Doing Race: Physical Appearance, Identity and the Micro-Politics of Racial Ambiguity

By

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To my Parents, Pam and Oliver,
for their unconditional love and support

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Abstract

DOING RACE: PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, IDENTITY AND THE MICRO-POLITICS OF RACIAL AMBIGUITY

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Under the supervision of Professor John DeLamater

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison

This dissertation explores the ways in which mixed race adults create racial meaning, i.e., "do race" (West and Fenstermaker 1995) in their everyday lives. I interviewed 30 mixed race adults in the United States and United Kingdom about their identity, body work and being asked "what are you?" In the first of four empirical chapters I discuss racial identity, analyzing the role of gender, socialization, social interactions, environment, and life course changes. One unique contribution is the recognition of hip hop as a significant factor in mixed race men's identity formation.

The next two chapters examine what body work interviewees perform and why. Chapter 4 analyzes hair styling and piercings, both of which were purposely used to influence one's racial appearance. I also discuss tattooing as multiple interviewees described desire for or acquisition of a personally designed tattoo that provides a pictorial representation of her/his mixed race identity. Chapter 5 then analyzes skin color management and other practices that were reported to *not* be used for racial purposes.

In the final empirical chapter, I theorize from my interviewees' experiences being asked "what are you?" finding in general that it was felt as a microaggression (Sue at al. 2007) or "Nigger moment" (Anderson 2011) when posed from mono-racial people but was welcomed as an opportunity for solidarity when posed from other mixed race people. Moreover,

intersectionality played a crucial role in these encounters with women and service workers reporting receiving more questions than men or professionals.

My dissertation concludes with a discussion of body work and responses to racial questions as instances of race emerging within social interactional. While only two types of body work were used purposefully to "do race," I argue that the body work practices for which non-racial explanations were offered may also be "doing race" yet are unrecognized as such due to white hegemony. Regarding receipt of racial questions, I argue that these accumulated inconsistent reflected appraisals collectively serve as one consistent reflected appraisal of mixed race heritage.

As whole, this dissertation interrogates the micro-politics of embodied racialization and advances our understanding of the micro-construction of race.

DOING RACE: PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, IDENTITY AND THE MICRO-POLITICS OF RACIAL AMBIGUITY

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE CONUNDRUM OF PHYSICAL AMBIGUITY

The mantra that race and ethnicity are socially constructed has been a mainstay in the sociological discourse since the essentialist paradigm was vitiated by scientific advances of the late 20th century. By "socially constructed" sociologists mean that these categories are not biologically given but instead are products of human creation. According to evolutionary biologists, there is no biological basis for the division of humans into race and ethnic groups (Graves 2001). Such divisions, therefore, are constructed by human social relations.

Hegemonic beliefs about what persons of certain races "look like" is one result of race being socially constructed (Omi and Winant 1994). While the majority of individuals' socially ascribed race can be discerned visually by the casual but culturally competent observer, the appearance of some individuals, particularly those who are "mixed race," i.e., those who's immediate parentage consists of members from two or more socially constructed racial groups, is ambiguous and therefore more difficult to categorize. Herman (2010) examined the congruence between mixed race adolescents' racial identity and observers' racial categorization of them. Results from one analysis showed that observers only correctly selected the mixed race target's chosen one "best" race 53 percent of the time. However, when separated by type of mixed race, one sees that congruence was highest for mixed race adolescents who selected white or black (75 and 80 percent respectively) as their one "best" race; and congruence was lowest for mixed race adolescents who selected Native American, Asian, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, or Pacific Islander as their one "best" race. To explore whether observers could identify targets' mixed ancestry,

Herman created a four-part table that featured biracial combinations of white/black, white/Hispanic, white/Asian, and white/Native American. Results from this analysis showed that only 22, 31, 20, and 12 percent respectively were congruently perceived by observers.

Song and Aspinall (2012) also examined what they call the "mismatch" between a mixed race person's identification and how they are perceived by others, finding that "mismatch between expressed and observed identification was widely reported across all the mixed groups," (8). Going a step further than Herman, the authors also examined how individuals felt about this mismatch. Half of their sample expressed indifference at being perceived differently from how they identify; a quarter enjoyed "the fact that people were unable to discern their ethnic and racial heritage," (13); and a final quarter felt annoyed and irritated.

Herman's and Song and Aspinall's work provide empirical evidence that mixed race individuals are difficult to ("correctly," congruently) classify. No doubt for this reason mixed race individuals are often asked "What race are you?" or "Where are you from?" These perhaps innocently intended questions reveal the observer's awareness of ambiguity (Bradshaw 1992) and a sense of discomfort with ambiguity as a momentary crisis of racial meaning (Omi and Winant 1994). How mixed race people respond to these questions first received attention in autobiographical writings. For example, Shumaker (2010: 86-87) enumerated five "sure-fire responses to The Question" in DeRango-Adem and Thompson's collection of essays and poems *Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out*:

> 1) The Obvious: "State the obvious and leave it at that. For example I am a human, a female, and an American"
> 2) The Mockingbird: "Answer said question, then ask the other party the exact same question"
> 3) Hear No Evil: "Act as though the words were not uttered"
> 4) The Hulk: "Get sarcastic. Get rude. Get loud"
> 5) Nothing But The Truth: "Answer the question honestly. Just tell them what you are"

The author claims these techniques will "guarantee people will leave you alone, or at least think twice before asking The Question" (ibid).

