Journal of Critical Theory, Art, Language, and Literature

2026, Vol. 08, No. 01,
e-ISSN: 2723-2417
DOI: 10.15575/call.v8i1.55395

DESTABILISING BELONGING: RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MULTIRACIAL SUBJECTIVITY IN GINNY & GEORGIA

Deuis Sugaryamah[1], Agry Pramita[2], Ibnu Azmi Firdaus[3], Daniela Lacramioara Moraru[4], Cisya Dewantara Nugraha[5]

[1]English Literature Program, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
[2]English Literature Program, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
[3]English Literature Program, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
[4]School of Humanities and Social Sciences, the University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg
[5]Centre of Arts & Creative Cultures, Coventry University, England, United Kingdom

*Corresponding author: deuissugaryamah@uinsgd.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The growing visibility of multiracial characters in contemporary popular media is frequently interpreted as evidence of progressive racial inclusion. Yet increased representation does not necessarily guarantee stable identity formation within narrative structures. This study examines how racial discrimination operates as a constitutive force shaping multiracial subjectivity in the Netflix series *Ginny & Georgia* (2021). It employs qualitative textual analysis of eight selected scenes from Season One—chosen for their narrative significance in depicting racialised interaction, identity negotiation, and emotional responses to racial ambiguity—to examine how institutional, interpersonal, and internalised forms of racism are narratively constructed. Integrating Jones's multilevel model of racism, Du Bois's concept of double consciousness, and Turner's theory of liminality, the findings indicate that institutional positioning, interpersonal microaggressions, and internalised ambiguity collectively generate what this article conceptualises as destabilised belonging—a condition in which multiracial identity remains persistently unsettled, marked by insecurity, embodied self-harm, and relational isolation. Rather than presenting multiracial identity as harmonious hybridity, the series constructs it as ongoing negotiation marked by fragmentation and conditional inclusion. By foregrounding the cumulative effects of subtle discrimination, the narrative challenges celebratory discourses of diversity and exposes the persistence of racial hierarchy within ostensibly inclusive environments. This study contributes to cultural and media scholarship by shifting analytical attention from representation alone to the structural and psychological consequences of discrimination in popular media narratives. It argues that multiracial visibility in streaming culture may coexist with continued instability in belonging, revealing the limits of multicultural inclusion in contemporary racial frameworks.

Keywords: *multiracial identity; racial discrimination; double consciousness; liminality; popular media narrative*

Article History

Received: 23 April 2026 Revised : 20 May 2026
Accepted: 24 May 2026 Published: 26 May 2026

How to cite (in APA style): Sugaryamah, D., Pramita, A., Firdaus, I. A., Moraru, D. L., & Nugraha, C. D. (2026). Destabilising belonging: Racial discrimination and the construction of multiracial subjectivity in Ginny & Georgia. *CALL*, 8 (1). 95-111

INTRODUCTION

Intermarriage rates and the number of individuals identifying as multiracial have increased significantly in recent decades, challenging long-standing racial binaries in American society. Yet this demographic shift has not eliminated racial hierarchy; rather, it has revealed the ongoing complexity of identity formation within systems still structured by monoracial norms. Scholars of multiracial identity argue that individuals of mixed racial heritage occupy a complex position within societies still governed by monoracial classification systems (Root, 1996). While multiracial identity is often framed as evidence of social progress or increasing diversity, it simultaneously exposes the instability of rigid racial categories. The persistence of racial hierarchy, despite demographic diversification, suggests that greater visibility does not automatically dismantle structural inequalities. As Bonilla-Silva (2021) contends, contemporary racism frequently operates through subtle, normalised practices embedded within institutions and everyday interactions rather than through overt exclusion alone. Within this context, multiracial identity can be understood as a socially embedded and negotiated process shaped by structural and interpersonal dynamics (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Scholars emphasise that multiracial subjectivity is continuously negotiated through racial ambiguity and social categorisation, shaping how individuals are perceived and understood (Gaither, 2015; Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

In cultural representation, these tensions become particularly visible within popular media narratives. Streaming platforms such as Netflix have expanded the presence of racially diverse characters, including multiracial protagonists, in globally distributed series. However, representation alone does not determine how racial identity is constructed within narrative frameworks. The depiction of discrimination—whether institutional, interpersonal, or internalised—plays a crucial role in shaping multiracial subjectivity. Research demonstrates that subtle forms of bias, such as racial microaggressions and socially constructed identity expectations, significantly affect multiracial individuals' psychological well-being and everyday interactions (Nadal et al., 2013; Reyna, 2022; Sue et al., 2007). These findings underscore that multiracial identity is not freely expressed but continuously negotiated within socially structured contexts. Thus, examining how discrimination operates within popular media narratives is essential for understanding how identity is narratively formed.

Scholars argue that popular media not only reflect diversity but actively construct racial meaning, normalising and negotiating identities within everyday discourse (Bell-Jordan, 2008; Chan & Blomdal, 2022; Tsai et al., 2024). These perspectives reinforce the importance of examining streaming narratives such as *Ginny & Georgia* not solely as sites of inclusion but as cultural arenas where racial hierarchies may be subtly reproduced, reconfigured, or destabilised.

