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Rachael C. Jackson

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Analyzing the Depictions of the Multiracial Child Character in Children's Media

by

Rachael C. Jackson

Thesis

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Thesis Committee:

Amanda Allen, PhD, Chair

Ramona Caponegro, PhD

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Abstract

The 2000 U.S. Census is the first in which a person could mark more than one racial identification box. Acknowledging this identity marks progress by recognizing an underserved population, but the media lags behind in the representation of Multiracial people in texts. My analysis of contemporary media examples (1) has the capacity to initiate conversations about the bigger social implication of race and diversity in the media; (2) sheds light on the rarity of Multiracial characters and the ways in which Multiracial characters are depicted; (3) suggests that greater access to Multiracial characters is granted to older audiences; (4) recognizes that hegemonic media studios control what media gets produced. This work is essential in continuing to give a voice to underserved characters since little can be done to induce change and increase production of texts that showcase Multiracial characters if few even question or acknowledge that such a lack exists.

Definition of Terms

While I provide operational definitions for terms in the context of how they will be used in this thesis, the very nature of words means that their individual definitions are socially constructed, situational, and always evolving. Before going into my analysis, I immediately recognize the challenge in selecting terms that I think most accurately define my work, and note that others may be more familiar with different definitions for these terms. I have selected the following words based on their common usage in scholarship, my familiarity with these words, and my interactions in the world. Even though these words are helpful in clarifying my scholarship, they are also a hindrance, positioning both the reader and the writer in a specific time, forcing them to focus through a specific “filtered” lens. All of the terms I have selected relate to racial/ethnic classifications in the vast spectrum of societal labeling. In constituting the words often used to describe differences and similarities among racial/ethnic groups, I run the risk of inadvertently pitting one against the other, but I do hope to avoid making generalizations about particular racial/ethnic groups. This undertaking positions me, as a writer, with the near-impossible task of presenting one definition for words that are socially constructed, and as such are always changing, and are limiting in that at any moment they can shift into another definition. Additionally, society places judgment values on words, labeling them good, bad, politically correct, empowering, pejorative, demeaning, and so on; however, even these labels demonstrate the limitations of words and how people react to them. Consider the evolution of the terms used to refer to people of multiple heritages/multiple races: colored, mutt, mud people, half-breed, biracial, multiracial, and mixed. The judgment placed on words extends to when referring to people of multiple heritages and carry a range of assigned values.

<i>Biracial</i>	Refers to an individual whose biological parents are of two different racial/ethnic groups.
<i>Color (Black, White)</i>	Skin color has been one of the most significant identifiers in discussions about race in the United States. I do use the terms Black and White throughout my work, when referring to Americans of either Black African or White European ancestry instead of African American/European American. I do not use the terms “Yellow” or “Red” which are frequently viewed as pejorative when referring to those of Asian or Native American ancestry.
<i>Ethnicity</i>	A category of people who identify with each other based on common ancestral, social, or cultural experiences.
<i>Immigrant</i>	A person who enters a foreign country and resides there permanently. As I explain later in this thesis, the character of Vijay Patel is Indian-American. I use the hyphen to indicate that he is an American immigrant, as opposed to his Multiracial son, Sanjay Patel, who was born in the United States.
<i>Interracial friendship</i>	A friendship that exists between multiple individuals, each of who are of different racial/ethnic identities. In <i>Hey Arnold!</i> , the

White protagonist Arnold is best friends with a Black character named Gerald. The friendship between these two characters is evidence of a multiracial cast, but not of a Multiracial character.

Interracial relationship

An affectionate/physical/sexual relationship between people, each of who are of a different racial/ethnic identity. In *Sanjay and Craig*, the Indian-American Vijay Patel is married to the White American Darlene Patel.

Miscegenation

The sexual relationship between people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. In the United States anti-miscegenation laws were imposed with the fallacious belief of racial/ethnic supremacy, claiming that racial/ethnic mixing could lead to physical and developmental abnormalities.

Multicultural

Refers to several cultural or ethnic groups interacting. *Multicultural* can refer to a group of diverse people interacting with one another, or refer to an individual person of multiple cultures. In *Hey Arnold!*, the Multiracial character of Phoebe Heyerdahl is multicultural because although she is an American, her family acknowledges and celebrate their Japanese heritage.

Multiracial/ Mixed race Refers to a specific individual who has biological parents of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. This term is currently one of the most popular and is often interchanged with *Mixed race*.

multiracial Refers to a group of individuals of varying racial/ethnic backgrounds interacting with one another. *Sanjay and Craig* is one example of a multiracial show because Sanjay (Multiracial), Megan (White), and Hector (White) are all friends.

Nationality Refers to a person who belongs to a particular nation. *Nationality* and racial/ethnic difference are sometimes interchanged unintentionally. Although the character of Kyo Heyerdahl in *Hey Arnold!* is of Asian descent, the audience is meant to view Kyo as American.

Race Remains the most difficult of these terms to attempt to define. A word that has changed drastically since the science community initially used *race* to classify various organisms, plants, and animals. Instead of a people with shared interests, habits, or characteristics, *race* has come to be referred to as a measure of nationality, ethnicity, skin color, and difference.

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Personal Background and Interest

I begin this thesis by explaining my interest in analyzing depictions of Multiracial characters in children's media and sharing some of my own experiences as a Multiracial person. When I was younger I rarely saw characters that were in "my image" in films and television programs. Even today, there are an insufficient number of Multiracial characters in media to support the growing Multiracial population. My interest in this study stems from a personal desire to examine societal influences that have largely ignored portrayals of Multiracial characters in media.

I was raised in a fairly diverse college town surrounded by friends of many racial/ethnic backgrounds. As such, I never thought that race would be the main identifier that other people would use when meeting me. However, at a certain age, questions about my racially ambiguous features started, and as I have gotten older, these questions have persisted and occurred more frequently.

At some point I became distinctly aware that some of my life experiences were unique. I now realize that not all people are asked, "What are you?" on a consistent basis, or bullied for "acting" one race when they are indeed Multiracial, or forced to pick one defining race to comfort others.

The first time that I remember questioning racial difference occurred when I was in elementary school. At that time, I was unaware that I was doing so. I asked my mother something to the effect of "Why don't I look like you?" I cannot remember why I was curious, perhaps, because children often question things that they do not know, and, as a child, it seemed an acceptable question. Her response to my question simply confused me. She just started crying.

In high school, there was one group of girls that would berate me for trying to “act white.” They judged me for “talking white,” questioned my taste in friends, commented on my hair, and stated that they had “seen my mother.” The behavior of these girls made me very uncomfortable, since I had never knowingly tried to “act” as another race, and I am not sure that I would even know how to do such a thing.

One day, during my time as an undergraduate student at Michigan State University, I was taking the elevator from the sixth floor to the main lobby. On the fourth floor the doors opened and a middle-aged woman joined me in the elevator. After a moment the woman looked at me and asked, “What are you?” After a moment of hesitation, and years of hearing that question, I knew she was referring to my race. I responded, “I’m Mixed.” A Cheshire cat smile spread across her face, like she had solved a riddle, or answered the one million dollar question. She continued, “Yeah, I could tell just from looking at you that you were.” Fortunately, by the time she was saying these last few words the elevator doors opened. I nodded and went on my way.

My Multiracial heritage does not bother me. I’ve always accepted and have kind of been proud of my Multiracial heritage. What does bother me is when year after year; people—strangers—think that it is okay to ask, “What are you?” It’s aggravating to encounter a person who refuses to accept my answer, who rolls her eyes and says, “Well, *obviously*, but what are you mixed with?” Even if a person suspects me of being Multiracial, why should these strangers, who I will most likely never even see again, think that it is appropriate to approach someone this way?

Introduction

Despite the drastically growing percentage of interracial couples and Multiracial people in the United States, our society still struggles to represent these people in film, television, and literature as frequently as other minority groups, and nowhere near as frequently as non-minority (White) groups. When interracial relationships and/or Multiracial people are shown, society tends to criticize the characters and those media forces that portray them, highlight the unnatural (even comical) nature of these relationships and characters, and push the Multiracial characters into “passing” as monoracial characters. Forcing Multiracial and Multiethnic persons to conform to larger racial groups for the ease of mind of others is a form of “selective exclusion.” This idea of exclusion is suggested by author Stephanie Greco Larson in *Media & Minorities*, writing that, “Through ‘selective exclusion’ racial minorities are included in film in a way that constrains or misrepresents them... Omitting differences is not only inaccurate, since the cultures, languages, histories, and dominant physical attributes among these group vary, but it conveys the impression that the only ‘important’ thing about minorities is the fact that they are racially ‘marked’; in other words, that they lack ‘whiteness’”(Larson 16). My observations suggest that many studios have chosen to avoid the possibility of negative consumer reactions by limiting their portrayals of Multiracial individuals. I argue that this phenomenon of overlooking Multiracial characters has stayed relatively consistent over time, and note that changes are often so minuscule that they are barely recorded.

The U.S. Census may now recognize Multiracial individuals, but influential media forces are slow to follow suit. When I refer to the media, I speak specifically of the “Big Six” media corporations in the United States. The Big Six are composed of Paramount Pictures,

Sony, Universal Studios, Walt Disney, Warner Bros. Pictures, and 20th Century Fox. With all the resources, actors, and money available to them, these media conglomerates are able to produce films in most genres and aim them toward nearly every age group. With years of experience these studios have established reputations for attracting large audiences and profiting from those audiences. As instruments of society, these dominant producers of media, entertainment, and education influence the meanings and messages in the everyday lives of viewers, and thus contribute to the continuation of a hegemonic media structure. I do not attempt to position the media as a scapegoat in this study, and to clarify, I do acknowledge that a range of factors including history, politics, regulations, and viewer reception all contribute to what and how images move from the creation process into the American mainstream of media. With that disclosure noted, my primary objective for this thesis is to contribute to a particularly underserved field of scholarship, one which addresses the Multiracial child character in children's media.

Released in 1965, Dr. Nancy Larrick's article, "The All White World of Children's Books" is often cited as one of the most prominent studies examining race in children's books. Although not the first study of its kind, the results of Larrick's study shed light on the appallingly low number of multicultural (non-White/diverse) children's books available, and the scarce depictions of characters in such books. Larrick's study has since inspired additional research about minorities in children's books and the production forces associated with these texts. Such research inspires Chaudri Amina, whose *The Skin We're In* reports the findings of an extensive literary analysis of children's books pertaining to "mixed race" (as

classified by the Library of Congress).¹ She notes a dramatic shift in the late 1990s with increased numbers of children's books that include "mixed race" characters: "Of the 157 titles I found, only 3 were published before 1996" (Amina 8), with 89% published after 1998. Larrick and Amina's work addressing minorities in children's literature is valuable because children's literature is one of the greatest sources of children's media.¹ Amina's work, of course, directly focuses on the Multiracial identity in literature, but Chaundhri and Teale (2013) pointedly note that, "In general, the body of research in multicultural literature makes only sporadic or tangential mention of mixed race issues. Yokota & Frost, (2002/2003), Smith (2001), Sands-O'Connor (2001), and Reynolds (2009) have written about multiracial characters in literature." Across the board, production of texts with Multiracial characters is increasing—slowly, albeit mostly in texts for older audiences. Amina uses the work of Rudine Sims Bishop as a framework in constructing the following categories to explain the depictions of "mixed race" characters in children's literature:

- Mixed Race In/Visibility: biracial identity is source of external or internal conflict.
- Mixed Race Blending: biracial identity marked but inconsequential to story.
- Mixed Race Awareness: recognition of biracial heritage, complex negotiation with credible resolutions. (Amina 12)

These categories are well suited for Amina's analysis but present issue in my own examination. I have decided that it would be difficult to use Amina's categories given the few examples that I recognize in my study and with the explanation that little is indeed known about *how* the Multiracial characters that I am addressing identify. Also, instead of

¹ For this study, I use the term Multiracial when referring to persons/characters of more than one race. Though these terms are often used interchangeably, for the sake of consistency I note the difference in terms used, and I use quotation marks just once when referring to Amina's work with mixed race characters.

being able to examine a physical text and read words, much of my own analysis comes from the interpretation of visual medias, sometimes giving the viewer less information about how the characters perceive and are perceived by others.

