

Identity Formation in the “Other” Race

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Word Count: 4,994 words

Identity Formation in the “Other” Race
Abstract & Protocol

The purpose of this study was to explore the racial identity formation processes of bi-racial mixed race individuals in order to determine the amount of role strain and conflict they experience during the process of conforming to two racial ideals. The study also sought to identify patterns in influences placed upon bi-racial mixed race individuals by all of our societal institutions of the family, religion, educational systems, employment arenas, and peer relationships. Overall, the results of the study sought to give hope to young people who are struggling with these issues by showing them examples of how others like themselves have come to find their racial selves.

This study was based upon data collected from a category of mixed race individuals in Humboldt County. Mixed race, in terms of this study, was defined as being biologically comprised of any mixture of **two** races rather than those of many races, or polyracial individuals. Participants were Humboldt State University students and community members aged 18-30, who may or may not have been raised by both biological parents. Originally, the specification was that both parents had to have been in the home, however, this became an impossibility to enforce as 90% of respondents had at least one absent parent. Participants were contacted via snowball sampling, with origins at the Humboldt State University Multicultural Center, the HSU Sociology Department, and personal contacts of the researchers. It was the intent of the researcher to explore this topic with as many genders and racial groups represented as possible. However, due to the limited sample size of the study and lack of pronounced presence of individuals of some racial backgrounds in Humboldt County, some mixed races were undoubtedly excluded.

Semi-structured interviews and a version of the Kuhn-McPartland “20 Statements Test” were used in data collection. Participants were provided with a hard copy of the “20 Statements” questionnaire one week prior to interviews in order to allow participants to reflect on the material without interference from the researchers. The given instructions depicted the questionnaire as an examination of identity in general, as not to influence the order of responses in terms of indication of race. Interviews, which followed one week later, were thirty to forty-five minutes in length, and took place in a private setting at the Humboldt State University campus in Arcata, CA. Data was transcribed and color coded for themes and patterns. All work was performed in Humboldt County.

Individual privacy was maintained in all published and written materials resulting from the study. All references to real names were assigned a pseudonym of the participant’s choice in any transcription and/or other written materials generated from audio tape recordings and questionnaires. Questionnaires were destroyed after data was analyzed. Audio tapes will be destroyed within thirty days of transcription. Records that could potentially link the participant with data provided were kept in a secure location.

The participant may have found that issues arisen during participation in the interview and the questionnaire may have caused him/her to reaffirm or question racial identity. Benefits from this study were the opportunity to view the results; how the participant’s life relates to the lives of other mixed race individuals. Procedures taken to reduce risk were voluntary participation, consent form, and the ability to stop answering questions at any time.

Identity Formation in the “Other” Race Literature Review

American society is a forever changing phenomenon. We have become a virtual melting pot of races, religions, genders, colors, and creeds. The majority of individuals, through the socialization process and interaction with others (symbolic or otherwise), find themselves falling into one of the many dimensions of the aforementioned categories. In fact, society often pressures the individual to make definite choices as to which group he/she belongs to. “In the year 2000, approximately 7 million people indicated that they belonged to more than one race in their responses to the U.S. Census” (Tashiro, 2002, p.1). With this pressure to conform to one racial group, these individuals, deemed “mixed race”, can be victims of brutal role strain and conflict, as well as racial identity confusion.

This research involved a qualitative examination of the racial identity formation processes in “mixed race” individuals, or those within a society who are socially defined as encompassing more than one racial variable in their biological make-up. The distinction of being “socially defined” is important, as many individuals identifying as a “full-blooded” member of any given race are likely the product of racial mixing, or miscegenation, at some point in their family history. According to Ursula Brown in her book The Interracial Experience, “it is estimated that 30 to 70 percent of African-Americans have white relatives in their ancestral history and that a significant proportion of white identified people have a multiracial background” (Brown, 2001, p.18). These individuals have either chosen or been forced to deny, or simply have not known, part of their racial identity. This social definition is the root of the identity problems faced by mixed race children, young adults, and adults alike. It has continually prohibited, or

otherwise practically ruled out, mixed race individuals from identifying as mixed race, but rather forced individuals to choose between the two.

