Experiences of Biracial Female High School Students in the United States

Mustafa Sever[*]

ABSTRACT

Number of biracial marriages is increasing in the United States, so does the number of children with mixed racial heritage. Biracial students constitute a distinct group with unique needs that main-stream multicultural educational agenda does not include. Besides, given the fact that race and identity studies usually focus on either social-historical construction of Blackness or Whiteness in different settings, one can say that mixed race kids are pushed to the periphery of the research agenda. This research sets out to understand how 'biracial' high school students in the United States articulate their schooling, community and family experiences and how peer culture and schooling practices influence the space and racial identity conceptualization of "mixed race" high school students. This research has been grounded on the belief that biracial students constitute a distinct group with unique needs that main-stream multicultural educational agenda does not include. This study is designed as a qualitative, phenomenological study in an attempt to reveal the experiences of biracial students. Seven female students were recruited as the subjects of the study. Snowball sampling technique was adopted as a way of finding research subjects. Semi-structured interview form was adopted as a tool of gathering data. Results show that formation of biracial identity needs to be studied in connection with social class as social class plays an important role on both school choice and schooling practices. In other words, race is nested in social class. At the same time, skin color itself could be very important about how other people see these kids.

Keywords: Biracial students, social class, biracial experience, identity formation.

---

[*] Assist. Prof. Dr., Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Curriculum Development, Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: sever_mustafa@hotmail.com

ABD'de Çift-Irk Lise Öğrencilerinin Deneyimleri

ÖZ

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde farklı ırklardan insanların evliliklerinin sayısı giderek artmaktadır. Buna bağlı olarak iki farklı ırkın özelliklerini taşıyan çocukların sayısı da artmaktadır. Çift ırktan çocuklar anadamar çokkültürlülük eğitim araştırmalarının gündeminde kendilerine yeterince yer bulamıyor. Diğer taraftan, eğitim bağlamında bu çocukların ihtiyaçları diğerlerine göre oldukça farklı olabiliyor. Benzer biçimde, ırk ve kimlik çalışmaları genellikle Siyahlık ve Beyazlık üzerine odaklandığı için yine çiftırktan gelen çocuklar bir anlamda araştırmaların periferisinde kalmaya devam ediyor. Bu araştırma ırksal olarak birden fazla kökenden gelen ve liseye devam eden kız çocuklarının okul, toplum ve aile deneyimlerini nasıl ifade ettiklerine ve okul pratikleri ve akran kültürünün kimliklerinin oluşumuna etkilerini incelemek üzere kurgulanmıştır. Araştırmanın öznelerini liseye devam eden ve farklı ırklardan ebeveynleri olan yedi kız öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Öğrencilere kartopu örneklem tekniği kullanılarak ulaşılmıştır. Araştırmanın verileri yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Bulgular göstermektedir ki çift ırk kimlik oluşumu, sosyal sınıf ile yakından ilişkilidir. Sosyal sınıf, ırksal kimliği çeşitli biçimlerde keserek, öğrencilerin deneyimlerini şekillendirmektedir. Okul seçiminden başlayaral akran kültürü ve diğer okul pratikleri hakkında öğrencilerin ifadelerinden ırkın sosyal sınıfın içine yuvalandığı çıkarabilir. Benzer biçiminde derinin rengini deneyimleri temel olarak niteleyen durumlardan biri olarak karşımıza çıkıyor. Diğer bir anlatımla, derinin rengi açıldıkça anadamar kültür içinde kendine yer açmak da giderek kolaylaşıyor.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Çift-ırktan öğrenciler, sosyal sınıf, çift-ırk deneyimi, kimlik oluşumu.

INTRODUCTION

Schools are the first places for people to select their racial categories formally to determine where they fall in the structure of official identity. For people who can easily find the option matching their racial category in the school forms asking them their racial identity, this might be seen just as, at most, the part of regular state bureaucracy. However, for multiracial and multiethnic children, as Wardle (1999) asserts, the first difficult school-related activity is to fill out official school forms as they cannot locate themselves any of five traditional race categories unless they do not choose to be an "other". This test-minded close enededness tending to underpin differences, if not wholly ratify other-blindness, and hinging on different political motivations manifests itself not only in curricular activities but also in cultural rituals embedded in school practices.

