



Representation of Biracial Identity in Mariah Carey's Songs: Literary and Cultural Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The concept of biracial identity has gained attention in cultural studies, particularly in a globalized world where racial boundaries are increasingly fluid. However, there is limited research on its representation in music. While visual and narrative arts often dominate such studies, music's lyrical storytelling remains underexplored. This study addresses the gap by analyzing biracial identity in Mariah Carey's songs "Outside", "Petals", and "Close My Eyes". Using Stuart Hall's Representation Theory and Critical Race Theory (CRT), it examines how her lyrics explore societal alienation, identity conflict, and self-acceptance. The findings reveal Carey's music as both personal narrative and cultural critique, challenging systemic racism and societal norms. Her work highlights identity's fluidity and amplifies marginalized voices, illustrating music's potential to address social issues. This research underscores the importance of inclusive representation in promoting diversity and contributing to discourses on race, identity, and belonging.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of biracial identity has become increasingly relevant in cultural studies and literature in today's globalized world. In the United States, the experience of mixed-race identity has historically been complex and often contentious. For centuries, American society viewed racial identity in binary terms, white or Black, colored or not, creating a sharp dichotomy in social group divisions (Burgos, 2021). However, the growing number of individuals with mixed or biracial backgrounds reveals a more diverse spectrum of racial identities beyond simple binary categories. This indicates that the concept of race is more complex and flexible than traditionally understood. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, about 33.8 million people, or 10.2% of the total population, identified as multiracial. As discourse on race and identity evolves globally, biracial individuals face unique challenges. They often experience identity conflicts, as they may not be fully

accepted within any single racial group and might even encounter discrimination from both sides (Carminati & Héliot, 2022). Consequently, they struggle to find a sense of self and belonging within a society that continues to view racial identity through a binary lens (Aris, 2019).

The complexities of biracial identity are not only explored in academic discussions but also vividly depicted through the personal stories of individuals who navigate this experience. Artists and public figures with mixed-race backgrounds often become powerful voices in shaping the cultural narrative around racial identity, providing a more nuanced understanding of what it means to belong to multiple racial communities. These personal journeys of reconciling different heritages can shed light on the struggles and triumphs faced by many biracial individuals. Mariah Carey, for instance, is a renowned artist with a biracial background a biracial background, her father being of Afro-Venezuelan, and her mother of Irish heritage. From a young age, she faced identity challenges due to racial stereotypes in the United States (Carey & Davis, 2020). This experience deeply influenced her career journey and is often reflected in her music, especially in themes that speak to acceptance, personal struggle, and the quest for identity. As a public figure, Mariah Carey is frequently regarded as a multicultural icon in pop music, helping to broaden understanding of the complexities surrounding biracial identity. Through her lyrics and visual art, Mariah Carey conveys experiences that resonate with many biracial individuals who feel caught between two worlds without fully belonging to either. This makes her a pivotal figure in discussions of biracial identity representation in popular media, as she contributes to narratives that transcend racial boundaries and celebrate the diversity within self-identity.

As one of the most commercially successful artists in the music industry, her global reach and influence make her music a key platform for discussing and shaping ideas about race and identity. In fact, her status as the best-selling female singer in history makes her an enduring cultural icon, whose music and image resonate with diverse audiences worldwide. Therefore, a study on the representation of biracial identity in popular culture, specifically in Mariah Carey's songs, is essential because popular culture significantly shapes public perceptions of race and identity (Adila et al., 2022). Through this research, it becomes possible to attain deeper insights into the lived experiences and struggles faced by biracial individuals, as well as observe how their identities are portrayed in popular media. The benefits of this include fostering greater understanding and acceptance of diversity within society and enriching social discourse on identity and minority issues. Additionally, this study underscores the importance of authentic and inclusive representation, encouraging the cultural industry to be more sensitive in amplifying minority experiences. This study aims to analyze how the lyrics and themes in Mariah Carey's songs reflect the challenges, complexities, and dualities of biracial identity. Additionally, this research seeks to explore how her work serves as a critique of the power structures underlying racial injustices.

