunter (2004) reports that African Americans with light skin earn more money and have higher levels of education than African Americans with dark skin. In addition, blacks with lighter skin have more prestigious jobs and earn more than blacks with dark skin (Herring, Keith & Horton, 2004). blacks, especially those with dark skin, are more likely to be followed in stores, have a difficult time catching a cab, and are treated in a disrespectful manner at a variety of venues (Herring, Keith, Horton, 2004). Jones (2006) explains the deferential treatment that dark-skinned and light-skinned blacks experience. The intersection of higher socioeconomic status and lighter skin has made these African Americans appear closer to white ideals and, therefore, less threatening to whites.

Interracial Relationships

Interracial sexuality is perceived to be a threat to whiteness (Ferber, 1998). Interracial sexuality eliminates difference and the borders between whiteness and blackness. Opportunity to acquire interracial relationships was not the goal of black social movements. Ferber (1998) claims that opposition to interracial sexuality increased during the black pride movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Blacks' primary goal was not to freely engage in interracial relations, but rather to acquire jobs, law equality, political participation, and access to public facilities (Myrdal, 1944). Myrdal (1944) studied the reasons why whites want to uphold segregation and discrimination. He found that interracial marriage and sexuality involving white women and black men was the most salient factor contributing to the maintenance of segregation and discrimination.

In 1967, the Supreme Court case *Loving vs. Virginia* impacted race relations in the United States by bringing an end to bans on interracial marriage (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, C, 1990; Kalmijn, 1993). The Supreme Court ruling that anti-miscegenation laws were unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment guaranteed equal protection under the law and the constitutional protection of the fundamental right to marry (Pascoe, 1996).

Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002) contend that the one-drop rule surfaced as a result of white supremacist opposition to miscegenation. Ultimately, the one-drop rule reifies the myth that race is biological (Brunnsma, 2006; Roth, 2005). According to Ferber (1998), when social changes or any type of political or economic gains toward equality are made for blacks, arguments against miscegenation increase. She cites the termination of Jim Crow laws through the *Brown v. Board of Education* 1954 decision. Whiteness was threatened because racial integration was thought to lead to interracial sexuality and biracial individuals.

One of the most racist acts in American history was slavery. During slavery, black women were property and, as such, used as sexual objects for white slave masters. Sexual relations between black men and white women were forbidden. White women were to be kept “pure” while white men could act without restrictions (Kalmijn, 1993, Pascoe, 1996). Scientific racism argued for the purity of races. Whites needed to keep themselves “pure” of black blood for fear of dilution. In alignment with the ideals of scientific racism was the whites’ new term for people of mixed decent— “mulattoes.” Continuing the succession of racism, those of mixed racial heritage were believed to be morally and physically inferior to “pure” blacks, prone to diseases, and sterile like mules (Romano, 2003).

Even as this racist idea spread quickly throughout the ever-growing country, a small number of biracial children were being born. A small percentage of black-white biracial children were even born to white mothers and slave fathers. To keep the races separated and promote racial purity, strict laws were created so that free white men or women who married blacks were negatively sanctioned through fines, imprisonment, or servitude (Romano, 2003). Blacks and whites who intermarried were banished from the colony of Virginia. By 1705, interracial couples who married were sent to prison for six months (Korgen, 1998).

However, biracial people did serve a purpose for whites. In the lower South, biracial people were considered a different caste from blacks. Those who had the lightest skin had the most privilege granted by whites. They were considered to be and treated as a buffer class between whites and blacks. This especially benefited plantation owners. Blacks significantly outnumbered them, and plantation owners were fearful of a slave uprising. The mixed-race class provided a shield to this uprising (Korgen, 1998).

During slavery, light-skinned blacks (generally black-white biracial individuals) were given more privileges than dark-skinned blacks. Black-white biracial individuals were usually children of the plantation master and worked in the house, whereas dark-skinned blacks labored in the fields. However, after the Civil War, the privileged black-white biracial individuals no longer had the distinction of freedom to distinguish them from dark blacks (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992). The black-white biracial elite wanted to maintain their status, so they began to segregate themselves into separate clubs, associations, and communities. Russell-Cole, Wilson, and Hall (2013) argue that policies such as the paper bag, comb, and door tests were used to

maintain the old hierarchy². This stratified the black community into a small light-skinned elite, a brown middle class, and a black proletariat (Spikard, 1989). Light skin was highly valued in the black community, but to be nearly white was not looked highly upon (Spikard, 1989). Blacks wanted to be light, not white (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992).

The One-Drop Rule

The one-drop rule is still used to define who is black. Because of this concept's importance, its meaning in historical context must be addressed. The one-drop rule is unique only to the United States. Massood (2008) contends that society is arranged in such a way that if any person has one drop of black or African blood, then that person is black and loses all privileges of whiteness. This includes individuals who have origins that are more European than African and those who could also pass for white because of the fairness of their skin (Korgen, 1998). Benshoff and Griffin (2004) argue that the one-drop rule is an oppressive tool used to maintain and protect whiteness. The slave-trading society created the one-drop rule as a means to determine the race of children who came from interracial relationships during slavery.

Ramirez (1995) asserts that the one-drop rule was created to increase the number of slaves. Race was determined through paternal heritage and this presented a problem for the new quickly growing colonies, which benefited from slave labor. They required a never-ending "fresh supply" of slaves, but most fathers of biracial children were white. To remedy this problem, the status of biracial children was determined by law in 1662 to be of the maternal line, which was black, and thus the children had a greater chance of becoming a slave (Korgen,

² The paper bag test involved placing an arm inside a brown bag, and only if the skin was lighter than the color of the bag would a prospective member be invited to the organization. Some organizations painted their doors a light shade of brown, and anyone whose skin was darker than the door was asked to seek membership elsewhere. A tooth comb tested the texture of a potential member's hair. If the hair was found to be too coarse and snagged the comb, membership was denied (Russell-Cole, Wilson, & Hall, 2013).

1998). However, this created yet another problem. Children of white women and black men would have the status of “free” according to this law. To correct this issue, laws of social conduct were enforced to ensure that the races were kept separate.

Ferber (1998) argues that the one-drop rule was used for the purpose of maintaining white purity. Jim Crow strengthened the effectiveness of the one-drop rule in its ability to define who was black. Whites perpetuated the one-drop rule, and the black community reinforced it by using it to their advantage. To garner more rights, biracial individuals identified as black during the Civil Rights Era to combat Jim Crow segregation (Winters & Debose, 2003). During this time, many blacks embraced “black pride” and felt that biracial people should identify themselves as black (Korgen, 1998). Biracial people felt pressure to identify as such.

Both whites and blacks agreed with the one-drop rule. Whites did not accept those who were not white, and light skin was no longer in fashion. Every person with one drop of African blood was black regardless of skin tone. At this time, fine features and straight hair were out-of-fashion. Afros and African features were popular. To fit in to the new paradigm of beauty, biracial people had to prove their “blackness” (Spikard, 1989). Biracial individuals who did not regard themselves as black were thought to betray and reject their black ancestry (Tizard & Phoenix, 2002).

History of Multiracial Identity

The Civil Rights Movement was an example and a catalyst for the Multiracial Movement (Williams, 2006). The Multiracial Movement began in the 1990s. The Multiracial Movement was an initiative of parents of multiracial children to have their children recognized by all their racial and ethnic backgrounds instead of “other”, with a proposed attempt to include the

addition of a “multiracial” category to the 2000 U.S. Census (Williams, 2006; Russell, Wilson, Hall, 1992). Multiracial advocates argue that multiracial people have experiences that monoracial people may never have, and because of this their identities should be validated by having a category that signifies this (Thorton, 1992). Multiracial advocates contend that the addition of a multiracial identity would allow for equity in the area of race relations, alleviate the psychological oppression related to choosing one parent’s racial background over another or forcing a multiracial person to make an unauthentic choice, and to provide a more accurate picture of contemporary demographics (Winters & Debose, 2003). Most ambitiously, multiracial activists propose that the inclusion of a multiracial category would help deconstruct the concept of race and the power and privileges it connotes (Winters & Debose, 2003). This new shift in categorizing people into racial groups has moved from an “either/or” paradigm to a “both/and” paradigm (Thorton, 1992). Having a multiracial category would legitimize an identity that was once considered ambiguous (Thorton, 1992). These reasons did not result in a multiracial category. Instead, a “mark all that apply” option has been available on the U.S. Census since 2000.

Multiracial advocates contend that some multiracial individuals may not define themselves with monoracial categories and a multiracial category would better capture a more accurate personal identity. Russell, Wilson, & Hall (1992) suggest that some multiracial people may feel marginalized by choosing “other” as a racial designation, and some may not believe in racial categorization at all. By having only monoracial groups to choose from, the multiracial individual may be forced to choose between his or her parents’ racial backgrounds. Some argue that multiracial people should and will identify with their minority parent’s culture. This is not

always the case, as the minority group may not fully accept the multiracial person. Russell, Wilson, and Hall (1992) suggest that multiracial people may not decide their personal identity based on appearance alone, but on other factors such as neighborhood composition, the culture that he or she was predominantly raised in, racial background of his or her friendship group, and acceptance of others as a legitimate member.

Some argue that categories on the U.S. Censuses essentialized racial identity. The U.S. Bureau of the Census is used to measure the various categories of race in the United States. The definition that the Census Bureau uses to measure race changes depending on the general population's definition of race. For instance, beginning in 1850, the U.S. Census employed the term mulatto, and later, in the 1890 Census, the terms quadroon and octoroon were used (Root, 1996). Presently, the definition of black used by the Census Bureau is the nation's cultural and legal definition—all persons with any known black ancestry (Root, 1996). The addition of a "mark all that apply" option did not significantly change the percentages of minority groups. Only 6.8 million (2.4 %) of the U.S. population labeled themselves as "multiracial" by selecting more than one racial group. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, about 9.0 million individuals (2.9 % of the population) identified as two or more races. Of this population, 20.4 % are of black and white ancestry (www.census.gov).

Biracial Identity

The meaning of race becomes nebulous when considering people of mixed descent. Categories become blurred when attempting to fit biracial people into them. A biracial individual's phenotype often puts questions into others' minds, such as "What are you?" and "If you had to choose one race, which one would you choose?" These are questions that every

biracial and multiracial person has pondered at some point in his or her life. To help answer these questions, researchers have conducted studies on biracial identity formation and how biracial individuals fit into society (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2005; Rockquemore & Laszlofly, 2005).

Appiah (2000) explains identification as the process through which a person shapes his or her life with the use of available labels or identities. Racial identity is important because racial identity is related to racial attitudes. In addition, racial identities are cultural scripts that shape the actions and behaviors of the person holding a particular racial identity (Appiah, 2000). Identity as biracial has another component that needs consideration: Validation. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) argue that individuals cannot have a realized identity without others who validate that identity. Racial identity validation occurs when others accept a person's constructed racial identity as legitimate. Racial identity validation is likely to occur where there is a high concentration of biracial and multiracial people and where the multiracial individual finds a community of support (Miville, Constantine, & Baysden, 2005).

The pressure for biracial people to "choose" a race may be due to the United States being a dichotomous, white-black stratified society. How members of society identify who is biracial is contingent first upon how race is understood (Morning, 2003). Choosing a race is a very difficult task for a biracial individual because they feel as though they are members of both groups, yet not part of either group (Root, 1992). Multiracial people may have some restrictions when selecting a racial designation for themselves because they have to justify their identity choices not only for themselves, but also for society (Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

Many monoracial people are challenged to consider that a multiracial person is free from oppressive rules of classification. Monoracial people may not understand this because a multiracial person's experiences do not fit his or her own. Unlike monoracial people, multiracial individuals may have more incentive when designating their own racial label. First, they must successfully integrate all heritages and identifications while also developing a positive self-concept and sense of competence. Second, they must develop the ability to incorporate their earlier identifications into a coherent and stable sense of a personal identity, as well as a positive racial identity (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2000).

Scholars have theorized how individuals develop racial identities and how racial identities have changed throughout history. However, there is no one correct, all-encompassing explanation about how and why individuals have racial identities. Appiah (2000) contends that the study of racial identity is important because of the ability to map the history of a label and its consequences. In addition, race can be used to treat people differently. Racial identities have implied social effects. Lewis (2004) asserts that identity is not an individual project. Attention must be given to power and structural forces that create social groups and the distribution of scarce resources to those groups. In addition, racial identities are cultural scripts that shape the actions, type of person, and behavior a person can present according to that label (Appiah, 2000).

Many factors contribute to biracial identity formation, but appearance, social class, and gender are specifically discussed. Appearance not only has an impact on an individual's self-perception, but also how society perceives that individual. The physical body is a collection of cultural meanings. Appearances help to define a situation and provide a context to develop

meaning for individuals involved. Skin color, hair texture, and facial features have meanings, which are used by others as markers of identity (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001).

A multiracial person may experience an exaggerated emphasis on physical appearance, which is often treated as unfamiliar and something to be correctly racially categorized (Root, 1992). A person's awareness of his or her racial ambiguity may contribute to a sense of vulnerability and a feeling of marginalization. Obstacles to claiming a racial identity leave the individual constantly vulnerable to rejection and identification as "the Other" (Root, 1992). For those multiracial people whose physical appearance leaves them racially ambiguous, questions about which group they identify with put them under constant pressure, especially when they feel that whoever is asking the question is looking for a particular answer (Root, 1992). One side of the question is quickly answered. Since the biracial person looks ambiguous, surely he or she could not possibly be white (Renn, 2000). Although a biracial person can be culturally white, his or her appearance signals to others that this is not the case.

Social class is an additional component that affects how people perceive biracial individuals and how biracial individuals racially identify. Biracial individuals living in middle and upper class environments are more likely to be perceived as biracial (rather than black) than those living in working and lower class environments (Brunsma, 2005). However, regardless of socioeconomic status, dark-skinned biracial individuals are likely to be recognized as being black (Harvey, LaBeach, Pridgen, & Gocial, 2005). Thorton (1995) contends that race is no longer perceived only by the one-drop rule, but also by skin color and situational factors such as culture and class. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2003) argue that biracial individuals will more likely identify with the racial group closer to their social status. Biracial individuals in social

environments consisting of fewer minority group members will more likely identify with their non-minority parent's racial group. Similarly, biracial individuals in social contexts consisting primarily of minority group members will more likely identify with their minority parent's racial identity.

Physical appearance is an important factor in the overall construction of female identity. Patriarchal ideology dictates that men are inherently more valuable than women, and among women, worth is defined in terms of physical beauty and sexuality (Rockquemore and Laszoffy, 2005). In the case of women, our society most values beauty. However, for men, intelligence, political influence, and strength are deemed important (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992). These values cut across racial lines. The African American community has adopted white standards of beauty. Women with light skin, straight hair, and fine features are regarded as beautiful.

Biracial women may also face conflict stemming from skin color. Like black women, biracial women are viewed through the lenses of stereotypes. For instance, the racial myth that all black-white women are "passionate" and "exotic" may encourage white men to believe they are desirable merely for sex rather than for any long-term, committed relationship. On the other hand, many biracial women state that black men perceive them as merely light-skinned "trophies" and status symbols (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002). During the mid-1970s, African American men were more likely to marry darker women than lighter women.

This trend reverted back to the times before the Civil Rights era. It has been observed that successful dark men continue to confirm their status by marrying women with light skin (Spikard, 1989). One would expect that the Black Power Movement would change perceptions

of black beauty. This is not the case. Dark skin continues to have negative connotations tied to it. Dark women are rated as less accomplished, less successful in romantic endeavors, unpopular, unattractive, emotionally unbalanced, and not as smart as lighter women (Korgen, 1998). Dark women may internalize these beliefs and because of this, they may believe that they must conform to others' expectations of them (Korgen, 1998).

Patricia Hill Collin's (2000) elucidation of black feminism sheds light on the experiences and knowledge construction by intersecting race, gender, and social class. Historically, black women were not able to articulate representations of themselves. Derogatory and racist imagery and ideologies promulgated in U.S. society, justifying slavery and domination of blacks. These representatives permeated the culture and social structures until they became normalized. Some of these stereotypes include that of the mammy, Jezebel, breeder woman, the docile Aunt Jemima, and welfare mother. According to Collins, these stereotypes are essential to the oppression of black women. In addition to the economy and politics, images and ideology are used to keep African American women in a subordinate place.

The idea of the black woman is socially constructed. Black women are defined by their comparison to white women. White women are portrayed as pure, gentle, demure, innocent, and beautiful, whereas black women are described as overly sexual, physical, loud, and ugly. By understanding this juxtaposition, representations of black women can be deconstructed in order to reveal the motives of such disparaging imagery. However, Collins (2010) asserts that although black women may share similar experiences, there is not an essential black woman type.

CHAPTER 3

MEDIA AND REPRESENTATIONS OF BIRACIAL IDENTITY

Media Analysis

This research explores how media reflects and perhaps reinforces cultural values. The study of film is important because it reflects the values of society (Cripps, 1993; Croteau, Hoynes, Milan, 2012). Film images can be considered semiotic signs. These images may represent social reality (Mask, 2009; Childs, 2009). According to Nesteby (1982), film is a historical text that mirrors the prevalent attitudes in American culture during which time the film was produced. Lawson (2006) suggests that media has the ability to reproduce and influence culture. Film can be used to examine how blackness and black people are seen and treated based upon constructed and consumed images (hooks, 1992). Examining the reaction to films opens up avenues of the study of race and race relations (Lawson, 2006). How race is constructed is mirrored in American mainstream film. One important historical character in film is the stereotypical tragic mulatto.

Hollywood as an Institution

Miller and Stam (2004) contend that Hollywood film refers to an industrial and rational mode of highly consumed cinematic production. Its purpose is to sell tickets to the largest audience possible, which increases profits. To attract a large audience to purchase tickets, films must play to the audience's beliefs and concerns. According to Miller and Stam, Hollywood does not intend to educate, but rather to entertain. However, Benshoff and Griffith (2009) argue that the Hollywood film industry is not as harmless as some may think. The Hollywood film industry is an ideological state apparatus. An ideological state apparatus (ISA) is a tool used

to oppress a population without using overt force and without the subordinates' knowledge that they are being oppressed. Hollywood is able to do this by shaping American ideology hidden under the guise of mere escapism. Without challenging ideologies promoted by Hollywood, images of all people are thought to be natural—as truths. In addition, Giglio (2000) states that it is not by accident that those in power seek to control the means of communication, one being film. Dominant groups are able to have their agendas supported by the masses. Giglio further explains that even if a film is entertaining, it still advances political messages and promotes the status quo. Because of this, Hollywood is able to shape ideologies concerning gender, class, race, etc.

Socialization

In contemporary culture, media are used as a primary agent of socialization (Duran, Yousman, Walsh, & Longshore, 2008; Miller & Stam, 2004; Croteau, Hoynes, & Milan, 2012). Media have the ability to present a world that otherwise would not be accessible to many of its consumers in their immediate social environments (Stroman, 1991). Robillard (2012) claims that media can influence behavior. The media also allow individuals to “know” groups that they have not encountered. Because of this, media is a system of racialization (Littlefield, 2008).

Media have an assortment of functions. Media entertain, inform, and educate (Etman & Rojecki, 2000). Media give their consumers glimpses into the world of others and allows consumers to understand their own social realities (Stroman, 1991; Negra, D., 2001; Vera, H. & Gordon, A., 2003; Littlefield, 2008; Croteau, Hoynes, & Milan, 2012). Media influence how social groups view themselves and other groups (Maddox & Chase, 2004). Media, and in the case of this research, film, mimics social life. Seggi (2012) takes this further by asserting that not

only is media a mirror of our culture, it actually shapes our culture. Film is a language used to construct reality by attempting to make sense of the variety of messages and behaviors of our culture and “packaging and reproducing them as fiction” (Seggi, 2012, p. 68).