As I suggest that “mixed” race characters are more visible in texts for older audiences I point to contemporary young adult literature and live-action television programs for older audiences as texts that depict Multiracial characters. These examples of books with Multiracial characters include Matt de La Peña’s *Mexican WhiteBoy* (2008), Chris Crutcher’s *Whale Talk* (2001), and Sarah Jamila Stevenson’s *The Latte Rebellion* (2011), to name a few.² Live-action sit-coms for adult and young adult audiences with Multiracial characters include *Heroes* (2006-2010), *Parenthood* (2010-present), and *Sullivan and Son* (2012-present). Taking more accurate data about racial identification collected within the last two decades into account, texts that include Multiracial individuals remains limited. My choice to examine and analyze texts from film and television leads me to employ scholarship from a variety of fields, including: children’s literature, cultivation theory, media studies, critical race theory, and reception theory.

Despite the few percentage of texts with Multiracial characters, there seems to be a trend and near infatuation with racial ambiguity and unrecognizable racial features. This trend is noted by Cathy Irwin when she states that when, “skimming through fashion magazines, I have found models and artists—Keanu Reeves (Hawaiian, Chinese, White), Mariah Carey (Black, Venezuelan, White), Johnny Depp (Cherokee, White), to name a few—with features that suggest mixed-race heritages. People with ambiguous racial features are hot commodities!” (Irwin 172). It appears that Irwin is making a distinction between what

is viewed and what is inferred, by suggesting that (racial) ambiguity is prevalent, but only when separated from an established Multiracial identity. Several actors of Multiracial heritages have come to the forefront of the Hollywood blockbuster scene and proven to be positive role models, although their race may not always be portrayed in the characters they play.³ Irwin continues by expressing the unsettling way in which these artists are unable to self-identify as Multiracial, writing that “people of mixed race also unsettle mainstream American culture—if they use their voices and bodies to speak against systems of classification that pigeonhole them into monoracial categories” [emphasis in original] (Irwin 172). Irwin’s argument recognizes that society thinks that Multiracial individuals should be seen and not heard. While racial ambiguity is acceptable, even desirable, speaking out and choosing to voice one’s racial identity is inappropriate. It appears that doing so, even at the level of celebrity, can cause controversy. Many scholars note and question the decisions of celebrities who have chosen to either vehemently accept a non-Multiracial identity (Halle Barry), share their Multiracial identity (Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson), or acknowledge their Multiracial identity but do not go into specifics about heritage (Vin Diesel).

The recent popularity of ambiguous features and interest in the unidentifiable is reminiscent of Edward Said’s work in *Orientalism*, published in 1979. Said proposes that Western society’s fascination with the unknown in the East was largely due to the West’s patronizing ignorance of Eastern society. The West viewed the East as a place of mystery, and often romanticized civilizations of the East as exotic, different, and ‘Other.’ My suggestion that a contemporary fascination with ambiguity relates to Said’s work is supported by author Belen Fernandez’s observation that: “The exoticisation of the ‘Other’ is

a subtler component of Western hegemony, comprised of caricatures that are premised on and reinforce a denial of indigenous agency” (Al Jazeera). In this thesis indigenoussness refers to an intranational population who are still perceived as Other: Multiracial Americans. The agency of Multiracial Americans has often been ignored, as has their ability to openly express a non-dominant racial identity by not being caricatured as tragic mulattos.

Western society’s near hypocritical ability to support the racial ambiguous but disregard an established Multiracial (Other) identity seems strange, but has been one of the motivations for celebrities and other well known public figures in speaking out. By speaking out, as noted in Cathy Irwin’s argument that the voicing of a Multiracial identity challenges hegemonic powers one can then see validity when a Multiracial person shares their Multiracial identity. In “*Mixing Races: From Scientific Racism to Modern Evolutionary Ideas*, author Paul Lawrence Farber acknowledges that:

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, celebrities of mixed-race ancestry attracted increased media coverage of interracial marriage.

Tiger Woods declared that he was not ‘black’ but was of ‘mixed race,’ and during the presidential campaign of 2008, Barack Obama frequently mentioned his white mother (from Kansas) and black father (from Kenya).

(Farber 1)

Obama is aware of his Multiracial background, accepts his Multiracial heritage, but still identifies as Black/African American. Obama’s choice was made evident in the 2010 census with Obama’s decision to check one racial identification box, “the box that says “Black, African Am., or Negro” (Smith). Generally, this choice to identify as a particular race is due to personal experiences, the time period in which a person is raised, and political influences

that contribute to how a society classifies its member, and how a person perceives him/herself.

The ability to classify and label others is often used as a framework to create distinctions between groups of people and/or build relationships. The concern with one's physical appearance, race, and blood has been a topic of concern since pre-colonial America, through the era of the Civil Rights Movement, and even in contemporary society. This concern was articulated in the one-drop rule, a sanction that a person with any amount of African blood was to be considered "negro." The one-drop rule was also relegated to Multiracial-White individuals and non-White Multiracial individuals, including those of Native American, Asian, and Latino descent. In A. D. Powell's *"Passing" For Who You Really Are: Essays in Support of Multiracial Whiteness,* Powell asserts that the one drop rule was stigmatized, particularly by Whites in the South, noting that "The main victims of 'one drop' mythology have been the mixed-blood descendants of 'whites' (however that is defined) and those blacks from the American ethnic group that was formerly enslaved in the United States (predominately [sic] in the South)" (Powell 33). The idea of the one drop victim suggested by Powell is substantiated by the enforcement of Jim Crow laws as evident in the Louisiana based *Plessy v. Ferguson* case (1896).⁴ In "Remaking the Color Line: Social Bases and Implications of the Multiracial Movement," scholar Kimberly DaCosta writes, "The one-drop principle of racial classification received state sanction through the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision in 1896...Homer Plessy, seven-eighths white (an 'octoroon') by ancestry and with a white-looking appearance, made that fact known while seated in a whites-only

⁴ Jim Crow laws refer to legalized racial segregation practices that were enforced from 1876 until 1965 to keep non-whites and whites separated. The "separate but equal" pretense suggested that non-whites would have similar facilities, treatment, and accommodations as white but that rarely happened.

railroad car” (DaCosta 6). The decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* case would not be overturned until fifty-eight years later, following the ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and it would still be another 114 years after the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case before Multiracial individuals would be recognized on their own terms.

Results from the most recent census have shown social and political growth in our country, but have also allowed us to recognize the history of race as a shaping force in policies, society, and entertainment. The 2010 U.S. Census is significant because it is the first census in which a person could mark more than one racial identification box and have those identities be recognized by the U.S. government. The ability for an individual to self-identify as Multiracial is significant because it allows the government to recognize an ill documented demographic. This instrumental data should allow the government to more accurately depict the current state of race in the nation. Project RACE (Reclassify All Children Equally) reports that “over nine million people; 9,009,073 [checked two or more racial identification boxes on the 2010 Census] according to the Census Bureau, which is 2.9 percent of the population of people who received a form, filled it in, and returned it” (Project Race). This number of respondents in the initial year of availability provides quantitative results that demonstrate that a unique racial identity may exist amongst persons of multiple heritages. When looking at the 9,009,073 figure, one must also consider that these only account for people who chose to mark more than one box, not necessarily all persons who are multiracial. For some individuals, racial identity has been a choice based on their value system, their experiences, and how they perceive the problematic issues of race in U.S. history.

Some might argue that acknowledging a Multiracial identity can be empowering for those Multiracial individuals, but others hold a different view. Afrocentrist Molefi Kete Asante expresses his distaste for and irritation with the popularized Multiracial identity and the organizations that have campaigned for recognition of the Multiracial/Mixed race experience, arguing that:

The *New People* and the *Interrace* group attempt to minimize the effects of blackness by claiming that they are neither white nor black, but colored. The nonsense in this position is seen when we consider the fact that nearly seventy percent of all African-Americans are genetically mixed with either Native Americans or whites. The post-Du Bois, and perhaps more accurately post-Martin Luther King, Jr. phenomenon of seeking to explode racial identity has two prongs: one is white guilt and the other is black self-hatred.

(Rockquemore and Brunnsma 13)

Asante's point regarding genetics is based on an acknowledged history of racist practices in the U.S., but the difficulty in his assessment of Multiracial identity is that it poses White and Black Multiracial individuals in a binary, each with negative sentiments, by suggesting that a Multiracial identity is only desired to distance oneself from one's "Blackness" to assume White privilege. This dichotomous form of labeling and identification neglects the complexities that exist amongst various Multiracial persons, including those whose Multiracial heritage is not one of a Black/White heritage. Asante's argument seemingly ignores the countless other Multiracial identities that exist outside of White/Black pairings and berates the choice of those who identify as "colored," who share their own Multiracial heritage or express such an identity.

In contrast to Asante's statements, leaders of the Multiracial movement express that:

Individuals, regardless of physical appearance, experience the world from the unique perspective of being Mixed-race, have common experiences with Blacks, Whites, and other Mixed-race people, and are understood by others as biracial (not exclusively Black). In order to have a Multiracial self-understanding, others must validate this identity in their social environment. (Rockquemore and Brunnsma 14)

This statement also posits the existence of Multiracial/Mixed race as existing between the White and Black worlds; however, the acknowledgment of a "unique perspective" is crucial in any Mixed-race individual and in Multiracial heritage.

This ongoing conversation is linked to the complexities of racial portrayals in film and television, two of the most popular mediums for entertainment based on how audiences relate to media, especially young viewers. Sharon Bramlett-Soloman and Yvette Roeder's examination of social learning and cultivation theory in "Looking at Race in Children's Television" might support the idea that the underlying effects of commercials and television influence young viewers' thoughts and beliefs about race and multiculturalism. They write:

Cultivation theory suggests that heavy TV viewing causes young viewers to see the images portrayed on television as the real world [and] social learning and cultivation theories suggest television commercials can be as influential as television shows, because a child is likely to experience

repeated exposure to messages in commercials, even within a short viewing span. (Bramlett-Soloman and Roeder 56-57)

If young viewers are being influenced to the extent suggested by Bramlett-Solomon and Roeder, and the correlation between television and the perception of real life continues, a visible increase in Multiracial children and diverse families could be highly influential, and definitely possible if media producers push for current marriage and relationship trends to be included in TV as projected as they are in real life.

Although some producers of children's texts have attempted to meet the demand for more diverse works, these numbers are still significantly lower than texts with all White and mostly White characters. The Disney Corporation has played a pivotal role in constructing children's media in the United States. One might argue that Disney has made great strides in providing diverse and multicultural films since their arguably stereotypical and somewhat racist history of depicting non-White characters. Films like *Dumbo* (1941), *Lady and the Tramp* (1955), and *The Fox and the Hound* (1981) have all been examined in conversations that question the appropriateness of their portrayals of race and identity. Similar examinations occurred following the release of one of Disney's more recent "Princess" movies, *The Princess and the Frog* (2009). The film features Tiana as the first Black princess. The (almost) racially ambiguous, pompous ladies' man, Prince Naveen arrives in New Orleans to find a bride after his parents have cut him off from the wealth of their kingdom in Maldonia (a fictional country). The situation arises when Prince Naveen has his choice between Charlotte (White) and Tiana (Black). The significance of this choice is lost when Prince Naveen and the waitress Tiana are transformed into frogs by a voodoo

magician, and remain in these forms for a majority of the film. This transformation highlights the unnatural *potential* relationship between characters of different races/ethnicities. *The Princess and the Frog* is the only princess film in Disney's history to anthropomorphize a princess. If this film is a progressive step in showing multiculturalism is still open to interpretation, but Keith M. Booker, author of *Disney, Pixar, and the Hidden Message of Children's Films*, would most likely err on the side of Disney. Booker concedes "While Disney has had its slips even in recent years (*Aladdin* is the most notable example), since the beginnings of the renaissance of the 1990s the company has been devoted to the politically correct promotion of multiculturalism" (172). However, Booker's choice of words somewhat confirm Disney's strategy of including less overtly racist and stereotypical non-White characters solely as an attempt to please the public (and potential consumers) by indicating that they are *buying into* multiculturalism. Disney's so-called "politically correct promotion" is attempting to appeal to future consumers of Disney products, merchandise, and films. I argue that Disney, along with other media studios, is stuck trying to balance between producing what their viewers want and what their viewers are still uncomfortable with showing. Viewers seem to want diversity and multiculturalism, but only on the viewers' own terms, meaning that some viewers will only accept certain kinds of diversity and certain depictions of minorities. Regardless of Disney's motives, while it may demonstrate a newly found sense of multiculturalism, that demonstration does not necessarily translate into representing interracial relationships and Multiracial child characters in their feature films.