This research has been grounded on the belief that biracial students constitute a distinct group with unique needs that main-stream multicultural educational agenda does not include. Besides, given the fact that race and identity studies usually focus on either social-historical construction of Blackness or Whiteness in different settings, one can say that mixed race kids are pushed to the periphery of the research agenda. To this end, this research is constructed around the research question: "How do 'biracial' high school students in the United States articulate their schooling, community and family experiences? How do peer culture and schooling practices influence the space and racial identity conceptualization of "mixed race" high school students?"

Background

According to Population Reference Bureau research (2010) on racial distribution in the United States, the number of people who identify themselves with more than one race is likely to increase as interracial marriages increase and more people acknowledge their multicultural backgrounds. Results from Census 2010 showed that of the about 308 million people in the United States, 7.3 million or 2.4% of the population indicated their background consisted of more than just one race.

Much of research had been done on biracial kids, particularly 1960s and 1970s, from the pathological point of view. In other words, the assumption is that biracial kids have traumatic experiences related to their mixed race, and we should help them overcome their problems through psychological guidance and/or counseling (Rocquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Brown (1990), for example, lays out the assumption that multiracial individuals will likely have identity problems as a result of their background typically refers to the view that these individuals do not fit neatly into socially defined racial categories and as a result they have trouble determining their position, role, and status in society. In addition to this, biracial kids are more accepted by the minority group that one of their parents may belong, thus they should better identify themselves not with dominant identity in the society but the minority they belong (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995).

Identifying biracial kids with their minority identity has a long history in the United States. The term "one drop" rule was used as a way to decide a person's race. If you have one person in your ancestry who is Black then you are labeled as Black

without any reference to your skin color. Slavers like the idea of "one drop" in order to have more people in the pool to make slaves but ironically at the beginning of the 20th century Blacks used one drop rule in order to increase their number in Civil Rights movements (Valentine, 1995).

According to Omi & Winant (1989) in a modern state, racial formation would occur different then slavery times, however, there are some similarities. At the first stage states support or declare certain laws determining the racial privilege or hegemony. As the scenario continues, popular oppositional movements involves in.

The specific project of the movement is opposed to the project of the state, and only when the movement's project gains much support does the state act. Unable to further ignore the racial movement's project, the racial state responds to the crisis in its trajectory by absorbing, insulating, or repressing the movement. The racial state's response to the crisis, by any of the means above, leads to a rearticulation of the racial hegemony so as to appease the movement (usually by a compromise of projects). This rearticulation of racial hegemony is racial formation (86-87).

Most of the discussions about race and ethnicity in social sciences have been focused on either racial-identity formation of Blacks and Whites or the oppressive practices created through the multiple-performances of White domination/privilege. In other words, researches have tended to "ignore" biracial people and their unique experiences by focusing on only mono-racial experience (Brandell, 1988). Moreover, when it comes to biracialism, small amount of research on biracial people have seen Black-White mixture as the only-exist biracial category due to the historical reasons still going on between African-Americans and Whites in the United States. These tendencies results in exclusion of other biracial people from research agenda (Wilson, 1992). Because of its unique character, on the one hand, race plays and important role on the level of socio-economic status that one can achieve and/or the place in the public institutions. On the other hand, it is very important indicator of the winner of who belongs to where game that might result in social isolation and loosing self-esteem, especially if there is no organized social support network to lean on. Oakes (1985), for example, talks about the differential distribution of knowledge in the United States and how minority students who were poorer than the Whites were placed in lower tracks, therefore, had "bad" education with low expectation tendencies both from the State and teachers. On the same token, the achievement level of biracial students or their place in differential distribution of knowledge might be similar to those race groups with which they were identified or race groups in which they were perceived by the "others". However, we do not have enough data to support this claim (Herman, 2002).

Most of the researches have stayed in the realm of psychological point of view and public opinion, thus, shaped according to these conceptualizations. For example, report released by CNN (2001) based on national surveys of 90,000 middle school and high school students found that young people of mixed race are at higher risk for stress-related health problems. Students who described their race as both Black and White reported as having more difficulties than those who considered themselves solely Black or White.

Kerwin and Ponterotto (1995), from the psychological point of view, developed some recourse for school counselors to help them promote racial identity among

multiracial children. Again they were using the assumption that multi-racial kids are more likely vulnerable than their single race counterparts.