The media, and specifically film, gives its consumers tools and images used to construct and understand their social worlds (Vera & Gordon, 2003; Negra, 2001). Celebrity is an undervalued area of knowledge. What consumers know about particular actors enables them to construct schemas about culture and belief systems that structure our society (Negra, 2001). These schemas are a type of sincere fictions in which we use to relate to others (Vera & Gordon, 2003). These fictions do not reflect reality, but rather pretense and a fantasy (hooks, 1992). Sincere fictions allow stereotypes to be created and perpetuated, especially when there is distance between the perceiver and the objectified “Other.”

These meanings can be absorbed into our identities. Hegemonic messages are internalized because they seem harmless and appear to be mere entertainment. Messages are consumed rather than challenged. Doane (2007) contends that American culture is denoted by white hegemony. Dominant groups determine the cultural and knowledge systems of society (Croteau, Hoynes, & Milan, 2012). Whites historically controlled major institutions and have appropriated the social and cultural normatives to make white meanings and social interactions the standard. Media and the Hollywood system are tools used to control meaning in American society. These meanings are not labeled as “white.” They are merely labeled as the “American standard” (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). Media messages dispensed by Hollywood are thought to be harmless entertainment. We are not all conscious consumers. We may internalize these

messages without criticizing their value and merit until they unknowingly become part of us. These messages are perceived as natural and as truths by whites and people of color.

Social Control and the Media

In the United States, members of the dominant racial group, or whites, use media to retain power, wealth, and status by promoting an ideology that justifies the current racial hierarchy (Lull, 2003; Wilson & Gutierrez, 1995). When an ideology becomes part of the social structure, it can be effectively used to control subordinate groups (Croteau, Hoynes, & Milan, 2012). The dominant group defines and determines what reality is for their group and for subordinate groups. The subordinate group accepts the philosophies of the dominant group as their reality (Littlefield, 2008). Because of this, media that reach mass audiences can be considered forms of social control.

Through media, the dominant group is able to reinforce the status quo by justifying inequality and/or by also denying the existence of inequality (Littlefield, 2008; Lawson, 2006). For example, certain movies tend to deny racial inequality by focusing on individual behavior and neglecting social structures. This message informs viewers that race does not matter and is an issue of the past. Our society is often portrayed as “colorblind,” a place in which racism does not exist and race is not important (Gallagher, 2006, Thorton, 2009).

Minority Representation in Film

Movies disseminate images and messages about race relations. Hooks (1992) argues that film is essential to examine because representations of black people in film determines how blacks and black culture are perceived by other groups. Individuals from other races base their responses upon these representations.

African American Stereotypes

Media images of African Americans have made incremental changes for the better (Littlefield, 2008). Yet even today African Americans are often portrayed in stereotypical roles tied to negative characteristics (Brown Givens & Monahan, 2005; Punyanunt-Carter, 2008). When African Americans are represented in film, it is usually in comedies (Foster, 2003; Lawson, 2006). Foster (2003) suggests that this is not surprising since white Americans are comfortable with stereotypical portrayals of African Americans. Lawson (2006) contends that regardless of the genre African Americans are able to find work in, the characters they play lack identity. The characters do not have a cultural identity, family background, or unique characteristics that would make them more developed.

African American men and women are both stereotyped, but in different ways. African American men are depicted as lazy Sambos and brutes. African American women are portrayed as welfare mothers and Jezebels (Collins, 2000). Smith (1997) argues that these images are created for economic and political reasons. They are used to disenfranchise African Americans and maintain their position as the "Other." In addition, Smith asserts that the binary of positive and negative distinction has the potential to essentialize racial identity, which limits recognition of diversity within racial groups. Essentializing racial groups is problematic because it confuses what is historical and cultural within a group and what is biological or genetic. A lack of distinction between these two is a breeding ground for racist thinking that is difficult to deconstruct (Smith, 1997).

By disseminating messages that people of color are naturally inferior, subordination of those groups is justified (Lawson, 2006; Huntemann & Morgan, 2001). Minority groups are

victimized when their identities are created and defined by the dominant group (Huntemann & Morgan, 2001). These messages allow the dominant group to believe their superiority, and minorities then internalize and believe stereotypes of themselves. Because of this, hooks (1992) claims that the minds of minorities have been “colonized.” Lawson (2006) explains colonization of the mind or internalized oppression is a term used to describe people’s belief in negative stereotypes of themselves. Essentially, those who hold negative images and messages as true for themselves accept the dominant ideology, which maintains the position of whiteness as superior and all others as inferior.

Tragic Mulatto in Film

Historically, if biracial actors played biracial characters, it was usually in the form of the tragic mulatto. “The tragic mulatto is a character torn to the point of derangement between his desire to be white and the certainty that society regarded him as Black” (Spikard, 1989, p. 254). Mixed race people were perceived to be degenerate, uncivilized progeny who were unable to reproduce (Evans, 2003). Films displaying this stereotype include *Lost Boundaries* (1949), *Pinky* (1949), *Imitation of Life* (1934 & 1959) (Russell, Wilson & Hall, 1992). In these films, the mulatto woman, represented as the possession of features of European standards of beauty and exoticism of the Other, was adored for her beauty but tormented by her mixed-race status, which was deemed a just punishment (Mask, M., 2009; Evans, C., 2003; Hunter, 2007; Benschhoff, H. & Griffin, S., 2004). Whether or not these historical representations are in contemporary film is a research question needing exploration.

Colorism

Hollywood is *colorstruck* and perpetuates colorism. Hollywood has a preference for light skin. Russell, Wilson, and Hall (1992) contend that dark-skinned black actors are rarely hired because dark skin is hard to photograph. The strong lighting used in filming flattens out subtle shapes of facial features. In addition, many light-skinned actresses are mixed-race black women with European features (Hunter, 2004), so they land more roles than dark-skinned actresses because they are perceived as being more attractive.

Bogle (1997) explains that Hollywood divided black actresses into two camps. Actresses with dark skin played characters described as unattractive mammy figures. Actresses who became leads or stars usually possessed features similar to a Eurocentric ideal of beauty. These women had straight hair, fine features, and light skin. Positive portrayals of light-skinned black characters and negative portrayals of dark-skinned characters in movies support colorism by spreading images that reinforce negative racial stereotypes.

American women are bombarded with images and messages that demand a rarely achievable standard of beauty. However, African American women and other American women of color have even less of a chance of achieving this standard because they are not white. According to Mask (2009), actresses of color are judged according to European standards of beauty. Actresses who are privileged enough to have long, straight, flowing locks, fine features, and light skin may be acceptable as the love interest of the leading man (Mask, 2009). Nevertheless, she is often only regulated to African American roles.

Passing and the Tragic Mulatto

Another issue concerning skin color and privilege is passing. Those who sacrificed their blackness for the privileges of whiteness were engaging in “passing.” Passing occurred when light-skinned African Americans (due to the one-drop rule) tried to infiltrate white society and destroy the boundaries between whiteness and blackness. Light-skinned African Americans passing for white may not have done so because of a desire to destroy the color line. It was mainly about the opportunity to possess the privileges of whiteness (Harris, 1998). Whites are afforded more privilege and power in our nation than people of color. Those passing for white sacrificed their families, their history, and their identities in exchange for freedom and more opportunities. One definite requirement needed to pass was white or nearly white skin. White or light skin not only enabled some African Americans to pass, it gave those who stayed in African American communities more privileges and power as well.

Media and Racial Identity

Media images and messages are hegemonic and influence the formation of identity. Hooks (1992) posits that imagery determines how others perceive us and also how we perceive ourselves. Media also shapes our identity (Brooks & Herbert, 2006; Huntemann & Morgan, 2001; Kellner, 2003). Jones (2006) contends that media outlets depict racial and ethnic groups in particular ways and their viewers emulate those messages whether they are positive or negative representations. Lawson (2006) differentiates how media influence whites’ and minority groups’ racial identities. When whites consume media imagery they may believe the messages that they are superior. Non-whites are often limited to negative media imagery and believe that they are inferior.

Currently, more people of color are represented in the media than in times past. Movies with themes relating to racial and ethnic concerns have been made. In addition, more ethnically and racially ambiguous-looking individuals are becoming more visible in media culture (Beltran, 2005). Racial heterogeneous films satisfy both the demands of those wanting more ethnic representation and those who are hesitantly accepting change. Multiracial actors may make it easier for hesitant individuals to swallow changes in America's population and in the media. Multiracial actors are somewhere between white and black. However, some argue that multiracial actors and actresses are replacing monoracial or non-ethnically mixed bodies in the present (Beltran, 2005).

Race is also predictive of the socioeconomic class of the roles assigned to different actors. In general, the media tends to portray light-skinned individuals with positive attributes and dark-skinned individuals with negative attributes (Wade & Bielitz, 2005). Light skin is associated with a higher socioeconomic class than dark skin (Hunter, 2007; Hunter, 2002; Jones 2000), so biracial characters are more likely to be of a higher economic class than black characters.

Multiraciality in the Media

Dagbovie-Mullins (2013) argues that mixed-race individuals attract media attention because it brings memories of miscegenation to life. Although interracial relationships are accepted more today, they are still seen as threatening to the status quo. Once biracial individuals gained visibility in media, their representations created a reality that promoted the ideology of white power holders (Hughey, 2009). When one group imposes an *identity* on another group, they force a group to internalize their inferior position and domination by the

superordinate group. The subordinate group is then complicit in their position. Since vilifying the progeny of interracial sex protects whiteness, Hollywood, like the general society, does not validate a biracial identity.

Classic Films

Many stereotypes labeled upon African Americans originated with D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915). This film is a depiction of past times in the rural South, when African Americans were migrating to a new life in the urban centers of the North (Nesteby, 1982). *Birth of a Nation* is considered the first epic film filled with strife and overt racism that has yet to be eradicated (Bogle, 1998). Some of the stereotypes that have endured from this film include the Tom, coon, mammy, buck, and tragic mulatto (Bogle, 1998; Smith, 1997). Smith (1997) argues Griffith went to great efforts to convince his audience that the history and future portrayed in *Birth of a Nation* was accurate. *Birth of a Nation's* release during the height of the Jim Crow era justified segregation, lynching, and Klan violence.

The Birth of a Nation is said to have reflected and simultaneously created American ideologies concerning race in the early 19th century (Smith, 1997). The actors who played the Toms, coons, mammies, buck, and tragic mulattoes in the film were white instead of African American. Nonetheless, these stereotypes validated society expectations of African Americans. One of the major themes running through *Birth of a Nation* was white Americans' fear of interracial sexuality (Bogle, 1998). In particular, the great fear was of the strong sexual black man, or buck. White women were defined by what they were not--African American. White women were virginal goddesses while African American women were oversexed, animalistic

breeders. The white women symbolized white racial purity, one of Griffith's major tropes (Nesteby, 1982)

Biracial individuals may have been Othered due to the contribution of the media, specifically film. Images of the tragic mulatto can first be seen in the racist *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Smith (1997) contends that the mulatto is the closest to the white ideal. The white woman was to be kept untouched and pure, but the mulatto was close enough to Eurocentric beauty standards and was sexually available because of her tainted blood. Griffith's portrayal of women has influenced how women are portrayed today. White women are still prized. Black women, especially with dark skin, can be used and discarded. Light-skinned women, usually mulatto, are the occasional acceptable sexual second-place prize.

Stereotypes from *The Birth of a Nation* were disseminated in films coming after it. In these films, stereotypes and characteristics of the tragic mulatto are found. Stereotypes of the tragic mulatto include a desire for whiteness, attempts at passing, exoticism, and a life of tragedy. *Imitation of Life*, *Cabin in the Sky*, and *Pinky* are classic films with these themes.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Hollywood started using more African Americans in films, especially in musicals or films with musical scenes, because African Americans were thought to be more naturally rhythmic, musical, and physical (Nesteby, 1982). African Americans were reduced to stereotypes and limited roles. Hollywood wanted a greater audience and maintained the racial ideologies of the time. Films of the 1930s and 1940s were segregated. African Americans were assumed to be natural entertainers, but could rarely be in the same scene as white actors.

Fredi Washington was a star of the 1930s and 1940s. She acted in the all- black film *The Emperor Jones* and, most famously, in the original version of *Imitation of Life* (1934) (Nesteby, 1982). Washington's archetypal role was that of an attractive, fair, nearly white black woman who decides to pass for white (Bogle, 1997). In *Imitation of Life*, two widows meet (Bogle, 1998). One woman is white and the other is black. Both women are struggling to raise their daughters alone. One morning, Aunt Delilah makes breakfast and Miss Bea is taken aback by how delicious her pancakes are, so she asks what the recipe is. Miss Bea realizes that she could profit from selling the pancakes. The idea is successful, and Miss Bea offers Aunt Delilah 20% profit of the pancake business. Aunt Delilah refuses. Her only wishes were to have a magnificent funeral and take care of Miss Bea and her daughter rather than have a home or wealth on her own (Nesteby, 1982)

A sub-plot of *Imitation of Life* is that of passing (Nesteby, 1982). Peola, the daughter of Aunt Delilah, is the quintessential tragic mulatto (Leab, 1975). She is marginalized. She is between white and black culture (Nesteby, 1982). Peola rejects her mother and her blackness for the privileges of whiteness. She causes tremendous heartbreak that is ultimately the cause of her mother's death. Peola grows up around privilege in Miss Bea's home. She observes and envies the life of Miss Bea's daughter, Jessie, from a distance. Delilah does not understand why she can't live a life of privilege since she has nearly white skin. As a young adult, Peola wants a life of her own and passes as white. However, her charade crumbles every time her mother finds her and addresses her in public. Peola continues with this act until her mother dies. Peola sobs and throws herself on her mother's white casket, finally acknowledging her blackness.

Peola no longer passes and can no longer live a white life. This film illustrates that passing as white has detrimental consequences.

Lena Horne, a biracial actress and singer, was a star of the 1940s. She is well known for her performance in *Stormy Weather* (1943) and *Cabin in the Sky* (1943) (Bogle, 1998). Lena Horne was the first African American woman to sign a contract with MGM studios. She was MGM's token actress; they could drop scenes with her in them to please audiences that found pictures with non-white actors offensive (Bogle, 1997; Nesteby, 1982). Unlike near-white stars of the past, like Nina Mae McKinney and Fredi Washington, Lena Horne was non-threatening. Instead of appearing white, Horne was copper-skinned, exotic.

Horne performed as Sweet Georgia Brown in the all-black musical *Cabin in the Sky* (1943) (Bogle, 1998). She was the exotic temptress who led others to their doom. In this film, Hell's demons use Georgia Brown to seduce the married Little Joe Jackson, and his soul is fought over. Heavenly forces win Joe Jackson's soul with prayers from his wife, Petunia. Bogle (1998) reports that the most common criticism of *Cabin in the Sky* is its stereotypical imagery of the African American as a natural entertainer. African Americans are once again shown singing, dancing, and gambling, and portrayed as lackadaisical. These stereotypes were far removed from the social and political climate of the time (Bogle, 1998; Nesteby, 1982).

Pinky was also released in 1949. It is a story of a light-skinned African American woman attempting to pass as white. In this version, the actress performing Pinky is actually white. Pinky rejects her blackness. She wants nothing to do with her grandmother and her lifestyle. Pinky was going to be better than her race by getting an education as a nurse in the North (Bogle, 1998). Pinky falls in love with a white doctor, but runs away when he proposes marriage. She

returns to her dark-skinned black grandmother in the South and works as a nurse for a rich, elderly white woman. Pinky rediscovers her true racial identity as a black woman through her relationship with the old white woman. When the old woman dies, Pinky inherits all of her money. Pinky faces one more obstacle when she is taken to court to see if she is really the rightful owner of the inheritance (Bogle, 1998). Pinky transforms the old woman's mansion into a home and hospital for colored children. It can be assumed that, because of Pinky's *good* white blood, she was able to get past the trauma of being black and become successful (Nesteby, 1982). Her attitude and misfortune were due to her blackness, and her intelligence and triumph were due to her whiteness. Pinky's tragic outcome, like many other mulatto characters, is that she was unable to find love.

Nesteby (1982) explains *Pinky's* use of a white actress to play a light-skinned African American was because white audiences would rather be sympathetic towards Pinky instead of appalled as she loses her relationship with the white doctor. Pinky's unsuccessful relationship and acceptance of her place as a single woman running a clinic reinforces the belief that miscegenation should be prevented (Leab, 1975). It is the natural way of things. Randall (1968) posits the largest problem with films like *Pinky* were their lack of honesty. Real issues pertaining to the social climate were often not addressed. If they were addressed, it was in an unrealistic fashion. Concerns of African Americans passing came from white Americans. African Americans were concerned about deplorable housing, employment inequality, and housing discrimination. These issues were not addressed in films of the 1940s.

One of the greatest biracial stars of the 1950s was Dorothy Dandridge. Dandridge was noted for her beauty and her talent (Bogle, 1998). She played the archetypical tragic mulatto in

many of her films. Some of these films include *Island of the Sun*, *Malaga*, and most notably *Carmen Jones* (1954). *Carmen Jones* is an all-black musical remake of Bizet's opera *Carmen*. Dandridge plays Carmen Jones, a parachute factory worker. Carmen is a seductress who persuades a good, clean-cut GI named Joe, performed by Harry Belafonte, into leaving the Army to follow her into a dismal life. Carmen tells Joe that she cannot be kept, that she has to be free, that Joe was too good for her. Carmen starts a relationship with the prize fighter, Husky Miller, and Joe goes out of his mind. If he could not have Carmen, no one would. He stalks Carmen. Once he catches her, he sings to her, and then strangles her while singing. She is the tragic mulatto.

Contemporary Films

Some major themes found in classic films with tragic mulattoes can also be found in contemporary film, and they are issues of passing, colorism, general stereotypes of the tragic mulatto, and the one-drop rule. These recurring themes suggest that racial imagery and racial ideologies are difficult to dismantle. The following contemporary films represent the same stereotypes, but a different costume is put on each time.

Mask (2009) argues that although biracial actors may be able to portray a multitude of ethnicities, they are not always given that opportunity because of Hollywood's adherence to the one-drop rule. One pattern often found in Hollywood film is that biracial individuals who are part African American and some other race or ethnicity typically play African American characters, not a wide variety of races and ethnicities (Mask, 2009). These African American characters played by biracial actors are perpetuations of stereotypes found throughout American film history. Biracial men are often depicted as criminals and biracial women are

portrayed as deceitful and sexually promiscuous (Beltran & Fojas. 2008). Positive portrayals of light-skinned black and biracial characters and negative portrayals of dark-skinned characters support colorism. They also work to uphold the present racial hierarchy. Disproportionate portrayals of black characters as negative support and help spread harmful racial stereotypes while, at the same time, “colorblind” portrayals of middle and upper class black and biracial characters support the notion that race no longer matters (at least for middle and upper class people).

The contemporary films chosen are manifestations of the tragic mulatto character. *Sparkle* (1976) is different from the other previously mentioned films. The racial background of the family centered in this drama is presumed to be African American. This family consists of a single mother and her three daughters—Sister, Delores, and Sparkle— all living in Harlem. The film illustrates the grittiness of living in an urban community with little economic opportunities. Sister, played by Lonette McKee, is seduced by materialism. She understands that, to make it “big,” she would have to do whatever it takes. The three sisters become successful when their girl group is given a music contract. Sister is the lead singer of the group and has the lightest skin of all three. Her younger sister, Sparkle, straightens Sister’s hair to remove all kinks, similar to Marilyn Monroe’s hair. Sister is also the most seductive of the sisters. She not only sings, but also uses her body like a musical instrument to accent rhythms and evoke emotions from her audience. She is the exotic “Other.”

Sister accomplishes her goal of being taken care of materially. She becomes the woman of the neighborhood boss, Satin. He lavishes her with fur coats, nice cars, and cocaine. Sister needs drugs because Satin beats her. He has broken her, and she “can’t fly with one wing.”

During Sister's final performance as a solo act, light frames her face, and the shot becomes blurry and distorted. In the next scene, Sparkle is singing lead in a choir beside Sister's casket. Sister's desire to make it big in a community with little economic opportunity caused her to be the tragic mulatto. She was beautiful and adored, but had a tumultuous and painful life.