Some perceive a multicultural cast as showing diversity. While this is accurate, I want to clarify that a multicultural/multiracial cast doesn't necessarily include a Multiracial character. The idea of questioning this distinction is problematic if Multiracial individuals are

turning to the few depiction of Multiracial individuals in the media. In *Media & Minorities: The Politics of Race in News and Entertainment*, author Stephanie Greco Larson states that, “Television and films without racial diversity promote an inaccurate picture of American society. They deprive minority viewers of role models and ignore the contributions of people of color. They also marginalize racial minorities through their omission” (Larson 15-16). Young viewers of a single minority heritage are already at a disadvantage when it comes to being represented in films, but those of a Multiracial heritage experience this on an even larger scale. This underrepresentation is seen in the *Scholastic’s Parent & Child Magazine* list of the “100 Greatest Movies For Kids.” Nine of the films listed contain non-White characters of color who are significant to the story; *Souder* (1972), *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *A Little Princess* (1995), *Kirikou and The Sorceress* (1998), *Remember the Titans* (2000), *Spirited Away* (2001), *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002), *Mad Hot Ballroom* (2005), and *Akeelah and the Bee* (2006). Of these racially diverse multicultural films, none portray (openly) Multiracial characters; however, this lack of racial inclusion is not limited to children’s films, which is part of the reason why television is included in my study.

At this point in time, given the “melting pot” nature of our country, it seems that diversity should be a near-given in media. The large, profitable, and influential film studios have come a long way in terms of representing diverse casts in the children’s media industry, but they have continuously limited the portrayal of Multiracial children in the texts they produce for the child audience. The influences behind the production of children’s films and the motivation of the major media conglomerates that operate behind the scenes account for the occasions when these characters are included, but limit access to at least a young adult audience and/or suggest that the Multiracial character has to negotiate the negative

perceptions of his/her racial identity. Children's film and television are two of the most popular means of entertainment for a visually stimulated culture. It is important for the Multiracial/Mixed race character to be more thoroughly studied in order to bring awareness to the lack of Multiracial/Mixed race characters represented in children's media.

The rest of my thesis proceeds as follows. In Chapter 1 "Race is All Around Us! History, Media, and Protecting the Children" my argument begins by addressing the U.S. film industry around the 1920s, just before the Golden Age period. While the history behind the advent of 'modern' film is fascinating, I focus on the actual regulations that pertain to this study, thereby addressing how social influences and legal sanctions have been involved in limiting racial minorities and racial mixing in the media.

In Chapter 2, "Challenging Tradition: New Modern Families," I explore the concept of family as portrayed in U.S. media. I acknowledge a transition that began with depictions of all White heteronormative families, and then increasingly monoracial heteronormative families, and slowly both interracial and non-heteronormative families. I argue that the new media depictions of family better reflects what the family model looks like. Additionally, I note that there is not just one way for a family to look; instead individual families have become just as diverse as the country as a whole. I argue that this progressive shift still appears to be limited to older audiences and has received negative reception, especially in regard to depictions of interracial couples and Multiracial characters.

In Chapter 3, "The Multiracial Child in Animated Cartoons," I provide examples from cable-based Nickelodeon television programs that incorporate Multiracial characters. I examine Phoebe Heyerdahl from *Hey Arnold!* and Sanjay Patel from *Sanjay and Craig* as two examples of Multiracial characters.

Finally, the conclusion summarizes my findings and offers an interpretation of the results. It seems apparent that racial divides continue to exist in our society and are y reflected in media. This reflection is sometimes documented by an invisibility of Multiracial characters, mostly frequently in children's media. Until Multiracial characters are depicted at a rate conducive to initiate conversations and represent population trends in the U.S. a disservice is being committed.

Chapter 1 – Race is All Around Us! History, Media, and Protecting the Children

The Big Six, operating under the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), control a majority of movies released in Hollywood—roughly 90%. These media conglomerates also own a number of television networks, making their productions some of the most easily accessible and most popular with the public. With a stronghold on the film and television industries, it is no wonder that these companies produce such significant revenue figures. In 2012 alone, the film industry in the United States earned \$10.8 billion in revenue (MPAA). Of this figure, approximately 23% come from films with either a G or PG rating, based on the Classification and Rating Administration (CARA) of the Motion Picture of America Association. This means that the film industry garners around two billion dollars in revenue from movies rated for those less than thirteen years of age. By producing films that are accessible to young viewers, the Big Six are able to capture those viewers earlier and secure them as future consumers, even as the young viewers transition from childhood to adolescence. The income available to young middle-class viewers is evident in their potential spending power. Angharad N. Valdivia addresses the benefit to corporations of appealing to younger audiences by sharing that, “Disney estimates that the aggregate disposable income of [tween] girls is between \$40 and \$60 billion” (275). This figure does not include income of tween boys, or the income of audiences both younger and older than that demographic. Regardless, media industries are continuing to make money from nearly all demographics.

Data reported by the MPAA are shown in a graphic found on their official website. Including the television industry, the MPAA reports that “the movie and television industry is comprised of 108,000 businesses across all fifty states, generates \$104 billion in total job wages, contributes \$16.7 billion in public revenue and generates \$14.3 billion in exports

worldwide” (MPAA). These impressive figures support the extent of the media’s infiltration of the entertainment system in the United States. With revenue in the billions, the Big Six must continuously evaluate and update their productions to adjust to their core audience and stay competitive in the market.

One of the challenges issued to contemporary filmmakers is making films that capture the essence of their audience. In order to gather more information about their key demographic, the MPAA has conducted studies to obtain quantitative information. The results of the MPAA’s 2013 “Theatrical Market Statistics” conclude that of frequent moviegoers (“those who went to the cinema once a month or more, seven percent were reported to be between the ages of two and eleven).” A brief appendix for the MPAA’s study explains some of the methodology used in conducting the surveys. For children age two to seventeen, adults in the household answered the questions. In addition to the MPAA receiving their information from a source other than the child, the appendix specifies, “each child’s race/ethnicity is assumed to be the same as the parent, as is household information such as location and household income” (MPAA). On the one hand, including children in a study regarding movie going and viewership gives us an idea of the child audience. The fact that the MPAA feels comfortable enough to nonchalantly assign race is problematic. For the race of a Multiracial child to be assumed invalidates their ability to be more than one race, or to be one identity and another at the same time. No further information was provided in the study itself to address if the study asked for the race of both parents, or if the child’s race would be assumed to be that of the minority race parent, or if was based on the parent who took the survey. Even with these issues, their findings are as follows: of all frequent moviegoers, 11% identified as African American, 56% as Caucasian, 26% as Hispanic, and

7% as Other (MPAA). The last text in the study's appendices notes that "Other" refers to anyone not included in the above-mentioned groups, including those who identify as Multiracial. One data set cannot provide the reader or the media studios with conclusive proof about the child audience and viewership, but studios most concerned with making a profit would understandably make media for their target audience, which appears to be the 56% that identified as Caucasian in the MPAA study. The lack of information, which specifically addresses the Multiracial individual as seen in the survey conducted by the MPAA is problematic.

In 2012, authors Ronald G Fryer, Jr., Lisa Kahn, Steven D. Levitt, and Jörg L. Spenkuch published "The Plight of Mixed-Race Adolescents" in the *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, an article that attempts to empirically recognize "the behaviors and outcomes of black-white mixed-race individuals" (Fryer et al 1). The article notes a similar concern to the one I just brought up regarding the lack of definitive statistics for Multiracial persons:

The absence of systematic empirical research on how mixed-race children fare relative to their monoracial peers is due in part to data limitations. Few data sets record racial information in a way that mixed-race children can be identified. Data sets that include a mixed-race classification are either too small to be useful or contain little information on childhood or adolescent experiences. (623)

Fryer mentions the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (known as "Add Health") as one exception to this, which completed an extensive multi-survey study over the course of fourteen years for children and young adult participants. Add Health's

legitimate survey serves in contrast to earlier pseudoscientific studies, namely the eugenics movement of the early twentieth century that discouraged mixing with unfit individuals by attempting to substantiate physical and psychological differences between people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. The eugenics movement directly influenced segregation policies and mandated sterilization procedures in the U.S.⁵ With new findings on genetics in the science community, the onset of World War II, and Hitler's obsession with Aryan supremacy, Americans wanted to distance themselves from such affiliations (although Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps during the war and segregation would continue to exist past the end of the Civil Rights Movement, in 1968). The notion that political practices, (inaccurate) sciences, and social movements are all interconnected and contribute to what a society can become is essential in commenting on regulations that are imposed to create a *better* society.

As systems of control, often created and maintained by hegemonic structures, regulations are imposed to uphold the civility necessary to succeed as a cohesive community and society. Regulations that govern the media industry are no exception to this notion of success, but it is the extent to which these rules are enforced—coupled with social policies practiced in specific time periods—that play a significant role in shaping cultural movements and history. The film and television industries were both established as apparatuses to educate and entertain, but possess a long-standing history of being two of the most heavily scrutinized and regulated forms of media. I note that society influenced classic regulations, but as times have changed, new regulations have been established and/or classic regulations

⁵ From 1907 until 1922, “18 states approved legislation that permitted the sterilization of at least 3,233 people institutionalized for mental disorders” (*Social History of the United States* 258).

have either remained or become obsolete. I will show how the politics of popular culture have directly contributed to regulations and the challenges faced by their imposition. In addressing differences in medium, it is essential to provide political, social, and historical context as a frame of reference in providing clarification when examining content from film and television programs. This section of the thesis delves into practices set in place in response to public concerns for unregulated media in the United States and examines an overarching consistency that exists between these forms: the regulations (self) imposed on media producers by society, that are justified by claiming that protecting the child is imperative to a successful society directly contribute to portrayals of racial diversity in film and television, regardless of whether these portrayals are positive, negative, or obsolete.

The American public has been apprehensive of the film industry and the access to mature subject matter and images since its inception, this being especially true if and when children have access to these images. Some scholars, notably those in the field of Children's Literature, address the distinct separation of children from adults, and thus children from the public at large. This separation, often touted as a means of protecting the child, can be witnessed in numerous forms of children's media. In "*Dumbo*, Disney, and the Difference: Walt Disney Productions as Children's Literature," Nicholas Sammond acknowledges that, "Since the opening of the modern movie industry in the late nineteenth century, fears about the effects of film on children's developing mind have been center stage in arguments for the censorship and regulation of the medium" (148). Although Sammond notes an apparent fear regarding the developing mind of the child, his statement alludes to a far greater concern: if children can easily access immoral and unsuitable subject matter they may not be able to properly assimilate to an adult-run society.

Mounting concerns regarding the morality of the film industry reached new heights in the 1920s. At that time, thirty-six state legislatures considered film-censorship bills in response to continued anxiety about unregulated media and its affects on the population. A contributing factor to such anxiety was partially spurred by the disclosure of unsavory scandals, including the rape of actress Virginia Rappe by one of Paramount's biggest stars, Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle. In an effort to circumvent further actions from the government towards censorship, in 1922 William Harrison Hays was charged with presiding over the newly founded Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), at \$100,000 per year (Gates 228). Hays' political career in the Republican party, position as U.S. Postmaster General, and affiliation with the Presbyterian Church were factors in bringing him in to head the MPPDA. In an effort to appease a public so adamant for change, Hays enacted a series of regulations called the Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 (Hays Code) under the MPPDA. Beginning in 1934, these regulations were strictly enforced. Some of the rules may now be considered conservative and others racist, but during the Golden Age of Hollywood (roughly 1927-1963) they were deemed somewhat normal and acceptable given the wholesome white imagery the nation wanted to see.

In *Mixed Race Hollywood*, Mary Beltrán and Camilla Fojas articulate the taboo nature of sex and race in Hollywood, noting that:

Under the Production Code, the representation of sexual relationships between people of different races was forbidden. The Code in this regard reflected larger legal, social, and cultural interdictions against marriage between whites and African Americans, and at times between whites and Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and American Indians, that were

reinforced in the U.S. legal arena in this period...needless to say, the Hollywood mixed race couple was typically not allowed a “happily ever after” or depicted marrying or having children, so wary were the studios to suggest any type of positive outcome to the intimate intermingling of the races. (7-8)

Fojas and Beltrán present a valid and accurate statement when you consider that while regulations forbade the portrayal of interracial relationships in film from the late 1920s, they aligned with legal sanctions in place when you consider that from 1913 until 1948 thirty out of the then forty-eight states enforced anti-miscegenation laws.