The Netflix series *Ginny & Georgia* (2021), created by Sarah Lampert, provides a compelling site for such analysis. The series centres on Ginny Miller, a teenage girl born to a Black father and a white mother, who relocates to a predominantly white suburban town. While framed as a coming-of-age drama, the narrative repeatedly foregrounds Ginny's racialised experiences within institutional and social spaces. These include moments of classroom marginalisation, racial profiling, peer scrutiny, and recurring challenges to her racial authenticity. Rather than appearing as isolated conflicts, such experiences accumulate to shape her sense of self and belonging.

To understand how discrimination functions within this narrative, this study adopts Jones's (2000) conceptualisation of racism as operating at multiple levels: institutionalised, personally mediated, and internalised. Ginny's experiences of classroom marginalisation, peer scrutiny, and challenges to her racial authenticity align with Jones's multilevel model, illustrating how institutional structures and everyday interactions converge to produce racial hierarchy. Yet the consequences of such positioning are not merely social but psychological: Du Bois's (1903) concept of double consciousness describes the internal division experienced when individuals perceive themselves through the gaze of a racially stratified society. For multiracial subjects like Ginny—continuously evaluated against incompatible racial norms—identity formation becomes intertwined with self-surveillance and fragmentation.

For multiracial individuals, this fragmentation may be intensified by occupying what Turner (1969) terms a liminal position—existing "betwixt and between" established social categories. Within binary racial systems, multiracial subjects often encounter conditional belonging in both Black and white spaces. This structural ambiguity produces an unstable sense of identity that is continually negotiated rather than securely anchored. While demographic studies document the growth of multiracial populations and sociological analyses theorise racial structures, fewer studies have examined how popular media narratives dramatise the destabilising effects of racial discrimination on multiracial identity formation. Much attention has been given to representation and visibility; comparatively less emphasis has been placed on how discriminatory environments shape subjectivity within narrative worlds. This article addresses that gap by analysing how racial discrimination in *Ginny & Georgia* contributes to the construction of destabilised belonging—a condition in which multiracial identity remains persistently unsettled due to institutional positioning, interpersonal scrutiny, and internalised ambiguity.

Specifically, this study argues that institutional and interpersonal discrimination within the series generate a condition of destabilised belonging, manifested through insecurity, self-harm, and perceived social isolation. These manifestations are interpreted not as isolated psychological traits but as narrative responses to structural racial positioning within the fictional world of the series. By situating the series within broader discussions of racism, double consciousness, and liminality, this analysis demonstrates how popular media narratives function as cultural arenas in which the tensions surrounding multiracial identity are both represented and reproduced.

It is important to clarify the epistemological scope of this analysis. The claims advanced here pertain to the narrative construction of multiracial identity within the fictional world of *Ginny & Georgia*, not to real-world psychological processes or clinical evidence. When this study states, for instance, that "institutional positioning produces psychological fragmentation" or that "self-harm emerges as a response to racialised tension," these claims describe how the series' narrative structures and frames Ginny Miller as a character—how her experiences are depicted, sequenced, and interpreted within the story. They are not assertions about the causal psychology of actual multiracial individuals. This distinction between narrative representation and real-world causation is consistent with the epistemological conventions of qualitative textual analysis, which treats media texts as cultural constructions subject to interpretive inquiry rather than as transparent records of social reality.

This study addresses the following research questions:

(1) How are institutional, interpersonal, and internalised forms of discrimination represented in *Ginny & Georgia*?

(2) How do these forms of discrimination contribute to the construction of multiracial subjectivity as destabilised belonging?

LITERATURE REVIEW

To examine how *Ginny & Georgia* constructs multiracial identity through experiences of racial discrimination, this study integrates three complementary theoretical perspectives: Camara Phyllis Jones's structural model of racism, W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of double consciousness, and Victor Turner's theory of liminality. Rather than treating these frameworks separately, this study synthesises them to conceptualise multiracial identity as structurally destabilised subjectivity emerging from institutional positioning, social perception, and internal self-negotiation.

Racism as Multilevel Structure

Jones (2000) theorises racism as operating at three interconnected levels: institutionalised, personally mediated, and internalised. Institutionalised racism refers to systematic differentials in access to opportunities, resources, and social legitimacy structured along racial lines. Personally mediated racism manifests in prejudice and discriminatory actions between individuals. Internalised racism occurs when members of marginalised groups absorb negative societal beliefs about their own racial worth.

This tripartite framework is crucial because it shifts the understanding of racism from isolated acts of bias to a normalised social system. In the narrative world of *Ginny & Georgia*, these levels do not function independently. Institutional positioning—such as educational authority and normative whiteness—shapes interpersonal interactions, which in turn influence self-perception. Thus, racism becomes an environment rather than an event. It continuously situates Ginny within racial hierarchies that frame her as racially ambiguous, exceptionalized, or insufficiently authentic.

Importantly, this study does not employ Jones's model merely to categorise instances of discrimination. Instead, it uses the framework to trace how structural positioning generates psychological consequences within the narrative. Institutional and interpersonal discrimination form the external conditions under which multiracial identity is negotiated.