Jennifer Beals is most noted for her role in the 1980s blockbuster *Flashdance* (1983). In this film, Beals plays the character Alex Owens. Alex is a welder in Pittsburgh who dreams of being a dancer (Bogle, 1994). Alex welds during the day and dances in a club at night. The dancing that Alex performs is not necessarily stripping, but performance art with little clothing needed. Alex is exoticized. Beal's character is also made exotic by her relationship with her older friend who mentors her and encourages her to pursue a relationship with her boss, who happens to be a married man. Alex is not only very sexual; she also has no morals. Her boss eventually helps her in her endeavors. He has connections, which allows her to audition for a prestigious dance troupe. Her talent alone could only get her so far. She needed the help of her white male benefactor and his privilege in order to succeed.

In this film, gender and race intersect. Although Alex's race is not discussed explicitly, she demonstrates characteristics of the tragic mulatto because she is seen as exotic, sexual, and reckless. In one scene, the character is at dinner with her employer. She is wearing men's attire—a tuxedo top. When her romantic partner's ex-wife confronts her, Alex takes off her jacket to show the other woman that she is not wearing a shirt, but just an overlay over her breasts. Alex may have done this to intimidate the woman and make her jealous by showing her that she sexually pleases the woman's ex-husband.

A major star of the late 1990s and early 2000s is Halle Berry. Berry is primarily known for her Oscar winning performance in *Monster's Ball* (2001). *Monster's Ball* was released one year after the 2000 U.S. Census included an additional racial category or option of "choose one or more races." This option allowed those who are more than one race and ethnicity an opportunity to indicate their complete racial background.

Monster's Ball (2001) was a critical and commercial success (Mask, 2009). Halle Berry plays Leticia Musgrove, the wife of an African American man on death row and the economic impoverished mother of an overweight teenaged son. Billy Bob Thornton plays Hank Grotowski, a corrections officer supervising inmates on death row. When Leticia's son is struck by a car and left on the side of a road, Hank picks them up and drives them to the hospital. When the coroner pronounces the boy dead, Leticia is justifiably passionate in her grieving. She is alone and only finds comfort in Hank, who simply drove her to the hospital. Leticia and Hank find solace in each other after their sons die. Leticia finds freedom in her sexual and economic relationship with Hank. She wants to "feel good" and "needs to be taken care of." Hank finds comfort because he can finally rectify his lack of parenting skills by caring for Leticia and rid himself of racism by having her as a girlfriend.

Some argue that this plot is not plausible in reality. *Monster's Ball* (2001) left many African Americans, particularly women, disturbed by its message that "an African American woman living in the South could fall in love with the white racist prison guard who supervised her husband's execution" (Mask, 2009, p. 121).

Mask (2009) contends that a black woman in the Deep South would have extended family, community, or networks to rely on instead of waiting for a supposed reformed white

racist to rescue her. In addition, African American women were not necessarily disgusted by the interracial relationship in the film; they were disturbed by the suggestion that a black woman can escape her poverty through sex (i.e. prostitution) (Mask, 2009). Leticia's race may be read as black. However, she exudes characteristics of the tragic mulatto. She has a troubled life and uses her exoticism and sexuality to achieve her goals.

Although this is just a small sample of films, these classic and contemporary films illustrate how the tragic mulatto has been represented throughout film history. As can be seen in these few films, the tragic mulatto is a woman with light skin who has a tumultuous life due to her mixed heritage. Characters from these films do not necessarily want to be white, but rather they want the privileges of whiteness. In order to attain what they desire, characters in these films use their physicality or sexuality. This demonstrates the power of one drop of black blood. Black blood makes the character carnal and pollutes the rational white blood.

Theoretical Approach

The theoretical basis for my dissertation research is a combination of whiteness and cultural studies. Whiteness studies focus on "privilege." For example, no matter the similar economic circumstances of a person who is black and another who is white, the white person still has a substantive edge (i.e., privilege) because of their race. There are those who argue that race is arbitrary and that we should "get over it," but they ignore the reality that the consequences of race are very real. While race is a social construct, it does have historical, political, social, and psychological meanings. Issues concerning race are not resigned to the past. Race matters today, not only for those with black, brown, yellow, or red skin, but for whites as well.

In a racial hierarchy, whites possess the most privilege and power. This privilege and power is unequally distributed based upon mere skin color (Winters and DeBose, 2003). Race is a construct used by the dominant group to maintain power. Race is also used to divide people based on phenotypic characteristics, primarily skin color. Skin color is real. "Skin signifies. Skin means. For Americans, skin color means race" (Taylor, 2005, p. 4). The one-drop rule is based upon this. The one-drop rule was used to give those with white skin privilege, preserve whiteness, and preserve the power of whites (Winters and DeBose, 2003).

Cultural studies focus on how dominant ideologies are accepted, negotiated, or opposed (Stam, 2000). Cultural studies attempt to understand how representation of culture shapes societies (Bogle, 2001). Cultural studies challenge the assumption that the media viewer is merely situated in a "complicit relationship with the text" that reproduces dominant ideologies (Allen, 2004, p. 9). The audience is active, not passive (Croteau, Hoynes, & Milan, 2012). Instead of media messages created by producers, directors and writers being directly internalized by the viewer, media messages are decoded by the viewer to possibly mean something different.

Readers of the media may agree with the message given without challenging it. This is a dominant reading. An oppositional reading occurs when the viewer rejects the message completely. Between these two types of readings are negotiated readings. This type is more complex than the other two. The reader consciously accepts some of the dominant messages and rejects others. Whether the viewer holds a dominant, oppositional, or negotiated reading depends upon their positionality (e.g., race, class, or gender) (Allen, 2004). The meaning of these messages do not come directly from the text, but rather from the social contexts of its viewing (Croteau, Hoynes, & Milan, 2012).

Cultural studies also contend that social structures are not fixed. The way social structures are constructed and deconstructed, reproduced, and maintained is examined with cultural studies (D'Acci, 2004). Binaries in particular are examined. A combination of these two theoretical approaches, for the purpose of this study, posits that opportunities have improved regardless of race; however, race still matters in the United States. How race matters can be measured by an examination of historical representations of race relations and biracial actors in film.

Cultural studies are aimed to place media in cultural and historical contexts (Stam, 2000). Cultural studies analyze how meaning is produced and received within various social and institutional conditions. Cultural studies are framed around the major premise that there is a constant ideological struggle when reading texts. Ideological struggles are the result of political, social, or economic conflicts in the social world and involve groups vying for power and social resources (Dijk, 2008). Hegemony is the way that a dominant group exerts ideological and social control over a subordinated group rather than using physical force (Lewis, 2004; Lull, 2003). When hegemony does occur the message is considered normal, common sense, or general truth (Lull, 2003; Croteau, Hoynes, & Milan, 2012). The subordinated group has given its willing consent to the dominant group to control them. With an oppositional reading, the subordinated group recognizes their position and that they are being control by another group. To combat their oppression, the subordinated group tries to challenge dominant meanings and make meanings function for their own interests (Kellner, 2003). The dominant group does not cede. Rather, ideological struggle continues. Consent must be won over and over again through negotiation. A negotiated reading occurs when the viewer consciously accepts some of the

dominant message and rejects those that are not of his or her interest. All three readings depend upon the social position and experience of the consumer.

The fictional representations of individuals who represent a group become stereotypes that are hard to erase from the screen and from memory. Lawson (2006) asserts that stereotyping is a way to subordinate minorities in the dominant discourse. Hooks (1992) is not surprised by this outcome. She observes that even though African Americans have made strides in various social institutions such as education and the economy, African Americans have yet to gain control over representation of themselves in the media (hooks, 1992). These stereotypes of African Americans reinforce the power of the dominant groups to control American ideology that “Others” African Americans. Littlefield (2008) explains that labeling a group as the “Other” marginalizes those that are non-whites. They are perceived and treated as though they are not humans and therefore deserve their oppression. Huntemann & Morgan (2001) assert that the media rarely create stereotypes, but depict reflections of the culture. Stereotypes have historical roots and are maintained and normalized through outlets such as media.

Smith (1997) asserts that media are not mere entertainment, but represent historically disenfranchised groups and reflect the lived circumstance of real people. Media also dispense ideologies through images that maintain the status quo and the dominant group’s position of power. When minority group members see these images, they may have feelings of inferiority and internalized oppression. Lawson (2006) argues that individuals who have internalized oppression blame themselves for their disadvantaged position and may not challenge the systems oppressing them. Minorities face internal oppression because media have limited images of minority group members. When these images are present they are usually in

stereotypical forms. When minorities internalize these images and concede to the dominant ideologies, they are complicit to their exclusion, dehumanization, and discrimination (Lawson, 2006). However, Keller (2003) warns that media consumers must be careful of reading media images as a positive/negative binary. Keller is not suggesting that fewer positive images should be produced because they can combat the proliferation of negative images. Media spectators should instead interrogate media messages and images.

Media can reflect society and the American racialized society. Whiteness is commodified in Hollywood. For a product to produce the most potential profit, it must be marketable to a large audience. In America, the largest target audience consists primarily of whites (Holtzman, 2000). Whites determine what an acceptable message is and what it is not. The media have recognized this and have downplayed ethnic and racial differences in their overall definition of what it is to be American. The politics of articulation are ignored, and when race/ethnicity are articulated, various aspects of these cultures are appropriated and commodified to be sold to white audiences (Havens, 2004). Havens contends that comedy is a genre where white viewers are able to “experience blackness” in a non-threatening way (p. 453). Stam (2000) contends that whites’ appropriation of blackness while denying the achievements of blacks is indicative of Eurocentrism.

Mass media perpetuate images that oppress, exploit, and dominate people of color, specifically African Americans. These media messages were used to justify white supremacy and oppression of people of color (hooks, 1992; Lawson, 2006). Hooks (1992) claims that white supremacists acknowledge that control over images and ideologies are essential to the protection of systems of racial domination. Wilson and Gutierrez (1995) argue that media

reinforce dominant ideologies rather than challenge them. Critical racial images and stereotypes are perpetuated in mass media and in particular film. Childs (2009) asserts that U.S. mainstream popular media are controlled by whites, which dictate how people of color are perceived. These created images are a significant part of racial ideology. According to Childs, a racial ideology is a grouping of ideas defending white supremacy and privilege while disguising it as based on merit. Inferiority of "Others" and the superiority of whites are deemed as natural.

Race is socially constructed. The meaning of race is rearticulated for economic and political reasons. One of the means used to reaffirm the American racial binary of blackness and whiteness is the one-drop rule. The one-drop rule is prevalent in Hollywood film as seen in its portrayals of the tragic mulatto. Hollywood disseminates messages that are more than mere entertainment; Hollywood shapes and reaffirms dominant ideologies. Because of this, Hollywood is an ideological state apparatus used to shape ideologies concerning skin color, race, and race relations. To discover if general film consumers adopt dominant ideologies concerning representation of race, respondents' perceptions of four clips of biracial actresses were measured using a survey. Characteristics that the respondents assessed were developed from a content analysis of 136 films featuring biracial actors.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Media are important contributors to how we place meaning on things, including people (Hobbs, 2005). Media have infiltrated the lives of many Americans, influencing the way individuals view people of various racial and ethnic groups. Media can act as a source of information correcting stereotypes and misconceptions by depicting accurate representations of these groups (Hobbs, 2005). Media shed light onto our cultural beliefs and values, including race (Croteau, Hoynes, & Milan, 2012). The discussion in the literature review suggests that, historically, skin color has limited actresses to certain roles (Bogle, 2001). It is unclear if the changing times have eased some racist attitudes in the film industry, allowing biracial actresses to play a variety of roles and races.

To better assess if this is happening, content analysis and an online survey were used. I used content analysis to assess my perceptions of the actresses and stereotypes related to the tragic mulatto. The online survey was used to assess if respondents recognize the tragic mulatto stereotype in various time periods. Results from both these methodologies are compared and discussed in a later chapter.

Hypotheses

A question this study investigated is whether or not old stereotypes of biracial individuals are still perpetuated in current media and if respondents recognize them. In particular, this study investigated if those stereotypes are related to the one-drop rule. The one-drop rule states that a person with any black ancestry is black. Media have typically depicted biracial individuals as the “tragic mulatto” with psychological problems because of

their confusion related to their racial background. This study assessed if this generalization occurs in contemporary media.

Research Design: Content Analysis

Content analysis is a detailed and systematic assessment of text used in an effort to identify patterns, themes, and meanings that are being propagated (Hoeschsmann & Poyntz, 2012; Berg, 2009). Content analysis is particularly useful to analyze media (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006). Film was analyzed in this current study. The advantages of this method are its ease and reliability. The disadvantage of this method is that validity is sacrificed. To combat this limitation, latent content was also analyzed. Each film was analyzed for its underlying meaning through the characteristics listed in the table: likeability, sex appeal, ability to contribute, ability to be violent, mental health, overall positive portrayal score, overall negative portrayal score, and social class. The costs of coding latent content are reliability and specificity. This problem is resolved by applying definitions and standards to each characteristic being measured.

Only films with black/white biracial actresses were analyzed (see Appendix A). Two interrater investigators, both women of color, watched the same ten films. The primary investigator also watched the same films. Scores obtained were calculated for an interrater reliability score. In addition, the primary investigator watched 124 films.

The interrater investigators were selected based on their race and sex. People of color are more sensitive to issues concerning race. In addition, women are subjected to standards of beauty, which has a racial component (Hunter, 2003). It can be argued that black culture holds white standards of beauty. Features that resemble whiteness are considered beautiful (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2004b). In this study, each investigator watched films and reported

responses on a previously constructed table (Appendix B). Lists of biracial actresses can be found at www.mixedfolks.com.

Mixedfolks.com is a website that identifies the racial and ethnic backgrounds of multiracial actresses/actors, musicians, athletes, and other notable figures (Nakamura, 2008). I selected only actresses that were identified as having one black parent and one white parent for my sample. Next, lists of films for each actress were found on IMDB.com (International Movie Data Base). IMDB regularly updates the site to include recently released films. Films were selected with the intention of finding patterns until they became common. I set the goal of watching every available film with biracial actresses from 1940 to 2010.

Operationalization of Variables

Dependent Variables

When the actress first appeared on screen, the investigator recorded her perception of the actress's race on the table. The available options were: 1) Biracial; 2) Black; 3) White; 4) Other (i.e., Hispanic ethnicity, Asian, and Native American); and 5) Unable to Specify.

"Likeability" measures the character's pleasantness (or, if the investigator could be the character's friend). Likeability was measured using a Likert scale, with one representing strong dislike and seven representing strong like.

It is likely that a character will have a higher likeability rating if the respondent is also white. Bogle (2001) states that even though a character is biracial, a white viewer may feel sympathetic towards that character because she has "white blood." Because of the whiteness in her blood, the tragic mulatto has certain privileges that monoracial blacks may not have. However, she is doomed to live a life full of tragedy because her black blood negates the

advantages of whiteness. The character cannot help that she is from mixed parentage.

Therefore, the audience may pity her to some extent rather than cast her off as just a mere victim.

Attractiveness was included on the table because biracial women have historically been described as exotic. "Attractiveness" is subjective and measured on a Likert scale from one to seven. The investigator marked "one" if she did not find the actress attractive and "seven" if she found the actress very attractive. A biracial actress can be perceived as attractive because of her golden or fair skin, fine features, and long hair. These are characteristics of Eurocentric standards of beauty that are favored in the United States and elsewhere (Mask, 2009). Another side of attractiveness is exoticism. Bogle (2001) claims that biracial women are often characterized as exotic. She is portrayed as sensual, a sex-object, or promiscuous. Instead of treating her as a prize, she is treated as an object while the white woman is kept on a pedestal and untouched.

"Ability to contribute" measured the investigator's opinion about whether or not the character contributed to her family, neighborhood, or society. Examples of "ability to contribute" include sharing values with children, starting a business that promotes unity and community, and teaching. Bogle (2001) claims that biracial characters may be perceived as being able to contribute more than black characters because of their white heritage. "White blood" is assumed to be associated with intelligence and civility (Lawson, 2006).

Another characteristic that was measured was "ability to be violent." This characteristic was measured on a one-to-seven scale. One meant that the character was not violent and seven meant that the character was very violent. Examples of "ability to be violent" include

physically, emotionally, or verbally abusing another person, harming oneself, brandishing a gun, and threatening others. The tragic mulatto is tormented by her “mixed blood” and may react recklessly and violently. Whether in self-defense or not, she may claw, bite, or act in other self-destructive manners (Bogle, 2001).

Mental health was a characteristic that was observed and measured in this study. Biracial individuals were once thought to have psychological problem contributing to the creation of the tragic mulatto stereotype. Shih and Sanchez (2005) report that previous studies suggested that biracial individuals inherently have psychological problems because they have unstable racial identities. “Mental health” has no specific definition, but is related to what the general population considers “normal” for that specific time and place. “Mental health” was measured from one-to-seven, with one being poor mental health and seven representing healthy mental well-being. Examples of poor mental health include depression and expressions of deviant behavior such as drug use, suicidal tendencies, and prostitution. The tragic mulatto is portrayed as having mental health problems because of her mixed heritage. She is especially likely to have psychological problems if she is trying to pass into white communities. This action may cause problems because she must deny her black heritage and put on a convincing charade that she is only white (Bogle, 2001; Spikard, 1989).

An “Overall Portrayal Score” was used to measure the character’s portrayal throughout the entire film. The Overall Positive Portrayal Score measured if the character was shown in a positive manner. The character could have been depicted negatively in some parts, but if the character was depicted positively for a majority of the film, that character would have a somewhat high positive portrayal score. This was measured on a Likert scale, with one

representing a consistent negative portrayal throughout the film and seven representing a consistent positive portrayal throughout the film.

Overall Negative Portrayal Score was also included. This characteristic was added to offset bias in the wording of “Overall Positive Portrayal Score.” The investigator may be led to only think of the character in a positive manner because of the aforementioned wording. Overall Negative Portrayal Score was measured from one to seven, with one representing a consistent positive portrayal throughout the film and seven representing a consistent negative portrayal throughout the film.

Social class was identified with three categories: 1) Low/Working class; 2) Middle Class; and 3) Upper Class. The social class of the character was determined by level of completed education, occupation, prestige of occupation, availability of leisure lifestyle, ability to purchase goods, the consumption of high culture, and ownership (i.e., homes, land, and vehicles) of the character (Vincent, Ball, & Braun, 2008; Marsh, Darity, Cohen, Casper, & Salters, 2007). If a particular character possessed most or all of the aforementioned factors, the character was categorized as belonging to the upper class. Those who had most of these factors, but did not exhibit an availability of leisure lifestyle and/or consumption of high culture, were recorded as middle class. Those who had few or none of these factors were labeled as working or lower class. Bogle (2001) posits that biracial characters are likely to be of middle or upper class. She is assumed to have more drive towards upward social mobility, more inherit intelligence, and simply more privilege because of white heritage.

Independent Variables

The online survey was analyzed using five independent variables: skin color, year of film distribution, role, movie type, and the character's race. Skin color is historically a contributing factor to privilege. Bogle (2001) claims that a character may be identified as biracial if she is fair-skinned. Blacks with lighter skin, particularly women, received better treatment than blacks with dark skin (Bogle, 2001; Maddox & Chase, 2004; Jones, 2006; Hunter, 2003). Although black-white biracial individuals had privilege, life for biracial individuals was, unfortunately, not perfect. Because of her light skin, the tragic mulatto often had her authenticity and parentage challenged. She may have had more advantages than monoracial blacks in her community, but she was not always completely accepted in that community. The one-drop of black blood also polluted the whiteness of the tragic mulatto. She belonged in neither place, which may have caused her to suffer emotional anguish.