The last anti-miscegenation law was still on the books until 2000 when it was officially repealed in Alabama. The historic ruling of the court in the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* case to make anti-miscegenation laws illegal continues to be recognized as a significant milestone in improving American race relations. Clinical psychologist and prominent scholar in the field of Multiracial Studies, Maria P.P. Root notes that, following the *Loving v. Virginia* verdict, “the rate of inter-marriage increased exponentially”(Choi-Misailidis 301). This court ruling and other civil rights efforts have played a part in shaping media portrayals of non-Whites. In a recent speech delivered at Eastern Michigan University, Ambassador and former Senator Carol Mosley Braun admits that U.S. laws and policies have come a long way since what she refers to as “official racism.” Additionally, Braun expresses her concern for the current generation’s lack of racial advocacy that may contribute to a “backsliding” in understanding one’s history. Solely focusing on the history of racism in terms of Black and White relations—the language used to articulate her concern—both perpetuates racial relations as binaries and echoes a similar sentiment in society. Problematically, this approach seemingly eliminates other ethnic/race groups in the United States, the variances within and

between these groups, and contributes to “backsliding” when not advocated for and discussed. While some claim that the X Generation are politically inactive non-advocates, others may see the X Generation as approaching race from an alternative perspective hence the push for a multicultural and “post-race” society. The *Loving v. Virginia* verdict was a step in the right direction for a multicultural society in which interracial marriage became more common, and Multiracial children more prominent.

In addition to Beltrán and Fojas’s work, I argue that the Production Code of 1930 was severe in all aspects of presenting sexual relationships. The code requested the following under Particular Applications regarding “Scenes of Passion”:

1. They should not be introduced when not essential to the plot.
2. Excessive and lustful kissing, lustful embraces, suggestive posture and gestures, are not to be shown.
3. In general passion should so be treated that these scenes do not stimulate the lower and baser element. (Production Code of 1930)

On some level, the Hays Code was trying to appeal to groups that demanded change in media regulations. Sammond writes that the guidelines set in 1930 were enacted “in the hopes of convincing middle-class pressure groups such as the National Board of Review or the Legion of Decency that the industry was committed to the edification of the public in general, and of children in particular” (149). In this case, the public in general referred to whites and their white children. The control implemented by those with power, from media conglomerates to committee members, parents, and other adults is obviously influenced by their belief that children need to be protected. The protection claim is only so far-reaching before it becomes clear that the adult’s notions of right or wrong, and good or bad, are the driving force behind

what children can access. The concerns voiced by these groups were following suit with political, social, and legal influences of the time. After all, during the 1920s and 1930s Americans were experiencing continued racial divides with events such as the Great Migration and the second rise of the Ku Klux Klan.

As times changes, so do the desires of the public. Growing tiresome of the restrictive nature of the Hays Code under the MPPDA, the public wanted more say in outdated regulations and content. In 1945 the MPPDA changed its name to the MPAA-Motion Picture Association of America, and in 1968 film producers created a rating system that placed a greater power of choice in the hands of the people. The tiered rating scale in its current form ranges from G (General Audiences), PG (Parental Guidance Suggested), PG-13 (Parents Strongly Cautioned), R (Restricted), to NC-17 (No One 17 and Under Admitted). Television networks have adopted a similar rating system, currently ranging from G (for general audience, to TV-Y (for all children), TV-Y7 (directed to older children), TV-14 (parental guidance suggested), and TV-MA (mature audiences only). These rating systems give the viewer greater control in choosing what to watch, and even suggest that parents should manage the media their children can access. Despite changes to regulations, the Multiracial child—the consequence and result of sexual interaction between an interracial couple—is rarely portrayed in Hollywood films. I address the phenomenon of the potential child in Chapter 2.

The addition of home televisions in the 1950s produced yet another opportunity for the public—and child in particular—to access screen media. The child’s access is again limited, based on what the public and adults think is appropriate for the child to view. Although not under the restrictions of the Hays’ Code, television programming has also been

closely policed—and perhaps rightly so considering how much television is watched in the United States. The consumption of television by the contemporary child viewer has reached impressively high rates. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) shares that “recent data indicates that children in the United States on average spend more than three hours a day watching television” (FCC). Although these figures support a media-dependent children’s culture, they would perhaps be even higher if certain restrictions were not in place. In “Children’s Media Policy,” Amy B. Jordan examines government policies and the way in which they control and affect media outlets when directed to a child audience. Policies such as the Children’s Television Act of 1990, The Three-hour Rule (1997), the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act (2006), and the Communication Decency Act (1996) all offer parents and other adults the opportunity to limit and restrict media for children with the explanation that children need to and should be protected.⁶ But, if these government-enforced policies and the rating systems were not evidence enough of society’s continued desire to protect the young from undesirable images, consider the technology being built into modern televisions. Since January 1, 2000, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has required all new television sets 13 inches or larger to contain a V-chip (FCC). The V-chip is a programmable form of technology that can be used to block certain content from being viewed based on personal preference. In

⁶ Congress enacted the Children’s Television Act of 1990 on September 24. The proposed bill found that television was a resource capable of educating and informing children and required broadcasters to meet standards to enforce and support this decision. The Three-hour Rule maintained that there had to be at least three hours a week of educational programming for children. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 signed into effect by President Bill Clinton endorsed greater competition between media outlets. The Broadcast Decency Act enacted in 1996 brought about harsher penalties for broadcasters using inappropriate language and themes. The Communications Decency Act deterred the use of obscenities on the Internet and restricted the access of children to pornographic material on the Internet.

addition to mandatory V-chips, other blocking devices and programs exist for desktop, laptop, tablet, and other handheld devices that children are using more frequently for entertainment.

Similar to the MPAA rating system, Television Parental Guidelines are another means to suggest suitable content for the media viewer. Content labels issued as letters indicate specific subject matter that may occur, from D (suggestive dialogue), L (coarse or crude language), S (sexual situations), V (violence), or FV (fantasy violence). Beyond the stringent regulations imposed on the media industry in general, children's media is by far one of the most policed in terms of rules and limitations. Society and the media's preoccupation with protecting the child has also been addressed on numerous occasions and closely aligned with the implementation of the Hays Code, which led to a "largely dichotomous view of films: they could either be good or bad for children. This belief was encouraged by social reformers anxious that unregulated moviemaking was undermining the moral fabric of the nation via its children" (Gates).⁷ I argue that the mere ability for a child to watch a television program or film and participate as a viewer is restricted because the privilege of selection is not afforded to them. Created by producers, the government, parents, and other gatekeepers who want to protect and educate the youth seemingly obsessive exclusionary measures are contributing to the underrepresentation of certain demographics in characters. Since television has consistently been ruled a means of education by the government, the lack of minority persons—including those of Multiracial heritages—is evidence of a miseducation. Fortunately, media companies keen to make a profit attempt to convey that they are

⁷ Between 1928 and 1935 the Payne Fund Studies conducted a set of twelve psychological and sociological experiments and surveys that attempted to determine scientifically exactly what effects movies had on children.

portraying other minority groups that have been held to standards similar to those affecting interracial relationships.

The desire to protect the child seems a valid reason to institute regulations to help parents in raising their children. Taking into account the scarce depictions of Multiracial characters, is society protecting children from the appropriate things? While no official regulations are currently in place that ban or limit the portrayal of interracial couples or Multiracial persons in media, the number of Multiracial characters in film and television for children is still marginal. If and when Multiracial characters are depicted they are usually constricted to specific spaces. These spaces are conditional in form (animation versus live action), audience age (child versus adult), and medium (film versus television). I suggest that the limitations can be explained with three reasons. Firstly, media studios may be weary of losing their established audiences. Secondly, media studios and producers may not see a need to produce these images depending upon the diversity in their own companies. Lastly, the goal of these companies is to make money, so they will only market particular characters to audiences that they think will enjoy those characters. While I question the media and society, neither should exist as scapegoat on their own. Factors that influence policies, habits within and among media producers are all contributing to the slight progress of representing non-traditional characters.

Chapter 2 – New Modern Families: Challenging Traditions and Marketing to the Masses

As the number of reported interracial couples in the United States continues to increase, so does the population of Biracial and Multiracial children. With such a drastic rise in interracial couples and Multiracial children, one might think that this trend would be widely reflected in the media but that has not proven to be the case. Producers are slowly making progress in this aspect by depicting both more realistic and more diverse versions of family life spurred by nontraditional relationships and families in the United States. The Fine Brothers report that, “One in 10 couples in America are interracial. This is a 28% jump since 2000” (Kids React). This progressive movement is somewhat encouraging in a society so fascinated with the concept of educating through entertainment or *edutainment*, even though the proportion of nontraditional relationships and Multiracial individuals still pale in comparison to same-race (mostly White), traditional family counterparts in literature, television, and film—and most noticeably in media for the child audience. This edutainment is not only desired and often regulated, it is almost explicitly implied in the very act of viewing media.

Taking the impressive rate of television consumption by child viewers into consideration, Scott R. Conley, reporting in the *Syracuse Law Review* shares that “an average child will have watched between 10,000 and 15,000 hours of television and more than 200,000 commercials by the time that have turned eighteen” (Conley 3). With these figures it is of little surprise that cognitive theory suggests a link between what children view and how they begin to perceive and interpret images from television. The effects of television consumption are articulated by cultivation theorists Bramlett-Solomon and Roeder, who

write that, “Cultivation theory suggests that heavy TV viewing causes young viewers to see certain images portrayed on television as the real world.” (56) These scholars all note the effects of media as influences on society, and on the young viewer. If children’s views are being influenced to the extent suggest by Bramlett-Solomon and Roeder, then it is not only important, but necessary to portray the “Multiracial child” experience in easily-accessibly texts intended for that audiences’ consumption. This ease proves to be an additional challenge when the decision to diversify is left in the hands of a select group of people. In *Media Analysis Techniques*, Arthur Asa Berger applies Marxist theory to the production and reception of media. Berger writes that:

The works carried by the mass media can be seen, then, not merely as carriers of ideology that manipulate and indoctrinate people with certain views. The media, as unwitting instruments of hegemonic domination, have a much broader and deeper influence—they shape people’s very ideas of themselves and the world; they shape people’s worldviews (62).

This influence on perception is at the forefront of media since the images the viewer sees in text are a result of what the media chooses to show. The power afforded to media producers as instruments has been acknowledged increasingly by those involved with the Nickelodeon network.

In the late seventies the Pinwheel network was rebranded as Nickelodeon, and has since become one of the most popular cable television networks for children, competing with Disney and Cartoon Network. It’s been reported that, “Nickelodeon’s U.S. television network is seen in more than 100 million households and has been the number-one-rated basic cable network for 18 consecutive years” (Vertical News 1). A variety of influences

have allowed Nickelodeon's viewership to remain strong and popular across a near two-decade span, including the approach of putting kids first and celebrating the diversity among kids. In *Slimed!: An Oral History of Nickelodeon's Golden Age*, author Mathew Klickstein reveals candid responses from current and former Nickelodeon affiliates about various aspects of the network. In a chapter titled "The Diversity: why were so many people on nickelodeon white?" (Klickstein 157) Mike Klinghoffer, producer of a number of shows for Nickelodeon, responds, "So here's the *non*-politically correct answer. The year is 1985. We were trying to reach our audience, which at that time—in the cable world of twelve million households—was maybe a few million kids. Upper-class white kids" (*Klickstein*). Klinghoffer acknowledges the target market in the mid-eighties but other responses speak to the changing nature of Nickelodeon's shows. Jason Alisharan, a former child actor that starred in *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* from 1991 until 1995 addresses the same question, but incorporates a very different viewpoint regarding diversity:

Nowadays we take that kind of diversity for granted, but in 1992, D.J. MacHale [creator of *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*] was *way* ahead of his time in making sure his show represented all kids, not just white kids. There was absolutely no problem with there being interracial relationships on the show, and again this wasn't commonplace for 1992. They didn't even think it was even worthwhile to comment on it; instead, they just played it like it was normal, which is the greatest testament to representing diversity on a show. (Klickstein 158)

Alisharan's response shows some of the change that Nickelodeon, along with other networks, began to incorporate to increase their reach to diverse audiences.