According to Wilson (1987) contrary to the popular stereotype of mixed race people as torn between Black and White, her research showed that many children are happy and secure identities for them as Black mixed race. For her sociological view of mixed race children has come from popular ideas about the problems they are likely to suffer.

Of course, the sociological analysis of the position of mixed race children differs from popular view in its explanation of why the children suffer. Sociology attributes it to white institutional racism, whereas society blames the parental relationship. None the less, the idea that mixed race children suffer from identity confusion is partly derived from prevailing popular wisdom on the subject (p.1).

METHOD

As this study probes the experiences of the biracial high-school students, it was designed as a phenomenological study. Phenomenological study focuses on the meanings derived from experiences of research participants. Phenomenological study directs its attention towards how similar experiences yield meanings and how they come together forming meaning patterns (Creswell, 1997).

Working Group

Working group of this research was gathered through snowball sampling technique of purposive sampling method (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). At the beginning of the research, finding subjects was my main concern because of the fact that it is very hard to locate and find these kids as there are no social gathering places peculiar to mixed-race kids. Moreover, schools also label these kids with one of five traditional race categories making them formally invisible. Thus, looking at the school records would not solve this problem. Instead, I applied a snowball technique by asking friends if they know any mixed race kids who can participate in my research. By the help of my friends, I was able to find seven biracial female high school students. Their racial distribution was; three of them African-American and White; one of them Latino and African-American; one of them Arab and White; two of them Latino and White. It should be also noted that these students were from different schools and their school experiences might be shaped through different institutional cultures and traditions. In addition to this, locations of schools (urban, suburban, inner-city etc), quality of teachers, school management styles, attitudes towards students, technological equipments within schools, student support systems, the percentage of biracial students as well as distribution of races, and peer culture are very important factors on shaping the school experiences. Therefore, I have treated each student's experience as unique because of their various backgrounds and institutional cultures that they were exposed.

Their socio-economic backgrounds are also oscillating between lower class and middle class characteristics. The reason that I used the word "oscillating" to define their cultural and class backgrounds lies behind of two limitations I had during

interviews. First of all, I couldn't simply ask them where they fall into class structure that exists in the United States. Thus, their stories and narrations were the only sources to understand their cultural and class backgrounds. And I do not think that one can perfectly understand one's class background simply by looking at various schooling and family experiences, especially when we think about the complexities that this century brought to our lives. It is really hard to define who belongs to which class even though we have some concrete evidences. In this sense, their tastes, habits, educational backgrounds, and cultural rituals that they engage routinely are more important qualifiers of the places in class structure.

Data Collection

The method that I have employed to conduct data was in-dept interview with semi-structural tendencies. I interviewed each student separately. Most of the interviews have been done in schools that they attend. Durations of the interviews changed according to the willingness level of talk about the subjects that I addressed. The shortest interview took 25 minutes whereas the longest one was 48 minutes. After getting permission to audiotape the interviews and explaining their rights to close tape-recorder whenever they want, I recorded every interview.

Interviewing somebody other than my native language created, as expected, barriers both for me and subjects. In the first couple minutes, we tried to understand each other. But, as the conversation went on we were able to break ices. Sometimes, the stories they wanted to tell and my concerns as a researcher dealing with bordered-issue did not match each other. In these cases, I did not interrupt them. Especially the rhetoric of being different and feeling "cool" about it marked many of my interviews. They usually preferred to talk about general issues embracing "big subjects" and appropriate for "common sense" knowledge by employing some rhetorical instruments such as romanticization and exaggeration. Speaking on behalf of every single "biracial" person sometimes shadowed their individual perspectives and stories. So, instead of opening their "private" to the public, some of them preferred to be in the safe side by making their experience collective. But, I developed my own strategies to overcome these difficulties. I, for example, did not follow the order of questions. I tried to connect related question to the story embedded at the spur of conversation.

Data Analysis

After conducting my data through individual interviews, I transcribed them verbatim. First, in order to see the complete picture of the life stories and understand how it is look like being biracial from "biracial" vantage point, I have deleted my voice from the interviews and tried to write personal stories for each subject. This helped me to see if there is any pattern related to being biracial, that these kids share. I could not find any common pattern in terms of experiencing biracialism. But, it should also be noted that reactions and/or behavioral patterns of communities that these children are living in were pretty much looked same to me. However, they have developed different overcoming strategies specific to their contexts.