Skin color was measured as a nominal variable on the following gradient: 1) Light; 2) Medium; and 3) Dark. Although the perception of skin color is arbitrary, skin color was categorized as light if the character could pass the "paper bag test" of having a complexion of or lighter than a paper bag. If the character had skin color darker than a paper bag but lighter than chocolate, they were categorized as having medium skin color. The character would be considered as having dark skin if her skin was the color of chocolate or darker.

Year of film distribution is a continuous interval level variable. Films distributed before the Civil Rights Movement (i.e., the 1950s) are likely to portray biracial characters as the tragic mulatto. During this time of social progressiveness, backlash occurred. Some of the backlash came from fear of the scarce resources being distributed to African Americans. Miscegenation

was another fear. Film during this time depicted children of interracial unions as tragic mulattoes to demonstrate the problems of interracial relationships. Films after the Civil Rights Movement (i.e., 1970-1990) demonstrated a time of black social unity. The one-drop rule was no longer used to oppress; instead, it was used to unify the black community.

Because biracial individuals may not have an Afrocentric aesthetic, they may not be cast in roles specifically written for African Americans. Although biracial actresses may not be cast as frequently as in previous points in film history, the role of the tragic mulatto is not as blatant as seen in films such as *Imitation of Life*. Films distributed in the 1990s and 2000s tend to be more diverse than past films, and portrayals of the tragic mulatto are not as prevalent as in times past. Biracial actresses have more work, but they are typically not biracial characters.

Role is a dichotomous nominal variable that represents the type of role the actress plays. The two categories are leading and secondary role. If an actress has a leading role (indicated as 1), she is usually the protagonist and will be in most scenes with a speaking part. A secondary role is one that is not the protagonist (indicated as 2). If the film's trope is about the negative consequences of interracial sexuality, the child of this relationship is usually the protagonist and portrayed as the tragic mulatto with a tumultuous life (e.g., *Pinky*). Films that do not have a theme of interracial relationships may have a secondary or underlying theme of consequences of the tragic mulatto, which relegates that character to a secondary role.

Film type is a nominal variable with five categories. These categories are: 1) Drama; 2) Comedy; 3) Action/thriller/science fiction; 4) Family; and 5) Musical. Because of the nature of the tragic mulatto (i.e., destruction, unrequited love, and torment), films with these characters should be more likely identified as dramas.

Character's race is a nominal variable that is described with the same choices used to record perception of the actress' race. These categories are: 1) White; 2) Black; 3) Biracial/Multiracial; 4) Other (e.g., Hispanic ethnicity, Asian, and Native American); and 5) Unable to Specify. It is possible that with the addition of social context, the viewer's perception of the character's race may be different from the actress's race. The race of the character was determined by appearance, social networks, style of language, and residential setting. A multiracial character is identifiable by an obvious introduction of her parents, or her racial identity is spoken of. Without these indicators, the biracial actress is often assumed to be playing a black role.

Interrater Reliability Scores

Interrater reliability scores were used to assess whether the tool used in this study produced similar results among different investigators. Thirteen items were evaluated using analysis of variance (ANOVA), which includes: attractiveness, ability to contribute, likeability, mental health, movie type, overall negative portrayal score, overall positive portrayal score, character's race, perceived race, role played, skin color, ability to be violent, and social class. Excluding outliers, interrater reliability scores ranged from .852 to 1.00.

Outliers include attractiveness, which had a significance score of .612. This score may be due to the fact that attractiveness is very subjective, with individuals valuing certain characteristics more than others. Another outlier included mental health. This item produced a significance score of .751. Varying scores may have resulted because there are no clear definitions for mental illness and mental health. The final outlier was overall positive portrayal

score with a significance score of .775. Many factors may have contributed to this score, such as previous knowledge of the actress and her work.

Table 1

Interrater Reliability Scores

<u>Variable</u>	<u>ANOVA</u>	
	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Ability to Contribute	.107	.899
Attractiveness	.500	.612
Character's Race	.000	1.00
Likeability	.161	.852
Mental Health	.289	.751
Perceived Race	.122	.886
Skin Color	.076	.927
Tendency to be Violent	.055	.947
Overall Negative Portrayal	.118	.889
Overall Positive Portrayal	.257	.775
Social Class	.153	.831

Research Design: Online Survey

The other method utilized in the research was an online survey. Online surveys have been frequently used as a means of surveying groups. The cost savings related to printing and mailing survey instruments and transforming the survey data into electronic format are great (Cobanoglu, Warae, and Morec, 2001). The survey instrument used was Kansas State University's Axio Survey. Axio Survey is a free online survey and reporting tool used for academic research that is available to any faculty, staff, or student at Kansas State University. The Axio Survey instrument is designed to distribute online surveys to a sample of identified respondents through access via email. Once access was gained to the Axio Survey, questions were then imported. The objective of the survey was to measure respondents' recognition of the tragic mulatto stereotype in clips of four biracial actresses from different time periods.

The target population for the Axio Survey was full-time undergraduate students attending Kansas State University in Manhattan (see Appendix C). As of Fall 2012, Kansas State University had 19,953 undergraduates. Fifty-two percent were male students. Seventy-seven percent were white. A little over five percent were black students. There were only 80 identified American Indian students, which is one-half of one percent of the student population. Just under two percent of the student population was of Asian or Hawaiian/Pacific Island descent. Seven percent of the student population was Hispanic. Three percent of undergraduate students identified with two or more races. About two percent of the undergraduate population did not identify racially. For a list of undergraduate students' areas of study, see Appendix E.

Since my research involved obtaining responses from human subjects, an IRB application was submitted to the University of North Texas IRB board. To collect data at Kansas State University, I also submitted a request for IRB approval. Both IRB applications were approved. Following IRB approval, the next step was to gain access to the email addresses for undergraduate students. A total of 16,815 students were part of the initial pool of potential participants. The Associate Director of Mediated Education was then able to populate a stratified sample of 1,500 undergraduate students.

The undergraduate population was stratified by academic college (see Appendix D). Students randomly selected to participate in the online survey included: 195 students from the college of agriculture, 206 students from the college of business administration, 96 undergraduates from the college of education, 250 students from the college of engineering,

567 undergraduates from the college of arts and sciences, 153 students from the college of human ecology, and 33 students from the college of architecture.

The list of email addresses remained private and was made available to authorized staff in order to enhance the anonymity and confidentiality of the survey results. The survey was distributed on February 5, 2012, to the email address of each undergraduate student drawn from the sample. Students received an email invitation to complete the survey and were provided a unique hyperlink to access a separate webpage. Since each hyperlink was unique, the potential for outsider access to the survey was limited. This helped maximize the probability that access to and completion of the survey were done only by the students identified in the sample. To ensure ample completion time, the end date for the survey was March 15, 2013, for a total duration of 38 days.

In addition to the initial survey invitation, five reminder emails were sent to the students who had not yet completed the survey at the time each reminder email was sent. The email reminders were sent at three-day intervals. In the email, students were encouraged to complete the survey before the end date and informed they were still allowed to access the online survey in the hyperlink provided. Students who had started the survey but had not fully completed it were also given the opportunity to re-access the online survey and continue where they left off. All previous responses were carried over from the initial attempt to take the online survey.

In hopes of boosting completion rates for the Axio Survey, respondents were given incentive of being placed in a drawing for a chance to win a new mini iPad. An optional prize distribution tool was available to assist in randomly selecting a winner. This feature allowed the

prize distribution to be possible without gaining access to the winning respondent's survey answers.

The survey consisted of four parts (see Appendix F). Each part contained the same questions, but they pertained to images and clips of each specific film. Respondents were first asked to identify the race of the actress in the image. Next, respondents watched a clip of the actress. Each actress in the survey was chosen randomly from each historical period. A list of black-white actresses was found on www.mixedfolks.com. Lena Horne was selected for the time period between 1930-1940. Eartha Kitt represented the time period between 1940-1950. Dorothy Dandridge was selected as an actress from 1950-1960s³. Jennifer Beals was selected as an actress from 1980-1990, and Michael Michelle represented the time period between 2000-2010.

Before the start of World War II, race films were popular among African American moviegoers. Race films were intended for an all-black audience and screened in black theaters. Race films also featured all-black casts. Race films are different from other genres of the time because they were produced outside the Hollywood system. Once World War II began and many African Americans were enlisted to fight, the race film genre faded. African Americans were then cast in Hollywood films.

Films from the 1930s-1950s can be described as social problem films (Langford, 2005; Bogle, 2001). Morehouse (2000) states that during this time, the United States was engaged in World War II in response to Japan bombing Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Many African

³ There was a gap of biracial actresses available for the time period between 1960-1980. This period in film is known as blaxploitation. Blaxploitation came during a time of black pride, and authenticity was paramount (Bogle, 2001). Biracial actresses seldom fit this market.

Americans enlisted and were on the front line although they were in lower occupational positions. The first time that military branches were integrated was on July 26, 1948, when President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981 (Turner-Sadler, 2009; Morehouse, 2000). Before this order, racial tensions permeated the country. African American soldiers were not treated as equals in U.S. military branches, and this was reflective of how civilian African Americans were treated in society. This order not only integrated military forces, but required equal treatment and opportunity. Desegregation was not enforced to completion until the Korean War. The last all-black unit became integrated in 1954.

Langford (2005) claims that Hollywood social problem films at this time were grounded in the social realities of that era. Themes included poverty and war. Examples of Hollywood social problem films include *Lost Boundaries* (1949) and *Pinky* (1949). Another film genre at this time was escapism film. These films were typically comedies or musicals. The main purpose of escapism film was to escape from reality and distract Americans from their problems, reinforce traditional values, and to quell political radicalism.

The 1950s brought on the fight for equality and civil rights for all Americans. One of the most notable cases was *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (1954). This Supreme Court case ruled laws and practices following the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision unconstitutional (Turner-Sadler, 2009). Separate but equal was not a realistic possibility. Although racial progress was being made, not all Hollywood films reflected this. Films depicting characteristics of the tragic mulatto were produced, two of which were *Anna Lucasta* (1958) and *Island of the Sun* (1957).

The 1960s were known for African Americans and white allies working together in movements to end violence and discrimination against African Americans. Pressure in the forms

of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom moved Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson to sign the Voting Rights Act and Civil Rights Act (Turner-Sadler, 2009). Another important racial milestone that took place during the 1960s is the Supreme Court case *Loving v. Virginia* (1967). This ruling declared that it was unconstitutional to deny interracial couples the right to marry by protection of the 14th Amendment. Interestingly, films with known biracial actresses were not plentiful at this time.

The 1960s and 1970s brought on the Black Power Movement. The black community craved something different. They wanted new types of black film and black heroes to match the militant political mood (Bogle, 2001). Film reflected a sentiment of social solidarity within the African American community and the struggle for social justice (Evans, 2003). Black film celebrated black beauty and heroes. Light skin, straight hair, and assimilation were no longer worshipped. This was one attempt to “transform negative ascription into positive affirmation, and a vehicle for building identification with a common ‘we’ instead of an isolated ‘me’”(p. 21). Films distributed in the 1970s were films that black audiences were waiting for. They were films that working and lower class African Americans could identify with (Bogle, 2001). These films portrayed images of struggles that black communities face, such as poverty, deindustrialization, decline of work, gangs, and drugs in their neighborhoods (Smith, 1997).

Bogle (2001) describes the early 1980s as a time of the “Greed Decade.” The 1980s were also a time of setbacks of the progress made during the Civil Rights era. In addition, economic inequality grew. The rich became richer and the poor became poorer and other social problems were ignored. Stereotypes of the past were reaffirmed in film as well. Few African American males were stars like Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy. Most were cast in interracial buddy films

where they played the sidekick to the white male lead (Bogle, 2001). The desires of the black male character were not explained in film, as though he could simply be replaced. Despite this, African Americans started to take over how they were represented by going behind the camera, with the most notable of directors being Spike Lee.

The 1990s were a time of racial events as well. In 1991, Rodney King was filmed being beaten after a traffic stop (Turner-Sadler, 2009; Ferber, 1999). The police were acquitted of this violence and racial riots occurred in Los Angeles. The O.J Simpson case of 1995 found the country torn. Simpson was not found guilty of murder and many African Americans celebrated. The mid-1990s was also known for debates concerning how those with multiple racial or ethnic backgrounds were to be identified by the U.S. Census. A multiracial category did not pass, although a “mark all that apply” option did (Williams, 2006).

Films of this time focused on black issues and cast more African Americans. One of the prominent film genres of the 1990s is the hood genre (Bogle, 2001). Films such as *Boyz n the Hood* (1991) were distributed to mass audiences. This genre told stories of street life in urban areas and failures of the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement did not rectify the criminal justice system, eliminate street crime or racism, or solve issues related to poverty for many in the African American community. Films that dealt with black issues include *New Jack City* (1991) and *Jungle Fever* (1991). One film about multiracial identity was *Mixing Nia* (1998).

The decade from 2000-2010 brought on racial milestones. One major milestone, as discussed before, is the inclusion of a “mark all that apply” option on the U.S. Census. Another major historical event occurred when the first black (or biracial) president was elected in 2008. Films during this time are known for their use of technology to produce special effects, such as

computer-generated imagery. Film genres ran across the spectrum from social awareness films such as *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) to action films like *Die Another Day* (2002), and comic-book-inspired films like *X-Men 2* (2001).

A list of films from each actress' filmography was compiled. Each film's domestic sales were calculated. Films considered to have blockbuster status were put on another list. From this other list, one film featuring each actress was randomly selected to include in the research. Each of these films was viewed to determine the longest scene in which each actress had a speaking role. Those clips were lifted from the film and uploaded on YouTube. Access to include these films on YouTube was attained through distributor's approval and the Fair Use Act for educational purposes.

First on the survey, the respondents saw a still of a film clip that the actress is later shown in. Respondents were asked to identify the actress's race or ethnicity. Options were: 1) American Indian; 2) Asian/Pacific Islander; 3) Black; 4) Hispanic/Latina; 5) mixed race; and 6) White. This question was used to assess the respondent's perception of race without social context.

The second question asked the respondent to determine the skin color of the actress. Skin color is often used as a social cue to identify race. Options included: 1) light; 2) medium; and 3) dark. Next, a short clip of the actress was shown to the respondent. The clip allowed the respondent to see the character within a social context.

The third question asked the respondent to describe how attractive the character in the clip was. Options included: 1) repulsive; 2) average; 3) somewhat attractive; 4) attractive; and

5) very attractive. According to research, African American women with lighter skin are deemed more beautiful than women with darker skin (Hunter, 2003).

The fourth question asked the respondent how confident he or she was in identifying the character's race. Options included: 1) not confident at all; 2) somewhat confident; 3) confident; and 4) very confident. If the respondent answered the questions regarding racial identity differently, it is likely that the respondent may question his or her ability to racially identify others.

The fifth question directed the respondent to identify the character's race. It is possible that the respondent may racially identify the character differently after seeing the character within a social context. Options included: 1) American Indian; 2) Asian/Pacific Islander; 3) Black; 4) Latina; 5) mixed race; and 6) White.

The sixth question asked the respondent to rate the character's overall positive portrayal score. Available options included: 1) The character is portrayed in a negative manner throughout the clip; 2) The character is portrayed in a negative manner in the majority of the clip; 3) The character is portrayed negatively and positively in equal amounts; 4) The character is portrayed in a positive manner in the majority of the clip; and 5) The character is portrayed in a positive manner throughout the clip.

The seventh question asked if the respondent found the character friendly. People of color are stereotyped as less friendly if they have dark skin or express a culture that is not Eurocentric (Bogle, 2001; Jones, 2006). Available options included: 1) not at all, great dislike for the character; 2) not likely; 3) mixed feelings about the character; 4) likely to be friends; and 5) very likely—great fondness for the character.

The eighth question asked the respondent if the character contributes positively to society. Options included: 1) The character causes problems; 2) The character does not contribute; 3) The character contributes somewhat; 4) The character contributes; and 5) The character contributes a great deal. Research indicates that people with light skin are perceived to be good, civil, and more intelligent than people with dark skin (Jones, 2006; Lawson, 2006). In addition, people of color with dark skin are often put in stereotypical roles that confirm the perception that people of color do not contribute positively to society.

The ninth question asked the respondent if the character was mentally stable. Available options included: 1) very poor mental health—the character is crazy; 2) poor mental health—the character is not stable emotionally; 3) fair mental health—the character is able to function without great difficulty; 4) good mental health—the character is able to overcome conflict; and 5) great mental health—the character seems not to be frustrated easily. Biracial women historically have been portrayed as the tragic mulatto. The tragic mulatto has poor mental stability (Spikard, 1989; Bogle, 2001).

The tenth question asked the respondent to assess if the character avoids conflict. Options included: 1) peaceful—the character acts as a mediator and ends conflicts; 2) not violent—the character does not react in anger; 3) somewhat violent—the character reacts violently only when provoked; 4) violent—the character uses weapons to threaten other characters; and 5) extremely violent—the character harms or kills another character or animal. In film history, characters with dark skin were more likely to be perceived as dangerous, violent, troublesome, and evil (Jones, 2006).

The eleventh question is similar to the eighth question about how the character is portrayed. The respondent was asked to assess if the character was portrayed in a negative way. Available options included: 1) the character is portrayed in a negative manner throughout the clip; 2) the character is portrayed in a negative manner in the majority of the clip; 3) the character is portrayed negatively and positively in equal amounts; 4) the character is portrayed in a positive manner in the majority of the clip; and 5) the character is portrayed in a positive manner throughout the clip.

The twelfth question asked the respondent to assess the character's social class. Options included: 1) lower class/working class; 2) middle class; and 3) upper class. It is expected that people in a higher social class are portrayed more positively than people in lower social classes. In addition, respondents may be more likely to give a positive assessment if the character's social class is similar to that of their own.

Expected Results: Content Analysis

Media's continuous portrayal of biracial characters in historical types predicts biracial characters are more likely to be described as having less mental stability than black characters (Bogle, 2001; Spikard, 1989). In addition, skin color limits actresses to certain roles. When race intersects with gender, it can be suggested that actresses with light skin are considered as more attractive than women with dark skin (Hunter, 2003; Hunter, 2007; Mask, 2009). Actresses with light skin are closer to the white standard of beauty (Hunter, 2007 & Mask, 2009). Hollywood accommodates, or maybe perpetuates, this standard, which leads to placing actresses into certain roles according to those standards. Because of this, actresses with lighter complexions will be cast in more leading roles than actresses with dark skin.

A biracial individual with an appearance that suggests that she is black will be classified as being black. If the actress has a dark appearance, she is likely to play a black character, and this character will likely have more negative characteristics than characters with light skin, such as a higher tendency to be violent and a lower ability to contribute. Characters with dark skin are also more likely to be perceived as less friendly than characters with light skin. Because of these aforementioned characteristics, characters with light skin are more likely to have higher overall positive portrayal scores than characters with dark skin. Also, because privilege is assumed with light skin, biracial characters are likely to be perceived as middle to upper class.

Expected Results: Online Survey

I do not expect respondents to be aware of racial stereotypes in the media. Media portrayals can be assumed as truths if the media consumer is not media literate (Ashley, Lyden, & Fasbinder, 2012; Bulman, 2003; Considine, Horton, & Moorman, 2009). I also predict that respondents will be able to discern the difference between light, medium, and dark skin. Although our society claims to be colorblind, most people can see differences in color (Gallagher, 2006; Thorton, 2009). I expect respondents to perceive racial identity differently. However, I predict that respondents will not choose the actress's race as multiracial. In most cases, respondents may be more likely to choose black as the actress's race due to her appearance (i.e., the actress does not appear to look white).

I predict that respondents who perceive the actress as multiracial will give higher friendliness ratings. Biracial individuals are often assumed to be a sign that racial strife has ended. Actresses will have higher attractiveness scores if they are identified as multiracial, and especially not black. Black women are perceived as less attractive because they do not fit

Eurocentric standards of beauty (Wade & Beilitz, 2005; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2004).

Multiracial women are perceived as attractive and exotic. If the actress is identified as biracial, the character will be rated at a higher level on ability to contribute.