In a recent interview, Klickstein questions why diversity in programming is important and argues that Nickelodeon programs rarely get diversity right. Klickstein bluntly expresses that Nickelodeon's decision to have White producers portray a non-White character undermines the culture of characters like Sanjay Patel in the show *Sanjay and Craig*, arguing that "the show is awkward because there's no reason for that character to be Indian—except for the fact that [Nickelodeon President] Cyma Zarghami and the women who run Nickelodeon now are *very* obsessed with diversity....No one working on that show is Indian. They're all white" (Flavorwire). I believe that Klickstein is attempting to say that when underserved minorities aren't involved in the production of a diverse character in a particular text, then that text will undoubtedly be inauthentic. Klickstein's approach and assessment regarding authenticity is debated among scholars. The "2014 Hollywood Diversity Report" commissioned by the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies at the UCLA reports that "more than 60 percent of broadcast comedies and dramas have writing staffs that are 10 percent minority or less" (Bunche Center 13). This figure suggests that Klickstein's desire for authenticity cannot be met given the marginal number of minority writers.

Klickstein's opinion suggests a problem within the Nickelodeon network of needing more diverse staff to create more authentic characters, but with few minorities, and few Multiracial staff, the Multiracial character will most likely continue to be underrepresented based on Klickstein's model. Klickstein goes too far in comparing the depiction of an "Indian" Sanjay as akin to blackface simply because Klickstein thinks that White producers are doing "the culture a disservice" in representing a non-White (but American) character.

⁸At this point, Klickstein’s interviewer, Pilot Viruet intervenes, charging that, “There’s no comparison between *Sanjay and Craig* and blackface. Sanjay is voiced by an Indian-American actor, Maulik Pancholy” (Flavorwire). Klickstein contradicts himself as the interview progresses arguing that children should be able to relate to a character no matter what the “race” of the character is and quality should be the only thing that matters. However, as I address in Chapter Three, based on ratings, at least, viewers seem to consider *Sanjay and Craig* a good show. Klickstein’s declaration is also flawed in that he claims a diverse cast needs the contributions of a diverse group of creators/producers, but if the people working at Nickelodeon are mostly White then diversity would not be seen. Klickstein claims authenticity is necessary, so only a Multiracial American of Indian-American descent and White descent would be the only one qualified to portray Sanjay. This claim places the burden on representation, not only on the character, but also on the qualified producer, which is also problematic since every person—including minority persons—has unique experiences and unique racial identities.

In a follow-up article to Klickstein’s appalling commentary regarding diversity, tokenism, and authenticity at Nickelodeon, Marah Eakin cites the “2014 Hollywood Diversity Report” sharing that minorities had lead roles in just under 15 percent of cable comedies and dramas, despite accounting for about 36 percent of the United States’ population” (A.V. Club). and “more than half of films had casts that were 10 percent minority or less” (Bunche Center 6). Clearly, the study conducted by the UCLA notes a disparaging lack of representation in television and film. Both Viruet and Eakin’s articles

⁸ Blackface dates back to the 19th century and refers to White actors who would perform at minstrel shows wearing makeup to make them appear “black”; these “negro” caricatures contributed to stereotypes that some still attribute to Blacks.

position the race of characters as diversity, but it is Mitchell Kriegman who expresses that the very goal of Nickelodeon is to appeal to minority characters: Nickelodeon was “concerned with representing another then-underserved minority: kids” (A.V. Club). Neither Klickstein, nor Eakin, nor Viruet refer to Sanjay as a Multiracial character. Instead, he is described as either “Indian” or “Indian American.” I claim that the “Indian America” description is somewhat accurate, but I claim that the Multiracial individual is often overshadowed by how others think they should be labeled. The “Indian” labeling reads as misinformed, since, as I note in Chapter Three, Sanjay’s interracial parents are a major part of the storyline.

The “nontraditional” family is seen increasingly in television programming, but also greatly in adult television, instead of children’s programming. In focusing on nontraditional families my study goes beyond the Multiracial child character and interracial family and brings into question the portrayals of other minority and nontraditional (non-monoracial/non-heteronormative/non-biological) family structures. Multicultural television programs such as *Grey’s Anatomy* (2005-present), *Modern Family* (2009-present), *The Fosters* (2013-present), and *Under the Dome* (2013- present) are just a few television programs that exemplify diverse casts and depict characters whose families engage in both traditional and nontraditional relationships. These “families” include heteronormative and homosexual monoracial relationships, heterosexual and homosexual interracial relationships, fostered/adopted children intranationally, internationally, cross- racially, and cross-culturally. A specific example of this kind of nontraditional family exists in the show *Modern Family*. Characters Mitchell Pritchett and Cameron Tucker are White homosexual men who adopt Lily Tucker-Pritchett from Vietnam. Their international adoption is multicultural and is not because she was born in a different country but was adopted as a baby and had little time to

acquire any kind of Vietnamese culture. I argue that by offering images of immigrant, LGBTQ, interracial, and other minority populations, the media is showcasing some of the more realistic and “nontraditional” families but these examples are usually not intended for a child audience.

Gill Branston and Roy Stafford note that “the call for ‘realism’ arises since the media are said to reflect (rather than represent) society, and accuracy is understandably demanded by groups which have previously been invisible” (Branston and Stafford 155). The Multiracial identity is one of these nearly “invisible” minority groups who are still underrepresented even when diverse families are portrayed. Further examination of a select group of multiracial characters will illuminate the depictions of multiracial characters in television and film but also acknowledge the rarity of such characters and the disservice often committed by the media in order to appease the majority audience (not necessarily the child audience) by limiting the number of multiracial characters in television. Live-action sit-coms for adult and young adult audiences with multiracial characters include *Heroes* (2006-2010), *Parenthood* (2010-present), and *Sullivan and Son* (2012-present). Marking these *few* examples as progress I move into questioning why there are so few examples.

Clearly, media producers are in the business of making money, but they also have a responsibility to respond to what their viewers want to see. I’ve already articulated this in Chapter One, noting that society places demands on media industries and producers to regulate and implement policies that will lead to a protected society. However, what some may mark as progress, others could find distasteful—and in each case the people making that decision may not know *why* they feel that way. The discomfort with a nontraditional family was expressed in media coverage surrounding the depiction of an intranational Black/White

interracial couple and their Multiracial daughter, “Gracie,” in a 2013 Cheerios commercial. Media examples can be tremendous in showing racial difference but with all of the controversy surrounding the Cheerios Controversy, nontraditional families in advertising make some people uneasy. In the thirty second “Just Checking” commercial that originally aired in 2013, a young Multiracial girl approaches her White mother in the kitchen and asks about the benefits of eating Cheerios, one of which is being “Heart Healthy.” The commercial then cuts to a scene where the girl’s Black father is waking up from a nap in the family room, where the girl has poured a pile of Cheerios cereal on her father’s shirt, specifically over his heart. At first viewing, the commercial appears to feature a wholesome, American family, and did receive some praise for the charming child concerned for her father’s health, but others viewed the commercial differently. Viewers’ comments pertaining to the commercial which was uploaded to the YouTube website is evidence of this. Many comments on YouTube specifically addressed a severe distaste for the interracial family. Comments became so obscene, vulgar, and racially charged that the ability to view, post, and access comments was disabled by the YouTube website. However as YouTube is a website that the general public can access, this situation is clearly a testament to the fierce opinions and concerns that some people have in regards to interracial couples and their offspring, despite harmless portrayals of them. Research compiled by Wendy Wang of the Pew Research Center indicates that “More than four-in-ten Americans (43%) say that more people of different races marrying each other has been a change for the better in our society, while 11% say it has been a change for the worse and 44% say it has made no difference” (Pew Research Center).

Even though many comments express anger about the interracial couple, the “Just Checking” commercial doesn’t show any direct interaction between the parents, thus the Multiracial daughter becomes the link and proof of the parents’ relationship. In response to the controversy the Vice President of marketing for General Mills, Camille Gibson, released a statement. Gibson stated [that Cheerios] “chose an interracial family because, ‘Ultimately we were trying to portray an American family, and there are lots of multicultural families in America today’” (Kids React).

The latter part of Gibson’s statement is echoed by many of the child participants in the Fine brothers’ “Kids React” video. In the video, children give their opinions about negative reactions to the Cheerios commercial. One young girl of around eight states, “Sometimes on TV, it’s unrealistic. In real life, there’s family’s of all races.” Her ability to recognize the state of television and express it is impressive, as was the follow-up commercial, “Gracie,” that aired during the 2014 Superbowl. As a General Mills cereal brand, Cheerios has attempted to become a staple of American culture and has a history of depicting somewhat realistic family moments in which their consumers can empathize. In the “Gracie” commercial, the family is gathered in the kitchen and Gracie’s father explains how their family will be growing by illustrating the situation with Cheerios pieces. As the commercial progresses, the mother, who has been positioned away from the camera, reveals her pregnant body. Gracie understands what her father explains to her, but bargains for a new puppy as well, which seems like a shock to her mother. If there were a question regarding whether or not the previous commercial skirted around the interracial relationship, this version clearly embraced it. As a large corporation with lots of advertising ability, one must recall that Cheerios might do what they think is right, but they want to sell their product. Cheerios’

decision to air a follow-up commercial during the Superbowl means that they recognize the power that they hold as advertisers. Solomon and Roeder propose that:

television advertising is one of the most powerful agents in contemporary US consumer society, manifested largely by its ubiquity and repetition. Advertising also conveys and disseminates racial ideology. As children tend to be heavy television viewers, television commercials are a potentially rich and influential source of messages about racial and social groups. (Solomon Roeder 56)

In an effort to get a better understanding of children's reception to the first Cheerios Commercial featuring "Gracie," The Fine Brothers released a video in their "Kids React" series about the controversy surrounding the commercial. The video shows that children interviewed about the commercial didn't see race as an issue even when adults seem to still be uncomfortable with racial mixing. Reception to the Cheerios interracial family and Multiracial child offers a unique perspective in a "realistic" example that may explain the limited amount of portrayals of such characters.

The Cheerios commercials and people's criticism to the advertisement can be thought of similarly to trends seen in other media. When interracial relationships are addressed they are often combined with friendships, intimacy, and can often lack a multiracial child. Unfortunately, films not necessarily intended for the child viewer still enact a pseudo experience of the interracial couple as inappropriate, because even though including it, they also create a mockery of such a relationship by mystifying and baffling the other characters in the film. This type of reaction says to the viewer that what is being shown here is to prove what people can do, but it's still unnatural and will make others uncomfortable. Janice R.

Welsch and J.Q. Adams continue to argue that the filmmakers are making progress, and in *Multicultural Films: a Reference Guide*, they write,

“More interracial and interethnic friendships exist on screen along with an increased number of intimate love relationships. Communication and interaction occur between colleagues at work (*Blue Collar*), and peers at school (*Higher Learning*), between native-born citizens and recent immigrants (*In America*), between young children (*Hey Arnold! The Movie*), adolescents (*The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love*), and adults (*Norma Rae*), between an adopted child and a parent (*Lovely and Amazing*), and between lovers (*Lone Star*).” (Welsch and Adams 147)

Welsch and Adams state that they have found multiple examples of these relationships, but their following statement is flawed; “[These films] follow the patterns of relationships among people whose racial/ethnic identity is the same. Which, of course, is as it should be (Welsch and Adams 147). While Welsch and Adams argue that there is a larger presence of interracial and multiracial characters, these are often presented hand in hand with racial stereotypes, caricaturing, and negative and racist reception—none of which should be deemed as appropriate for the child viewer, especially if that will be his/her only experience and exposure to learning about other races and cultures. Mary Beltrán and Camilla Fojas may agree with Welsch and Adams, and similarly note in *Mixed Race Hollywood* that “we have witnessed a blossoming of portrayals of mixed race relationships in film and television that conclude on a neutral or positive note” (Beltrán

and Fojas 9).⁹ Beltrán and Fojas appear optimistic but I can only agree with them to a certain extent. Of the handful of films and television programs portraying various interracial relationships they mention as contributing to a progressive movement, many are still problematic in this line of study in that they dedicate a percentage of the storyline to having the characters defend their relationship, none are below a PG-13 rating, and none include a Multiracial child.

Following Beltrán and Fojas' examination of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) and *Jungle Fever* (1991), Angel's takes the examination of Multiracial further by claiming that the multiracial child isn't present in Hollywood films. She does this by focusing on the depiction of interracial couples and the *idea* of Multiracial children in two films, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) and *Jungle Fever* (1991). In both films, the interracial relationships are marked with concern and difficulties, reiterating the belief that the children of interracial relationships would face unavoidable hardships and a troubled life. It appears that the Multiracial character is and has been avoided in an attempt to alienate what was a historically shameful racial identity, Angel writes that "through their indirect presence in film—an indirectness firmly rooted in a history of legal and social alienation, where people of "mixed race" were submerged in rigid categories of identity—people of "mixed race" were further prevented from being seen and heard" (261).