In terms of this qualitative study, mixed race individuals from any mixture of two racial backgrounds were interviewed in relation to their individual racial identity. The research involves analysis of the parental role in fostering or hindering a positive multiracial identity. Originally, a requirement was set that the respondent's parents must have been living together in the home. After discovering that mixed race individuals of this sort are a minority in this area at least, the presence of any parental figure was accepted. Perhaps this trend is due to the overwhelming amount of strain placed on mixed race relationships by society. All respondents were Humboldt State University students aged 18-25, all of whom live in Humboldt County. Individual interviews approximately thirty to forty-five minutes in length were conducted to explore the following: to what degree the individual identifies with each of his/her racial groups; the racial influences imposed on him/her by societal institutions of the family, educational system, the church, peers, the government, and employment arenas; strategies the individual used to assist in the formation of a racial identity; major turning points in identity, and experience of role strain/conflict; and how others have perceived the individual as he/she progressed through stages of racial identity formation.

Grounded theory was used to categorize the data and extract vital information from the research. Basically, I hoped to pull theory from my data rather than beginning with an initial hypothesis. It is more thoroughly explained by Glaser and Strauss as "an initial systematic discovery of a theory from the data of social research" (Glaser, 1967, p.3). In addition, a lightly modified version of the Kuhn-M^cPartland "20 Statements

Test”, in which “twenty responses to the generic question ‘Who am I?’ provide subjective definitions of the self ... which [the researcher] understands as internalizations of a person’s objective social status”, will be used (Alm, 1).

Author and Professor of Philosophy Naomi Zack defines race in scientific terms as “a self contained breeding population that has a higher percentage of individuals with certain physical characteristics than some other population” (Zack, 1993, p.14). She stresses, however, that race as it is commonly viewed, is a false concept with no biological or anthropological evidence to the contrary (Zack, 1993). There exists not one physical characteristic of any race that exists in every single member of that race. Furthermore, “there exist too many variables in genetic combination, including mutation, for individuals to breed ‘true to type’ over long periods of time” (Zack, 1993, p.15). Therefore, race is defined as a cultural category whose designations cannot be fairly arranged due to its “lack of clarity and uniformity”. United States society has continually added more confusion, as racial discrimination has been allowed, promoted, and used by government. During slavery, “an individual was Black if he/she had one Black forebear, and White ... if he/she had no Black forebears” (Zack, 1993, p.5). In the case of Knight in 1909, the courts deemed “a man who was half White, one quarter Japanese, and one quarter Chinese could not be considered White, and thus was denied citizenship” (Tashiro, 2002, p.4).

In these cases, race can be seen as a social object. “Its meaning is conferred upon by the members of society” (Sandstrom, 2003, p.38). A social object’s meaning varies over time and by culture. The meaning of being placed into a racial category varies over time and by culture. What it is to be African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Native

American, Caucasian, etc., is defined by society. Earlier in our nation's history, Asians were denied citizenship because the collective conscience of U.S. society looked down upon them. Today, we continue to stereotype Asians, but in a more positive manner as mathematicians, scientists, and doctors. "Identifications can fluctuate over time as a result of the relative acceptability of minority status" (Tashiro, 2002, p.2). These labels rarely define adequately what it is to be a member of a given race. However, they do make it difficult for individuals who fit into multiple categories to express a multiracial identity, especially when its social meaning is contradictory as with the individual of African-American/Caucasian mixed ancestry.

Those who fall between racial categories are allowed to define themselves as "other". The categorization as "other" often leaves the individual feeling degraded or dehumanized. This is exhibited in a statement by a mixed race student studied by Ursula Brown: "Every time I have to fill out a form I am confronted with the fact that there is no category for me. It's like I don't exist" (Brown, 2001, p.59). "All racial designations identify individuals as members of races . . . or else require that they construct such identities for themselves" (Zack, 1993, p.6). This being the case, this study sought to discover who or what is the model for mixed race "others" to identify with.