This study will employ two main theories to analyze the representation of biracial identity in Mariah Carey's music. Stuart Hall's theory of representation will serve as a foundation for understanding how biracial identity is depicted in Carey's lyrics and musical imagery. According to (Hall, 1997), identity is not fixed or essential, it is a social construct shaped through interaction with cultural and social environments. Hall posits that identity is dynamic and often forms through contradictory positions within society. This theory enables an examination of how Mariah Carey conveys the complexity of her mixed-race identity and how it is interpreted by society within the context of popular culture. In addition to Hall's theory of cultural identity, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is also relevant for understanding the context of discrimination faced by biracial individuals like Mariah Carey. (Delgado et al., 2006) explain that CRT, which arose in response to racial injustices within legal and societal systems, provides a framework for examining how race and identity intersect with power and dominance in popular culture. CRT emphasizes that race is not a biological category but rather a social construct rooted in a history of injustice and discrimination. In the context of Mariah Carey's music, CRT will help identify how the representation of her biracial identity may reflect, challenge, or reinforce existing racial stereotypes. By linking with theories of representation and CRT, this study aspires to provide in-depth insights into how Mariah Carey expresses and communicates the complexities of biracial identity through her music. Based on these objectives, the research poses two key questions: how biracial identity is represented in Mariah Carey's songs, and how her songs convey a form of resistance to biracial issues.

Research conducted by (Kristianto & Wahyuni, 2022) focuses on the representation of identity crisis in the film *Minari*, particularly through the character Jacob, who grapples with the conflict between family responsibilities and personal ambitions as a Korean immigrant in the United States. This study illustrates how Jacob preserves Korean culture, such as traditional farming methods, while striving to adapt to American culture. The symbol of the minari plant serves as a metaphor for Jacob's resilience and adaptability. A study by (Sere et al., 2020) examines the representation of African cultural identity in the film *Black Panther*. They discover that the film employs the symbol of vibranium to depict the wealth of Africa's resources, contrasting stereotypes of Africa as a poor and underdeveloped continent. Additionally, the film integrates cultural rituals and traditional African costumes to authentically showcase the richness of African culture, while also highlighting the empowerment of African female characters, such as Shuri, who is portrayed as an intelligent scientist. Through the representation of beautiful African landscapes, this research reveals how *Black Panther* celebrates cultural diversity and African strength, offering a positive perspective that is often overlooked in the media. Research by Ardianto et al. (2023) analyzes the representation of Surabaya in the album *Dosa, Kota, dan Kenangan* by Silampukau. Surabaya is depicted through urban icons such as Gang Dolly and Jalan Ahmad Yani, reflecting nightlife and traffic congestion. Furthermore, the songs in this album highlight the

social behaviors of busy urban residents who frequently marginalize religion, illustrating the dynamics of a large city grappling with metropolitan issues, including the loss of green spaces for development.

The novelty of the research on the representation of biracial identity in the music of Mariah Carey lies in its unique focus on the experiences of mixed-race identity expressed through the lyrics and themes of popular songs, distinguishing it from the work of Kristianto & Wahyuni (2022), which centers on cultural identity in the context of Korean immigrants in America. While Sere et al. (2020) explore African cultural identity through symbols and visual elements in Black Panther, this study offers a fresh perspective by examining the complexities of biracial identity represented through music lyrics as an introspective and personal medium. Unlike the research by (Ardianto et al., 2023), which discusses the representation of Surabaya in songs reflecting local and social identity, this study emphasizes how Mariah Carey's work portrays the challenges of biracial identity within the framework of American popular culture. Consequently, this research contributes to the understanding of minority representation in popular media and enriches perspectives on biracial experiences in a multicultural society.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the representation of biracial identity in Mariah Carey's songs. Qualitative research, as a form of naturalistic inquiry, aimed to achieve a profound understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting (Lim, 2024). Through a detailed analysis of Carey's lyrics and accompanying musical elements, this research delved into the intricate expression of biracial identity in her work. The study population encompassed Mariah Carey's entire body of work. However, the research adopted purposive sampling, a technique in which the researcher selected specific individuals, cases, or units based on criteria relevant to the research objectives (Campbell et al., 2020). Therefore, in the context of this study, purposive sampling was applied by selecting specific songs from Mariah Carey's discography that prominently featured themes of biracial identity.