Because of racist ideologies of the past, a biracial individual's white blood is assumed to overcome the detrimental effect of her black blood (Jones, 2006; Bogle, 2001). If blacks are depicted as having a higher ability to be violent, it may be due to stereotypes suggesting that blacks are more animalistic and less civil. Because of a biracial individual's black blood, she may be more prone to react in violent ways. Mental health scores are predicted to be lower if the respondent identifies the actress as biracial or white. Biracial characters, especially those passing for white, are thought to be conflicted because of their mixed heritage (Bogle, 2001; Spikard, 1989).

If the actress is identified as biracial, overall positive portrayal scores will be higher and overall negative portrayal scores will be lower than other racial identifications. Historically, biracial individuals or tragic mulattoes have been portrayed negatively. This research examines if this occurs in contemporary film. If the actress is identified as multiracial, the character will be rated as belonging to a higher social class. Biracial individuals had many opportunities and privileges that were not afforded to monoracial blacks, allowing them upward social mobility.

Content analysis allows for the examination of text. In the case of this research, characters played by biracial women are examined. This methodology will enable aspects of the tragic mulatto and other stereotypes of African Americans to be recognized and counted. The online survey will permit the ability to gather the perceptions of respondents to see if they

recognize aspects of the tragic mulatto. In the following chapter, results from the use of these methodologies are illustrated.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the results of this study are presented. First, the results of the content analysis are discussed. Next, the findings of the online survey are demonstrated. The purpose of this research is to examine the perceptions of biracial actresses in American film throughout history. My focus is the social construction of race, maintenance of a black-white racial binary, and lack of validation of a biracial identity.

Content Analysis Results

I used content analysis to examine various aspects of the tragic mulatto and stereotypes of African Americans throughout film history. In particular, this study determined the significance of variables representing characteristics of the tragic mulatto. Ordinary least squares regression was used in this analysis with the exception of Table 2, which used binomial logistic regression. This table used multinomial logistic regression because the dependent variable, perceived race, is a categorical variable with two categories. Perceived race was dummy coded so that only two categories were compared in each model.

The content analysis consists of nine dependent variables that are characteristics of the tragic mulatto. These variables are perceived race, mental health, likeability, attractiveness, ability to contribute, ability to be violent, overall positive portrayal score, negative portrayal score, and social class. The independent variables are skin color, year of film distribution, movie type, role, and character's race. The variables are used to assess if the level of the dependent variable was affected by the independent variables.

When perceived race was the dependent variable, none of the models were significant

in themselves. The null hypothesis that there was no difference between the model without independent variables and the model with independent variables was not rejected. However, three independent variables were found to be significant within their respective models. The first significant variable was found in Model 2—year of distribution ($p = .029$). The relationship between perceived race and year of film distribution was supported. For each year increase, the odds of character’s race being perceived as biracial is .971 times greater rather than being perceived as white. Model 4 had two significant independent variables—year of distribution ($p = .024$) and skin color ($p = .000$). For each year increase, the odds of character’s race being perceived as black is .118 times less likely than being perceived as white. Characters with light skin are 12.293 times less likely to be perceived as black versus “other race.”

Table 2

Binomical Logistic Regression Coefficients for Nested Models Predicting Perceived Race (Odds Ratios in Parentheses)

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Character’s Race	Biracial	1.181	1.206	1.414	.847
	Black	.336	4.230	4.867	2.973
	White	2.312	.749	2.741	.432
Year of Distribution		.932	2.473	1.128**	1.074
Skin Color	Light	4.295	.059***	.440	.233
Movie Type	Drama	1.127	3.615	5.095	.887
	Comedy	3.385	2.163	1.664	.295
	Action/Thriller/Sci-Fi	1.859	11.097	5.171	.538
	Family	4.310	11.129	2.162	.232
Role	Leading	7.208	.382	.482	.139

Reference category: Perceived Race 4 (“other race”). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

When overall negative portrayal score was the dependent variable, three independent variables were found to be significant, which were year, skin color medium, and drama. The most parsimonious model multiple regression equation was as follows:

$$\text{ZOVERALLNEGPORTSCORE-HAT} = .111\text{EBIRACIAL} + .182\text{BLACK} + .131\text{WHITE} + .063\text{NOTSTATED} - .168\text{YEAR} + .156\text{MEDIUM} - .153\text{DRAMA} - .068\text{FAMILY}$$

About 35 % of the variance in overall negative portrayal score is explained by Model 1 ($df = 8/124, F=2.817, p = .007$) (see Table 3).

Table 3

Regression Coefficients for Nested Models Predicting Overall Negative Portrayal Score (Standardized Coefficients in Parentheses)

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Character's Race	Biracial	.327 (.111)	.291 (.099)	.313 (.106)			
	Black	.514 (.182)	.481 (.170)	.508 (.180)	.381 (.135)	.342 (.121)	
	White	.702 (.131)	.671 (.125)	.686 (.128)	.581 (.108)		
	Not Stated	.467 (.063)					
Year of Distribution		-.031 (-.168)	-.030 (-.163)	-.030 (-.163)	-.030 (-.162)	-.032* (-.176)	-.032* (-.172)
Skin Color	Medium	.400 (.156)	.387 (.152)	.369 (.144)	.376 (.147)	.369 (.144)	.444* (.174)
Movie Type	Drama	-.457 (-.153)	-.467 (-.156)	-.449 (-.151)	-.499 (.167)	-.461 (-.155)	-.512* (-.172)
	Action/Thriller/Sci-Fi						
	Family	-1.001 (-.068)	-1.032 (-.070)				
	Musical						
Role	Secondary						
Constant		63.251	61.655	61.502	61.112	66.348	64.937
R-squared		.349	.344	.337	.323	.305	.283

* $p < .05$

The overall negative portrayal score for biracial characters is .111 standard units higher than characters whose race is other. The overall negative portrayal score for black characters is .182 standard units higher than characters whose race is other. The overall negative portrayal score for white characters is .131 standard units higher than characters whose race is other. The overall negative portrayal score for characters whose race is not stated is .063 standard units

higher than characters whose race is other. The overall negative portrayal score is expected to increase by .229 standard deviations with every one-year increase. The overall negative portrayal score of characters with medium skin is .156 standard units higher than a character with light skin. The overall negative portrayal score of characters in dramas is .153 standard units lower than characters in comedies. The overall negative portrayal score of characters in family films is .068 standard units lower than characters in comedies (see Table 3).

When mental health was the dependent variable, two independent variables were found to be significant. These variables were character's race white and skin color medium. The most parsimonious multiple regression equation was as follows:

$$\text{ZMENTALHEALTH-HAT} = .034\text{BIRACIAL} + .143\text{BLACK} - .277\text{WHITE} - .066\text{YEAR} - .235\text{MEDIUM} + .832\text{ACTION} + .118\text{FAMILY} + .096\text{MUSICAL}$$

About 15 % of the variance in mental health is explained by Model 4 ($df = 8/124$, $F=2.817$, $p = .007$). A biracial character's mental stability is .034 standard units higher than a character whose race is other. A black character's mental stability is .143 standard units higher than a character whose race is other. A white character's mental stability is .277 standard units lower than a character whose race is other. Mental health is predicted to decrease by .066 standard deviations with every one standard unit increase in year of distribution, holding all other independent variables constant. The mental stability of a character with medium skin is .235 standard units lower than a character with light skin. The mental stability of characters in action/thriller/sci-fi films is .832 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The mental stability of characters in family films is .118 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The mental stability of characters in musicals is .096 standard units higher than characters in comedies (see Table 4).

Table 4

Regression Coefficients for Nested Models Predicting Mental Health (Standardized Coefficients in Parentheses)

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Character's Race	Biracial	.179 (.034)						
	Black	.725(.143)	.654 (.129)	.654 (.129)	.642 (.127)	.624 (.123)	.567 (.114)	
	White	-2.664** (-.277)	-2.732** (-.284)	-2.752** (-.286)	-2.667** (-.278)	-2.720** (-.283)	-2.749** (-.286)	-2.902** (-.302)
	Not Stated							
Year of Distribution		-.022 (-.066)	-.021 (-.065)	-.021 (-.065)				
Skin Color	Medium	-1.074** (-.235)	-1.068** (-.233)	-1.057** (-.231)	-1.081** (-.236)	-1.021** (-.233)	-.970* (-.212)	-.842* (-.184)
Movie Type	Drama							
	Action/Thriller/Sci-Fi	.832 (.054)	.785 (.051)					
	Family	3.113 (.118)	3.040 (.115)	3.013 (.114)	3.008 (.114)	2.919 (.110)		
	Musical	.796 (.092)	.798 (.092)	.775 (.089)	.699 (.081)			
Role	Secondary							
Constant		48.226	47.777	47.962		5.103	5.113	5.218
R-squared		.392	.391	.388	.382	.374	.358	.341

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

When attractiveness was the dependent variable, two independent variables were found to be significant. These variables were character's race biracial and year of film distribution. The most parsimonious multiple regression model equation was as follows:

$$\text{ZATTRACTIVENESS-HAT} = .243\text{BIRACIAL} + .170\text{BLACK} + .167\text{WHITE} - .064\text{NOTSTATED} + .201\text{YEAR} - .118\text{MEDIUM} + .053\text{ACTION} + .156\text{FAMILY} + .108\text{MUSICAL} - .099\text{SECONDARY}$$

About 16 % of the variance in attractiveness is explained by the Model 1 ($df = 10/122$, $F = 2.341$, $p = .015$).

A biracial character's attractiveness is .243 standard units higher than a character whose race is other. A black character's attractiveness is .170 standard units higher than a character whose race is other. A white character's attractiveness is .167 standard units higher than a character whose race is other. A character whose race is not stated attractiveness is .064 units lower than a character whose race is other. A character's attractiveness is expected to increase by .201 standard deviations with every one-year increase. The attractiveness of a character with medium skin is .118 standard units higher than a character with light skin. The attractiveness of characters in action/thriller/sci-fi films is .053 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The attractiveness of characters in family films is .156 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The attractiveness of characters in musicals is .108 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The attractiveness of secondary characters is .099 standard units lower than characters in leading roles (see Table 5).

Table 5

Regression Coefficients for nested Models Predicting Attractiveness (Standardized Coefficients in Parentheses)

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Character's Race	Biracial	.791* (.243)	.768* (.235)	.809** (.248)	.869** (.266)	.856** (.262)	.864** (.265)
	Black	.531 (.170)	.517 (.166)	.555 (.178)	.653 (.209)	.563 (.181)	.562 (.180)
	White	.992 (.167)	.970 (.164)	1.009 (.170)	1.026 (.173)	1.031 (.174)	.999 (.169)
	Not Stated	-.526 (-.064)	-.546 (-.066)				
Year of Distribution		.041** (.201)	.041** (.202)	.040* (.196)	.037* (.183)	.036* (.175)	.039* (.192)
Skin Color	Medium	-.332 (-.118)	-.325 (-.115)	-.312 (-.111)	-.302 (-.107)		
Movie Type	Drama						
	Action/Thriller/Sci-Fi	.500 (.053)					
	Family	2.544 (.156)	2.520 (.154)	2.556 (.157)	2.534 (.155)	2.358 (.145)	2.309 (.142)
	Musical	.576 (.108)	.555 (.104)	.572 (.107)	.698 (.131)	.619 (.116)	
Role	Secondary	-.350 (-.099)	-.366 (-.103)	-.369 (-.104)			
Constant		-76.455	-76.674	-74.592	-69.654	-66.465	-73.395
R-squared		.161	.158	.154	.145	.135	.122

When likeability was the dependent variable, two independent variables were found to be significant. These variables were year of film distribution and skin color medium. The most parsimonious multiple regression model equation was as follows:

$$\text{ZLIKEABILITY-HAT} = -.058\text{BIRACIAL} - .144\text{BLACK} - .032\text{WHITE} - .037\text{NOTSTATED} + .229\text{YEAR} - .247\text{MEDIUM} + .093\text{DRAMA} + .081\text{ACTION} + .060\text{FAMILY} - .057\text{MUSICAL} - .131\text{SECONDARY}$$

About 14 % of the variance in likeability is explained by Model 1 ($df = 11/121$, $F = 1.831$, $p = .056$). A biracial character's likeability is .058 standard units lower than a character whose race is other. A black character's likeability is .247 standard units lower than a character whose race is other. A white character's likeability is .037 units lower than a character whose race is other. A character's likeability is expected to increase by .229 standard deviations with every one-year increase. The likeability of a character with medium skin is .247 standard units lower than a character with light skin. The likeability of characters in dramas is .093 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The likeability of characters in action/thriller/sci-fi films is .081 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The likeability of characters in family films is .060 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The likeability of characters in musicals is .057 standard units lower than characters in comedies. The likeability of secondary characters is .131 standard units lower than leading characters (see Table 6).

When overall positive portrayal score was the dependent variable, two independent variables were significant: year of film distribution and skin color medium. The most parsimonious multiple regression model equation was as follows:

$$\text{ZOVERALLPOSITIVESCORE-HAT} = -.030\text{BIRACIAL} - .126\text{BLACK} - .052\text{WHITE} - .045\text{NOTSTATED} + .201\text{YEAR} - .198\text{MEDIUM} + .108\text{DRAMA} + .033\text{ACTION} + .128\text{FAMILY} - .047\text{MUSICAL} - .066\text{SECONDARY}$$

Table 6

Regression Coefficients for Nested Models Predicting Likeability (Standardized Coefficients in Parentheses)

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	
Character's Race	Biracial	-.160 (-.058)	-.139 (-.050)	-.122 (-.044)							
	Black	-.378 (-.144)	-.358 (-.136)	-.342 (-.130)	-.289 (-.110)	-.274 (-.104)	-.288 (-.110)	-.292 (-.111)	-.329 (-.125)	-.265 (-.100)	
	White	-.160 (-.032)									
	Not Stated	-.255 (-.037)	-.234 (-.034)								
Year of Distribution		.039** (.229)	.040** (.233)	.039** (.230)	.039** (.227)	.038* (.220)	.038* (.219)	.037* (.218)	.036* (.209)	.034* (.199)	.033* (.194)
Skin Color	Medium	-.589** (-.247)	-.588** (-.247)	-.583** (-.245)	-.587** (-.246)	-.603** (-.253)	-.568** (-.246)	-.579** (-.243)	-.584** (-.245)	-.565** (-.237)	-.625** (-.262)
Movie Type	Drama	.260 (.093)	.254 (.091)	.260 (.093)	.284 (.102)	.305 (.110)	.294 (.106)	.273 (.098)			
	Action/Thriller/Sci-Fi	.646 (.081)	.660 (.082)	.672 (.084)	.711 (.089)	.741 (.093)	.731 (.091)				
	Family	.821 (.060)	.841 (.061)	.857 (.062)	.908 (.066)	.937 (.068)					
	Musical	-.258 (-.057)	-.251 (-.056)	-.243 (-.054)	-.232 (-.051)						
Role	Secondary	-.394 (-.131)	-.391 (-.130)	-.392 (-.131)	-.369 (-.123)	-.333 (-.111)	-.325 (-.108)	-.338 (-.113)	-.330 (-.110)		
Constant		-72.468	-73.657	-72.658	-71.844	-69.297	-69.117	-68.752	-65.431	-62.413	-60.824
R-squared		.143	.142	.141	.139	.137	.132	.124	.115	.104	.094

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

About 12 % of the variance of overall positive portrayal score is explained by the model ($df = 11/121, F=1.455, p = .161$).

The overall positive portrayal score for biracial characters is .030 standard units lower than characters whose race is other. The overall positive portrayal score for black characters is .126 standard units lower than characters whose race is other. The overall positive portrayal score for white characters is .247 lower than characters whose race is other. The overall positive portrayal score is expected to increase by .229 standard deviations with every one-year increase. The overall positive portrayal score of characters with medium skin is -.247 standard units lower than a character with light skin. The overall positive portrayal score of characters in dramas is .093 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The overall positive portrayal score of characters in action/thriller/sci-fi films is .081 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The overall positive portrayal score of characters in family films is .060 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The overall positive portrayal score of characters in musicals is .057 standard units lower than characters in comedies. The overall positive portrayal score of secondary characters is .131 standard units lower than leading characters (see Table 7)

When ability to contribute was the dependent variable, two independent variables were found to be significant: year of film distribution and medium skin color. The most parsimonious multiple regression model equation was as follows:

$$\text{ZABILITYTOCONTRIBUTE-HAT} = -.132\text{BIRACIAL} - .118\text{BLACK} - .081\text{WHITE} -.111\text{NOTSTATED} + .232\text{YEAR} -.248\text{MEDIUM} + .068\text{DRAMA} + .117\text{FAMILY} +.097\text{MUSICAL} -.127\text{SECONDARY}$$

About 16 % of the variance in ability to contribute is explained by Model 1 ($df = 10/122, F = 2.247, p = .019$). .

Table 7

Regression Coefficients for Nested Models Predicting Overall Positive Portrayal Score (Standardized Coefficients in Parentheses)

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	
Character's Race	Biracial	-.079 (-.030)									
	Black	-.313 (-.126)	-.276 (-.111)	-.279 (-.113)	-.269 (-.109)	-.256 (-.103)	-.243 (-.098)	-.213 (-.086)			
	White	-.243 (-.052)	-.215 (-.046)	-.220 (-.047)	-.208 (-.044)						
	Not Stated	-.294 (-.045)	-.263 (-.040)	-.269 (-.041)							
Year of Distribution		.032* (.201)	.032* (.200)	.032* (.200)	.032* (.197)	.033* (.202)	.032* (.196)	.031* (.191)	.030* (.188)	.028* (.175)	.028* (.175)
Skin Color	Medium	-.445* (-.198)	-.447* (-.199)	-.443* (-.197)	-.436* (-.194)	-.435* (-.193)	-.448* (-.199)	-.438* (-.195)	-.487* (-.216)	-.503** (-.224)	-.478* (-.213)
Movie Type	Drama	.284 (.108)	.298 (.114)	.289 (.110)	.291 (.111)	.278 (.106)	.294 (.122)	.291 (.111)	.323 (.123)		
	Action/Thriller/Sci-Fi	.249 (.033)	.277 (.037)								
	Family	1.668 (.128)	1.703 (.131)	1.692 (.130)	1.703 (.131)	1.716 (.132)	1.739 (.134)	1.712 (.132)	1.804 (.139)	1.734 (.134)	
	Musical	-.201 (-.047)	-.193 (-.045)	-.206 (-.048)	-.198 (-.046)	-.192 (-.045)					
Role	Secondary	-.187 (-.066)	-.173 (-.061)	-.179 (-.063)	-.184 (-.065)	-.186 (-.066)	-.156 (-.055)				
Constant		-58.970	-58.577	-58.552	-57.632	-59.472	-57.349	-55.874	-55.012	-50.884	-50.775
R-squared		.116	.115	.114	.113	.111	.109	.106	.099	.084	.067

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

A biracial character's ability to contribute is .030 standard units lower than a character whose race is other. A black character's ability to contribute is .126 standard units lower than a character whose race is other. A white character's ability to contribute is .052 units lower than a character whose race is other. A character whose race is not stated is .045 standard units lower in ability to contribute than a character whose race is other. A character's ability to contribute is expected to increase by .201 standard deviations with every one-year increase. The ability to contribute among characters with medium skin is .198 standard units lower than a character with light skin. The ability to contribute among characters in dramas is .108 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The ability to contribute among characters in action/thriller/sci-fi films is .033 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The ability to contribute among characters in family films is .128 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The ability to contribute among characters in musicals is .047 standard units lower than characters in comedies. The ability to contribute among secondary characters is .066 standard units lower than leading characters (see Table 8).