Maria Root was one of the first researchers to identify multiple ways of identifying with one's mixed race identity. Root claims that "identity development is a spiral process with four possibilities for identity: 1) acceptance of the identity society assigns you, 2) identification with both racial groups, 3) identification with a single racial group, or 4) identification with a new racial group" (Root, 1996, p.47).

One's identity, as mentioned before, is formed through the process of socialization. This process, as defined by Kenneth Sandstrom in his book Symbols, Selves, and Social Reality, is "an ongoing interactive process through which individuals develop identities and learn the ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that characterize society." Through primary socialization, children learn to become positive members of society. We must ask ourselves exactly what it is to be a positive member of society. As we live in a society that is very Caucasian-dominant in terms of power and status, and in addition has discriminated and continues to discriminate against minorities, we must assume that to be a fully successful citizen is in part to be Caucasian, or at least to act in a manner that coincides with this title. This adversely affects those who do not have membership in the group. Society is showing the individual quite effectively "his/her position in relation to the white group" (Brown, 2001, p.177). This can be a crushing blow to the child's self-esteem as "the individual experiences him/herself not directly, but only indirectly from the particular standpoint of others" (Prus, 1996, p.55).

Charles Horton Cooley's idea of the "looking-glass" self plays a significant role in identity formation. "We learn who we are through interactions with others" (Sandstrom, 2002, p.66). A child of African-American heritage does not realize his/her perceived lower status in society until another person makes it known to them. This is often signified by a child's first exposure to racial slurs from peers. However, this child is still not in the same boat as mixed race children. The views mixed race children receive from others are mixed, convoluted, contradicting, and in some cases alienating. These views are often negative, and can come from both sides of the individual's racial make-up as well as from others. A firm example lies with the mixed race individual of African-

American/Caucasian heritage. This person can be discriminated against by Caucasians for having “black blood”, while simultaneously being discriminated against by African-Americans for having undue privilege due to the existence of “white blood”. This hypothesis was confirmed by the research.

Turning points in identity are “certain critical incidents that occur to force a person to recognize that ‘I am not the same as I was, or as I used to be’” (Strauss, 1959, p.93). The mixed race individual has experienced countless turning point events. These range from “a light-skinned [African-American] passing as White”, to “betrayal by anyone with whom one is closely identified with”, and “rejection by a group one once identified with” (Strauss). “There is more anguish involved when a person finds that although he believed he/she possessed a comfortable dual identity, significant others are now challenging one or more of those identities” (Strauss, 1959, p.99). This occurs if a mixed race individual is shunned by family members or peers, or has identified as being part of a race and then been denied membership by some other member of that group. Several mixed race respondents claimed to have been discriminated as such.

Many mixed race individuals fall into a category aptly named by Everett Stonequist in his book The Marginal Man. The marginal person is “one whom fate has condemned to live in two societies and in two, not merely different, but antagonistic cultures ... the most obvious of which is the mixed race individual.” He stresses the role of the mixed race person as belonging to both groups, yet at the same time being excluded from both groups. This person is constantly pondering who they are and where exactly they fit into the larger racial schema. In his book, Stonequist depicts the conflict of the United States Mulatto. He suggests that mulattoes, a derogatory term used to

describe individuals being mixed race of African-American/Caucasian descent, receive discrimination only from their White counterparts and only praise from their Black counterparts. This seems disturbingly untrue unless one evaluates the time period the book emerged from. In 1961, it likely appeared in this manner due to the high volume of “mulattoes” in leadership positions of the Black Civil Rights Movement. This is also likely due to educational opportunities allowed mixed race individuals that provided the knowledge of the system African-Americans were seeking to participate in, and therefore had no knowledge of. The mixed race individual was an ally, a forced ally due to discrimination against them from Whites.