Data collection methods included observation through listening to Mariah Carey's songs to better understand the thematic and symbolic elements within her music, followed by an extensive document study involving the analysis of song lyrics, music videos, and relevant autobiographical or interview content related to Mariah Carey's personal experiences. This research procedure involved three key phases. First, researchers identified and selected three songs based on their thematic relevance and connection to Mariah Carey's personal experiences or cultural significance. The second phase consisted of close readings and lyric analysis, where the lyrics were examined for deeper meanings, symbolism, emotional expression, and their representation of biracial identity. In this phase, Stuart Hall's representation theory was utilized to analyze how Mariah Carey's music constructed and communicated complex identities, emphasizing the dynamic and



socially constructed nature of identity. Simultaneously, CRT was applied to explore how her lyrics engaged with and critiqued societal power structures, racial stereotypes, and issues of discrimination. These complementary frameworks enabled a multifaceted examination of the ways race and identity intersected in her music. Finally, in the third phase, the researchers synthesized common themes across the selected songs and interpreted them using both theoretical perspectives. By linking Hall's ideas of representation with CRT's focus on systemic power dynamics, this phase contextualized Mariah Carey's work within broader social, cultural, and personal narratives, providing deeper insights into the portrayal of biracial identity in her music.

Data analysis was conducted through thematic coding to reveal recurring motifs and representations of biracial identity. Thematic analysis is a method used to analyze data with the aim of identifying patterns or discovering themes within the data collected by the researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this research context, thematic coding involved identifying and categorizing patterns within the lyrics, music videos, and autobiographical content that reflected the complex experience of navigating multiple racial identities. In addition, interviews conducted by Mariah Carey, available through reputable sources, provided valuable insight into her personal experiences and served as a source of confirmation for the interpretations of her lyrics. These video interviews, in which Mariah Carey directly addressed aspects of her biracial identity, supported, and enriched the qualitative analysis of her songs. While autobiographical content and interviews offered deeper insights into her experiences, there were still limitations in the availability of direct, explicit statements from Mariah Carey regarding her biracial identity, which could have affected the depth of analysis regarding how these experiences were reflected in her music.

To ensure clarity and consistency in the analysis, a coding system was developed to categorize specific parts of the lyrics. The codes were structured with the first part indicating the title of the song being analyzed, the second part referring to the section within the song (e.g., verse, chorus, bridge), and the third part specifying the exact line within that section. For example, "O.V1.L1" represented the first line in the first verse of the song "Outside". Similarly, "P.B.L2" identified the second line in the bridge section of the song "Petals" and "C.V2.L3" referred to the third line in the second verse of the song "Close My Eyes". This coding system was consistently applied throughout the analysis to help readers identify and contextualize the specific parts of the lyrics being discussed, ensuring a systematic and transparent approach to examining the lyrical content.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Growing up in a multicultural household, Mariah Carey faced challenges related to her mixed racial identity, which became more pronounced in the predominantly white-dominated music industry of the 1990s. Her struggle to define herself within a binary racial framework highlights the complexities of biracial identity. Mariah Carey has spoken about facing rejection from both Black and White communities, underscoring the broader discourse on identity, representation, and the fluidity of cultural constructs. Stuart Hall's theory of representation provides a lens to understand how Mariah Carey's music reflects cultural negotiation. Hall argues that identity is dynamic, shaped by historical, social, and cultural influences. This perspective is key to understanding Mariah Carey's exploration of her biracial identity through her lyrics. Additionally, CRT complements Hall's theory by addressing the systemic and structural aspects of race. CRT emphasizes racism as ordinary and systemic, and stresses the importance of intersectionality, how race, gender, and other identity markers shape experiences of discrimination. It also advocates for counter-narratives to challenge dominant perspectives, offering a framework to analyze Mariah Carey's navigation of race and identity in a racially charged societal context (Delgado et al., 2006). This study focuses on analyzing three of Mariah Carey's songs that are considered to represent her biracial identity and experiences, which are "Outside", "Petals", and "Close My Eyes".