Having some general ideas about their various experiences with schooling and community, I defined general themes emerged from overall readings. I coded every interview with "nodes" by keeping in mind my general themes. After then, I put these "nodes" as anchors under the themes that they qualify best. I read the nodes and general themes respectively and tried to understand what these kids wanted to tell me. Besides, I tried to develop alternative "above reading" methods as there is no contemporary theoretical approach other than 80 years old "Marginal Man" by Parks (1928) to help me to construct my framework..

Scarcity of data, on the other hand, did not allow me to talk about every issue that I predicted to cover. As it is mentioned by many qualitative researchers (Bogdan & BikLen, 1998), generalizations are almost impossible from qualitative researches for many cases, particularly from the small-scale studies like this one. But, it would be helpful to underscore some individual experiences both to open a paving way for future researches and to formulate "intellectual generalizations" that opens the way to ask an intellectual questions: "If it happens in that context, why can not be here?" or "how about here?" Shortly, I tried to highlight some important points that might be the most influential in their lives by keeping the anxiety of necessity to stick broader question.

I have eliminated many data during analysis process because, some issues such as talking about other peoples' experiences, experiences with school personnel, or personal characteristics of certain teachers did not make sense or point to me. Besides, I tried to stay away from acting as a discourse analyst who is looking for hidden meanings behind every sentence or word. Psychological analysis also has been seemed to me always dangerous in sociological research, so, whenever I feel that the

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Who am I? Identity Formation, Family and Class

What constitutes identity? What are the factors that shape, (re)produce, assimilate it? Along with the emergence of modernization theories, every single social scientist focused on those or similar questions. It is simply the answer to the question "Who are you?" But, what makes it this much important is not the answer itself but putting one piece of identity at the top of other pieces which constitute it (In this sense, the term identity itself refers to a schizophrenic situation) and looking at the world from that vantage point. It is assumed that the way you define yourself affects the way you see the world and making meaning from what you have seen. I asked my subjects who they are:

> "I m living in ..... I am a freshman. My dad is from .... My mother is from ...." (Amy)

> "My mom is from ... and my dad is from ... I am Porto Rican in blood." (Betty)

> "I am African American and Latino. My dad's family is half Latino." (Emma)

> "I am a freshman. My dad is from .... My mom is from .... I am half American and half Arabian." (Christine)

It was really interesting that these girls define themselves with their family [racial] backgrounds at the first hand. This might be related to my previous explanations about the research that I am conducting and the purposes of the interviews before conversation. They might want to help me to understand their racial background. But, if they do not, then it would be fair to say that being a biracial occupies a considerable space in their identity perceptions. They did not give me specific information about their families and the neighborhood that they live, though, I asked couple of times. They preferred to parry these questions with simple answers:

> *"My dad is high school graduate, and he is mechanic." (Dorothy)*

> *"I am from ..... It is a cool place to live. Everybody helpful, I like to live there." (Emma)*

I should exclude Marilyn from other girls here. Because, she is attending private high school and has many privileges because of her mother and father. Her parents are educated and most importantly she has white skin, even though she is from Black-White family.   And she was very articulate about her family and neighborhood:

> *"I have been in the private school all my life, I am sixteen, I play basketball, I have two brothers. My mother is college graduate and working at ... I am living in East side of ..., It is predominantly African-American neighborhood and much more better than ... I like to live there. I know everybody, everybody knows me." (Marilyn)*

I asked background questions at the beginning of the interviews and now I can see that it was not a good idea. This is because, such important questions should be asked after mutual trust has been provided between us. The shortness of answers and lack of specificity made me think about this way. When I asked what they think about their racial identity, situation has changed:

> *"I like being [biracial] that is like... less people know it though. Because if you see my mom you'll think I have to be white. But I am Spanish. I guess, it is since I don't speak Spanish a lot or because I don't have an accent like most Porto Ricans do, then may be like either she is like white and black, or she is just black and acts like black. but I like being mixed. And I make sure it is known. I don't like to be judged as something else. If you are gonna judge me you have to know who I am or what I am." (Betty)*