Double Consciousness and Racialised Self-Surveillance

While Jones's model explains how racism structures social conditions, it does not fully account for the internal fragmentation that may result from such positioning. To address this dimension, the study draws on Du Bois's concept of double consciousness. Du Bois (1903) defines double consciousness as a divided awareness shaped by viewing oneself through society's racial gaze—one in which the subject measures themselves against external standards that may devalue their identity.

Although Du Bois originally articulated this concept in relation to African American experience, its analytical relevance extends to multiracial identity in a society governed by binary racial logics. For multiracial individuals, self-awareness is shaped not only by external categorisation but also by competing expectations from multiple racial communities. In *Ginny & Georgia*, Ginny's recurring articulation of being "too white" in Black spaces and "not white enough" in white spaces exemplifies this fractured consciousness. Her identity is filtered through perceived judgements from both groups, intensifying self-surveillance and emotional instability.

In this sense, personally mediated racism (Jones) produces the conditions for double consciousness (Du Bois). External racialisation becomes internalised as ongoing self-monitoring. The subject becomes hyperaware of how she is perceived, and identity formation becomes contingent upon external validation.

Liminality and the In-Between Condition

To further theorise this instability, the study incorporates Turner's (1969) concept of liminality. Turner (1969) describes liminality as an ambiguous "in-between" state outside fixed social categories, in which individuals are neither fully integrated nor entirely excluded. Multiracial identity, particularly within rigid Black/white binaries, often occupies such a liminal position. In *Ginny & Georgia*, Ginny's racial hybridity situates her within a social space that demands categorical clarity yet denies her full belonging within either category. She is visibly racialised in predominantly white environments, yet her lived experiences complicate seamless identification within Black spaces. This structural ambiguity reinforces the double consciousness described above and intensifies the instability generated by institutional and interpersonal discrimination.

Liminality here is not romanticised as cultural fluidity. Rather, it is understood as a socially produced ambiguity sustained by racial binaries. Popular media narratives frequently celebrate hybridity as progressive; however, the lived implications of liminality may include alienation, insecurity, and fragmentation. The series dramatises this tension by presenting Ginny's identity as simultaneously visible and unsettled.

Toward Destabilised Multiracial Subjectivity

Together, these three frameworks reveal how racial hierarchy is absorbed into the self, fractures self-awareness into divided consciousness, and positions multiracial subjects within unresolvable social ambiguity—producing what this study terms destabilised belonging. Institutionalised and personally mediated racism (Jones) position Ginny within racial hierarchies; as Jones (2000) and Du Bois (1903) theorise, this structural absorption fractures self-awareness into divided consciousness. This condition is further intensified by her liminal placement within binary racial structures (Turner), producing a state where belonging is conditional, identity is context-dependent, and stability remains elusive.

This conceptual synthesis enables the analysis to move beyond representational critique. Rather than simply asking how multiracial identity is depicted, the study investigates how discrimination functions narratively to produce insecurity, embodied self-harm, and relational isolation within the series. Within the popular media narrative of *Ginny & Georgia*, these manifestations are interpreted as narrative constructions that represent embodied responses to structural racialisation—not as direct evidence of real-world psychological outcomes.

The following analysis demonstrates how institutional and interpersonal encounters within the series operate as narrative mechanisms that construct and destabilise multiracial subjectivity. This integrative framework aligns with recent studies that conceptualise multiracial identity as a negotiation shaped by systemic constraint rather than autonomous hybridity (Chan & Blomdal, 2022; Tsai et al., 2024).

METHOD

This study employs qualitative textual analysis to examine how racial discrimination shapes multiracial subjectivity in *Ginny & Georgia* (2021). The series is approached as a cultural text through which racial meaning is constructed and negotiated within popular media. The primary data consist of selected scenes and dialogues from Season One that foreground Ginny Miller's racialised experiences in institutional, interpersonal, and familial contexts. A total of eight key scenes were selected based on their narrative significance and thematic relevance. The eight scenes analysed are: (1) Episode 1, approximately 18 minutes—classroom questioning by the teacher regarding assigned reading; (2) Episode 1, approximately 34 minutes—peer racial humour and background-questioning in the school hallway; (3) Episode 2, approximately 11 minutes—Ginny's articulation of being "too white for the Black kids and not white enough for the white kids"; (4) Episode 2, approximately 22 minutes—first self-harm scene in Ginny's bedroom following social alienation; (5) Episode 2, approximately 41 minutes—Georgia's minimising response to Ginny's racialised distress; (6) Episode 3, approximately 19 minutes—peer group inclusion interrupted by racialised remarks; (7) Episode 4, approximately 28 minutes—racialised exoticisation during peer socialisation; and (8) Episode 5, approximately 14 minutes—romantic interaction marked by racial gaze and heightened self-scrutiny. These scenes were identified initially from episodes highlighted in prior

media reception scholarship on the series, then reviewed against the theoretical framework to ensure representational coverage across all three dimensions of Jones's (2000) model. No scenes depicting overt racial conflict without narrative complexity were selected, and the analysis acknowledges that the series also contains scenes in which Ginny's racial identity is not foregrounded; the focus here is on those scenes where racialised dynamics are narratively salient.