Academic attention to "The Question" in particular and on the effect of an ambiguous appearance on mixed race individuals in general, is even more recent. Paragg for example, drawing on Fanon and the notion of the "external racial gaze," is presently theorizing the underpinnings of the "what are you?" question as well as mixed race people's responses to it in the Canadian context[1].

Another avenue of theorizing about mixed race people's experience being asked their race is through focused attention not on the observer's act of observing but on the target of their gaze, i.e., the mixed race person's physical body. Stone (1962) asserted that appearance has a reflexive relationship with identity, and Rockquemore and Brunsma (2004) extended this thesis to include racial identity. Research on mixed race identity has found that others' perception of one's appearance, regardless of his or her actual corporal bodily characteristics, is influential in shaping racial identity (Brunsma and Rockquemore 2001). In other words, "looking Black" "appearing Asian" or being able to "pass" as White is often associated with the mixed race person identifying accordingly (Brown 1997; McClain 2004; Khanna 2004; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2004a; Ahnallen et al 2006). Khanna (2010, 2004) draws on the symbolic interactionist concept of reflected appraisals to explain this phenomenon. Developed from Cooley's (1902) concept of the "looking glass self," the theory of reflected appraisals refers to the process of internalizing the perceptions that one thinks other people hold of him/her. Burke and Sets (2009:25) write that reflected appraisals "constitute one of the main ways we come to understand who we are in identity theory." Applied to race, research suggests that mixed race individuals develop identification with the race that they believe others perceive them to be. In her research

[1] Jillian Paragg, email message to author, February 4, 2014.

on Asian/white Americans' identity, for example, Khanna (2004) found that a person is between two and five times more likely (depending on what other variables are in the model) to identify as Asian if s/he feels that others perceive his/her appearance as Asian.

The shortcoming of theorizing the relationship between physical appearance and racial identity as linked via the processes of reflected appraisals is that it rests on two faulty assumptions. First, it assumes that one's appearance is always perceived in the same manner at all times by all observers. Past research suggests, however, that mixed race people are often not only perceived differently than how they identify but also that they are perceived differently by different observers, i.e., they receive inconsistent reflected appraisals.

Secondly, current identity theory treats one's actual physical form as if it were unchanging, or at least static enough that changes do not alter others' perception of the target. Experimental studies have shown, however, that for those who are racially ambiguous, changing even just one feature can alter how others perceive them racially (MacLin and Malpass 2001). Using two identical computer generated faces that were "created such that certain facial features (e.g., eyes, nose, and mouth) overlapped across Hispanic and African American racial lines," MacLin and Malpass (2001) then added a hairstyle that had been identified as either stereotypically Hispanic or black in a pilot test. With the stereotypically Hispanic hairstyle 68% of participants selected Hispanic as the person's race and only 1% selected black. When the exact same face had the stereotypically black hairstyle, however, 68% of participants thought it was a black person and only 7% marked Hispanic. MacLin and Malpass conclude that certain physical characteristics, in this case hairstyle, are "racial marker features" which are used to resolve cases of ambiguity.

Outside of the computer generated world, real people can and do alter their physical appearance as well. They style their hair, apply make-up, shave or grow facial hair, tan their skin or avoid sun exposure, receive plastic surgery and more. Sometimes altering how one appears racially is an unintended byproduct of body work efforts which are meant for other purposes. For example, Kaw's (1993:75) Asian American respondents underwent cosmetic eye and nose surgery that was "motivated by the need to look their best as women." However, a consequence of the procedures was that it altered how they appeared racially to others because the features that they altered were racial marker features specific to Asians. Data from the pilot study of this project suggest similar processes at play for mixed race individuals. The ways in which mixed race women interviewees arranged their hair for special occasions (straitened and/or worn down) was intended to create a more feminine appearance; yet interviewees commented that they felt it altered how they appeared racially to others as well.

Other times body work is done intentionally as a strategy to influence how others perceive one racially. "Manipulation of phenotype" is the term given to describe the act of purposefully altering an aspect(s) of one's physical appearance with the intent to influence how one is perceived racially by others (Khanna and Johnson 2010). A few of Khanna and Johnson's (2010) mixed race black/white respondents described arranging their hair in a way to affect how they appeared racially to others. A black identified woman with long hair reported keeping it pulled back because others did not perceived her as black when it was down. A black identified male respondent disclosed that he used to wear an Afro in order that he would be perceived as black. In contrast, one mixed race identified woman reported removing her braids upon realizing the style made others perceive her as black.