Analysis of the Song "Outside"

The opening verse of "Outside" contains the lines *"It's hard to explain (O.VI.L1) / Inherently it's just always been strange (O.VI.L2) / Neither here nor there (O.VI.L3) / Always somewhat out of place everywhere (O.VI.L4) / Ambiguous (O.VI.L5) / Without a sense of belonging to touch (O.VI.L6) / Somewhere halfway (O.VI.L7) / Feeling there's no one completely the same (O.VI.L8)"*. These lines the difficulty of articulating an identity that is both deeply personal and universally misunderstood. Hall's concept of identity as fluid and continuously negotiated is mirrored in these sentiments, particularly the idea of being "neither here nor there", which reflects the liminal position many biracial individuals occupy. Furthermore, the word "ambiguous" in (O.VI.L5) underscores the inadequacy of rigid societal categories to convey biracial identities, aligning with CRT emphasis on the social construction of race and its role in sustaining privilege and exclusion (Britannica, 2024). The sense of isolation expressed in (O.VI.L6) highlights CRT's concept of "othering", where individuals are excluded from dominant cultural or racial groups. This is supported by the research of Eid & Parker (2023), who note that biracial individuals often struggle to fully embrace either of their racial heritages, complicating their sense of belonging. (Christophe et al., 2022) further highlight the societal invalidation that biracial individuals face, leading to internalized self-doubt and a fragmented sense of self.

The chorus goes with the lines “*Standing alone (O.C.L1) / Eager to just (O.C.L2) / Believe it's good enough to be what (O.C.L3) / You really are (O.C.L4) / But in your heart (O.C.L5) / Uncertainty forever lies (O.C.L6) / And you'll always be (O.C.L7) / Somewhere on the (O.C.L8) / Outside (O.C.L9)*”. The longing expressed in *(O.C.L3-O.C.L4)* mirrors Hall’s concept of identity as a process of becoming rather than being, revealing a desire to transcend societal classifications and embrace an authentic self. However, the acknowledgment in *(O.C.L6)* reflects CRT’s view of systemic racism as an omnipresent force, constantly reminding marginalized individuals of their perceived otherness. The final line in *(O.C.L7-O.C.L9)*, shows the psychological impact of exclusion, emphasizing that “othering” is both internalized and externally imposed. This is supported by research from Williams (2011), which reveals that social rejection activates brain regions associated with physical pain, highlighting its intense emotional impact. Even brief rejection can provoke anger, sadness, and a crisis in belonging, leaving individuals feeling invisible and unworthy (Yu et al., 2023). This burden is reflected in Mariah Carey’s lived experience. In 2001, she publicly disclosed her struggle with bipolar disorder following a mental breakdown, highlighting the compounding effects of exclusion and internalized self-doubt on mental health (ABC News, 2018).

The lines of the second verse are “*Early on, you face (O.V2.L1) / The realization you don't have a space (O.V2.L2) / Where you fit in (O.V2.L3) / And recognize you (O.V2.L4) / Were born to exist (O.V2.L5)*”. This second verse shifts focus to the early recognition of societal exclusion, a theme deeply resonant with CRT’s principle that racism is systemic and ordinary. The line *(O.V2.L2)* reflects highlights the structural nature of racial categorization, which marginalizes biracial individuals who struggle to fit within societal norms (Heritage Foundation, 2024). This idea aligns with Stuart Hall's theory that identity is shaped by cultural codes, suggesting that biracial individuals navigate complexities beyond mainstream definitions. The line *(O.V2.L5)* underlines a reclaiming agency despite systemic marginalization, echoing CRT's counter-narrative to dominant racial frameworks and asserting individuals' inherent right to identity (Hardin, 2021). The bridge of the song goes only with the repeated lines “*And it's hard (O.B.L1) / And it's hard (O.B.L2) / And it's hard (O.B.L3)*”. The repetition highlights the relentlessness of the emotional turmoil tied to navigating a biracial identity.