⁹ Mary Beltran and Camilla Fojas cite the following films and television shows that are evidence of either neutral or positive depictions of mixed race relationships: *Sayonara* (1957), *My Geisha* (1962), *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner* (1967), *Jungle Fever* (1991), *The Joy Luck Club* (1993), *Made in America* (1993), *Fools Rush In* (1997), *Save the Last Dance* (2001), *I Love Lucy* (1951-57), *The Courtship of Eddie's Father* (1969-72), and *The Jeffersons* (1975-85).

To a certain extent, these concerns demonstrate how the identities of mixed race children are constructed and imposed by others. Just as the characters Angel studies are invisible and undesirable, so are similar potential Multiracial characters in more contemporary examples. Angel acknowledges this attitude and writes that, “fear and prejudice...is not unique to the United States.” (Angel 265) Although “unrated” by the MPAA, *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* doesn’t appear to be for a child audience. Likewise, Spike Lee’s *Jungle Fever* received an “R” rating. In addition to these two films, Angel also refers to *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1933), *God’s Stepchildren* (1938), and *Showboat* (1951), *Imitation of Life* (1959), and *East is East* (1999) as films which address the potential Multiracial child, but all received a MPAA rating of PG-13 or higher.

While Angel’s study covers an eighty-four year span that explores interracial relationships and the *idea* of mixed children, more recent examples can be seen in *Pocahontas*, *The Rugrats in Paris*, and even the *Harry Potter* films. The interracial relationship is essential to produce multiracial children. I have chosen not to focus on the depictions on interracial relationships exclusively. Instead, I hope to better establish what seems to be a perception of Multiracial/Mixed race characters.

I think the negative view of Multiracial children as shameful and inferior has declined slightly. Author Angharad N. Valdivia clearly expresses that the country’s increased Multiracial population has contributed to depictions of Multiracial characters in *Mixed Race Hollywood*. However, she also charges this progress to social influences, noting that “mixed race in Disney is a fairly new phenomenon,” (*Mixed Race Hollywood* 270), even though the Disney Channel has been around since 1983. Valdivia goes on to suggest that the social

influences that have contributed to the multicultural evolution in some of Disney's productions include pressure from the tween audience and consumer. Valdivia's work focuses on the Multiracial characters in the feature length Disney Channel Original Movies (made-for-television movies) *Johnny Tsunami* (1999) and *The Cheetah Girls* (2003), juxtaposed against the *Lizzie McGuire* series (2001-2004) and the Hollywood released film, *The Lizzie McGuire Movie* (2003). She examines how the Multiracial characters in *Johnny Tsunami* and *The Cheetah Girls* identify themselves and how they interact with other characters in comparison to Lizzie and other characters in *Lizzie McGuire*. In some ways, Valdivia's chapter clearly demonstrates the evolving nature of Disney productions and their depictions of Multiracial characters, but also reifies my own argument in that these shows were marketed towards a slightly older audience of tweens instead of children.

In *Johnny Tsunami*, the Hawaiian and White protagonist Johnny Kapahaala "experiences racial prejudice from most of his classmates in his elite prep school. He is different. His clothing, hairstyle, indeed his brownness all stand out in a nearly Nazi-like white setting of the prep school in which he finds himself"(Valdivia 277-278). His friendship and attraction to a White female character makes some of the other White characters even more uncomfortable. Johnny's actions are even more taboo since a Multiracial person is participating in an interracial relationship. In the case of *The Cheetah Girls*, difference is brought to the forefront in what Valdivia describes as in "a typical postfeminist setting, Cheetah Girls are all about materialism, girl power, multiculturalism, and song and dance" (279). One thing that Disney has done by including these characters is to acknowledge difference, something that is not as prominent in *Lizzie McGuire*. While Disney has shown these differences, the subject matter has been tailored to and marketed towards a slightly

older audience than the young child. One of the more interesting pieces of Valdivia's research is that it recognizes that these shows and films are for the tween audience, which is typically defined as the developmental stage between a child and a teenager. The nature of these titles being intended for persons older than children could be used as another means to show that Disney is still not producing a large number of works about mixed race for the child audience. The work of Angharad N. Valdivia, in "Mixed Race on the Disney Channel," closely aligns with my own in that we both examine the Multiracial character in media meant for younger audiences. However, Valdivia's scholarship pays particular attention to the tween audience, while I focus on depictions of the multiracial characters in children's media. However, the target audience for the shows and made-for-television films examined by Valdivia are for viewers ages 13-18, outside of the "child" mark. Once again, I acknowledge a distinction in Multiracial characters based on viewer age.

As marginal characters, the Multiracial child is still comprised of the non-majority, nontraditional family. The inclusion of nontraditional interracial families and Multiracial characters in *Johnny Tsunami* and *The Cheetah Girls* serve as examples of what progress in media can do, represent underserved populations, however, frequency and quality must also be a part of the equation in representing diversity. Without diversity, author Stephanie Greco Larson adds that, "television and films without racial diversity promote an inaccurate picture of American society. They deprive minority viewers of role models and ignore the contributions of people of color. They also marginalize racial minorities through their omission" (Larson 15-16). Young characters of a single minority heritage are already at a disadvantage when it comes to being represented in television and film, but those of multiple heritages, and multiple minority heritages, experience this on an even larger scale.

As influential media producers capable of suggesting change in how minorities are viewed, studios such as Disney are charged with producing quality entertainment for the public. Films, television programming and advertising appear to be pushing the boundaries with nontraditional families and characters, but even these mediums tend to cater to viewers that are slightly older and more mature. These boundaries are also challenged by adult viewers and based on specific kinds of nontraditional families, noting the controversy regarding Gracie's family, but little outcry for the homosexual relationship in *Modern Family*. With the idea of appealing to the largest audience possible, media producers are forced to pit what may be progressive against what the typical viewer wants to see. The challenging of traditional models and characters must continue, if the media does want to reflect the diversity that is occurring in society, including the spike of Multiracial individuals and interracial couples.

Chapter 3 – The Multiracial Child in Animated Cartoons

Initially an art form solely accessible with the accompaniment of feature presentations at the cinema, after some experimentation and successes (Windsor McCay's *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914), Max Fleischer's *My Old Kentucky Home* (1926), Walt Disney's *Steamboat Willy* (1928)), the animated cartoons slowly gained notice on television. Although animated shows were part of television programming from the 1950s, some of the earliest successful animated series are still considered Hanna-Barbera's *The Flintstones* (1960-1966) and *The Jetsons* (1962-1988). Contemporary cartoons employ similar family structures to those initially shown, but there is greater diversity, and even Multiracial characters. In *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons*, the lead characters are White, and live heteronormative lifestyles. In both cases, each family is led by a somewhat foolish father figure, Fred Flintstone in *The Flintstones* and George Jetson in *The Jetsons*. Fred is married to the Velma (White), and they live with their toddler-aged daughter, Pebbles, pet dinosaur, Dino, and saber-toothed tiger, Baby Puss. George is married to White, female, mother figure Jane, and they live with their teenage daughter Judy, young son Elroy, dog Astro, and maid, Rosie the Robot. Some viewers and scholars may argue that cartoons are an art form most suitable for children. It is true that a number of television networks featuring family-friendly and child-friendly programming such as Nickelodeon, Disney, and Cartoon Network have a reputation for producing a large number of animated series. These early cartoons led the way for a scope of cartoons, for children, dual, and adult viewership for more modern visions such as Matt Groening's *The Simpsons* (1989-Present), Mike Judge's *Beavis and Butthead* (1993-2011), Trey Parker and Matt Stone's *South Park* (1997-Present), *Family Guy* (1999-Present), *Bob's Burgers* (2011-Present), and Adam Reed's *Archer* (2009-Present).

The evolving nature of cartoons to cater towards different age groups can similarly be witnessed in the evolution of the characters portrayed. Television and cable networks were used to mostly White, and sometimes all White casts, over time some of these networks and cartoon creators have incorporated more diversity and multiculturalism in their casts-- but few have specifically honed in on the Multiracial character. In this chapter, I examine the depictions of a select group of multiracial characters and their families in two different animated series that originally aired on the Nickelodeon network. I begin with Sanjay Patel from *Sanjay and Craig* (2013-present), then address Phoebe Heyerdahl from *Hey Arnold!* (1996-2004). I note that while each animated series features a multiracial character, the way in which they are presented is unique to each program.

Created by Jim Dirschberger, Jay Howell (*Bob's Burgers*), and Andreas Trolf, *Sanjay and Craig* also includes the creative contributions of previously successful and award-winning producers, Will McRobb and Chris Viscardi, the creators of the 1990s live-action series *The Adventures of Pete and Pete* (1993-1996) as executive producers for *Sanjay and Craig*. The creators' vision has achieved immense success since first airing on May 25, 2013: "According to Nielsen, *Sanjay and Craig* is the number-one new animated series of the year with all kid demos" (Kidscreen). Having previously successful producers is undoubtedly beneficial, but perhaps the talented voices behind the characters contribute to the viewer base. After all, media marketed towards children is often monitored by adults, and if an adult is familiar with an actor's previous work that may influence their decision to share future work with their child. These voices include Maulik Pancholy (*Phineas and Ferb*, *30 Rock*) as Sanjay Patel, Chris Hardwick (*Talking Dead*) as Craig Slithers, Grey DeLisle (*The Fairly Odd Parents*) as Darlene Patel, Kunal Nayyar (*The Big Bang Theory*) as Vijay Patel, Linda

Cardellini (*ER*) as Megan Sparkles, Matt Jones (*Breaking Bad*) as Hector Flanagan, and Tony Hale (*Arrested Development*) as Mr. Noodman. Also, children are not the only ones to view animated cartoons; a good portion of contemporary cartoons are for older audiences.

In the previous chapter regarding regulations, I noted that audience viewership affects profitability in the media industry, and suggested that studios appeal to their audience for viewers. Figures from the show *Sanjay and Craig* imply that audiences enjoy what they are seeing and are not at all deterred from watching the show simply because of Sanjay's racial background. The season premiere of *Sanjay and Craig* "drew 3.6 million total viewers, and to date is averaging 3 million total viewers and posting double-digit gains with kids two to 11 (+23%) and kids six to 11 (+29%)" (Kidscreen). Russell Hicks, president of content development and production at Nickelodeon suggests the success of *Sanjay and Craig* is due in part to the fact that the show is "playing on a lot of different levels [and] the series' success...lies in its ability to find the right voice and strike the proper tone for its audience" (Kidscreen). Appealing to the audience of *Sanjay and Craig* is clearly then one of the most essential aspects in the success of the show.

The animated comedy series has a TV-Y7 rating, suggesting that it is most appropriate for children age seven and above but the show's unique blend of humor, characters, and storylines makes it appealing to other demographics as well. The show's ability to appeal to a wide range of audiences could be due in part to the personal tastes of the shows creators, self-proclaimed viewers and fans of 1990s Nickelodeon shows. *Sanjay and Craig* doesn't dumb down its content; Jamie Piekarz, director of original programming for Canada's Corus Entertainment, shares that shows like *Sanjay and Craig* "are trying to

capture an adult tone, where the humor is more sophisticated, random and unexpected” (Kidscreen).

The premise behind *Sanjay and Craig* follows the twelve-year-old multiracial protagonist, Sanjay Patel, in outlandish schemes, cockamamie ideas, and misadventures in his suburban town. Rarely does Sanjay partake in adventures without some involvement from his close group of friends, consisting of Craig Slithers, Hector Flanagan, and Megan Sparkles. Megan Sparkles is a White, American, female character with big dreams of stardom. She also has a crush on Sanjay, which is shown in her perpetual flirting with him. Sanjay, however, is more interested in the White, fifteen-year-old Belle Pepper who works at the Frycade-- the group’s favorite place to hangout and gorge on spicy chicken wings. Hector Flanagan is a white, American, male character who wears an eye patch. Some may view Hector’s assumed disability as making him less than whole, but similar to children that wear a cape, Hector explains that he thinks wearing the eye patch heightens his other senses like a superhero, and the viewer never knows if wearing the eye patch is out of necessity or simply Hector’s choice. Sanjay’s unique group of friends is rounded out by Craig Slithers, Sanjay’s best friend and his pet snake, though Craig hates to be referred to as a pet. The “Sanjay and Craig Theme Song” explains how the two met, and how their friendship began:

Lookin’ for a pet one day
Sanjay found a talking snake
And the perfect match was made
Jumped into his arms to say
[Craig to Sanjay] Dude!
[Sanjay to Craig] What’s up?