The mixed race individual “often frequently possesses some characteristics of manner, thought, and speech which are derived from both lines of ancestry” (Stonequist, 1961, p.10). This can allow the individual to function more fluidly in different realms of society than those of one race. It can also allow the individual to “pass”, or make others believe that he/she is of only one of the two races the individual represents. This was quite common in the post-slavery era as fair-skinned mixed race slaves often attempted to “pass” as being solely Caucasian in order to receive the benefits Caucasians were allotted or to escape the problems full Blacks were experiencing. This is examined in more detail by Ursula Brown as she explains that “the addition of white blood elevated the blackness of mixed race children . . . but because of their black blood, mulattos could never attain the skills and intellectual competency of the white race” (Brown, 2001, p.16). Not all mixed race individuals claim to have a racial identity problem, however all respondents claimed to have experienced strain at some point. Stonequist suggests that “the extent to which they are a social and numerical minority . . . and the social attitudes [including

racism] they have encountered” play a large role in this. Some parents adequately provide an atmosphere conducive to mixed race identity formation, but conflict will no doubt occur at some point once the individual has entered into mainstream society.

In her study, Brown found that “racial identity problems may sometimes be masked by symptoms of depression, social isolation, detachment, and substance abuse” (Brown, 2001, p.55). This is an obvious side effect of a seeming cycle of racial acceptance and rejection. The mixed race individual is constantly trying to define him/herself with a people, yet when a connection is made it is open to attack by other less open members of the group. In a study of mixed race students in grades 7-12, Richard Udry found that “adolescents who identify as more than one race are at higher health and behavior risks” than those of one race (Udry, 2003, 1). His study shows in many cases that “struggles with racial identity formation lead to lack of self-esteem, social isolation, and problems of family dynamics” (Udry, 2003, p.3). Activities such as juvenile delinquency, smoking marijuana and cigarettes, drinking alcohol, suicidal thoughts, and deviant sexual acts were more frequently taken part in by mixed race individuals.

There are some programs that are in effect to assist mixed race children and their parents in achieving racial identity success. People in Harmony are a group founded in England in 1972. It continues to this day to provide support to these children as they move through the racial identity formation process, and allow parents to obtain cultural knowledge they may lack about their child. Vic Motune writes: “drama, music, and creative writing are used to help members express their feelings about this complex issue ... and to provide young mixed-race people with positive self-esteem” (Motune, 1999, p.1). Groups such as these have begun and will continue to spring up all over the world

as mixed race individuals, once a minority, will soon progress to become a majority and demand their place in society. “Though being of mixed heritage can have its disadvantages at times (affected by situational, regional, and cultural contexts), its growing prevalence, acceptability, and even trendiness influence the ways in which people make decisions about how to racially identify themselves and their children” (Lopez, 2003, p.35).

Identity Formation in the “Other” Race Methodology

This study was based upon data collected from a category of mixed race individuals in Humboldt County. Mixed race, in terms of this study, was defined as being biologically comprised of any mixture of **two** races rather than those of many races, or polyracial individuals. Participants were Humboldt State University students and community members aged 18-30, who in addition were raised by both biological parents. Participants were contacted via snowball sampling, with origins at the Humboldt State University Multicultural Center, the HSU Sociology Department, and personal contacts of the researcher. It was the intent of the researcher to explore this topic with as many genders and racial groups represented as possible. However, due to the limited sample size of the study and lack of pronounced presence of individuals of some racial backgrounds in Humboldt County, some mixed races were undoubtedly excluded.

Semi-structured interviews and a version of the Kuhn-McPartland “20 Statements Test” were used in data collection. Participants were provided with a hard copy of the “20 Statements” questionnaire one week prior to interviews in order to allow participants to reflect on the material without interference from the researchers. The given instructions depicted the questionnaire as an examination of identity in general, as not to influence the order of responses in terms of indication of race. Interviews, which followed one week later, were thirty to forty-five minutes in length, and took place in a private setting at the Humboldt State University campus in Arcata, CA. Data was transcribed and color coded for themes and patterns. All work was performed in Humboldt County.