The lines of verse three are as follows “*Irreversibly (O.V3.L1) / Falling in between (O.V3.L2) / And it's hard (O.V3.L3) / And it's hard (O.V3.L4) / To be understood (O.V3.L5) / As you are (O.V3.L6) / As you are (O.V3.L7) / Oh, and God knows (O.V3.L8) / That you're standing on your own (O.V3.L9) / Blind and unguided (O.V3.L10) / Into a world divided (O.V3.L11) / You're thrown (O.V3.L12) / Where you're never quite the same (O.V3.L13) / Although you try, try, and try (O.V3.L14) / To tell yourself (O.V3.L15) / You really are (O.V3.L16) / But in your heart, uncertainty forever lies (O.V3.L17) / And you'll always be (O.V3.L18) / Somewhere on the outside (O.V3.L19)*”. The phrase in *(O.V3.L10-O.V3.L11)* captures the

disorienting experience of individuals existing between fixed racial categories. CRT critiques the systemic failure to accommodate hybrid identities, leaving biracial individuals to navigate their paths without adequate societal support. The line in (*O.V3.L14-O.V3.L16*) emphasize the persistence of uncertainty, a theme central to both CRT and Hall's theories. While Hall frames this uncertainty as an inherent aspect of fluid identity, CRT underscores the role of societal structures in perpetuating it (George, 2021). The concluding lines in (*O.V3.L18-O.V3.L19*) function as a reminder of the enduring tension between personal identity and societal expectations. This reflects CRT's recognition that individuals often exist on the margins of societal acceptance due to their racial or ethnic identities.

Analysis of the Song "Petals"

In *Petals*, Mariah Carey's emotional lyrics explore themes of family, identity, love, and loss, reflecting the pain of disconnection and the search for healing. The verse one goes by the lines "*I've often wondered if there's ever been a perfect family (P.V1.L1) / I've always longed for undividedness and sought stability (P.V1.L2)*". In these opening lines, Mariah Carey expresses a deep, existential longing for an idealized, perfect family, one without conflict or division. This mirrors the universal desire for a sense of belonging and stability that many individuals experience, particularly those who feel caught between conflicting identities or familial expectations. This notion ties into CRT's counter-narratives, as it suggests that the conventional "perfect family" often doesn't account for the struggles of marginalized or biracial individuals whose family dynamics are more complicated due to societal pressures and systemic challenges (Dwipananda, 2019).

To further explore the evolution of Mariah Carey's emotional journey, the second verse using the imagery of a "flower" becomes central to understanding her shifting sense of self and connection to the world around her. "*A flower taught me how to pray (P.V2.L1) / But as I grew, that flower changed (P.V2.L2) / She started flailing in the wind (P.V2.L3) / Like golden petals scattering (P.V2.L4)*". The "flower" metaphor symbolizes nurturing or maternal influence in Mariah Carey's life, initially representing guidance and hope. However, its transition to "flailing in the wind" in (*P.V2.L3*) and "golden petals scattering" (*P.V2.L4*) reflects a loss of stability in her relationships and sense of self. This captures the fragility of identity and relationships, especially in the face of societal and personal turmoil. CRT explains how external forces, like microaggressions, shape identity and destabilize self-perception, particularly for marginalized individuals (Britannica, 2024).

The transition into the chorus deepens Mariah Carey's emotional conflict, shifting from the metaphor of the "flower" to the "dandelion," symbolizing her struggle with loss and trust with her sister (The Canary, 2024). The chorus goes by the lines "*And I miss you dandelion (P.C1.L1) / And even love you (P.C1.L2) /*



And I wish there was a way for me to trust you (P.C1.L3) / But it hurts me every time I try to touch you (P.C1.L4) / But I miss you dandelion (P.C1.L5) / And even love you (P.C1.L6)". The lines (*P.C1.L1- P.C1.L2*) and (*P.C1.L5- P.C1.L6*) convey nostalgia and longing for a connection that has been lost. Yet, the simultaneous acknowledgment of pain in (*P.C1.L4*) reflects emotional conflict, signaling that the relationship in question is fraught with unresolved trauma or betrayal.