Sanjay and Craig

The stuff they get into is insane

Sanjay and Craig

They're in the Best Friends Hall of Fame

Sanjay and Craig

There is no Best Friends Hall of Fame

They made it up

Ahhhh...yes (Sanjay and Craig Theme Song)

The conception of race, although not explicitly mentioned, is confronted right out the gate during the thirty-second introductory song. The imagery that corresponds to the lyrics feature a segment where Craig dances around the edge of an oriental rug while playing a flute and apparently charming the light brown skinned Sanjay, as Sanjay dances in the center of the rug, imitating the movements of a snake. Some may argue that Sanjay's ability to communicate with snakes, and the Sanjay-charming bit, reinforce stereotypical perceptions and negative ideas about people of Indian heritage. I agree to a certain extent that these images could be negative, but only if the creators do not address the situation (Sanjay's race) properly. I argue these images are not negative when we view the entire theme song or the series as a whole. The series reveals that Sanjay's close friends Megan and Hector can also communicate with Craig. Sanjay and Craig attempt to conceal Craig's ability to speak from Sanjay's parents, but later in the series, they reveal that they already knew Craig's secret. Nickelodeon chose for Craig's voice to be heard by all is part of the reason he is almost always wearing a disguise (Craig's everyday disguise consists of a backwards baseball cap

and red capped baseball tee). After all, imagine what would happen if people knew that a snake could talk?¹⁰

In the segment immediately following the Sanjay-charming bit, Sanjay skateboards down a steep hill with Craig wrapped around his body. The transitional segment between the rug dancing and the skateboarding shows Sanjay swinging Tarzan-style using Craig's body. This bit could signify the metaphorical intersection of Sanjay's racial identity, by blending an exotic background from the East (as proposed by Edward Said) with a more 'comfortable' background from the West. In viewing these two segments, the audience has already witnessed a critical dynamic in Sanjay's racial identity and his relationship to the outside world. I perceive these segments as giving the audience information about Sanjay's ethnic heritage and racial background in the quickest way possible, using the rapidity of visual stereotypes, which in this case are not used in a negative way. By incorporating the Sanjay-charming scene and then immediately transitioning to Sanjay skateboarding, Sanjay's Multiracial background is made more clear to the viewer by featuring both a White (American) tradition and an Indian tradition. However, Sanjay is not Multiracial simply because of the opening sequence; he is not pigeonholed or subjugated as being explicitly one or the other. Instead, he simply *is*, making it appear that Sanjay's Multiracial background is of little consequence. It is seeing Sanjay's parents that solidify our presumption of his race.

In the very first episode, "Brett Venom, M.D.," we meet Sanjay's biological mother, Darlene Patel, and biological father, Vijay Patel. Darlene, a White American works as an

¹⁰ In "A Tail of Two Slithers" we encounter the only other animal in the series with the ability to talk, Ronnie Slithers, Craig's long-lost brother. In the same episode, an unimpressive garter snake with no special abilities fails to replace Craig when Craig considers moving in with Ronnie.

emergency room nurse in the local hospital. Vijay, an Indian American,¹¹ was educated as an engineer in college and owns and operates the “Close-Out Blow-Out Store,” a clearance electronics store in town. The relationship between Darlene and Vijay is one that I have classified as an international interracial relationship, with Darlene being viewed as American and Vijay as Indian American. Despite Vijay’s assumed years living in the United, he is still depicted as an American immigrant. Vijay’s foreign accent suggest that an Indian rooted language, perhaps Hindi may be his first. A flashback sequence depicts Vijay as a student at an American university, but he is an outcast, desperate and lonely enough to create a robot friend (“PartyBot”). The interracial relationship between Sanjay’s parents does not lead them to be portrayed as excessively flawed. Unlike many animated cartoons for children, Vijay Patel and Darlene Patel appear to be more involved in Sanjay’s life (and the show) than typical cartoon parents, and are also aware of Sanjay’s many kid-ventures. With the Patel parents’ involvement in the show, the viewer is reminded again and again of Sanjay’s Multiracial identity. Darlene and Vijay support and help Sanjay when necessary but are not overprotective. They are good parents. Darlene and Vijay appear to have raised Sanjay in a contemporary middle-class household. The family lives in a nicely maintained house with a good-sized yard located in the suburbs. The Patel’s house is markedly plain and undecorated, save a few posters in Vijay’s bedroom. This suggests that the family is not overly concerned

¹¹ I intentionally use a space between the words Indian and American when referring to Vijay Patel as opposed to the hyphenated Indian-American label. I make this distinction based on the following reasoning: Sanjay, a character we assume was born in the U.S. would be an American, but his multiracial heritage marks him as an Indian-American. Vijay, on the other hand, appears to be an American immigrant, and although he may now be an American citizen, for clarification, he is referred to as Indian American meaning that he is indeed from India.

with surrounding Sanjay with objects from India, an authentic gesture taken by some interracial parents.

Portrayals of interracial couples have a history of showcasing negative and problematic outcomes in their relationships and in regard to the possibility of having children. Sanjay's parents disprove these notions by appearing to be in a loving relationship with one another and raising a "normal" child. Darlene and Vijay's admiration for one another is evident in "Heightmare," an episode where Sanjay, Craig, Megan, and Hector make a pact to ride every roller coaster at the amusement park. Darlene says to Vijay, "Hey! You're taking me on the 'Tunnel of Lo-o-o-ove...'"("Heightmare") Darlene's seductive nature alludes to the idea that the Patel parents are still affectionate, interested in one another, and sexually involved.

The Patel parents may be good-natured and loving, but as an interracial couple one might question how Sanjay has developed his sense of identity. The taxing psychological affects of being a multiracial child has been suggested by numerous studies. However, the *American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* reports that "Recent research has shown that multiracial children **do not** differ from other children in self-esteem, comfort with themselves, or number of psychiatric problems. Also, they tend to be high achievers with a strong sense of self and tolerance of diversity" [emphasis in the original] (1). Likening Sanjay's multiracial heritage to these findings, I note that Sanjay does not suffer from any extraordinary identity crises, though he does on occasion dress up with Craig Slithers. The one most questionable exception to this statement comes from "The Ultimate Challenge," an episode in which Sanjay and Craig transform into the best versions of themselves to battle. Craig transforms into a large, fierce snake. Sanjay, however, transforms into a white, blue-

eyed version of himself. At twelve years old, Sanjay would most likely be going through developmental changes and coming to terms with his identity, but the scene comes across as another one of the duo's kid ventures, as opposed to question of minority race rejection.

Even if Sanjay accepts his racial identity, that does not make him a perfect character. Sanjay has a desire to impress others, sometimes at the cost of his own dignity, perhaps a testament to his desire to be a "high achiever." In "Stinkboy," desperate for the acceptance of the neighborhood punk rock group the "Tuff Skulls," comprised of the Dicksons', Sanjay attempts to tightrope walk over the Dicksons' rancid pool by using Craig's outstretched body. Sanjay, capable of accomplishing this task almost effortlessly, begins to showoff past the point where Craig can hold on to the other side of the pool. Sanjay falls into the pool and acquires a stench so terrible that no one can stand to be near him. After falling in the pool, Sanjay returns home and sees his parents in the driveway. When Sanjay approaches his parents, instead of consoling him, Vijay shoots a hose at Sanjay using full blast. Sanjay is exiled to the backyard that night, to sleep in a tent with Craig, but Craig slithers off during the night, unable to handle the stench. Feeling rejected and lonely, Sanjay goes to live in the sewer and embraces his new stench. Sanjay's friends Hector, Megan, and Craig venture into the sewer with the hope of bringing him aboveground. While the group does get Sanjay out of the sewer, due to a mishap they all end up covered in sewer slime and are all forced to spend the night in the tent as "poopoo princesses" ("Stinkboy"). Sanjay and his friends are clearly close and willing to do whatever necessary to help one another, even though Sanjay is a Multiracial character. The group of friends are not defined by racial groupings in the show, but the stories operate in much the same way as cartoons with more traditional (White) casts.

The characters in *Sanjay and Craig* are examples of the progressive nature of the Multiracial characters in Nickelodeon.

The show *Sanjay and Craig* is multicultural in that the cast embodies a range of racially diverse characters. It shows the inter-racial relationship between Sanjay's parents and allows the viewer to acknowledge Sanjay as a Multiracial and multi-cultural character, though he is never expressly anything other than Sanjay. At this point in the series racial differences between the characters have not been mentioned. Instead Sanjay is just perceived as a goofy, all-American character that lives in the suburbs. Sanjay's race may go unnoticed by some viewers, but the show is enjoyable because our lead is eccentric, fun, and up for an adventure. Sanjay has these qualities in common with a protagonist of another animated cartoon on Nickelodeon, Arnold from *Hey Arnold!*

Dating back to the mid-1990s, Nickelodeon's *Hey Arnold!* depicts one of the most racially diverse casts that existed in animation up until that time. Executive producer and creator Craig Barlett's previous successes on the animated series' *Rugrats* (1991-2004) and *The Ren & Stimpy Show* (1991-1996) continued with the TV-Y rated, *Hey Arnold!* The show aired from 1996 until 2004, and *Hey Arnold!: The Movie* was released in 2002. The popularity of the *Hey Arnold!* series is evident from the length of the show's staying power. The diversity of the *Hey Arnold!* characters is also seen in the diversity of the *Hey Arnold!* cast--Spencer Klein (*Live Shot*), Phillip Van Dyke (*The Home Court*), and Toran Caudell (*Recess*, *7th Heaven*, *Rocket Power*) all voiced Arnold at some point during series, Jamil Walker Smith (*SGU Stargate Universe*) as Gerard Johannsen, Francesca Smith (*Recess*) as Helga Pataki, Anndi McAfee (*Tom and Jerry: The Movie*) as Phoebe Heyerdahl, George

Takei (*Star Trek, Heroes*) as Kyo Heyerdahl, and Jean Smart (*Kim Possible*) as Reba Heyerdahl.

The premise behind *Hey Arnold!* follows Arnold and other students from P.S. 118 through kid-crises and on various kidventures. Unlike *Sanjay and Craig*'s suburban setting, *Hey Arnold!* takes place in an urban city, reminiscent of New York's Brooklyn borough; a seemingly appropriate environment for a show that is multicultural from its own beginning in the "*Hey Arnold! Theme Song*"¹² Similar to *Sanjay and Craig*, the protagonist of this animated cartoon is a young boy, but in this instance our protagonist is a White American named Arnold (whose last name is never revealed), a character best known for his kind demeanor, wisdom beyond his years, and head shaped like an American football. Disputably an orphan, Arnold has been raised by and lives with his grandparents in the Sunset Arms Boarding House. Arnold's grandmother Gertrude, affectionately referred to as "Pookie," and grandfather Phil "Steely," rent to a diverse group of boardinghouse tenants, including Mr. Hyunh, a refugee from the Vietnam war, Oskar Kokoshka, an illiterate Czechoslovakian immigrant who maintains his gambling habit by taking money from his wife Suzie Kokoshka, and the ever elusive Mr. Smith, a man whose face is never visible. Arnold's best friend is Gerald Johanssen, a Black American is Arnold's best friend. Although much can be said in regard to Arnold's interracial interactions with various characters, I focus on the Multiracial secondary character, Phoebe Heyerdahl.

Phoebe is first seen in the "*Hey Arnold! Theme Song*" along with most of the fourth grade class from P.S. 118. Phoebe's English is perfectly articulated in a slightly nasally Midwestern vernacular. Unlike Sanjay who appears in every episode of his name-titled show,

¹²"The *Hey Arnold!* Theme Song" consists of six words, "Hey Arnold!" repeatedly, and "Move it football head."

or Arnold in *Hey Arnold!*, excluding the introductory song, Phoebe appears in fifty-six of the shows one hundred episodes and is the feature character in just seven of those fifty-six episodes: “Hall Monitor” (1997), “Phoebe Cheats” (1997), “Preteen Scream” (1998), “Phoebe Takes the Fall”(1998), “Phoebe Skips” (1999), “Phoebe Breaks a Leg” (2000), and the final episode of the series “Phoebe’s Little Problem” (2004).¹³ Nickelodeon must have felt the need to further address Phoebe’s ethnicity, and they do so in the 1997 episode, “Phoebe Cheats.” In it, Phoebe waits on stage in the school auditorium to receive an award from principal Wartz for a poem that she plagiarized:

Phoebe: Oh sir, I can’t write...

Wartz: Ah nonsense. We’re proud of our multi-cultural students here at PS 118. Where do you come from Phoebe?

Phoebe: Kentucky, sir.