The selection criteria included: (1) scenes depicting explicit or implicit racialised interaction, (2) scenes illustrating identity negotiation or racial ambiguity, and (3) scenes associated with emotional responses such as insecurity, self-harm, or relational tension. Scenes were analysed through a deductive thematic coding process—guided by the three theoretical frameworks of Jones, Du Bois, and Turner—in which recurring patterns of institutional positioning, interpersonal microaggressions, and internalised responses were identified and interpreted. To ensure analytical consistency, coding was reviewed through peer debriefing with a colleague in media and cultural studies, and emergent interpretations were cross-checked against the theoretical framework.

It is also important to acknowledge a potential limitation of scene selection: this study focuses on moments where racialised dynamics are narratively foregrounded, which may not fully capture the range of Ginny's experiences across the series. Future research may benefit from analysing additional episodes or seasons to examine whether destabilised belonging is sustained, resolved, or reconfigured over time. The analysis integrates Jones's (2000) multilevel model of racism, Du Bois's (1903) concept of double consciousness, and Turner's (1969) theory of liminality as interpretive frameworks. Rather than applying these theories mechanically, the study uses them to trace how narrative constructions of institutional positioning produce depictions of psychological fragmentation and conditional belonging within the series. The analysis proceeds thematically, identifying recurring patterns of racialised positioning across the narrative rather than summarising episodes sequentially.

FINDINGS

The findings are organised into four interrelated dimensions that collectively address the research questions.

Institutional Positioning and the Narrative Structuring of Racial Difference

Within *Ginny & Georgia*, racial discrimination is not presented as an extraordinary rupture but as a normalised feature of institutional life. The school environment, in particular, functions as a key site where racial difference is subtly structured, regulated, and reproduced. In Episode 1 (approximately 18 minutes), one of the earliest classroom scenes shows Ginny being questioned by her teacher, who suggests that she may find the assigned material "challenging." This interaction appears minor, yet it establishes a subtle hierarchy within the classroom. The gesture is framed as supportive, but it implicitly positions Ginny as academically peripheral within a normatively white standard.

This moment can be interpreted as an instance of differential expectation rather than overt exclusion. The teacher's assumption does not deny Ginny access to participation; instead, it repositions her as an exception to the assumed norm. Such positioning reflects what Jones (2000) conceptualises as institutionalised racism, where unequal expectations are embedded within routine practices and interactions.

The classroom exchange becomes more revealing when Ginny responds defensively, asserting that she has completed the reading. Her response signals not only academic competence but also resistance to the implicit presumption embedded in the teacher's tone—a moment that dramatises the tension between individual agency and structural positioning, in which Ginny asserts selfhood precisely where the institution has denied it. Although race is not explicitly mentioned, the interaction carries a coded implication of intellectual diminishment.

Visually, the scene reinforces this positioning, as Ginny is framed slightly apart from her white classmates, emphasising her marginal placement within the classroom space. This spatial arrangement contributes to the normalisation of racial hierarchy, where difference is subtly marked without explicit acknowledgement.

The narrative framing is significant. The scene is not dramatised as explicit racism; rather, it appears socially ambiguous and easily dismissible. This subtlety reflects what Bonilla-Silva (2021) describes as colour-blind racism, where inequality is reproduced through seemingly neutral interactions. The teacher's gesture, while not overtly discriminatory, establishes a differential standard that isolates Ginny within institutional norms.

The classroom also functions as a discursive arena in which racial authenticity is negotiated. In discussions of race, Ginny is implicitly positioned as a spokesperson for Black experience despite her multiracial identity. This positioning places her in what Turner (1969) terms a liminal state—simultaneously visible as racially distinct yet not fully recognised within a single category.

Peer interactions at approximately 34 minutes into Episode 1 further reinforce this structure. Ginny's classmates engage in subtle forms of microaggression—questioning her background, exoticising her difference, or invoking racialised humour. These interactions accumulate rather than escalate, normalising scrutiny and reinforcing conditional belonging. Such patterns align with Sue et al.'s (2007) concept of everyday microaggressions, which operate through repetition rather than isolated incidents.

Through this accumulation, discrimination becomes environmental rather than episodic. Institutional structures establish the framework, while interpersonal interactions sustain it. As a result, the distinction between institutionalised and personally mediated racism becomes blurred in practice. Within this context, Ginny develops heightened self-awareness shaped by external perception. This reflects Du Bois's (1903) concept of double consciousness, in which the subject becomes aware of herself through the gaze of a racially stratified society. The classroom thus becomes

not only a site of learning but a space where identity is continuously negotiated within the narrative.

Insecurity and the Internalisation of Racial Ambiguity

If institutional and interpersonal discrimination establish the external conditions of racial positioning, insecurity emerges as one of its most immediate internal consequences as depicted in the series. In *Ginny & Georgia*, insecurity is not portrayed as general adolescent fragility; rather, it is specifically racialised and structurally produced.