As Mariah Carey transitions from the chorus to the third verse, she reflects on emotional disillusionment and the power dynamics in her past relationship: "*I gravitated towards a patriarch so young predictably (P.V3.L1) / I was resigned to spend my life within a maze of misery (P.V3.L2)*". Mariah Carey links her attraction to a flawed patriarch, symbolized by her Caucasian ex-husband, to the emotional abuse she endured (Entertainment Tonight, 2020). This portrayal aligns with themes of power dynamics, where one partner may dominate the relationship, leading to emotional abuse and a feeling of being trapped within a cycle of unhappiness (Hambrick, 2016). The "maze of misery" in (*P.V3.L2*) represents the entanglements of family and identity, where she felt trapped and directionless. This resonates with CRT's focus on intersectionality, where race, gender, and societal expectations intersect to perpetuate cycles of oppression. Hall's notion of cultural identity being shaped by external forces also underscores the complex interplay between personal identity and social structures.

Following the emotional reconciliation in the second chorus, the bridge emphasizes Mariah Carey's deep sense of betrayal, particularly by her sister. "*So many I considered closest to me (P.B.L1) / Turned on a dime and sold me out dutifully (P.B.L2) / Although that knife was chipping away at me (P.B.L3) / They turned their eyes away and (P.B.L4) / Went home to sleep (sleep, sleep, sleep) (P.B.L5)*". In (*P.B.L1-P.B.L2*), Mariah Carey reflects on how those she trusted betrayed her suddenly and calculatedly, echoing the shocking revelation that her sister once attempted to sell her to a pimp (Carey & Davis, 2020). The metaphor in (*P.B.L3*) reflects the emotional toll of betrayal, symbolizing the gradual erosion of trust and self-worth. The repetition of "sleep" in (*P.B.L5*) highlights the apathy of those once close to her. This connects to Stuart Hall's theory of representation, illustrating how Carey's identity is shaped and challenged not only by societal, but also personal betrayals. It also aligns with CRT, which emphasizes the systemic oppression faced by marginalized individuals, who often encounter betrayal both within personal relationships and broader societal structures (Ferguson, 2016).

The third chorus marks a turning point in Mariah Carey's emotional journey, highlighting both self-reflection and hope for healing. "*And I missed a lot of life, but I'll recover (P.C3.L1) / Though I know you really like to see me suffer (Like to see me suffer) (P.C3.L2) / Still, I wish that you and I'd forgive each other (P.C3.L3) / 'Cause I miss you, Valentine (P.C3.L4) / And really loved you (P.C3.L5)*". In (*P.C3.L1*), she acknowledges past pain while expressing resilience. The line (*P.C3.L2*) reflects an awareness of those who



caused her pain, but she also yearns for forgiveness in line (P.C3.L3). In the context of CRT, this emotional recovery parallels societal healing. According to CRT's concept of interest convergence (Bell, 1995), progress on racial inequality occurs when the interests of marginalized groups align with those in power. Just as Mariah Carey's healing requires forgiveness and acknowledgment from those who caused her pain, societal change requires recognition of past wrongs and collective effort to address them. This process mirrors historical shifts like the Civil Rights Movement, where real progress occurred when the needs of marginalized groups aligned with the interests of the dominant majority (Quinn & Grumbach, 2015).

The outro transitions to a moment of liberation, highlighting Mariah Carey's journey toward self-preservation and emotional freedom. *"I really loved you (I guess I loved you) (P.O.L1) / I tried so hard (P.O.L2) / But you drove me away (P.O.L3) / To preserve my sanity (P.O.L4) / And I found the strength to break away (P.O.L5) / Fly (P.O.L6)"*. The repetition of *in* (P.O.L1) conveys lingering affection and painful acceptance, while the line (P.O.L3) highlights the emotional burden of such relationships. This aligns with CRT, which emphasizes agency in resisting oppressive forces, both socially and personally. Mariah Carey symbolizes her triumph over these pressures with the metaphor of "fly", representing her freedom. From Hall's perspective, this shift reflects a process of identity transformation as Mariah Carey reclaims her narrative.