> *"...not a lot of people know, they just think I am white. They don't believe it. I always have to prove it. They don't believe me. So I have to speak Arabic or what..." (Christine)*

> *"Usually like, first they think she has to be black, ok she is white. And they see my mom like ooo I didn't know you're white...and I am like no she is all Latino. She is a slight ..... if you are figured out who you are, what people thinking doesn't matter anyway." (Emma)*

However some of them kept the same attitudes:

"You know, I am what I am." (Amy)

It is really hard to tell to what extent their families played a role in their racial identity formation. But, it is seen clearly that mothers have bigger impacts on kids no matter their races are. In other words, mothers are "primary" parents in their narrations. Through the advices or the experiences they had, mothers take the role of preparing kids for future as a biracial person. Common themes in narrations about the mothers' advices are to stay away from trouble and have a pride of being biracial.

"My mom always tells me to proud being mixed." (Gloria)

"My mama it is like, don't tell anything, don't say anything to anybody even if you know it is not true. even if it's your cousin and they are talking about her, because I don't want you to get in that stuff. Somebody else will have a problem with you, don't say it." (Betty)

"...don't be a follower failure. Just because your friends are doing it, don't do it. If your friend fall down from ... bridge, will you do this? That's what she always tells to me." (Amy)

"...watch out what you do, because everything you do will come back to you." (Dorothy)

Not surprisingly biracial marriage especially African-American and White would not receive a warm welcome by some families. One mother has traumatic experience with her husband's family and this must have affected family deeply that it came up during the conversation.

"My mom had more of trouble with it. Because my grandparents had… they are like strict like catholic. When she first had my oldest brother, it was more difficult, my grandmother I guess she used to say stuff about African-Americans like called them stuff like where are they from like they called them like ………it wasn't so much problem with my grandmother. ..... it wasn't so much of a problem with my grandmother stuff. My dad's family, they love us. My grandma loves my mom, she is their daughter, you know. But; me and grandma, I didn't have any problem with being biracial. It wasn't a big issue, because I have multicultural friends anyway." (Gloria)

When it comes to relations with fathers, kids were more critical. Again, Marilyn is the only exception:

"I've just talked to them it's nothing when I was talking, he was watching football It's pathetic." (Christine)

"He is very stricted with my grades. My mom is too, but he is worst. "When I was at your age I've got a 90 at average, why not you?" (Dorothy)

"Everybody is scared of my dad. They won't come over. Everybody is scared of him." (Betty)

"My dad always help me and understand, my mom help him to understand. He does not much to say my life. He is not strict at all." (Marilyn)

What these data basically tell me is that class is very important factor on kids life no matter their races are. Traditional division of labor within families, mother is responsible from kids and their schools (as an experimental leader of the family) whereas father is considered as bread-winners (as an instrumental leader of the family), is still valid for working class or lower class families. In this traditional structure, mothers are supposed to be primary parents for their kids. That's why in nearly every narration mothers came up as advisors, protectors or responsible of everything related to children. Marilyn as the only affluent kid does not have any conflict with her father. Her class background should have kept her away from this situation. Shortly, I can say that class background is as influential in identity formation as the race is.

"I am trying to be better!" School and Peer Culture

Schools as the primary sites to come into contact with public sphere and most of the times only bargaining places with society are the main determiners of the socio-economic status level that one can reach. But, it is not enough to attend to school and get high grades in order to reach high socio-economic status. You have to find right school, located at the right place, with right family background. When I asked to students why/how they choose the schools they attend:

"I lived in Buffalo first, then we moved out here. This is the public school. So that is how I end up here, because Buffalo was too dangerous for us. Shooting like because we lived in west side, so many shooting… And my mom and my dad both at once to get about here. So we moved out here, because my dad's parents are living here." (Betty)

"I resisted my mom… But she said it is a school of mixture. I mean it is not just like going to the frontier school with one race basically." (Emma)

"Yep, it's like you are going to apply to a job. And, then a different and you enter a school that's like your whole life. You are gonna feel like comfortable. That how I see it." (Christine)

"I have never been in Public schools. Teachers pay more attention, in other schools, public schools they don't as much as they do here. My teachers help me a lot with my courses. …My mother chose this school. It's racially balanced and everybody is so nice." (Marilyn)

"I don't even know. I've just came to schoo.l" (Amy)

It seems to me that families decided to send their kids to the schools in which they will act comfortably. Their race has played an important in school choice. But

this is not true for all kids. After looking at data about school choice, I am a little bit confused about how to read them because of dilemma that I still have. Schools that these kids are attending can be defined as "working class" schools because of their locations and physical conditions that I have witnessed, except for Marilyn's school. So, why do these kids attend these schools? Because, are these schools multiracial, safer and comfortable as they suggested? Or because, are these schools match their class backgrounds perfectly as they are living close neighborhoods showing similar class characteristics?

