



Critical Mixed-Race Theory: Analyzing the Identities of South Asian to Canadian

Immigration on Mixed-Race Women

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Introduction

As a mixed-race Indian-European woman, I have endured my fair share of questionable conversations throughout my life — “...so what are you?” is one that is particularly significant. Through this research, I plan to navigate the complexities of self-discovery prescribed by multiple racial identities and the lack of “wholeness” one may feel regarding that. Growing up, I struggled immensely with the feeling of alienation from my own family — never Indian enough, and yet, never white enough, either. This is an experience I would like to further research in relation to critical mixed-race theory, a branch of critical race theory that states that race is a socially constructed phenomenon (Delgado and Stefancic, 9). Furthermore, this is a significant issue for women who are already subjected to the complexities of systemic oppression and socially constructed binaries that redefine their being as “incomplete.” The objective of this research is to suggest a social identifier suitable for those who are biracial to identify with, without making it seem like they are some mathematical equation of a person (i.e., 50% this and 50% that). By analyzing previously written mixed-race theory texts and interviewing mixed-race Indian-European female-identifying individuals, I strive to reach a hypothesis that views these individuals as whole-bodied beings of their own identity.

Research Objectives & Questions

The primary objective of this study is to unalienate mixed-race women of South Asian and European descent living in Canada. Tackling popular concepts of critical mixed-race theory, this paper will analyze the complexities of self-identification and discovery through conversations with mixed-race women, curating a piece rooted simultaneously in equity studies, race studies, and gender studies. My research aims to answer the following questions:

1. How does being multiracial influence our understanding of identity? Is this further impacted by female identification?
2. What does it mean to be “half and half?” How does this language impact these individuals’ feelings of wholeness?
3. Is there a commonality between white-passing mixed-race women and non-white-passing mixed-race women? How does this complicate relationships with our multiple ethnicities?

Methodology

The methodology that I will use to conduct this research will be a literature review and qualitative analysis based on a series of interpersonal interviews.

The literature review will look at theorists' understanding of identity politics in conjunction with critical mixed-race theory. These readings will be academically written and peer-reviewed for utmost accuracy and lack of bias in praxis. Engaging with this material will be the first stage of my research, allowing me to gauge a greater perception of mixed-race theory in preparation for the qualitative analysis. This will be completed in the third and fourth weeks of my research.

For the second phase of research, I will interview mixed-race South Asian-European women living in Canada to gain individualized understandings of how mixed-race people perceive themselves. Focusing on the primary objectives of this research, with expansion based on the literature review, I intend to gain a sense of the “mixed-race identity” through these conversations. I intend to complete these interviews during the first week of my research,

allowing optimal time for me to gather my findings and thereby hypothesize a conclusion to the paper's presented questions.

Research Location

This research will take place in Toronto, Canada, as it is one of the most immigrated cities for those part of the Indian diaspora. Staying in the city will allow me to gain a sense of how diaspora and mixed racialization have affected women's sense of self and identity. As well, given the statistics of Indian immigrants to Canada, there is a greater population of Indian-European women with whom I can discuss this topic, allowing for more precise research.

Ethics Review

Refer to MRHP via research advisor.

Interdisciplinary and/or International Focus

My research is centered around studies of racial theory and gender theory, providing an interdisciplinary view of the intersection of these politics. This piece will dive deeper into topics of diaspora, transnationalism, identity, and racialization to gain foresight beyond the descriptor of "mixed-race." Studying first-generation to second-generation persons of immigration, my research intends to broaden the lens by which we view all mixed-race people, despite its qualitative focus on South Asian-European identifying individuals.

Outcomes

Mixed-race individuals have historically been subjected to conversations that should never be up for debate. Identity politics — meaning, those politics that govern our understanding of ourselves — have drawn implications for such people that thereby diminish and belittle the lives we have lived thus far. As a biracial individual myself, I know firsthand that my own racial identity should not be a topic of conversation, yet I have been subject to such discussions since I was a child. Thus, this research is not to create a third dimension of understanding, but rather to assist mixed-race people in understanding themselves.

Foreseeing the impacts of this research, it is in my highest hopes that this paper generates a connection between mixed-race individuals. Thereby, they may apply my personal theory of identity to their own lives, allowing them to feel more stabilized in their understanding of self. As well, it may broaden the field of mixed-race theory to look at the unique experiences of biraciality, allowing for an interdisciplinary case based on the impacts on identity, attributes of gender, and concepts of transnationalism. This will prove to be beneficial in further studies, as it accounts for an intersection of knowledge that can often go unheard of in light of studies in racial theory.

On a broader scale, this research may aid conversations in identity politics, as previously defined, to allow for an introspective view of these concepts that command our beings. It is my goal that this study will look at what is considerably set in stone (i.e., identity) and open the gaze at which we view it. For it is not a controlling force that begets our person, but rather an amalgamation of experiences that are carefully crafted as per each individual.

Research Supervisor

Ted Sammons, my research advisor, will support this study through in-person meetings (unless extraneous circumstances) on a biweekly basis to review my progress and development through this research. He will advise me throughout my research on the validity of my external sources, develop the critical perspective from which this research is conducted, and propose enhancements to the piece as he sees necessary. Please review the estimated timeline of this research to review the external sources used.

Timeline

June 1st - 14th → Pre-Research

- This period will be used to promote and gather research correspondence for interpersonal interviews, which will be held during the May 18th - 22nd period.
 - I will build my research questions and create a workshop that further develops the study.
- I will familiarize myself with such research methods (i.e., qualitative/quantitative review, people-facing tasks, etc.) to ensure the 6-week research process goes smoothly.
 - This will be done through meetings with my advisor, conversations with academics, and personal research in scholarly sources.

June 15th - 26th → Interviews

- The first half of this period will be dedicated to conducting interviews with approximately 10 Indian-European identifying women with questions curated during the Pre-Research period.

- The second half of this period will involve an interactive workshop that helps these individuals gain a greater sense of their identity and pose questions for me that can further aid my research.
 - This will likely be a social event where individuals get to interact with others of similar heritage and gain an understanding of the multiplicities of mixed-race identities.

June 27th - July 3rd → Quantifying the Results

- This period will be used to translate the findings of the interview period into quantifiable results that may be used in my paper.
 - This will also be a period in which I can conduct a well-developed hypothesis based on my conversations with these mixed-race women.

July 4th - 17th → Literature/Journal Review

- During this period, I will refer to other theorists' writings on mixed-race identity and combine my own findings with their understandings of it.
- Some sources I will refer to include:
 - “Critical Race Theory, Fourth Edition” by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2023)
 - *Re-viewing Race and Mixedness: Mixed Race in Asia and the Pacific* by Zarine L. Rocha (2018)
 - “‘Mixed Race’ Studies: A Reader” edited by Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe (2004)
 - *“Know Whence you Came”: Psychoanalytic Theory, Queer Theory, and the Mixed-Race Experience* by Alexandra P. Jamali & Teresa Méndez (2019)

- *Clinical Sociology and Mixedness: Towards Applying Critical Mixed Race Theory in Everyday Life* by Zarine L. Rocha (2022)
- *A Social Theory of Gender: Connell's Gender and Power* by Zarina Maharaj (1995)

July 18th - 24th → Constructing a Conclusion

- This final period will be used to collect all information gathered in previous portions of this research and reach a conclusion that is simultaneously evidence-based and culturally appropriate.
- I intend for this conclusion to finalize the understanding of identity — whatever that may mean — for mixed-race people and answer the questions proposed by this research.