Identity Formation in the “Other” Race Findings

Chart A: Biological Racial Make-Up

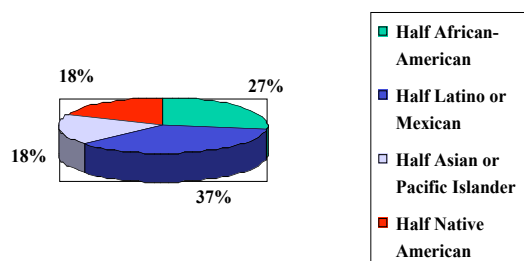
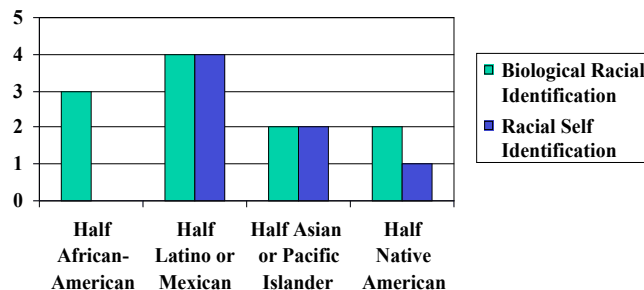


Chart B: Race(s) Identified With vs. Biological Racial Make-Up



There were a total of ten respondents to the study, and each participated in both the questionnaire and the interview portion. Respondents were 70% female and 30% male, and in addition 9 out of 10 respondents were biologically half Caucasian. The remaining individual was biologically two minority races, which is depicted in Chart A. If you refer to Chart A, which depicts Respondents’ Biological Make-Up, you will see that of all respondents: 37% were half Latino or Mexican, 27% of respondents were half African-American, 18% of respondents were half Asian or Pacific Islander, and 18% were half Native American. Racial groupings were selected using commonly displayed racial groupings found on surveys and questionnaires. The average age of respondents was 22.4 years.

Chart B depicts the Respondents’ Biological Racial Make-Up versus how they actually racially self-identify. It is interesting to note that although 90% of respondents were biologically half Caucasian and also claimed to have been raised in a primarily Caucasian area, only 10% or one respondent identified as Caucasian. 100% of respondents in both the half Latino/Mexican and half Asian/Pacific Islander groups

identified as Latino/Mexican and Asian/Pacific Islander, respectively, as opposed to Caucasian or “other”. Of the two respondents in the half Native American group, one identified as Native American while the other identified as Caucasian. Perhaps the greatest finding in this section was that no respondent in the half African-American group identified as African-American. Two respondents, whose biological make-up were both African-American/Caucasian, identified as other. While the remaining respondent, African-American/Mexican, identified as Mexican. These findings may have depicted themselves differently in a larger sample more representative of diversity in terms of communities of upbringing.

In addition, categories were formed to depict the quantity and quality of role strain and conflict felt by each of the mixed race respondents. Respondents feeling **light** role strain may: 1) have had few questions of their racial identity, 2) had an overall feeling of being well integrated into society, 3) have experienced little or no harassment/jokes/comments regarding race, 4) had parental figure(s) that provided an open forum for multi-racial expression, and/or 5) have had both parents in the home. Respondents feeling **moderate** role strain may: 1) have many questions of their racial identity, 2) have felt some experiences of not fitting in with one racial group, 3) have had limited knowledge of one side of racial heritage, 4) have been hindered by a language barrier, 5) have experienced a moderate level of harassment/jokes/comments regarding race, and/or 6) had one or more parent absent from the home. Respondents feeling **heavy** role strain may: 1) have experienced constant questioning of their racial identity, 2) have feelings of not fitting in with either racial group, 3) have experienced extreme racial slurs

or attacks, 4) have been denied a part of their heritage, and/or 5) have experienced a betrayal by those close to them or by a group he/she once felt a belonging to.

Of all ten respondents, 10% felt light role strain/conflict, 30% felt moderate role strain/conflict, and an unsurprising 60% felt heavy role strain/conflict. In addition, 100% of respondents of half African-American or half Native-American descent felt heavy role strain/conflict and/or had serious experiences with racism. Racism experiences seemed more extreme or painful in respondents of these groups. 90% of respondents claimed to have felt discomfort or non-acceptance when socializing with full-blooded members of one or more of their racial backgrounds. 80% of respondents claimed that they didn't question their racial identity until someone else brought it up. After this initial questioning, the need to seek out a racial identity was extreme. 90% of respondents reported experiencing a re-examination of past and current experiences in terms of racial content. In other words, respondents claimed that they tended to identify racial influences in situations that may or may not have actually contained them. These after-the-fact realizations were common.