I couldn't get much information about their level of success in comparison to other kids. But five out of seven hate natural sciences, be it math, physics or chemistry. This might be a speculation but this made me think about their abstract thinking skills, I remained with the question that Basil Bernstein put thirty years ago. If they hate these classes then they most probably are not successful in those. I came to this conclusion because, when we compare the classes they like and teachers they admire they perfectly match each other:

> *"I was always like pretty good in English. I like poetry. I like the English teacher most." (Emma)*

> *"I like art. It is fun. I hate math. I mean it's not like you really have to show when you are doing it and the teacher is cool." (Christine)*

> *"...science is boring, I like global class and its teacher, it is like learning other people, stuff like that." (Gloria)*

When I asked them if they are considered themselves as successful students, answers barely came up from their mouths: *I am not bad; I am ok; I am trying.*

When it comes to peer relations in schools, children have different experiences. But especially two of them were really interesting that shows the difficulties these kids might have:

> *"What I don't like about school is because everyone is mixed, they talk so much. If you are not all black, all black girls are starting to make comments. Even my friends… Since I am not all black, I can't review the bus schedule because only all black people can review bus schedule. I am like c'mon, be serious." (Emma)*

> *Gloria: They just throw stuff and say stuff*
> *Mustafa: What did they say?*
> *Gloria: Shut up you white girl!*
> *Mustafa: Were they black girls?*
> *Gloria: Yeah. Some stupid… some of them was half, that is the funniest part*

Although in Marilyn's school story was completely different:

> *"There is cliques but everybody gets along I know everybody, I have some girls, we sit together to eat lunch but after than we go and talk to everybody. There is no problem between people." (Marilyn)*

They do not have any problems with teachers in general. I did not hear any negative expressions about them. However, dislike that they developed towards some classes may influence their perception about the teachers in charge. I think that this is not peculiar to certain classes, gender, or race; rather it should be thought and framed within the general psychological state of human being.

"...Most of the teachers are open-minded about that stuff." (Betty)

"I think it's just all about your attitude in class. I mean I do my work. I am quiet, I mean I can be quiet, and then they are nice." (Amy)

Future with the Magical Stick

I knew that it would be really hard to imagine the future without thinking about it for sometime. That's why I decided to ask their future perceptions by employing magical stick metaphor. I first asked them where they would want to be ten years later, if someone gives them the opportunity to go there. I also explained them that they do not need to go to college or university or struggle with other parts of life etc. all they need to do just imagine. By doing this I wanted to create sort of a relief from the future anxiety that they have to wrestle nearly every single day. They, of course, knew the cost of being somewhere important. But, instead of beginning with "what if", I gave them the opportunity to dream about their futures:

"In a small apartment in New York City listening to classical music or reading my favorite poets, I've read Winston Hughes, Pablo Neruda, Emily Dickinson, Shakespeare." (Dorothy)

"...big house, nice cars. I just wanna see me wealthy and married with children. Probably a hygienist." (Christine)

"I don't know I just know that I want to have a job that actually helps people which have like addictions or cancer, that actually can benefit other people. I don't want a nice car, big house, lots of money. It would be good. but even if I can't get that far I wanna make sure that like my mom and my family said to me they don't have too much to worry about and just to be happy." (Betty)

Their future perceptions did not tell me anything other than common dreaming of that age group. But, when I used the same method to ask them what they would want to change if they have the opportunity, I got really interesting answers.

"My mom, she is an American. She is like I can date boys, wear shorts, and talk to boys on the phone..... a lot of things. Like kids do at this age. But my dad is strict, he does not allow me to wear shorts, I can not go out Because I can't take it, because I have all these friends, they wanna do something. But I can't do anything maybe, every other weekend I can go out. I've been like this for a long time. I just wanna change my dad, but I can't change who he is. I wanna change the way he acts. I like be who I am. He is too strict."