In Episode 2 (approximately 11 minutes), Ginny articulates her frustration during a moment of emotional confrontation, stating, *"I'm too white for the Black kids and not white enough for the white kids."* This statement provides a direct expression of her unstable position within binary racial structures as constructed by the narrative. The scene centres on her attempt to navigate social belonging, only to encounter conflicting expectations from both groups.

This moment can be understood as more than a personal expression of insecurity within the story. It reveals how racial belonging is structured as mutually exclusive within the series' narrative logic, leaving multiracial identity suspended between incompatible categories. The statement functions not only descriptively but diagnostically, exposing the limitations of binary racial logic as the narrative frames it. Such insecurity aligns with what Jones (2000) conceptualises as internalised racism, where individuals absorb and negotiate societal expectations about racial identity. In the case of multiracial individuals, this internalisation does not necessarily manifest as self-rejection but as persistent uncertainty regarding authenticity and legitimacy.Caught between incompatible racial expectations, Ginny's identity becomes an exhausting site of social evaluation—a test she repeatedly fails regardless of context, where belonging is offered only conditionally and withdrawn just as quickly.

Beyond peer interactions, familial dynamics further complicate Ginny's racial positioning. Raised primarily by her white mother, Ginny experiences a disconnect between her lived racialisation and her mother's perception of race. In several interactions across Episodes 2 and 3, her mother's responses minimise or misunderstand the racial dimensions of Ginny's experiences—dramatising the gap between lived racialisation and parental perception, where even domestic space offers no refuge from racial isolation.

This dynamic contributes to a heightened form of self-awareness as depicted in the narrative. Ginny becomes increasingly attentive to how she speaks, reacts, and positions herself in conversations involving race. This reflects what Du Bois (1903) describes as double consciousness, in which the subject perceives herself through the gaze of others. However, in Ginny's case, this awareness is further complicated by her multiracial positioning, producing a fragmented and unstable sense of self as the series constructs it.

Turner's (1969) concept of liminality provides a useful framework for understanding this instability. Ginny occupies a threshold space in which identity is neither fixed nor fully recognised within the narrative. Rather than functioning as a temporary transition, this liminal state becomes a sustained condition marked by uncertainty and conditional belonging.

Importantly, the series does not portray this insecurity as irrational. Instead, it is grounded in repeated experiences of subtle marginalisation. Across multiple episodes, moments of microaggression, institutional positioning, and peer interaction accumulate, reinforcing the perception that Ginny's identity is constantly under scrutiny. These patterns correspond with Bonilla-Silva's (2021) argument that contemporary racism operates through normalisation rather than overt hostility.

This internalisation of ambiguity produces fragmentation rather than coherence within the narrative. Multiracial identity is not stabilised through representation but continually negotiated within structural constraints. In this sense, insecurity functions as the psychological manifestation of destabilised belonging as the series constructs it. This embodied insecurity ultimately prepares the ground for a more extreme manifestation of instability: self-harm, where internal tension is translated onto the body itself.

Self-Harm as Embodied Racial Fragmentation

If insecurity reflects the internalisation of racial ambiguity at the level of perception, self-harm represents its translation onto the body as depicted in the narrative. In *Ginny & Georgia*, Ginny's self-harming behaviour is not framed merely as adolescent emotional distress; rather, it functions as an embodied narrative response to accumulated racialised instability.

In Episode 2 (approximately 22 minutes), following a sequence of social tension in which Ginny feels excluded and racially scrutinised, she withdraws into her bedroom, closes the door, and engages in self-harm in private. The scene is quiet and minimally dramatised, emphasising concealment rather than spectacle. No explicit dialogue accompanies the act, yet its placement immediately after moments of alienation establishes a clear narrative link between social experience and bodily response.

Rather than expressing distress verbally, Ginny inscribes unresolved racial tension onto her body—an act that emerges not in isolation but as the cumulative residue of interactions that have repeatedly positioned her as racially and socially unstable within the narrative. Ginny's self-harm illustrates how racial hierarchy is narratively absorbed and fractured at the level of the self, as Jones (2000) and Du Bois (1903) theorise. Where Jones explains how institutional racism becomes internalised, Du Bois illuminates how this absorption fractures self-awareness into divided consciousness—a psychic dissonance that, for Ginny as a character, exceeds what social interaction can reconcile and is intensified by her liminal positioning between Blackness and whiteness (Turner, 1969).

Importantly, the series does not isolate self-harm from racial context. Across multiple episodes, moments of microaggression, romantic tension, and institutional positioning precede or surround Ginny's emotional breakdowns, suggesting that her distress is structurally situated within the narrative rather than individually produced. This pattern corresponds with Heilman's (2022) notion of "racial mismatch," where identity is shaped through ongoing external interrogation.

From a narrative perspective, the placement of self-harm scenes is significant. They consistently follow moments of social exposure and are enacted in private spaces, creating a contrast between public composure and private collapse. This juxtaposition highlights the gap between visible inclusion and internal instability as the series depicts them. Bonilla-Silva's (2021) argument that contemporary racism operates through normalisation is particularly relevant here. The interactions that precede Ginny's distress often appear minor or socially manageable, yet their cumulative narrative impact is profound. Publicly, discrimination is subtle; privately, it becomes somatic.