One of the most interesting findings of this research was the 90% of respondents' parents were no longer married or otherwise together. Of these individuals, 60% of respondents identified with the absent parent's race. Of the nine respondents who experienced a divorce in the household, eight reported the father as being the absent parent, while only one reported the mother being absent. The absent father was just as likely to have been Caucasian as of one of the minority races studied. These statistics may prove to be different in a study with a larger sample size.

Again, 100% of respondents who were biologically half Latino/Mexican self-identified as Latino/Mexican, were Catholic, and expressed strong ties to that side of their heritage. However, 75% of respondents in this group described being intentionally denied the opportunity to learn the Spanish language. A typical response as to why this occurred was that speaking Spanish was looked down upon in the workplace at that time. It is difficult to be sure if Catholicism can be directly linked to Latino/Mexican influence, although two respondents said in their cases this was so.

In terms of parental figures providing an environment conducive to exploration of racial identity, respondents generally felt parental figures had done a sufficient job. 90% of respondents' provided an atmosphere somewhat to greatly conducive to racial exploration. Peers tended to play a huge role in the influences placed on mixed race individuals as 90% of respondents exemplified a discomfort around certain peers or had feelings of not fitting in. In fact, most respondents felt more comfortable migrating between peer groups as there was usually not one group they identified with. In addition, one's peers were most likely to ask questions about the respondent's racial make-up or identity. School influences varied, but most respondents reported positive influences coming from school administration and/or staff. Governmental influences were not clearly identified. This could have been a result of researcher error in construction of the interview guide. Influences from the employment arena varied as well.

100% of respondents reported being asked the question "What are you?" in terms of their racial make-up. In addition, it was found that individuals in society tend to try to identify an individual's race by common racial stereotypes of particular races, which did not include all races. For example, a respondent who was Samoan/Caucasian recalled

being identified by others as Latina, Native American, and African-American. When these options had run out, the individual asking the questions became irritated and demanded “Well, then what are you?!” This was the case in several respondents, which led me to believe that individuals experience strain when they are unable to automatically racially identify mixed race individuals. The frequency of these questions, and the quantity and quality of role strain/conflict were found to be in correlation with the presence of commonly identifiable racial traits in the mixed race individual.

In conclusion, this research was inhibited by a small sample size and time constraints. There were difficulties locating mixed race individuals in Humboldt County. Respondents often had difficulty remembering events from their childhood years. There was also difficulty in deciphering between racial influences and those of sex, class, religion, and age. There were some minor errors in interview conduction and flow by the researcher, such as a few leading questions. In addition, the diversity of respondents included many mixes, but relatively lacked diversity in terms of communities of upbringing.

However, the data found by this study is rich, and shows that this is an extremely important issue for mixed race individuals. Trends found were somewhat significant in terms of the percentages of respondents identifying with them. It seemed as though the respondents felt more comfortable in sharing their stories with a researcher who was also mixed race. As I described my experiences, those of respondents seemed to pour out. Several respondents remembered events after the interview and actively sought me out to make sure the information was included. Respondents were highly interested in the findings of the study. I believe that respondents felt a sense of ease in knowing that other

mixed race individuals had gone through similar experiences. I know I did. For all of these reasons, further studies on this issue must be conducted. Mixed race individuals are becoming no longer a minority, but a majority whose interests and well-being must be taken into account if we care to identify ourselves as true sociologists.

Identity Formation in the “Other” Race
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Identity Formation in the “Other” Race
Appendix A

Identity Formation in the “Other” Race
Appendix A: Face Sheet

Facesheet

Name Code:

Time/Place of Interview:

Biological Racial Make-Up:

Race(s) Identified With:

Community Raised In:

Religion:

Respondent’s Sex:

Respondent’s Age:

Identity Formation in the “Other Race”
Appendix A: Consent Form

Overview:

You have been invited to participate in an exploratory study regarding mixed race identity formation. This study seeks to discover patterns in racial influences imposed on the mixed race individual by societal institutions such as the family, educational system, and the government. In addition, the study hopes to identify to what degree the mixed race individual identifies with his/her racial groups, and the strategies used in coming to form this racial identity.