Table 8

Regression Coefficients for Nested Models Predicting Ability to Contribute (Standardized Coefficients in Parentheses)

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Character's Race	Biracial	-.347 (-.132)	-.384 (-.145)	-.334 (-.127)	-.340 (-.129)	-.213 (-.081)				
	Black	-.298 (-.118)	-.339 (-.134)	-.289 (-.115)	-.314 (-.124)					
	White	-.386 (-.081)	-.364 (-.076)							
	Not Stated	-.743 (-.111)	-.762 (-.114)	-.714 (-.107)	-.739 (-.111)	-.641 (-.096)	-.584 (-.088)			
Year of Distribution		.038** (.232)	.038** (.229)	.039** (.237)	.041** (.252)	.040** (.241)	.039** (.238)	.038** (.232)	.036** (.222)	.036** (.222)
Skin Color	Medium	-.565** (-.248)	.564** (-.247)	-.561** (-.246)	-.535** (-.234)	-.590** (-.258)	-.575** (-.252)	-.555** (-.243)	-.519** (-.227)	-.496* (-.217)
Movie Type	Drama	.182 (.068)								
	Action/Thriller/Sci-Fi									
	Family	1.544 (.117)	1.477 (.112)	1.525 (.116)	1.484 (.113)	1.620 (.123)	1.666 (.126)	1.678 (.127)	1.593 (.121)	
	Musical	.419 (.097)	.374 (.086)	.391 (.091)						
Role	Secondary	-.366 (-.127)	-.374 (-.130)	-.368 (-.128)	-.429 (-.149)	-.347 (-.121)	-.331 (-.115)	-.349 (-.122)		
Constant		-69.811	-68.715	-71.534	-76.413	-72.994	-71.759	-69.840	-67.053	-66.953
R-squared		.156	.151	.146	.139	.127	.121	.114	.099	.085

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

When ability to be violent was the dependent variable, one independent variable was found to be significant. This variable was movie type musical. The most parsimonious multiple regression model equation was as follows:

$$\text{ZABILTYTOBEVIOLENT-HAT} = -.132\text{BIRACIAL} - .118\text{BLACK} - .081\text{WHITE} - .111\text{NOTSTATED} + .232\text{YEAR} - .248\text{MEDIUM} + .068\text{DRAMA} + .117\text{FAMILY} + .097\text{MUSICAL} - .127\text{SECONDARY}$$

About 14 % of the variance in ability to be violent is explained by Model 1 ($df = 11/121$, $F = 1.814$, $p = .059$).

A biracial character's ability to violent is .132 standard units lower than a character whose race is other. A black character's ability to be violent is .118 standard units lower than a character whose race is other. A white character's ability to be violent is .081 units lower than a character whose race is other. A character whose race is not stated is .111 standard units lower in ability to be violent than a character whose race is other. A character's ability to be violent is expected to increase by .232 standard deviations with every one-year increase. The ability to be violent among characters with medium skin is .248 standard units lower than a character with light skin. The ability to be violent among characters in dramas is .068 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The ability to be violent among characters in family films is .117 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The ability to be violent among characters in musicals is .097 standard units higher than characters in comedies. The ability to be violent among secondary characters is .127 standard units lower than leading characters (see Table 9).

When social class was the dependent variable, there were no significant findings. The multiple regression model equation was as follows:

Table 9

Regression Coefficients for Nested Models Predicting Ability to be Violent (Standardized Coefficients in Parentheses)

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	
Character's Race	Biracial	-.166 (-.071)	-.163 (-.069)	-.154 (-.065)	-.149 (-.063)	-.144 (-.061)	-.155 (-.066)				
	Black	.177 (.079)	.180 (.080)	.189 (.084)	.195 (.087)	.201 (.089)	.195 (.087)	.260 (.116)	.212 (.094)		
	White	-.076 (-.018)	-.073 (-.017)								
	Not Stated	-.043 (-.007)									
Year of Distribution		.004 (.027)	.004 (.027)	.004 (.029)	.004 (.029)						
Skin Color	Medium	-.178 (-.087)	-.177 (-.087)	-.177 (-.087)	-.181 (-.089)	-.176 (-.086)	-.173 (-.085)	-.177 (-.087)			
Movie Type	Drama	-.331 (-.139)	-.330 (-.139)	-.332 (-.140)	-.329 (-.138)	-.333 (-.140)	-.342 (-.144)	-.313 (-.132)	-.311 (-.131)	-.347 (-.146)	-.353 (-.149)
	Action/Thriller/Sci-Fi	.211 (.031)	.213 (.031)	.219 (.032)	.224 (.033)	.226 (.033)					
	Family	-.235 (-.020)	-.232 (-.020)	-.223 (-.019)							
	Musical	.956** (.248)	.957** (.249)	.960** (.249)	.964** (.250)	.982** (.255)	.971** (.252)	.979** (.254)	.931** (.242)	.906** (.235)	1.015** (.264)
Role	Secondary	-.316 (-.123)	-.316 (-.123)	-.315 (-.123)	-.315 (-.123)	-.305 (-.119)	-.312 (-.122)	-.285 (-.111)	-.278 (-.109)	-.336 (-.131)	
Constant		-6.233	-6.076	-6.658	-6.633	1.698	1.711	1.627	1.544	1.662	1.385
R-squared		.142	.141	.141	.141	.140	.139	.136	.129	.121	.104

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

ZSOCIALCLASS-HAT = $-.076$ BIRACIAL - $.107$ BLACK + $.056$ WHITE + $.026$ NOTSTATED - $.114$ YEAR + $.081$ MEDIUM + $.068$ DRAMA + $.117$ FAMILY + $.097$ MUSICAL - $.127$ SECONDARY

About 4% of the variance in social class explained Model 1 ($df = 11/121$, $F = 501$, $p = .857$) (see Table 10).

As discussed in the literature review, the tragic mulatto is a label placed on women of black-white mixed heritage usually to demean her (Bogle, 2001). From these models, character's race was an important independent variable. Although a large portion of the characters were black, various characters exuded distinctions of the tragic mulatto, such as Eurocentric appearance (perceived race), lowered mental health if the character was identified as white, and higher levels of attractiveness.

Skin color was found to be a central independent variable. Many of the actresses in this content analysis had light or medium complexions. Few actresses had dark skin. It was found that attractiveness, likeability, overall portrayal scores, and ability to contribute were higher for actresses with light skin than actresses with dark skin. This result can be attributed to the character's "white blood." Although the tragic mulatto is a character with many problems, she is still relatable.

The year of film distribution had interesting relationships with attractiveness, likeability, and ability to contribute. Characters in contemporary films were assessed to be more attractive, likeable, and more able to contribute than characters in older films. It is possible that earlier films included characters that portrayed characteristics of the tragic mulatto more directly than contemporary films. Recent films are more likely to portray characters played by biracial actresses as being more attractive because of their exoticism, and diversity is prized in today's society.

Table 10

Regression Coefficients for Nested Models Predicting Social Class (Standardized Coefficients in Parentheses)

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11
Character's Race	Biracial	-.118 (-.076)	-.110 (-.071)	-.118 (-.076)	-.126 (-.081)	-.121 (-.078)	-.122 (-.079)	-.141 (-.091)	-.137 (-.089)			
	Black	-.159 (-.107)	-.150 (-.101)	-.162 (-.109)	-.169 (-.115)	-.163 (-.111)	-.161 (-.109)	-.179 (-.121)	-.153 (-.104)	-.105 (-.071)		
	White	.157 (.056)	.153 (.054)	.151 (.054)	.143 (.051)	.147 (.052)	.152 (.054)					
	Not Stated	.103 (.026)	.108 (.028)	.109 (.028)								
Year of Distribution		-.011 (-.114)	-.011 (-.113)	-.011 (-.109)	-.010 (-.107)	-.010 (-.107)	-.011 (-.113)	-.012 (-.120)	-.011 (-.113)	-.011 (-.118)	-.012 (-.124)	-.012 (2.113)
Skin Color	Medium	.108 (.081)	.108 (.081)	.107 (.080)	.104 (.078)	.099 (.074)	.092 (.068)	.090 (.068)				
Movie Type	Drama	-.037 (-.023)										
	Action/Thriller/Sci-Fi	-.494 (-.110)	-.482 (-.107)	.107 (.080)	-.496 (-.110)	-.492 (-.109)	-.483 (-.107)	-.497 (-.110)	-.485 (-.108)	-.452 (-.101)	-.457 (-.102)	
	Family	-.256 (-.033)	-.242 (-.031)	-.240 (-.031)	-.247 (-.032)							
	Musical	-.095 (-.038)	-.086 (-.034)	-.101 (-.040)	-.105 (-.041)	-.101 (-.040)						
Role	Secondary	.042 (.025)	.044 (.026)									
Constant		23.998	23.783	23.198	22.775	22.805	23.830	25.203	23.938	24.872	25.910	25.869
R-squared		.049	.048	.047	.047	.046	.044	.042	.037	.031	.026	.015

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Characters in recent films are portrayed as more likeable than characters of the past. In classic films, miscegenation was portrayed in overtly negative ways. Many social changes have developed; interracial relationships are not as taboo today as they used to be. In the past, the children of interracial relationships were assumed to have inherent problems because of their mixed ancestry.

Ability to contribute is also higher for characters in recent films than in films of the past. Again, diversity or multiculturalism is seen as a positive attribute in our current society, whereas diversity and integration were frowned upon in the past.

Other characteristics examined in this research suggest that they are not as pertinent in recent films than in the past. This may suggest that films are demonstrating our society's emerging tolerant attitudes regarding race.

Online Survey Results

To analyze the results from the online surveys, independent t-tests were used to compare respondents' first choice of an actress's race as multiracial or non-multiracial to identify characteristics of the tragic mulatto. These characteristics include skin color, attractiveness, confidence in character's race, character's race (after seeing clip), overall positive portrayal score, friendliness, ability to contribute, mental stability, ability to avoid conflict, overall negative portrayal score, and social class.

Actress 1: Lena Horne in Cabin in the Sky (1943)

Table 11 demonstrates descriptive statistics and the results of independent t-tests comparing respondents' first choice of Actress 1's race as multiracial to respondents' first choice of Actress 1's race as non-multiracial based on perceptions of Actress 1's skin color.

Perceptions of Actress 1's skin color tend to be significantly different when the actress's race is multiracial and when the actress's race is non-multiracial. When Actress 1 is perceived to be multiracial or non-multiracial, respondents regard Actress 1's skin color as light to medium ($M = 1.73$ v. $M = 1.86$). In addition, respondents who chose Actress 1's race as multiracial tend to be more varied in their perception of Actress 1's skin color than respondents who chose Actress 1's race as non-multiracial ($SD = .449$ v. $SD = .372$).

Perceptions of Actress 1's attractiveness tend to be significantly different when the actress's race is multiracial and when the actress's race is non-multiracial. When Actress 1 is perceived as multiracial or non-multiracial, respondents consider Actress 1 as somewhat attractive to attractive ($M = 3.53$ v. $M = 3.15$). In addition, respondents who chose Actress 1's race as non-multiracial tend to be slightly more varied in their perception of attractiveness than respondents who chose Actress 1's race as multiracial ($SD = .915$ v. $SD = .972$).

Whether their first choice of race is multiracial or non-multiracial, respondents do not differ in opinion regarding their confidence in Actress 1's race.

Perceptions of the race of Actress 1's character tend to be significantly different when the actress's race is multiracial and when the actress's race is non-multiracial. When Actress 1 is perceived as multiracial, her character is perceived as Hispanic ($M = 4.05$). When Actress 1 is perceived as non-multiracial, her character is perceived as black ($M = 3.45$). In addition, respondents who chose Actress 1's race as multiracial tend to be slightly more varied in their perception of her character's race than respondents who chose Actress 1's race as non-multiracial ($SD = 1.087$ v. $SD = 1.065$).

Regardless of their first choice of Actress 1's race, respondents do not differ in their

perception of her character’s ability to contribute, mental stability, ability to avoid conflict and social class.

Table 11

Means, Standard Deviations, t-Test for Equality of Means for All Independent Variables on Respondent’s First Choice of Actress 1’s Race

	Multiracial	Non-multiracial	
	Mean (Standard Deviation)	Mean (Standard Deviation)	t-test Scores (p-values)
Skin Color	1.73 (.449)	1.86 (.772)	-2.04 (.044)*
Confidence	2.50 (.846)	2.34 (.781)	1.310 (.192)
Attractiveness	3.53 (.915)	3.15 (.972)	2.618 (.010)**
Character’s Race	4.05 (1.087)	3.45 (1.065)	3.577 (.000)***
Overall Positive Portrayal Score	3.09 (1.173)	2.98 (1.049)	.642 (.522)
Ability to be Friends	3.05 (.753)	2.93 (.887)	.937 (.350)
Ability to Contribute	2.62 (1.225)	2.74 (1.00)	-.648 (.518)
Mental Stability	3.59 (.976)	3.40 (.862)	1.345 (.180)
Ability to Avoid Conflict	2.00 (.765)	2.07 (.635)	-.712 (.478)
Overall Negative Portrayal Score	3.02 (1.130)	2.99 (1.076)	.140 (.889)
Social Class	2.08 (.640)	2.07 (.660)	.014 (.989)

Multiracial $n = 66$, Non-multiracial $n = 121$, $df = 185$, $* = p < .05$

Actress 2: Eartha Kitt in Anna Lucasta (1958)

Table 12 demonstrates descriptive statistics and the results of independent *t*-tests comparing respondents’ first choice of Actress 2’s race as multiracial to respondents’ first choice of Actress 2’s race as non-multiracial based on perceptions of Actress 2’s skin color.

Perceptions of Actress 2's skin color tend to be significantly different when the actress's race is multiracial and when the actress's race is non-multiracial. When Actress 2 is perceived to be multiracial or non-multiracial, respondents regard Actress 2's skin color as light to medium ($M = 1.78$ v. $M = 2.24$). In addition, respondents who chose Actress 2's race as non-multiracial tend to be more varied in their perception of her skin color than respondents who chose Actress 2's race as multiracial ($SD = .548$ v. $SD = .592$).

Table 12

Means, Standard Deviations, t-Test for Equality of Means for All Independent Variables on Respondent's First Choice of Actress 2's Race

	Multiracial	Non-multiracial	
	Mean (Standard Deviation)	Mean (Standard Deviation)	t-test Scores (p-value)
Skin Color	1.78 (.548)	2.24 (.592)	-3.155 (.002)**
Confidence	2.56 (.784)	2.59 (.857)	-1.671 (.097)
Attractiveness	2.78 (.878)	2.59 (.731)	.968 (.325)
Character's Race	3.67 (1.188)	3.19 (.710)	1.655 (.115)
Overall Positive Portrayal Score	3.56 (.705)	3.43 (.856)	.576 (.566)
Ability to be Friends	3.22 (1.003)	3.21 (.843)	.039 (.969)
Ability to Contribute	3.50 (.618)	3.23 (.848)	1.683 (.104)
Mental Stability	3.67 (.970)	3.60 (.794)	.328 (.744)
Ability to Avoid Conflict	2.39 (.778)	2.26 (.677)	.737 (.462)
Overall Negative Portrayal Score	3.39 (.916)	3.48 (.782)	-.436 (.663)
Social Class	1.61 (.608)	1.83 (.678)	-1.305 (.194)

Multiracial n = 18, Non-multiracial n = 145, df = 161, * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

Regardless of their first choice of Actress 2's race, respondents do not differ in their perception of her attractiveness, confidence in the actress's race, perception of the character's race, overall portrayal score, ability to be friends with the character, ability to contribute, mental stability, ability to avoid conflict, overall negative portrayal scores, and social class.

Actress 3: Jennifer Beals in Flashdance (1983)

Table 13 demonstrates descriptive statistics and the results of independent t-tests comparing respondents' first choice of Actress 3's race as multiracial to respondents' first choice of Actress 3's race as non-multiracial.

Regardless of their first choice of Actress 3's race, respondents do not differ in their opinions of the actress's skin color, perceptions of the attractiveness of the character, or opinion regarding confidence in the actress's race.

Perceptions of Actress 3's character's race tend to be significantly different when the actress's race is multiracial and when the actress's race is non-multiracial. When Actress 3 is perceived as multiracial, the character played by Actress 3 is perceived as white ($M=5.90$). When Actress 3 is perceived as non-multiracial, the character played by Actress 3 is perceived as multiracial ($M=5.27$). In addition, respondents who chose Actress 3's race as non-multiracial tend to be slightly more varied in their perception of her character's race than respondents who chose Actress 3's race as multiracial ($SD=.403$ v. $SD=1.064$).

Regardless of their first choice of Actress 3's race, respondents do not differ in their overall positive portrayal scores for the character played by Actress 3, ability to be friends, perception of her character's ability to contribute, mental stability, ability to avoid conflict, overall negative portrayal scores, or social class.

Table 13

Means, Standard Deviations, t-Test for Equality of Means for All Independent Variables on Respondent's First Choice of Actress 3's Race

	Multiracial	Non-multiracial	t-test Scores (p-value)
	Mean (Standard Deviation)	Mean (Standard Deviation)	
Skin Color	1.03 (.183)	1.09 (.314)	-1.336 (.186)
Confidence	3.03 (.718)	2.76 (.875)	1.818 (.075)
Attractiveness	3.64 (.939)	3.03 (1.013)	-.345 (.731)
Character's Race	5.90 (.430)	5.27 (1.064)	5.307 (.000)***
Overall Positive Portrayal Score	3.83 (.874)	3.69 (.942)	.765 (.445)
Ability to be Friends	3.60 (.855)	3.61 (.888)	-.076 (.939)
Ability to Contribute	3.33 (.711)	3.56 (.849)	-1.360 (.176)
Mental Stability	3.53 (.937)	3.80 (.878)	-1.501 (.135)
Ability to Avoid Conflict	1.70 (.702)	1.80 (.756)	-.682 (.496)
Overall Negative Portrayal Score	3.67 (.922)	3.79 (.891)	.668 (.505)
Social Class	1.73 (.585)	1.73 (.631)	.048 (.962)

Multiracial $n = 30$, Non-multiracial $n = 132$, $df = 160$, * = $p < .05$

Actress 4: Michael Michelle in How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days (2003)

Regardless of their first choice of Actress 4's race, respondents do not differ in their opinions in regards to her skin color, attractiveness, confidence in her race, and perception of her race. Respondents do not differ in their overall positive portrayal scores regardless of their first choice of Actress 4's race. Regardless of their first choice of actress's 4's race, respondents do not differ in their perceptions of their ability to be friends with the character, perceptions of

the her character's ability to contribute, mental stability, ability to avoid conflict, overall negative portrayal scores, and social class (see Table 14).

Table 14

Means, Standard Deviations, t-Test for Equality of Means for All Independent Variables on Respondent's First Choice of Actress 4's Race

	Multiracial	Non-multiracial	
	Mean (Standard Deviation)	Mean (Standard Deviation)	t-test Scores (p-values)
Skin Color	1.22 (.415)	1.20 (.437)	.208 (.835)
Confidence	2.52 (.875)	2.65 (.867)	-.938 (.350)
Attractiveness	3.72 (1.119)	3.77 (1.141)	-.262 (.793)
Character's Race	4.69 (.795)	4.61 (1.004)	.539 (.596)
Overall Positive Portrayal Score	3.61 (1.006)	3.30 (1.056)	-.854 (.394)
Ability to be Friends	3.68 (1.107)	3.00 (1.020)	.497 (.620)
Ability to Contribute	3.55 (.976)	3.53 (1.076)	.166 (.868)
Mental Stability	3.87 (.777)	3.82 (.881)	.326 (.745)
Ability to Avoid Conflict	2.25 (.746)	2.31 (.739)	-.487 (.627)
Overall Negative Portrayal Score	3.20 (.947)	3.27 (1.038)	-.413 (.680)
Social Class	2.82 (.417)	2.84 (.406)	-.282 (.779)

Very few characteristics assessing the duration of the tragic mulatto stereotype were significant. The analysis of Actress 1 produced the most significant characteristics, which were skin color, attractiveness, and character's race. Skin color was also significant for the assessment of Actress 2. In addition, the only other characteristic that was also significant was character's race for Actress 3. The resulting non-significance of the characteristics of the tragic

mulatto may suggest that respondents do not recognize portrayals of the tragic mulatto, or stereotypes of the tragic mulatto are simply not prevalent in more contemporary Hollywood film. Because each time period is limited to only one clip, caution must be taken when assessing the results. However, the results do indicate that the respondents are not making distinctions between multiracial characters and non-multiracial characters when examining attributes of the characters.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation investigated the development and perpetuation of the tragic mulatto and how media consumers perceive these images. The purpose of my research is to examine the perception of biracial persons throughout American film history, from the 1940s to 2010. Specifically, my research modified Bogle's inventive typology from *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks* (2001) and focuses on the portrayals and perceptions of biracial actresses. In this chapter, answers to questions pertaining to this research will be addressed, a discussion comparing the findings of the content analysis and online survey will be given, implications and limitations of this research will be made, and direction for future research will be addressed.