In this sense, the body functions as a narrative site where unresolved tension is materialised. Ginny's self-inflicted wounds symbolise fragmentation that cannot be articulated within social discourse. Where institutional settings demand composure and peer interactions require adaptation, self-harm becomes a silent expression of what cannot be reconciled within the story.

By situating self-harm within a racially stratified narrative environment, *Ginny & Georgia* challenges reductive interpretations of adolescent distress. Instead, it frames bodily vulnerability as inseparable from systemic positioning within the narrative. Multiracial identity is not simply represented as hybridity but constructed as a precarious condition negotiated under continuous scrutiny.

Thus, self-harm is not incidental but integral to the narrative. It marks the point at which institutional racism, double consciousness, and liminal ambiguity converge on the body as the series constructs it. This convergence not only intensifies internal fragmentation but also reshapes Ginny's capacity for relational belonging, leading to the next dimension of analysis: relational isolation.

Relational Isolation and the Limits of Multicultural Inclusion

If institutional positioning structures racial difference and self-harm embodies internal fragmentation, relational isolation reveals how destabilised multiracial identity reshapes Ginny's social bonds within the narrative. In *Ginny & Georgia*, belonging is repeatedly presented as conditional rather than secure.

In Episodes 3 and 4 (approximately 19 and 28 minutes respectively), Ginny participates in peer interactions where moments of inclusion are interrupted by subtle racial tension—such as when her friends make insensitive remarks or implicitly question her racial identity. Rather than excluding her outright, these interactions position Ginny as simultaneously included and differentiated—marking her racial difference through humour, comparison, or casual questioning in ways that disrupt the appearance of seamless integration. Such dynamics can be interpreted

through Turner's (1969) concept of liminality, in which individuals occupy a position that is neither fully inside nor outside a social category. Ginny's relational position reflects this "in-between" state, where visibility does not translate into stable belonging.

Beyond peer dynamics, relational instability extends into intimate spaces. In Episode 5 (approximately 14 minutes), during interactions with a romantic partner, Ginny's sense of acceptance is complicated by underlying racial dynamics that shape attraction and perception. Although intimacy suggests inclusion, it does not eliminate the racial gaze within the narrative. Instead, it introduces a heightened awareness of how she is seen and evaluated. This dynamic reflects Du Bois's (1903) concept of double consciousness, extending it into intimate spaces as depicted in the series. Ginny's self-perception is continuously mediated by external perception, even in moments that might otherwise offer emotional stability.

This instability is not limited to peers and partners; it also shapes familial bonds. Across several episodes, Ginny's interactions with her mother reveal a gap in understanding when racial experiences are discussed. While her mother expresses concern and support, she is unable to fully grasp the racial dimensions of Ginny's experiences. This disconnect produces a form of relational asymmetry rooted in differing lived realities. Jones's (2000) framework helps clarify this condition. Institutional and interpersonal racism shape Ginny's experiences in ways that her mother does not encounter, creating a divergence in perception that cannot be resolved through empathy alone. As a result, Ginny's sense of belonging within her family remains emotionally present but experientially incomplete.Importantly, relational isolation in the series does not arise from hostility or rejection. Instead, it emerges through repeated moments of misalignment. Ginny belongs to multiple social spheres—peer groups, romantic relationships, and family—yet in each context, her identity is only partially recognised. This pattern corresponds with Bonilla-Silva's (2021) argument that contemporary racism operates through normalised structures rather than overt exclusion. Diversity is present, but hierarchy persists. Inclusion does not erase difference; it reorganises how difference is experienced.

This study conceptualises relational isolation as the culminating dimension of destabilised belonging. While prior frameworks such as Turner's liminality and Du Bois's double consciousness illuminate the structural and psychological conditions of racial in-betweenness, this analysis demonstrates how those conditions are narratively extended outward into every sphere of social life—peer groups, intimate relationships, and family—producing a pervasive condition in which no relational space offers stable recognition within the series. This is the study's key contribution: destabilised belonging names not merely an internal state but a structurally reproduced social condition that renders multiracial identity continuously unsettled across institutional, embodied, and relational dimensions of the narrative.

Rather than offering resolution, the narrative sustains ambiguity. There is no definitive moment in which Ginny achieves secure belonging across social contexts.

This lack of closure underscores the limits of multicultural inclusion, where representation does not necessarily translate into equality or stability.

DISCUSSION

These four dimensions collectively demonstrate how racial discrimination is represented and how it shapes multiracial subjectivity within the series. Building on these findings, the following discussion synthesises the results within broader theoretical and scholarly contexts. This study demonstrates that racial discrimination in *Ginny & Georgia* operates through interconnected institutional, interpersonal, and internalised processes that collectively shape multiracial subjectivity as a narrative construction. Rather than functioning as isolated events, these forms of discrimination accumulate across narrative contexts, producing what this article conceptualises as destabilised belonging—a condition in which multiracial identity remains persistently unsettled within systems that demand racial coherence but deny stable recognition. This concept is the study's central contribution: it moves beyond existing frameworks of hybridity and visibility to name the ongoing, structurally reproduced instability that characterises multiracial experience in popular media narratives.