Wartz: Phoebe, let’s make Ken-Tuk-Ay proud on Thursday. (“Phoebe Cheats”)

Wartz’s ignorance of ethnicity and racial difference is highlighted in this near cringe-worthy moment by his inability to see Phoebe as an American. His attempt to pronounce the word “Kentucky” by making it “sound Asian” becomes a mockery of Phoebe’s nationality by neglecting her citizenship and her multiracial identity. Mr. Wartz has already assumed Phoebe’s ethnicity as Other, foreign, and most likely Asian. Even Mr. Wartz’s “Where do you come from?” question is reminiscent of the “What are you” question often posed to multiracial people. However, it is clear that Wartz seems to be in the minority with his questioning of racial difference. Best friends Arnold and Gerald and Phoebe and Helga embrace their interracial friendships without mentioning racial difference.

¹³ As an aside, I find it fascinating that of all of Phoebe’s title episodes, none suggest positive imagery; instead nearly all are episodes association with her has some negative connotation.

Still, although not questioned, race and ethnicity are acknowledged. In “Phoebe’s Little Problem,” Phoebe is humiliated in front of the entire school when accepting an attendance award. Phoebe stays home from school following the embarrassing event and Arnold comes by her house to check on how she is doing. Phoebe reassures Arnold that everything is fine, “ever since [she] decided that [she is] never going back to P.S. 118” (“Phoebe’s Little Problem”). It is the décor of her house that acknowledges and reflects part of her heritage. Décor elements often associated with Japanese and Oriental styles are overly present in every room, including traditional wall scrolls, bonsai plants, and *Kanji* writing. This appears to be quite the opposite of Sanjay’s home with its almost heritage and décor-free house. The emphasis on Japanese heritage is continued in the episode “Phoebe’s Little Problem,” when Phoebe sits down with her parents for dinner as they eat with chopsticks and have green tea.

Phoebe is portrayed as a shy, small, timid character, but also as the smartest child in her fourth grade (and for a brief time in the sixth grade class, in “Phoebe Skips”). One may think that the latter quality—intelligence—should be positive, but in *Hey Arnold!* Phoebe’s knowledge and desire for educational success often borders on the stereotype of the model minority. Comments on Phoebe’s intelligence are mentioned consistently throughout the series, even from our main protagonist, Arnold. Following Arnold and Gerald’s loss to Phoebe and Helga in a prequalifying academic competition, Arnold comments that, “Phoebe was incredible, I don’t think anybody could beat her in the contest tomorrow” (“Phoebe Takes the Fall”). Unfortunately, Phoebe is often taken advantage of by other characters, and the next day Phoebe must face her best friend, biggest tormentor, and school bully Helga Pataki in completion. Helga, obsessed with finally beating her older sister, Olga, pleads with

Phoebe to throw the competition, allowing Helga to advance to the citywide competition. Their teacher and proctor of the competition, Mr. Simmons, asks Phoebe the final question, “What was the name of the privileged warrior class in ancient Japan?” Phoebe who is shown to clearly know the correct answer, says “sumo wrestler.” In this brief interaction Mr. Simmons looks utterly shocked that Phoebe answered incorrectly, especially because the question directly refers to Phoebe’s heritage. Helga ends up winning the competition after Phoebe feeds the correct answer, “the samurai,” to Helga. After that victory, Helga pushes Phoebe further into tutoring her before the citywide competition. On the way to the citywide academic competition, Helga has a sudden change of heart and is overcome with such remorse for treating Phoebe terribly that she attempts to apologize to her. Given Helga’s inept social skills, however, she inadvertently places the blame on Phoebe for not sticking up for herself when she shouts, “How could you let me do this to you?” (“Phoebe Takes the Fall”). Helga’s mistreatment of Phoebe, and Phoebe’s continued acceptance of such treatment, continues throughout the series.

In “Phoebe Breaks a Leg,” Helga requests that Phoebe accomplish a laundry list of tasks after school that results in Phoebe breaking her leg in an attempt to catch the bus after school. Helga is genuinely concerned for her friend and offers to take care of Phoebe while she recovers. Phoebe, who is used to Helga’s conceited behavior, takes advantage of the situation and continues to fake her injury even after it has healed. Helga brings Phoebe fresh *sushi rolls*, turns the page of Phoebe’s books in the library, and offers her four shampoo options when she washes her hair. Instead of addressing the continued abuse and mistreatment, it is not until Arnold steps in that Phoebe confesses to Helga. Sanjay may be involved in healthy friendships, but Phoebe’s involvement in this unhealthy friendship isn’t

necessary a comment on her identity as a Multiracial character. The difference between the two characters is then a statement about the diverse kinds of friendships that all characters/children, not just Multiracial characters/children can have.

As the parents of a secondary character, the audience does not get to know Reba and Kyo as well as some of the other, more fleshed-out adult characters in *Hey Arnold!* From what we do see, Phoebe's family life is healthy and her parents are also in a loving relationship. Phoebe's biological mother, Reba Heyerdahl, is married to Phoebe's biological father, Kyo Heyerdahl. The relationship between Reba and Kyo is one that I've classified as an intranational interracial relationship, with Reba being viewed as American and Kyo as Asian-American. Reba is from Kentucky with red hair and a southern "accent." Reba is drawn to be several inches taller than her husband and is fairly brawny. Despite Kyo's small stature he has a powerful and very deep voice. Unlike Vijay Patel, Kyo Heyerdahl speaks impeccable English and is presumably either a second-generation immigrant, or emigrated from Japan to the U.S. at a young age. Kyo's ties to his Japanese culture are reinforced in most instances despite his brief screen time. In the season three episode "Parents Day," the family works together in a variety of field day activities. The Heyerdahl family secures a Parents Day victory by placing first and winning.¹⁴ In celebration, Phoebe turns to her father and they share an *eshaku* (Japanese bow) between one another. Reba is positioned behind Kyo and Phoebe, smiling and completely uninflected by what seems to be an ordinary exchange between father and daughter.

Aside from Reba and Kyo's relationship, Phoebe is involved in her own intranational interracial relationship with the Black American Gerald Johannsen. The relationship between

¹⁴ Strangely, even though they win the competition, none of the Heyerdahl family members have a single speaking role in the two-part "Parents Day" episode.

the two young students is not at the forefront of the show compared to the one between Helga and Arnold, more-so Helga's obsession with Arnold. In an archived Nickelodeon blog, Craig Barlett confirms that Phoebe and Gerald are involved in a relationship together:

Craig Bartlett: They've sort of been boyfriend and girlfriend ever since the first season.

Craig Bartlett: Their love is not unrequited.

Craig Bartlett: I guess that means it's requited! (Nickelodeon)

Although never directly mentioned in several episodes, the couple shares approving, cute intimate looks and are physically close in proximity. In "Love Cheese," the pair gaze into each other's eyes, each holding an ice cream cone at the Cheese Festival. In "April Fools Day," they are shown dancing together, and in "Operation Ruthless," the two are shown holding hands. Phoebe's relationship as a Multiracial character involved with another minority character are progressive in showing diversity in a 1990s Nickelodeon based cartoon. Although *Hey Arnold!* was being progressive by portraying such a diverse cast, many of the characters fall into stereotypes, perhaps one of the biggest obstacles faced by animators that create *semi-realistic* characters.

I place emphasis on the idea of realism additionally noting that as television programs, and as animated shows, they do not and cannot directly portray the real world. Although referring to cinema, Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni express a similar sentiment, noting that the objects used to capture scenes are real (camera and film) but nearly every other part of the process is constructed, even reality itself, stating that "'Reality' is nothing but an expression of the prevailing ideology." (*Film Theory and Criticism* 683)

Hey Arnold! and *Sanjay and Craig* were originally broadcast on the Nickelodeon network. Although Phoebe and Sanjay are not the only Multiracial/Mixed race child characters in television, they do stand out as making a statement about Multiracial characters in cartoons, and unintentionally about Multiraciality. Nickelodeon's approach to these two different characters even says something about the seventeen-year difference in the two shows initial episodes. Phoebe is a partial result of a 1990s multicultural, diversity boom and Sanjay is the result of a newly documented population and Multiracial boom. Sanjay and Phoebe are seemingly well-rounded, healthy, intelligent, though perhaps quirky characters that don't seem to bear the burden of representation in their cartoon worlds.

Conclusion

While my study examines the depictions of Multiracial characters in children's media, and the media producers that control such depictions, People of Color, and specifically Multiracial child characters, are underrepresented in media for children. Producers will most likely continue to create images based on the influential power of whatever dominant ideology is in place, creating film and television programming to maximize viewership and profit in revenue. Hopefully, societal influences will pressure media forces to do their part as edutainers. This means presenting realistic depictions of modern families, including families with Multiracial children. The potential benefit of these images goes to young viewers who can begin their exposure to racial/ethnic differences that exist among people in an increasingly diverse country.

However, diversity should be approached carefully and thoughtfully. When diversity is added just to add diversity producers may run the risk of caricaturing, enforcing racial stereotypes, and highlighting pejorative words and remarks. These images could be inappropriate for the child viewer and be detrimental to their ability to learn how to be accepting of all people, especially if that is the child's only experience and exposure to races and cultures. Although scholarship tends to focus on the historically negative interracial couple and complicated Multiracial child, these animated children resemble their "monoracial" counterparts. Monoracial is placed in quotations because in a world of animation it is frequent for illustrators to make characters who are meant to be human—unrealistic colors and illustrators may exaggerate the characters physical appearances in other ways. In my claim that there is difficulty in consistently finding Multiracial characters in television and film for young audiences, one counterargument may be that Multiracial

characters are available in media for older audiences. After all, marketing to these older audiences would be more beneficial to studios that want to make money from their viewers. These older viewers are also more mature and better able to comprehend the complexities that exist in media when portraying Multiracial characters. Both of these views are flawed as noted in my own study, because even in media for older audiences, portrayals of Multiracial characters that are more visible, are still fairly infrequent. The frequency of Multiracial characters in children's media is restricted by a variety of forces. There is a history of attempting to overprotect children that has left contemporary society reeling from past legislations. Some of the regulations to "protect" the child were often racist in nature and governed everyday life from politics, to popular perception, to sanctions imposed on the media. It appears that evolving nature of the Multiracial individual and pressure from the Multiracial Movement in society is pushing for more acceptance and inclusion in mediums such as magazines, television, and print that celebrate the physical racial ambiguity of some Multiracial individuals but do not celebrate an established Multiracial identity.

The challenge issued to media producers is due in part to an increased diversity in the population. Self-identified Multiracial minorities are joining the call of other marginally recognized individuals for more representation. With growing numbers of nontraditional family units, in order to appease the target audience, shows have to employ diverse characters to try to reach as many of their viewers as possible. These family units include more than just Multiracial characters, but those of varying family dynamics. These characters can include international relationships, intranational relationships, adopted and fostered children, homosexual and heterosexual relationships, and a range of other elements. Even though I suggest a reform from the stringent regulations set in place with the Hays' Code,

acceptable of nontraditional families is not always approved by adults. The Cheerios commercials with Gracie and the reception to them have shed light on the White concern for miscegenation that is still held by some. In the same vein, child viewers of the commercial noted the normalcy of the interracial family and Multiracial Gracie in the Cheerios' commercials. This racial transition from adult viewer to child viewer is clearly still a real issue.

At least the few characters that I have mentioned, Gracie, Phoebe, and Sanjay are not defined by their race. Clearly, they are all a specific race, but the fact that each of those characters is Multiracial does not become the focus of the storylines, unlike a text such as Aaron McGrunder's *Boondocks* in which the Multiracial character Jazmine consistently questions how others perceive her racially. Unlike a fair amount of Hollywood films that have focused on the possible problems of being in an interracial relationship-- including having a multiracial child, in the three above-mentioned family models, the parents appear to be in health loving relationships and are caring for "normal" Multiracial children.

Although an analysis of this sample size cannot provide significant evidence to address his field of study as a whole, it can enlighten us to some of the dynamics their interesting racial differences provide and few examples comment on the disservice often committed by the media in order to appease the majority audience (not necessarily the child audience) by limiting the number of multiracial characters in television and film. Instead, they Multiracial characters exist as "normal" persons and it isn't until their parents are shown, their perceived race is questioned, their race exposed, or altered, that their Multiraciality becomes a potential problem. As difficult as it has been visualize the Multiracial identity from the side of inclusion of the ever-more present multiracial and

therefore interracial relationships, the industry appears to be making small steps in the direction of having more inclusive representations.

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