Analysis of the Song "Close My Eyes"

The third song identified continues the narrative of self-discovery, addressing the lingering effects of childhood trauma and its role in shaping her identity. *"I was a wayward child (C.V1.L1) / With the weight of the world (C.V1.L2) / That I held deep inside (C.V1.L3) / Life was a winding road (C.V1.L4) / And I learned many things (C.V1.L5) / Little ones shouldn't know (C.V1.L6)"*. The term "wayward child" in (C.V1.L1) conveys a sense of alienation, echoing CRT's principle of "othering", while the next line (C.V1.L2) symbolizes premature exposure to societal and familial pressures, aligning with CRT's critique of systemic burdens on marginalized individuals (Akbulut & Razum, 2022). The loss of innocence in (C.V1.L5) reflects CRT's intersectionality, as Mariah Carey's experiences arise from overlapping pressures of race, gender, and family dynamics. Hall's concept of identity as a process of becoming is evident as these challenges contribute to her self-formation.

In the chorus, Mariah Carey delves deeper into the emotional impact of her past, blending resilience with reflections on childhood experiences. She sings, *"But I closed my eyes (C.C.L1) / Steadied my feet on the ground (C.C.L2) / Raised my head to the sky (C.C.L3) / And though time's rolled by (C.C.L4) / Still I feel like a child (C.C.L5) / As I look at the moon (C.C.L6) / Maybe I grew up (C.C.L7) / A little too soon (C.C.L8)"*. Lines such as (C.C.L1) symbolize introspection and self-preservation, while the next two lines, (C.C.L2) and

(C.C.L3), convey determination and hope amidst adversity. The acknowledgment in (C.C.L4-C.C.L5) reflects how childhood trauma persists into adulthood, shaping emotional development and identity (Leon, 2024). This tension aligns with Hall's view of identity as fluid, shaped by past experiences. Lines (C.C.L7-C.C.L8) highlight toxic stress and premature adulthood from adversity, echoing research on how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) foster coping mechanisms that mask deeper emotional struggles (Elmore et al., 2020).

The introspective first verse and chorus pave the way for the second verse's focus on coping mechanisms and emotional aftermath. *"Funny how one can learn (C.V2.L1) / To grow numb to the madness (C.V2.L2) / And block it away (C.V2.L3) / I left the worse unsaid (C.V2.L4) / Let it all dissipate (C.V2.L5) / And I try to forget (C.V2.L6)"*. The lines (C.V2.L1-C.V2.L2) reflect emotional numbness as a survival strategy for enduring hardship. This aligns with research on emotion-focused coping, which helps manage emotional stress (Sapeta et al., 2022). Mariah Carey's admission in (C.V2.L4) echoes CRT's insights on systemic silencing of marginalized voices. Her struggle to "forget" in (C.V2.L6) also illustrates the tension between moving forward and grappling with unresolved trauma, often tied to disengagement coping (Compas et al., 2012).

The transition from the second verse to the bridge intensifies the emotional journey, shifting from introspection to self-awareness and reclaiming strength. *"Nearing the edge (C.B.L1) / Oblivious I almost fell right over (C.B.L2) / A part of me will never be quite able to feel stable (C.B.L3) / That woman-child feeling inside was on the verge of fading (C.B.L4) / Thankfully I woke up in time (C.B.L5)"*. The line (C.B.L1) suggests an emotional breaking point, reflecting the delicate balance between resilience and collapse. "Oblivious" in (C.B.L2) highlights a lack of awareness about vulnerabilities, aligning with Hall's critique of traditional cultural identity, which often overlooks complexities in biracial communities. This obliviousness emphasizes the dynamic nature of identity, where challenges reveal hidden emotions (Chen, 2010). The line (C.B.L3) reflects ongoing struggles with past traumas, suggesting unresolved emotional wounds. This ties to "woman-child" in (C.B.L4), which captures the duality in Mariah Carey's identity—balancing maturity with youthful fragility. This sentiment parallels Hall's argument that identities are constantly shifting, shaped by past traumas. Finally, the line (C.B.L5) marks a reclaiming of agency, symbolizing clarity, and the determination to face adversity. This act of self-renewal reflects the broader human capacity for identity negotiation in diasporic contexts (Nindiasmara, 2016).