Biracial actresses have been given more opportunities to find work in Hollywood than monoracial African American actresses (Hunter, 2009). This may be due to the biracial actress' skin color. A fairer complexion is easier to film than a darker complexion and is more pleasing to film consumers, especially white film patrons (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992). A majority of actresses evaluated in this study possessed either light or medium skin. Rarely are actresses with dark skin given leading or secondary roles. This suggests that Eurocentric standards of beauty and colorism are held in Hollywood (Hunter, 2002).

As discovered in the content analysis, biracial actresses from 1940 to 2010 often played African American roles. African American female roles are usually the friend or romantic partner of the protagonist and can be characterized as secondary parts. If the actress has light or medium skin, the character is usually evaluated positively. For example, actresses with lighter skin were found by respondents to be attractive, friendly, contributing positively to

society, non-violent, and middle-class. If the actress was perceived to be dark-skinned, the character was evaluated less favorably than characters played by light-skinned actresses. An exception to this was the category of mental stability. Characters played by actresses with lighter skin and who were perceived to be white were evaluated to have less mental stability than characters played by actresses with dark skin. This may not directly indicate that the stereotype of the tragic mulatto is still apparent in our current culture. However, findings from this research suggest that colorism plays a role in Hollywood and our culture as a whole (Hunter, 2007).

The online survey produced very few significant results. When analyzing characteristics of the tragic mulatto for Actress 1, three variables were found significant: skin color, attractiveness, and the character's race. Respondents who identified Actress 1's race as multiracial assessed her skin color as light, whereas respondents who identified Actress 1's race as non-multiracial assessed her skin color as medium. This suggests black-white biracial individuals are assumed to have light skin. Attractiveness scores were higher when the actress was identified as multiracial rather than non-multiracial. This is not surprising, since attractiveness or exoticism is a characteristic of the tragic mulatto. Surprisingly, even though 35% of the respondents identified the actress as multiracial, they did not identify the character's race in the same way. Rather, those who identified the actress as multiracial identified the character's race as Hispanic. Those who identified the actress's race as non-multiracial identified the character's race as black. This result suggests that social context is a factor when making an assumption about another person's racial identity.

When analyzing characteristics of the tragic mulatto for Actress 2, there was only one significant finding: skin color. Similar to Actress 1, those who identified Actress 2 as multiracial evaluated her as having light skin. Respondents who identified Actress 2 as non-multiracial perceived her as having medium skin color.

The evaluations of the characteristics of the tragic mulatto for Actress 3 found only one significant variable: character's race. Interestingly, those who identified Actress 3's race as multiracial identified her character's race as white, while those who identified Actress 3's race as non-multiracial identified her character's race as multiracial. Again, social context may have contributed to the respondents changing their evaluations of the character's race.

Assessment of the characteristics of the tragic mulatto for Actress 4 did not produce any significant results. This suggests that either the respondents did not recognize stereotypes of the tragic mulatto in contemporary film, or roles played by biracial actresses are moving away from that of the tragic mulatto. Overall, the findings from the online survey indicated that respondents do not recognize media messages of the tragic mulatto. They also do not recognize the actresses as biracial. Biracial identity is not recognizable and therefore not a valid identity.

The results from the content analysis suggest that the independent variables of character's race and skin color are central significant variables predicting characteristics of the tragic mulatto. These results were very similar to the findings of the online survey. This suggests that film portrayals of the tragic mulatto are not at the forefront of Hollywood film in current times. There may be a longitudinal effect indicating that earlier films portray characteristics of the tragic mulatto. Future research may indicate this trend.

The two methodologies of content analysis and online survey, in combination, indicate that perceived race is a determining factor in how people are evaluated. These evaluations, however, may change or may be supported further with social context. Social context included the environment in which the individual inhabits, associates of the individual, and culture of the individual. The content analysis suggests that skin color is a significant factor in determining or perceiving a person's race, although errors may still occur. In the content analysis, the majority of the actresses played black roles. These results propose that although the U.S. Census and other governmental forms have changed, our culture has not yet caught on to the trend. Our behavior and attitudes do not reflect the changes of the availability of a biracial identity, and a biracial identity is not validated in Hollywood. The binaries between whiteness and blackness are maintained.

The one-drop rule was once used to divide blacks from whites in various aspects of social life, including marriage, education, the economy, and residence, to name a few (Rockquemore & Brunisma, 2006; Feber, 1999). The one-drop rule that was once used to separate and control blacks was then used by the Black community to unify its people (Winters & Debose, 2003). In today's society, we see an increase in number of those identifying as black-white biracial, but a majority of people with Black ancestry still identify as black, according to the 2010 U.S. Census.

In Hollywood, the one-drop rule is also prevalent. Many actresses perceived as African American are biracial. Skin color—especially light skin—is valued in Hollywood, but a biracial identity is not. The tragic mulatto stereotype is not explicitly expressed in current media as it

once was in the past. The tragic mulatto still has light skin, but may not express racial torment as openly.

Not only does skin color effect acceptance of one's racial identity, social context also helps determine that identity. For example, if a biracial individual with medium skin tone lives in a multiracial environment, her biracial identity may be validated (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004). If this same individual lives in a black environment, they are more than likely perceived as black. Along with this individual's perceived racial identity comes characteristics and stereotypes associated with those racial identities. Hollywood validates the character's race by providing an environment, associates, and culture that are affiliated with a particular racial or ethnic group. In this case, film reflects and reifies race.

The racial identity of the character (usually black) is supported by the character's environment, associates, and behavior. This is typical of Hollywood. Films, unlike books, can take time to develop characters and environments. Prototypes or stereotypes are used to inform the spectator of what to expect from the character. Hollywood is an institution in the business of making profits, not necessarily educating (Croteau, Hoynes, & Milan, 2001). If promotion of stereotypes enables higher profits then it is realistic to expect Hollywood to promote those stereotypes.

Even though American citizens can choose one or more races to indicate their racial background, Hollywood has not replicated this reality. There have been a few films that specifically feature a biracial character. Rarely is the racial identity of that character an essential part of the film. One exception is *Mixing Nia* (1998). This film was released two years before the option of choosing one or more races was included on the U.S. Census. *Mixing Nia* is a

fictionalized story of one biracial woman's exploration of her racial identity. In this film, discussions of interracial relationships, what it means to be black, and self-acceptance are addressed. Again, films addressing biracial identity are rare.

It is possible that respondents of the online survey did not assess multiracial and non-multiracial characters differently because they are not media literate or may not know the history of stereotypes pertaining to mixed-race individuals. Two of the film clips are more direct representations of the tragic mulatto; however, respondents did not assess the characters in these clips as such. If this online survey was given after the respondents were educated in media literacy, results may have been significantly different.

Media does not present reality, but rather a representation of reality (Croteau, Hoynes, & Milan, 2012). Hoeschsmann and Poyntz (2012) argue that we as citizens may not have the power to pressure media producers to make these representations more realistic. Instead, the authors propose that we can use our agency to educate ourselves about media and discover what is real and what is fiction. Ashley, Lyden, and Fasbinder (2012) argue that media literacy is needed because we are surrounded by media messages, but we may not understand their meanings or intent. Considine, Horton, & Moorman (2009) add that media literacy is essential because "media messages may have social consequences or effects" (pg. 472). The Center for Media Literacy contends that the core concepts of media literacy are (Ashley, Lyden, Fasbinder, 2012, pg. 104):

- All media messages are constructed.
- Media are constructed using a unique creative language dictated by the media format.

- Different people (e.g., differences by gender, race, class) can experience the same media message differently.
- Media have embedded values and points of view reflected by those who create it

Robillard (2012) adds that media literacy should also address how profit and power are the ultimate motivations of the media. Bulman (2003) asserts that another aspect of media literacy is understanding the language of film and filmmakers in order to recognize when one is being persuaded. Considine, Horton, & Moorman (2009) posit that media literacy contains values and ideologies that audiences negotiate. When negotiating media messages, consumers are able to question dominant paradigms propagated by the media. Consumers can choose to accept the message as is, oppose the message, or take pieces of the message and reject others. This is a part of media consumer agency (Ashley, Lyden, Fasbinder, 2012).

The goals of media literacy are varied. Ashley, Lyden, and Fasbinder (2012) state that a major goal of media literacy is help people recognize propaganda and have the ability to resist it. Resisting propaganda and other persuasive messages can be attained by becoming critical media consumers. In addition to critically evaluating messages, those who are media literate are also able to recognize media's ties to politics and the economy (Duran, Yousman, Walsh, Longshore, 2008).

A larger goal of media literacy is to mold media consumers into active media producers (Gill, 2012). Media production allows the consumer to express his or her agency. According to Gill (2012), media literacy is empowering. This form of literacy fosters access to information and knowledge. Media literacy and media production opens the gates to more people to tell their stories and participate in ways they may not have had without becoming media literate.

Hoeschsman and Poyntz (2012) succinctly express a primary goal of media literacy: "In

considering these issues, a central aim within media education is to understand not only how meaning is produced in contemporary media cultures but also how economic, political, and cultural forces work through the media to shape the exercise of social power in society” (p. 72).

Learning media education builds upon other literacy and educational skills. For example, media literacy integrates critical thinking (Poyntz, 2012). Media literacy relies on observation and evidence to support claims. Claims must be clearly explained or justified so others may test those arguments. Media literacy strengthens research skills and ability to access the credibility and accuracy of sources. In addition to these skills, Robillard (2012) claims that with media literacy, consumers will be able to understand how media messages appear or sound the way they do, who creates and is privileged from these messages, when and how we are affected by media, and where to find alternative media.

Ashley, Lyden, and Fasbinder (2012) argue that media literacy should be included in educational curriculum. Unfortunately, this is not happening at the primary and secondary school levels (Duran, Yousman, Walsh, Longshore, 2008). Media education is also not emphasized at the collegiate level, with the exception of mass communication and media studies courses. In media literacy courses, media or entertainment should not simply be regarded as evil. Instead, media and entertainment can be used as a tool to aid in the development of education. Media literacy allows instructors to connect with students and their culture since students are well-versed users of technology. By incorporating technology and media into course curriculum, school experiences are made relevant (Ashley, Lyden, Fasbinder, 2012). Although students may have access to technology and media, they do not always have the interpretative skills needed to use media to attain goals. By analyzing media messages,

students are able to assess how entertainment and other forms of media reflect social and cultural values (Hoeschsmann & Poyntz, 2012). Hoeschsmann and Poyntz (2012) assert that media literacy helps students “denaturalize the world around them” by analyzing the media and media messages.

Instructors incorporating media literacy into their curriculum can encourage agency among their students. Students are able to learn about themselves and their social worlds through media literacy (Hoeschsmann & Poyntz, 2012). Media literacy, with the addition of media production, enables students to understand, critique, and create their own media messages. This may give students a sense that they control what messages they will accept and allow them to create their own messages if desired. By becoming media producers, students are able to connect to the larger social world. Potter (2011) asserts that, “taking control is what media literacy is all about” (pg. 9). Students will not only be media consumers, but also creators of media messages (Considine, Horton, Moorman, 2009).

Findings from this research should assist consumers of media in their ability to recognize and read media messages critically in order to identify potentially dangerous images and societal belief systems. With this ability and responsibility, marginalized and voiceless communities will be conscious of their power to direct cultural production and reproduction so that they can contest hegemonic messages. Media literacy allows media consumers to critically analyze media messages. In regards to race, individuals should be able to discern stereotypes from varieties of experiences of racial and ethnic groups. Instead of perceiving groups in monolithic ways, groups can be seen in a range of ways. It is probable that media literacy with the focus of race and ethnicity could influence race relations on a micro level. For example, if an

individual does not have face-to-face contact with out-group members and only has knowledge of these groups through media sources, they may rely on those sources in their future interactions. However, if the individual is media literate in regards to race and ethnicity, he or she will be cognizant not to rely solely on media sources when interacting with out-group members.

Findings from this study suggest that biracial identity is not recognized in Hollywood film. In the past, biracial individuals were portrayed as the tragic mulatto in film. Currently, biracial individuals are not portrayed as tragic mulattoes directly; they are not recognized as biracial at all. I propose that biracial individuals become agents in their own representation. In order for this to occur power must be shifted to create their own realities. Biracial individuals can be active in the construction of reality through the media by choosing not to watch media with stereotypical portrayals. Hollywood will also be held accountable for perpetuating racial stereotypes, whether consciously or unconsciously and held responsible for images they create and distribute. Media consumers can critique and question directors, producers, and actors for their portrayals of characters, or work within the industry themselves.

Limitations

There are important limitations in this study. First, there are only three interrater judges to assess the validity and reliability of the typology used in the content analysis. More interrater judges and those aside from just women of color could make the typology more reliable. Second, the list of black-white actresses is not exhaustive. There are other Internet sources besides www.mixedfolks.com that list famous multiracial Americans, and these other actresses may be cast in roles that are significantly different than those provided by

www.mixedfolks.com. A third limitation concerns the online survey. The online survey was released on a predominately white campus. Finding differences between groups may have been effected by the lack of non-white respondents. Results from the online survey could also be affected by the recording quality of the video clips used. In addition, some films randomly chosen for the survey were black and white, and assessing skin color may have been a challenge for some respondents. Lastly, films selected for the online survey may not be solely representative of the time period they represent. Other films representing each decade may produce different results. Because the online survey used only four films, generalizability is a problem that future research using other films may overcome.

Recommendations for Future Research

All questions pertaining to how media influences race relations and racial identity have not been answered by this study or any other study up to this date. Future research studies could help address these gaps in the scholarly pool. One such study could use focus groups in which participants watch films with black-white biracial actors. One or two facilitators trained in race relations and media literacy could direct a discussion about the films, racial representations, and how these representations are reflective of current society or not. This study would address how respondents process media messages qualitatively and provide more insight into what particular messages mean to them.

Another study could focus on students' levels of media literacy. Media literacy is another form of literacy that allows media consumers to consciously process and critique media messages. In this study, a pre-test and post-test of students' perceptions of racial stereotypes

will be given to measure their media literacy levels. Before the post-test, students will take a semester-long media literacy course.

A modification of the abovementioned study is to test students' media literacy and understanding of the stereotype of the tragic mulatto using an experimental design. Three groups will be compared. In the first group, students will only be taught about the stereotype tragic mulatto. In the second group, students will be taught about media literacy without the specific focus on understanding racial and ethnic stereotypes. The third group is the control group. This group will not be in either the stereotype education class or media literacy class. All three groups will be given a pre-test and post-test to assess if they recognize media messages of the tragic mulatto. These tests will be used to determine if a class on racial and ethnic stereotypes, media literacy, or no class at all improves students' ability to recognize media messages pertaining to the tragic mulatto.

In another research project, I could focus on men, although the tragic mulatto stereotype typically applies to black-white biracial women. I can investigate how stereotypes of African American men have been perpetuated throughout history. Bogle (2001) has already done this, but I can update it. I could also compare how black-white biracial men and monoracial black men are portrayed in film.

This study explored the social construction of race, the maintenance of a black-white binary, and the tragic mulatto stereotype. This research suggests that the one-drop rule still determines the race of Americans with black ancestry regardless of skin color. The lack of validation of a biracial identity is reflected in Hollywood film. Although biracial actresses are

white *and* black, they tend to play only black roles. This suggests that Hollywood mirrors and, to some extent, creates social reality.

The lights are brightening and you are still seated in the theater. You are pondering if your original answer to the question of “What is she?” was answered. That answer depends on how categories of race are created and maintained in society. At one point, it is possible that she could have been labeled as a mulatto. However, today she is simply classified as black or the “Other.” Her biracial identity is not validated. It is out of sight.

APPENDIX A
LIST OF ACTRESSES AND FILMS

Actor	Movie
Lonette McKee	A Day in Black and White
Karen Parsons	Mixing Nia
Carmen Ejogo	Sally Heming”s: An American Scandal
Gloria Reuben	A Feast of All Saints
Jennifer Beals	A Feast of All Saints
Jasmine Guy	A Feast of All Saints
Victoria Rowel	A Feast of All Saints
Eartha Kitt	A Feast of All Saints
Tamara Taylor	Diary of a Mad Black Woman
Eartha Kitt	Boomerang
Sophie Okonedo	Hotel Rwanda
Sophie Okonedo	Dirty Pretty Things
Gloria Reubens	Nick of Time
Nicole Ari Parker	Boogie Nights
Tamara Taylor	The Best Man
Halle Berry	Introducing Dorothy Dandridge
Tamara Taylor	Introducing Dorothy Dandridge
Rachel True	Groove
Jasmine Guy	Diamond Men
Michael Michelle	New Jack City
Nicole Ari Parker	The End of Violence
Kidada Jones	Black and White
Victoria Rowell	Eve”s Bayou
Nicole Ari Parker	Stonewall
Maya Rudolph	Gattaca
Sydney Tamiia Poitier	MacArthur Park
Nicole Ari Parker	The Adventures of Sebastian Cole

Troy Beyer	Gingerbread Man
Carmen Ejogo	Love's Labour's Lost
Sherri Saum	Anne B. Real
Maya Rudolph	Chuck and Buck
Maya Rudolph	A Prairie Home Companion
Jennifer Beals	Roger Dodger
Jennifer Beals	Flashdance
Jennifer Beals	The Anniversary Party
Jennifer Beals	Four Rooms
Jaye Davidson	Stargate
Rachel True	Nowhere
Jennifer Beals	In the Soup
Halle Berry	Die Another Day
Jennifer Beals	Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle
Maya Rudolph	As Good As It Gets
Karen Parsons	Major Payne
Maya Rudolph	Duets
Halle Berry	Catwoman
Halle Berry	Gothika
Halle Berry	X-Men 2
Halle Berry	Monster's Ball
Halle Berry	Introducing Dorothy Dandridge
Halle Berry	The Flintstones
Thandie Newton	The Pursuit of Happyness
Thandie Newton	Beloved
Thandie Newton	Interview with the Vampire
Michael Michelle	Ali
Lonette McKee	The Cotton Club

Lonette McKee	Jungle Fever
Halle Berry	Jungle Fever
Lonette McKee	Lift
Lonette McKee	Fast Food, Fast Women
Nicole Ari Parker	Brown Sugar
Halle Berry	Their Eyes Were Watching God
Jasmine Guy	School Daze
Tamara Taylor	Love and Basketball
Halle Berry	Losing Isaiah
Nicole Ari Parker	Remember the Titans
Mario Van Peebles	Carlito's Way: Rise to Power
Gina Ravera	Soul Food
Thandie Newton	Run, Fat Boy, Run
Halle Berry	Things We Lost in the Fire
Halle Berry	X-Men 3: The Last Stand
Kidada Jones	Proud
Kidada Jones	Thicker than Water
Victoria Rowell	Dumb and Dumber
Lisa Bonet	High Fidelity
Earth Kit	Preaching to the Choir
Sallie Richardson	I Am Legend
Rashida Jones	Now You Know
Tia Mowry	Twitches
Tamera Mowry	Twitches
Lonette McKee	Brewster's Millions
Lonette McKee	Sparkle
Sherri Saum	Finding Home
Gina Rivera	Gas