"...everybody is scared of my dad. They won't come over. Everybody is scared of him." (Christine)

"I wouldn't change anything. On holidays, we go to my mom's or dad's family. Or if we just have to, we go to one of our brother's house so that my dad's family or my mom's family can come. But my mom's and dad's family got really close over these years, because of the circumstances. I wouldn't change my family. If I could change, I would change the fact that my mom's got all that troubles, when she was young. That's it." (Gloria)

CONCLUSION

Race is not a big issue in many parts of the world as it is in the United States. Although there are historical issues behind, this research helped me to see very important fact that we usually do not think about it deeply, that is, the effect of visual culture. In daily life, your race is not determined with your culture or ethnic identity etc. but your skin color. It is really hard to find this much black and white people living together in other parts of the world. This makes the United States unique among other nations. My subjects, for example, who have white skins, did not have any problem with being biracial until they tell people. On the other hand, brown skins could get an acceptance neither from Whites nor Blacks. This may seem as biological determinism at the first look but daily life puts its own rules and people do not get into your blood type or culture by only looking at you, particularly in the country in which "seeing is believing" is the dominant philosophical stance towards incidents. Departing from the basic assumption "What you see is what you get", one can argue that problems around race accumulated around the skin color in daily life surrounding biracial children. This does not mean that they do not have institutional and cultural problems related to biracialism. I claim that they have much less problems especially in public settings then their colored peers. In other words, skin color has the potential of increasing and alleviating the pains that these kids might have.

My subjects also showed me that class still matters. Affluent kids no matter their racial identity find the way to drive their cars in every condition whereas their poor counterparts have to walk all the time without any guidance or support. (Although, it does not matter how rich you are, if you have black skin you are subject to stigmatized with millions of stereotypes fabricated to make you inferior) This may sound like romanticization, but it is also the reality of millions of people. Turning back to my first claim, it is apparent that chancing everybody's skin color to white will not solve the problem, only hide it. And I do not believe that training professionals about the unique needs of biracial kids will contribute the solution. New policies, new approaches, new instruction methods, new managers, I do not think any of these will help to lift social inequalities. Therefore, I believe that social inequalities fueled with relentless market economy are the results of class stratification. If you are more vulnerable and have any weakness such as your skin color or ethnic identity, you are subject to become the first brick to be stepped on in order to reach higher floors of richness and wealth or the victim of any kind of political project. The only solution come to my mind is simply "equality", without any reservation

REFERENCES

Bogdan, R. & Bilken, S. (1998). Fieldwork. *In Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and methods.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Brandell, J. R. (1988). Treatment of the biracial child: Theoretical and clinical issues. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 18,* 176–187.

Creswell, J. (1997) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions,* New York, Sage. Publicationshttp://www.cnn.com/2003/EDUCATION/11/01/mixed.race.ap/

Herman, M. (2002). *The Black-White-Other Test Score Gap: Academic Achievement among Mixed Race Adolescents*, Institute for Policy Research, www.northwestern.edu/IFPR

Kerwin, K., & Ponterotto, J. G. (1995). Biracial identity development. In J. G. Ponterotto,J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multiculturalcounseling* (pp. 199-217). Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.

Oakes, J. (1985). The Distribution of Knowledge. In R. Arum & I. Beattie *The Structure of Schooling: Readings in the Sociology of Education* (pp.224-234). California: Mayfield Publishing Co.

Omi M. & Winant H.(1989). *Racial Formation in the United States*, NY: Routledge.

Rocquemore, K. and D. Brunsma (2002). *Beyond Black: Biracial Identity in America*, California, Sage Publications.

U.S. Bureau of Census. (2010). *Mapping census 2010: The geography of U.S. diversity*. Washington, DC: www.census.gov

Wardle, F. (1999). Children of Mixed Race no Longer Invisible, *Educational Leadership,* 57 (4) pp.68-72.

Wilson A. (1987). *Mixed Race Children*, London, Allen & Unwin.

Wilson, T. (1992). Blood quantum: Native American mixed bloods. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *Racially mixed people in America* (pp. 108–125). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Valentine, G. (1995). Shades of gray: The conundrum of color categories. *Teaching Tolerance*, 49, 47.