The bridge leads into the third verse, shifting from internal struggle to external comfort. *"Guardian angel, I (C.V3.L1) / Sail away on an ocean (C.V3.L2) / With you by my side (C.V3.L3) / Orange clouds roll by (C.V3.L4) / They burn into your image (C.V3.L5) / And you're still alive (C.V3.L6)"*. The "guardian angel" in (C.V3.L1) represents emotional support, possibly a lost loved one, faith, or Mariah Carey's inner strength.



The ocean imagery (*C.V3.L2*) symbolizes a journey toward peace and healing, while the “orange clouds” (*C.V3.L4*) evoke transformation, warmth, and hope. As the clouds “burn into your image” (*C.V3.L5*), they signify the merging of memory and support, both transcendent and constant. The final line (*C.V3.L6*) reflects the enduring power of hope and love after loss or trauma. This verse can be interpreted through CRT as a powerful statement of reclaiming agency in the face of systemic and personal challenges. CRT emphasizes how societal structures often perpetuate oppression under the guise of neutrality (Thyberg & Newhill, 2022). In this context, the “guardian angel” symbolizes the counter-narratives that focus on strength, survival, and self-defined identity, reflecting the resilience of marginalized individuals as they navigate both external societal pressures and internal struggles. By recognizing the interplay between personal agency and systemic oppression, CRT highlights how external support and internal determination can empower individuals, fostering hope and resistance against injustice (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Mariah Carey’s lyrics intricately portray the complexities of biracial identity, exploring themes of alienation, societal rejection, and the continuous struggle for self-acceptance. Her music illustrates how identity is fluid, shaped by personal experiences and external societal pressures. Songs like “Outside” reflect the liminality of biracial identity, emphasizing the unique challenges faced by individuals who navigate their place within rigid social constructs. This ongoing negotiation between two cultural worlds often highlights the emotional and psychological burden of alienation, while “Petals” delves into the pain of fractured family relationships, underscoring the broader experience of cultural and personal disconnection. Meanwhile, “Close My Eyes” offers a reflective journey toward resilience and self-healing, demonstrating that identity evolves dynamically as individuals confront and reconcile their multifaceted realities.

Beyond personal storytelling, Mariah Carey’s music critiques societal norms and systemic racism, challenging stereotypes, and dominant narratives about race. Supported by Stuart Hall’s Representation Theory, her work deconstructs fixed notions of identity and emphasizes its socially constructed nature. CRT further contextualizes her songs, revealing how they expose structural inequalities while amplifying the voices of marginalized groups. Through counter-narratives, Mariah Carey challenges the “othering” of biracial individuals, asserting agency and resilience in the face of exclusion. Songs like “Outside” and “Petals” showcase the strength required to overcome systemic and interpersonal obstacles, while also advocating for the reclamation of authentic identity. Mariah Carey’s music serves as both a personal and cultural platform, fostering greater understanding and inclusivity. By addressing the complexities of biracial identity and resisting societal constraints, her work contributes to broader conversations about race, belonging, and identity in multicultural societies. Her artistry not only resonates deeply with those who share



similar struggles but also educates and inspires audiences to embrace diversity and challenge systemic inequities.

Future research on the representation of biracial identity could include comparative studies of artists like Alicia Keys, Bob Marley, and other biracial musicians to explore how cultural contexts and musical styles influence their narratives. Additionally, examining the impact of Mariah Carey's songs on multiracial audiences through surveys or interviews could shed light on how art shapes self-identity and fosters a sense of belonging. An interdisciplinary approach, blending psychology and sociology, could further enhance this exploration by analyzing how representation influences mental health and social connections to offer deeper insights into the transformative and empowering role of art for biracial individuals.

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