Researcher Contact Information:

This study is being conducted by Dana M. Rice, a Humboldt State University Sociology senior, as the culminating senior project for the Bachelor’s degree. I may be contacted at (707) 822-5664 or via e-mail at Dana5381@aol.com. The senior project class is under direction of Dr. Mary Virnoche, Department of Sociology, Humboldt State University, (707) 826-4569, Arcata, CA, 95521.

Your Role:

Your part in this study will involve both the completion of a simple pre-interview identity examination questionnaire, and a thirty to forty-five minute interview regarding your experiences of society as a biologically mixed race individual. Interviews will be audio tape recorded, and take place in either your home, the home of the researcher, or in a private setting at the Humboldt State University campus.

Risks and Benefits:

I foresee no risks to you through your participation in this study. However, you may find that issues that arise within your participation in the interview and the questionnaire cause you to reaffirm or question your racial identity. The results to the study may prove interesting to you, in terms of how others have struggled through the difficult task of living as mixed race in a society that often forces one to choose.

Voluntary Participation:

Please understand that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to participate in all or none of the evaluation activities. You have the right to refuse to answer any particular question for any reason. You also have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation in this study at any time. The researchers also have the right to end your participation in the study at any time.

Confidentiality:

Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written materials resulting from this study. All references to your real name will be assigned a pseudonym of your choice in any transcription and/or other written materials generated from audio tape recordings and questionnaires. Questionnaires will be destroyed after data has been analyzed. Audio tapes will be destroyed within thirty days of transcription. Records that could potentially link you with data you provide will be kept in a secure location.

Concerns:

If you have any concerns regarding this project or the evaluation that you are not comfortable communicating with the researchers, you may contact confidentially Dr. Mary Virnoche, Department of Sociology, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA, 95521, (707) 826- 4569, mv23@humboldt.edu.

Signature of Participant

Date

Print Name Here

Identity Formation in the “Other” Race
Appendix A: Pre-Interview Identity Questionnaire

There are twenty numbered blanks on the page below. Please go to a quiet place and write twenty answers to the question “Who am I?” in the blanks. Write the answers in the order they occur to you; don’t worry about logic or importance. Please bring this sheet with you to the interview.

- | | | |
|---------|----------|----------|
| 1)_____ | 8)_____ | 15)_____ |
| 2)_____ | 9)_____ | 16)_____ |
| 3)_____ | 10)_____ | 17)_____ |
| 4)_____ | 11)_____ | 18)_____ |
| 5)_____ | 12)_____ | 19)_____ |
| 6)_____ | 13)_____ | 20)_____ |
| 7)_____ | 14)_____ | |

Your Interview Time:
Your Interview Place:

Identity Formation in the “Other” Race
Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. I see on your pre-interview questionnaire that you listed your race(s) as # _____. Why do you, or do you not, believe that your race is a crucial part of your identity? To what degree do you identify with both of your races? (Opening)
Probes: peers, family, social skin or projected appearance
2. How would you describe what it is like to grow up and live bi-racially in the United States? In your home town? (Transitional)
Probes: experiences at home/overall
3. What strategies did your parents use to provide an open forum for you to explore both of your parent races? How did they hinder you, if at all? (Key Question)
Probes: parental responses/comments/actions/strategies
4. What influences have you received from outside of home regarding who you are, or are supposed to be, racially? (Key Question)
Probes: peers, educational system, church, government, employment arenas
5. How did you negotiate these often conflicting influences? (Key Question)
Probes: strategies used, coping techniques
6. Have you ever experienced conflict in your struggle to identify with both racial groups? Can you describe any major turning points in your identity, or moments that afterward made you question your racial identity? (Key Question)
Probes: racism experiences, discrimination, betrayal by those close to you, acceptance
7. How do you believe others perceive you racially? (Key Question)
Probes: questions of “What are you?”, experiences from childhood to now
8. How do you respond when prompted about your race? If you respond as “other”, how does that make you feel? (Key Question)
Probes: feelings of exclusion or inclusion, one parent race or both
9. Is there anything that you would like to add about your personal experiences that we have not covered? (Closing)