At the institutional level, the series constructs racial hierarchy through subtle yet persistent mechanisms of differentiation. Educational spaces, in particular, establish normative expectations that position Ginny as simultaneously visible and peripheral. These dynamics align with Jones's (2000) framework, illustrating how institutionalised racism operates not through exclusion alone but through differential expectations embedded in everyday practices. The institutional framing of difference sets the stage for interpersonal scrutiny, which in turn intensifies psychological instability as portrayed in the series. Interpersonal interactions further reinforce this structure by normalising racial scrutiny. Microaggressions, casual remarks, and social questioning operate cumulatively, transforming isolated incidents into patterned experiences. In this sense, the series reflects broader understandings of contemporary racism as diffuse and normalised rather than overtly hostile (Bonilla-Silva, 2021).

This interpersonal scrutiny, in turn, generates profound psychological fragmentation as the narrative depicts it. At the psychological level, these external pressures manifest as internal instability within the story. Ginny's experiences illustrate a form of intensified self-awareness consistent with Du Bois's (1903) concept of double consciousness. However, unlike the duality described in relation to African American identity, Ginny's multiracial positioning introduces a more complex fragmentation, as she navigates conflicting expectations across racial boundaries. This condition is further illuminated by Turner's (1969) concept of liminality, which frames her identity as persistently "in-between" rather than transitional.

The analysis also highlights how this instability becomes embodied within the narrative. Self-harm emerges not as an isolated psychological condition but as a narrative response to accumulated racialised tension. By situating bodily vulnerability within a broader structural context, the series challenges

interpretations that detach individual behaviour from social conditions. The body, in this sense, becomes a narrative site where unresolved racial contradictions are materialised.

Relationally, the findings demonstrate that inclusion does not equate to belonging within the series. Ginny participates in friendships, romantic relationships, and familial bonds; yet these connections remain marked by asymmetry and partial recognition. This reinforces the limits of multicultural inclusion, where diversity may be visible but structural inequalities persist. Belonging is thus revealed as conditional rather than secure.

These findings must be situated in relation to existing scholarship that has already engaged with multiracial identity in streaming media. Wong-Campbell, Combs, Johnston-Guerrero, and Cepeda (2024) analyse *Ginny & Georgia* alongside other series through Critical Multiracial Theory, reaching related conclusions about conditional belonging and monoracism. The present study complements their analysis by foregrounding the cumulative, embodied, and relational dimensions of racialised instability through an integrated Jones–Du Bois–Turner framework, extending the analysis to include self-harm as a narrative site of racialised fragmentation—a dimension not addressed by prior work. Similarly, Saleem et al.'s (2026) meta-analysis of sixty studies on media depictions of minority groups demonstrates that media scholarship has long been concerned with how representations shape identity formation and intergroup attitudes; the present study contributes to this tradition by focusing on the structural mechanisms through which discrimination is narratively constructed rather than on audience effects alone.

Taken together, these findings extend existing scholarship on multiracial identity by shifting the analytical focus from representation to process. The concept of destabilised belonging captures this condition, foregrounding the cumulative effects of subtle, normalised, and structurally embedded forms of racism. In this way, *Ginny & Georgia* does not simply reflect social reality but actively participates in the construction of racial meaning within contemporary media culture. The series demonstrates that increased representation does not resolve structural tensions; rather, it exposes the fragility of belonging within systems that continue to demand racial coherence—confirming that multiracial visibility and instability are not opposites but coexisting conditions.These findings have broader implications for theory, media studies, and cultural politics—implications that are developed in the following conclusion.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined how racial discrimination operates as a constitutive narrative force in shaping multiracial subjectivity within *Ginny & Georgia*. Through a qualitative textual analysis, the findings demonstrate that institutional positioning, interpersonal interactions, and internalised responses function together to produce what this article conceptualises as destabilised belonging. Rather than presenting

multiracial identity as a stable or harmonious hybridity, the series constructs it as an ongoing negotiation marked by fragmentation, insecurity, and conditional inclusion.

These findings contribute to ongoing scholarly debates on visibility politics, hybridity, and the representation of racially marginalised subjects in media. While existing research has often emphasised visibility, hybridity, and identity negotiation, this study highlights how discrimination operates narratively to structure subjectivity itself. In doing so, it shifts analytical attention from representation as presence to representation as process—foregrounding the structural and psychological consequences of racialised interaction within popular media. Concretely, this shift was demonstrated through four interlocking findings: institutional positioning (classroom marginalisation), interpersonal microaggressions (peer scrutiny and racial humour), embodied fragmentation (self-harm as a racialised narrative response), and relational isolation (conditional belonging across peer, romantic, and familial contexts).