Eartha Kitt	Anything But Love
Eartha Kitt	Ernest Scared Stupid
Eartha Kitt	And Then Came Love
Eartha Kitt	Harriet the Spy
Eartha Kitt	Living Doll
Eartha Kitt	Anna Lucasta
Rachel True	Auteur Theory
Leila Arcieri	Daddy Dare Care
Sophie Okonedo	The Secret Life of Bees
Victoria Rowell	Black Listed
Tia Mowry	Seventeen Again
Tamera Mowry	Seventeen Again
Sydney Tamiia Poitier	The List
Victoria Rowell	Distinguished Gentleman
Maya Rudolph	Idiocracy
Leila Arcieri	Mammoth
Lisa Bonet	Lathe of Heaven
Tracee Ellis Ross	I-See-You.Com
Lisa Bonet	Biker Boys
Jennifer Beals	13 Moons
Karen Parsons	13 Moons
Karen Parsons	Ladies Man
Tia Mowry	The Hot Chick
Tamera Mowry	The Hot Chick
Tia Mowry	Twitches Too
Tamera Mowry	Twitches Too
Tamera Mowry	Something to Sing About
Leila Arcieri	A Perfect Fit

Victoria Rowell	A Perfect Fit
Victoria Rowell	A Perfect Fit
Lonette McKee	ATL
Lonette McKee	Honey
Lonette McKee	Round Midnight
Lonette McKee	Dangerous Passions
Lonette McKee	Garden of Stone
Troy Beyer	A Light in the Darkness
Troy Beyer	B.A.P.S.
Halle Berry	B.A.P.S.
Troy Beyer	Disorderlies
Carmen Ejogo	Boycott
Carmen Ejogo	What's the Worst That Could Happen
	The Catherin Cookson Anthology: Color
Carmen Ejogo	Blind
Rashida Jones	I Love You, Man
Tracee Ellis Ross	Daddy's Little Girls
Sydney Tamiia Poitier	True Crime
Sydney Tamiia Poitier	Park Day
Tracee Ellis Ross	Life Support
Gloria Reuben	Life Support
Gloria Reuben	Salem Witch Trials
Gloria Reuben	Little John
Gloria Reuben	Inferno
Maya Rudolph	Grown Ups

APPENDIX B
EVALUATION FORM

Actress	Movie	Role	Perc Race	Char Race	Men Health	Skin Color	Like	Attract	Abil to Contr	Abil to be Viol	Over Pos Port	Over Neg Port	Social Class
Sophie Okonedo	Hotel Rwanda	2	2	2	6	2	7	5	5	1	7	1	2
Victoria Rowell	Eve's Bayou	2	2	2	5	2	4	5	4	1	4	5	1

Actress= Actress's name

Movie= Title of movie

Role= Role played

Perc Race= Perceived race

Men Health= Mental health

Like= Likeability

Attract= Attractiveness

Abil to Contr= Ability to contribute

Abil to be Viol= Ability to be violent

Over Pos Port= Overall positive portrayal score

Over Neg Port= Overall negative portrayal score

Social Class= Social Class

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTION OF STUDY

Characteristic	N	%
Sex		
Men	10,395	52.4
Women	9,458	47.6
Age		
19 and Under	6,739	33.9
20-24	11,015	55.5
25-39	1,751	8.82
40+	348	1.75
Race		
Non-Resident Alien	1,301	6.55
Black	847	4.27
American Indian	80	.403
Asian	234	1.18
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	24	0.121
Hispanic	1,116	5.62

Multiracial	523	2.63
Unknown	373	1.88
White	15,354	77.3
Hometown Region		
Kansas	15,580	78.5
Missouri	665	3.35
Texas	409	2.06
Colorado	227	1.14
Nebraska	203	1.02
Other States	1,526	7.69
Other Country	1,243	6.26
Area of Study		
Engineering/Technology	3,555	17.9
Business	2,603	13.1
Agriculture	2,525	12.7
Social Sciences	2,215	11.2
Human Ecology	2,123	10.7

Education	1,251	6.30
Biological Sciences	1,199	6.04
Humanities/Arts	937	4.72
Health Sciences	522	2.63
Architecture	429	2.66
Psychology	470	2.37
Computer Science	304	1.53
Physical Sciences	233	1.17
Mathematics/Statistics	91	.458
All Other	1,406	7.08

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY SAMPLE ($N = 157$)

Characteristic	N	%
Sex		
Male	79	50.3
Female	78	49.7
Age		
18-19	36	22.9
20-21	63	40.1
22-23	33	21.0
24-25	8	5.10
26-30	12	7.64
31-40	4	2.55
41-50	0	0
50+	1	.637
Year in School		
Freshman	27	17.2
Sophomore	35	22.3
Junior	39	24.8
Senior	50	31.8
Masters	2	1.27
Doctorate	0	0
Other	4	2.55
Hometown Region		
Northeast	4	2.55
Southeast	2	1.27
Southwest	7	4.46
Midwest	133	84.7
Other Country	11	7.01
Mother's Education		
Less than high school	7	4.46
Received high school diploma or GED	40	25.5
Associate's degree	27	17.2

Bachelor's degree	50	31.8
Graduate or professional degree	30	19.1
Other	3	1.91
Father's Education		
Less than high school	5	3.18
Received high school diploma or GED	39	24.8
Associate's degree	17	10.8
Bachelor's degree	45	28.6
Graduate or professional degree	41	26.1
Other	10	6.37
Family's Household Income		
Less than \$10,000	7	4.46
\$10,000-24,999	27	17.2
\$25,000-44,999	26	16.6
\$45,000-60,000	23	14.6
\$60,000+	74	47.1
Race of Respondent		
White	125	79.6
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3	1.91
Asian	5	3.18
Black or African American	3	1.91
Hispanic or Latin(o/a)	7	4.46
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	0.637
Multiracial	8	5.10
Non-resident of the U.S.	2	1.27
Other	3	1.91

APPENDIX E

AREAS OF STUDY FOR STUDENTS IN STUDY SAMPLE

Area of Study	N	%
College of Agriculture	195	13.0
College of Business Administration	206	13.7
College of Education	96	6.40
College of Engineering	250	16.7
College of Arts and Sciences	567	37.8
College of Human Ecology	153	10.2
College of Architecture	33	2.20

APPENDIX F
ONLINE SURVEY

Light, Bright, and Out of Sight

Survey Description:

Dear K-State Student,

You have been selected to participate in a K-State research survey and to be entered into a drawing for a FREE iPad mini upon completing the study. There are no strings attached, we just want to thank you for your time. What's more, this survey is actually pretty interesting! Importantly, your responses are completely anonymous and will be kept confidential.

In this survey you will be asked to watch four 3-10 minute clips of film and give ratings of the actor in the video. There are no right or wrong answers, just your reactions and opinions. You should know that your responses to this survey are very valuable. Through research such as this, we gain valuable insights into how different people perceive different media messages. Such research helps us understand the significance of the broad reach of the American film industry and its history. In short, your opinion matters. Thank you!

This survey consists of five short sections and should take 20-30 minutes of your time to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary.

We appreciate your time and consideration in completing this survey. It is only through the help of students like you that we can improve our understanding of media and society.

Thanks again and good luck with the drawing for the FREE iPad mini!

Sincerely,

Alicia Brunson

American Ethnic Studies Instructor

Kansas State University

Spencer D. Wood, Ph.D

Assistant Professor of Sociology

Kansas State University

Opening Instructions:

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits, and risks, and how the study will be conducted.

You will be asked to evaluate four 3-10 minute clips of film and give ratings of the character under investigation. This research will take about 20-30 minutes of your time.

There are no foreseeable risks involved in this study. You may benefit from the opportunity to win an iPad mini. You may also become more aware of messages that are distributed through film. Your responses to the film assessment and demographic survey will be kept confidential. Only the student researcher, Alicia Brunson, and the supervising advisor will have access to your responses. The confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publication or presentation regarding this study.

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Alicia Brunson at ale3434@ksu.edu or Dr. Spencer Wood at sdwood@ksu.edu.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the KSU Institutional Review Board (IRB). The KSU IRB can be contacted at (785)532-3224 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Agreement:

I understand why this study is being conducted and that my participation is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I understand that you may contact the study researcher, Alicia Brunson, with any questions about the study. I may print this page for my records.

By continuing with the survey, I agree that I understand that my responses are protected under informed consent.

Page 1

Question 1 * required *****

Looking at the image below what is your best guess as to the actress's race or ethnicity? (Please rank your top three guesses, with number one being your best guess.)



Question 2 * required *****

In your opinion, which of the following accurately describes the actress's skin color?

Light-Lighter than a paper bag

Medium-Darker than a paper bag, but lighter than chocolate

Dark-Chocolate color or darker

Question 3 * required *****

In your opinion, how attractive is the character in this clip? Remember that character can be different from actress.

repulsive

average

somewhat attractive

attractive

very attractive

Video Clip Here: *Cabin in the Sky*

Question 4 ** required **

Now that you have seen the clip, how confident do you feel in identifying the character's race?

Not confident at all

Somewhat confident

Confident

Very confident

Question 5 ** required **

Based on seeing the entire clip, now what would you say is the character's race? Remember that the question is about the character portrayed by the actress.

American Indian

Asian/Pacific Islander

Black

Latina

Mixed race

White

Other:

Question 6 ** required **

In your opinion, is the character portrayed in a **positive** way?

The character is portrayed in a negative manner throughout the clip

The character is portrayed in a negative manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed negatively and positively in equal amounts

The character is portrayed in positive manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed in a positive manner throughout the clip

Question 7 ** required **

Imagine that the character is someone that you know, how likely could it be that she could be a friend of yours?

Not at all, great dislike for the character

Not likely

Mixed feeling about the character

Likely to be friends

Very likely-great fondness for the character

Question 8 * required *****

In your opinion, based on this short clip, what is the character's ability to contribute positively to society?

The character causes problems

The character does not contribute

The character contributes somewhat

The character contributes

The character contributes a great deal

Question 9 * required *****

In your opinion, based on this short clip, do you think that the character is mentally stable?

Very poor mental health-The character is crazy

Poor mental health-The character is not stable emotionally

Fair mental health-The character is able to function without great difficulty

Good mental health-The character is able to overcome conflict

Great mental health-The character seems not to be frustrated easily

Question 10 * required *****

In your opinion, how likely is the character to avoid conflict?

Peaceful-The character acts as a mediator and ends conflicts

Not violent-The character does not react in anger

Somewhat violent-The character reacts violently only when provoked

Violent-The character uses weapons to threaten other characters

Extremely violent-The character harms or kills another character or animal

Question 11 *** required ***

In your opinion, is the character portrayed in a **negative** way?

The character is portrayed in a negative manner throughout the clip

The character is portrayed in a negative manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed negatively and positively in equal amounts

The character is portrayed in a positive manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed in a positive manner throughout the clip

Question 12 *** required ***

In your opinion, what is the character's social class? This can be based upon the character's job, education, income, wealth, and/or amount of free time available.

Lower class/Working class

Middle class

Upper class

Page 2

Question 13

Looking at the image below what is your best guess as to the actress's race or ethnicity? (Please rank your top three guesses, with number one being your best guess.)



Question 14 ** required **

What is the actress's skin color?

Light-Lighter than a paper bag

Medium-Darker than a paper bag, but lighter than chocolate

Dark-Chocolate color or darker

Question 15 ** required *

How attractive is the character in this clip? Character can be different from actress.

Repulsive

Average

Somewhat attractive

Very attractive

Video Clip Here: *Anna Lucasta*

Now that you have seen the clip, how confident are you in identifying the character's race?

Not confident at all

Somewhat confident

Confident

Very confident

Question 17 * required *****

Based on seeing the entire clip, now what would you say is the character's race? Remember the question is about the character portrayed by the actress.

American Indian

Asian/Pacific Islander

Black

Hispanic/Latina

Mixed race

White

Other

Question 18 * required *****

In your opinion, is the character portrayed in a positive way?

The character is portrayed in a negative manner throughout the clip

The character is portrayed in a negative manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed negatively and positively in equal amounts

The character is portrayed in a positive manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed in a positive manner throughout the clip

Question 19 *** required ***

Imagine that the character is someone that you know, how likely could it be that she could be a friend of yours?

Not at all, great dislike for the character

Not likely

Mixed feeling about the character

Likely to be friends

Very likely-great fondness for the character

Question 20 *** required ***

In your opinion, based on this short clip, what is the character's ability to contribute positively to society?

The character causes problems

The character does not contribute

The character contributes somewhat

The character contributes

The character contributes a great deal

Question 21 * required *****

In your opinion, is the character mentally stable?

Very poor mental health-The character is crazy

Poor mental health-The character is not stable emotionally

Fair mental health-The character is able to function without great difficulty

Good mental health-The character is able to overcome conflict

Great mental health-The character seems not to be frustrated easily

Question 22 * required *****

In your opinion, how likely is the character to avoid conflict?

Peaceful-The character acts as a mediator and ends conflicts

Not violent-The character does not react in anger

Somewhat violent-The character reacts violently only when provoked

Violent-The character uses weapons to threaten other characters

Extremely violent-The character harms or kills another character or animal

Question 23 * required *****

In your opinion, is the character portrayed in a **negative** way?

The character is portrayed in a negative manner throughout the clip

The character is portrayed in a negative manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed negatively and positively in equal amounts

The character is portrayed in positive manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed in a positive manner throughout the clip

Question 24 * required *****

What is the character's social class? This can be based upon the character's job, education, income, wealth, and/or amount of free time available.

Lower class/Working class

Middle class

Upper class

Page 3

Question 25

Looking at the image below, what is your best guess as to the actress's race or ethnicity?

(Please rank your top three guesses, with number one being your best guess.)



Question 26 * required *****

What is the actress's skin color?

Light-Lighter than a paper bag

Medium-Darker than a paper bag, but lighter than chocolate

Dark-Chocolate color or darker

Question 27 * required *****

How attractive is the character in the clip? Remember that character can be different from actress.

Repulsive

Average

Somewhat attractive

Attractive

Very attractive

Question 28 * required *****

Now that you have seen the clip, how confident are you in identifying the character's race?

Not confident at all

Somewhat confident

Confident

Very confident

Question 29 *** required ***

Based on the seeing the entire clip, now what would you say is the character's race? Remember the question is about the character portrayed by the actress.

American Indian

Asian/Pacific Islander

Black

Latina

Mixed race

White

Question 30 *** required ***

In your opinion, is the character portrayed in a **positive** way?

The character is portrayed in a negative manner throughout the clip

The character is portrayed in a negative manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed negatively and positively in equal amounts

The character is portrayed in positive manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed in a positive manner throughout the clip

Question 31 *** required ***

Imagine that the character is someone that you know, how likely could it be that she could be a friend of yours?

Not at all, great dislike for the character

Not likely

Mixed feeling about the character

Likely to be friends

Very likely-great fondness for the character

Question 32 ** required **

In your opinion, based on this short clip, what is the character's ability to contribute positively to society?

The character causes problems

The character does not contribute

The character contributes somewhat

The character contributes

The character contributes a great deal

Question 33 ** required **

In your opinion, is the character mentally stable?

Very poor mental health-The character is crazy

Poor mental health-The character is not stable emotionally

Fair mental health-The character is able to function without great difficulty

Good mental health-The character is able to overcome conflict

Great mental health-The character seems not to be frustrated easily

Question 34 *** required ***

In your opinion, how likely is the character to avoid conflict?

Peaceful-The character acts as a mediator and ends conflicts

Not violent-The character does not react in anger

Somewhat violent-The character reacts violently only when provoked

Violent-The character uses weapons to threaten other characters

Extremely violent-The character harms or kills another character or animal

Question 35 *** required ***

In your opinion, is the character portrayed in a **negative** way?

The character is portrayed in a negative manner throughout the clip

The character is portrayed in a negative manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed negatively and positively in equal amounts

The character is portrayed in positive manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed in a positive manner throughout the clip

Question 36 *** required ***

In your opinion, what is the character's social class? This can be based upon the character's job, education, income, wealth, and/or amount of free time available.

Lower class/Working class

Middle class

Upper class

Question 37

Looking at the image below, what is your best guess as to the actress's race or ethnicity?

(Please rank your top three guesses, with number one being your best guess.)



Question 38 ** required **

What is the actress's skin color?

Light-Lighter than a paper bag

Medium-Darker than a paper bag, but lighter than chocolate

Dark-Chocolate color or darker

Question 39 ** required **

How attractive is the character in this clip? Remember that the character can be different from actress.

Repulsive

Average

Somewhat attractive

Attractive

Very attractive

Question 40 * required *****

Now that you have seen the clip, how confident are you in identifying the character's race?

Not confident at all

Somewhat confident

Confident

Very confident

Question 41 * required *****

Based on seeing the entire clip, now what would you say is the character's race? Remember the question is about the character portrayed by the actress.

American Indian

Asian/Pacific Islander

Black

Hispanic/Latina

Mixed race

White

Other:

Question 42 *** required ***

In your opinion, is the character portrayed in a **positive** way?

The character is portrayed in a negative manner throughout the clip

The character is portrayed in a negative manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed negatively and positively in equal amounts

The character is portrayed in positive manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed in a positive manner throughout the clip

Question 43 *** required ***

Imagine that the character is someone that you know, how likely could it be that she could be a friend of yours?

Not at all, great dislike for the character

Not likely

Mixed feeling about the character

Likely to be friends

Very likely-great fondness for the character

Question 44 *** required ***

In your opinion, based on this short clip, what is the character's ability to contribute positively to society?

The character causes problems

The character does not contribute

The character contributes somewhat

The character contributes

The character contributes a great deal

Question 45

In your opinion, is the character mentally stable?

Very poor mental health-The character is crazy

Poor mental health-The character is not stable emotionally

Fair mental health-The character is able to function without great difficulty

Good mental health-The character is able to overcome conflict

Great mental health-The character seems not to be frustrated easily

Question 46 **** required ****

In your opinion, how likely is the character to avoid conflict?

Peaceful-The character acts as a mediator and ends conflicts

Not violent-The character does not react in anger

Somewhat violent-The character reacts violently only when provoked

Violent-The character uses weapons to threaten other characters

Extremely violent-The character harms or kills another character or animal

Question 47 *** required ***

In your opinion, is the character portrayed in a **negative** way?

The character is portrayed in a negative manner throughout the clip

The character is portrayed in a negative manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed negatively and positively in equal amounts

The character is portrayed in positive manner in the majority of the clip

The character is portrayed in a positive manner throughout the clip

Question 48 *** required ***

In your opinion, what is the character's social class? This can be based upon the character's job, education, income, wealth, and/or amount of free time available.

Lower class/Working class

Middle class

Upper class

Page 5

Please answer the following to the best of your ability.

Question 49 *** required ***

What is your sex?

Male

Female

Question 50 * required *****

What is your age? You must be 18 years or older to participate in this research.

18-19

20-21

22-23

24-25

26-30

31-40

41-50

50+

Question 51 * required *****

What year in school are you currently in?

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Master Level

Doctorate Level

Other:

Question 52 * required *****

What region is your hometown located in?

The Northeast: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont

The Southeast: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia

The Southwest: Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin

Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota

A country other than the U.S.

Question 53 * required *****

What is your mother's highest completed degree or level of education?

Less than high school

Received high school diploma or GED

Associates or technical degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate or professional degree

Other:

Question 54 * required *****

What is your father's highest completed degree or level of education?

Less than high school

Received high school diploma or GED

Associates or technical degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate or professional degree

Other:

Question 55 * required *****

What is your family's household income? (If you are an independent student, please do not include your parents' household income. Indicate your immediate family's household income.)

Less than \$10,000

\$10,000-\$24,999

\$25,000-\$44,999

\$45,000-\$60,000

\$60,000+

Question 56 * required *****

Please specify your race.

White

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Hispanic or Latino(a)

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Multiracial

Non-resident of the U.S.

Other:

Closing Message

Dear K-State Student,

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact Alicia Brunson at ale3434@ksu.edu.

Sincerely,

Alicia Brunson

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