The concept of destabilised belonging offers a framework for understanding how multiracial identity is not merely expressed but continuously produced under conditions of structural inequality within media narratives. This perspective challenges celebratory discourses of diversity that equate increased representation with social progress. Instead, the analysis demonstrates that visibility may coexist with persistent instability, revealing the limits of multicultural inclusion within contemporary racial frameworks.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis is limited to Season One of the series; subsequent seasons may present different or evolving constructions of Ginny's multiracial identity. Second, textual analysis is inherently interpretive, and the findings reflect one theoretically grounded reading of the selected scenes; alternative frameworks may yield different insights. Third, the study does not address audience reception or the ways in which viewers of diverse backgrounds engage with the series' racial representations. Finally, the analysis focuses on the Black–white multiracial experience as depicted in the series and may not be directly transferable to other forms of multiracial identity.

These findings carry implications across several domains. For media scholars and cultural critics, the concept of destabilised belonging provides an analytical tool for examining how streaming platforms construct multiracial subjectivity beyond simple visibility metrics. For educators and diversity practitioners, the analysis highlights how institutional environments—even those framed as inclusive—may reproduce racial hierarchy through differential expectations and microaggressions; recognising these patterns is essential for creating genuinely equitable spaces. For clinicians and mental health professionals working with multiracial young people, the narrative framing of self-harm as a response to racialised structural pressure—rather than individual pathology—underscores the importance of attending to social and institutional contexts in therapeutic practice. For media producers and showrunners, the findings suggest that authentic multiracial representation requires not only the

presence of multiracial characters but sustained narrative attention to the structural conditions that shape their experiences.

Future research might extend this analysis in several directions. Longitudinal textual analysis of subsequent seasons of *Ginny & Georgia* could examine whether destabilised belonging is sustained, complicated, or resolved over time. Comparative studies across streaming platforms could investigate whether the narrative patterns identified here are particular to this series or constitute broader conventions of multiracial representation in contemporary television. Reception studies examining how multiracial audiences engage with and interpret these representations would provide a valuable complement to the textual focus of the present analysis. Finally, research applying Critical Multiracial Theory alongside the Jones–Du Bois–Turner framework used here could generate a richer synthesis of structural and experiential dimensions of multiracial representation.

More broadly, this study underscores the importance of examining how media narratives do not simply reflect social realities but actively participate in shaping racial meaning and identity formation. Ultimately, the study's contribution lies in conceptualising destabilised belonging as a framework for analysing multiracial subjectivity in media narratives—one that reveals how representation both dramatises and reproduces structural inequality, and that extends the analytical reach of Turner's liminality and Du Bois's double consciousness by locating their effects not only within the psyche but across the relational, institutional, and embodied dimensions of the narrative.

REFERENCES

Bell-Jordan, K. E. (2008). Black. White. and a survivor of *The Real World*: Constructions of race on reality TV. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 25(4), 353–372. https://doi.org/10.1080/15295030802327725

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2021). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Chan, S. G., & Blomdal, A. R. (2022). Multiracial identity negotiation in a "monoracial" world. *Pepperdine Journal of Communication Research*, 10, Article 8. https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/pjcr/vol10/iss1/8

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1903). *The souls of Black folk*. A. C. McClurg & Co.

Gaither, S. E. (2015). "Mixed" results: Multiracial research and identity explorations. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 24(2), 114–119. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721414558115

Heilman, M. (2022). The racial elevator speech: How multiracial individuals respond to racial identity inquiries. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 8(3), 370–385. https://doi.org/10.1177/23326492221098949

Jones, C. P. (2000). Levels of racism: A theoretic framework and a gardener's tale. *American Journal of Public Health*, 90(8), 1212–121. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.90.8.1212

Lampert, S. (Creator). (2021). *Ginny & Georgia* [TV series]. Netflix.

Nadal, K. L., Sriken, J., Davidoff, K. C., Wong, Y., & McLean, K. (2013). Microaggressions within families: Experiences of multiracial people. *Family Relations*, 62(1), 190–201. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2012.00752.x

Reyna, C. V. (2022). "You're biracial but…": Multiracial socialization discourse among mommy bloggers with Black and non-Black multiracial children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 84(5), 1507–1528. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12866

Rockquemore, K. A., & Brunsma, D. L. (2002). Socially embedded identities: Theories, typologies, and processes of racial identity among Black/White biracials. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 43(3), 335–356. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2002.tb00052.x

Root, M. P. P. (1996). *The multiracial experience: Racial borders as the new frontier*. Sage Publications.

Saleem, M., Hawkins, I., Rains, S. A., Mastro, D., & Coles, S. (2025). Media depictions of minority groups: A meta-analytic review examining the effects of positive and negative portrayals on outgroup evaluations. *Media Psychology*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2025.2498374

Sanchez, D. T., Young, D. M., & Pauker, K. (2015). Exposure to racial ambiguity influences lay theories of race. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 6(4), 382–390. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550614562844

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271–286. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271

Tsai, A., Straka, B., & Kimura, D. (2024). Mixed-heritage individuals and systemic risk during negotiation of identity. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 23(6), 895–909. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2022.2065277

Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Aldine Publishing.

Wong-Campbell, J. P., Combs, L. D., Johnston-Guerrero, M. P., & Cepeda, R. (2024). Dear mixed people: Critically examining monoracism in college-related TV series. *JCSCORE*, 10(2), 112–130. https://doi.org/10.15763/issn.2642-2387.2024.10.2.112-130