In addition to hair, research has pointed to the importance of skin color in racial perception. Ali (2003) found that mixed race children automatically considered naturally "pale" skin unauthentic for blacks. One of Khanna's (2004) mixed Asian/white respondents reported that others often questioned the authenticity of her Indian heritage because of her "fair"/ "light" skin tone; and a Black/white mixed race woman revealed that she tans to achieve the darker skin tone others associate with blacks (Khanna and Johnson 2010).

One way to view body work from a constructivist point of view is through the lens of "doing difference" (West and Fenstermaker 1995). Building on an ethnomethodological tradition of performativity, this framework understands categories like race, class, and gender as "ongoing interactional accomplishments." This perspective views such categorical differences as emerging as a *result* of interaction between actors, rather than viewing interactions as presenting an opportunity to *display* inherent differences among actors.

Racial Identity

The study of identities is a foundational focus of social psychology. An "identity" is defined as "the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person," (Burke and Sets 2009:3). Group based identities are called social identities (Hogg and Abrams 1988), and in modern society one type of social identity is racial identity. While most members of society are socially ascribed to a racial group and thus have little agency in selecting their racial identity, some groups have more "ethnic options" than others (Waters 1990). According to many mixed race studies scholars (e.g., Ali, Alibhai-Brown, Brunsma, Ifekwunigwe, Khanna, Rockquemore, Root, Song), mixed race individuals are one

such group who have a degree of "choice" in their racial identity. Rockquemore (1999, 2002, 2005) asserts that biracial individuals racially identify in one of four ways: consistently with a single race, consistently with both races ("border" or "blended" identity), situationally as one or the other or both races ("protean" identity) or by rejecting group racial identification all together ("transcendent" racial identity).

Many factors influence and sometimes constrain mixed race individuals' identity choice. First, socialization by parents influences one's identity. Mixed race identity is more likely to emerge if parents encourage identification with both races and if parents call the child by a biracial label such as *mixed* or *biracial* (Kerwin et al., 1993). Second, as a social construct, race has different meanings in different places. Rockquemore (1999:206) states that "because individuals do not create and maintain an identity in social isolation, others in their interactional context must support, or validate their self-understanding." In the United States, biracial individuals are more likely to identify as biracial if they grow up or currently reside in the Eastern part of the country (Brunsma 2006). In Brunsma and Rockquemore's Survey of Biracial Identity, none of the black/white biracial respondents in the Eastern sample identified as exclusively black while the majority of those in the South did (Brunsma 2006). The author concludes that the Eastern United States - the location of the landmark *Loving vs. Virginia* case that struck down anti-miscegenation laws - more so than the rest of the country, rejects the rules of hypodescent in racial classification and conversely recognizes more nuanced understandings of racial identity.

Racial composition of social environment similarly affects a mixed race individual's racial identity. In Xie and Goyette's (1997) study of children with one Asian and one non-Asian parent, results showed that the mixed race child was more likely to identify as exclusively Asian

as the proportion of Asians in the community increased. McClain (2004) found that being raised in a predominantly black community was a "forceful influence" on developing a black identity. Similarly, Herman's (2004) results showed that for biracial Asian, Hispanic, and Black high school students, being in an "ethnic crowd" at an otherwise racially diverse school also increased the odds of identifying with that particular single race versus as mixed race.

The socioeconomic status of the individual's family of origin also affects how one racially identifies. Mixed race individuals from families of higher socioeconomic status are more likely to identify as white (in the case of white/non-white parentage) or biracial (in the case of non-white/non-white parentage) (Kerwin et al., 1993; Rockquemore, 1999; Yancey 2003). Researchers conclude that this is because higher socioeconomic status provides more opportunity for interaction with white social groups, and people in such settings are more likely to label and call people with parents of different races *mixed* or *biracial*. The exception to this trend is biracials of white/black parentage for whom Brunsma (2005) found that socioeconomic status of the parents had no effect on predicting the racial identification of their biracial child. He theorizes that the white/black exception stems from the strength of the norm of hypodescent- the so called "one drop" rule.

Hypodescent, however, is not the dominant ideology in all cultures; and consequently it does not exert as much influence on identification in other places as in the United States. In the United Kingdom, for example, black/white mixed race people exercise a greater range of identities than their counterparts in the United States (Song and Aspinall 2012). Whereas US studies have shown that upwards of 75% of black/white youth identify mono-racially as black (e.g., Harris and Sim 2002) only about half of Song and Aspinall's (2012) black/white British

interviewees did so. This suggests that nationality, in that it places one in a specific cultural context with specific racial understandings, influences one's racial identity.

Research Questions

Little scholarly attention has thus far been given to the impact of mixed race individuals' racially ambiguous and variably perceived physical appearance or how it relates to their chosen racial identity (though see Khanna and Johnson 2010 for an exception). What racialized conversations about ambiguous physical appearance and identity illuminate about the micro-construction and performance of race has been similarly understudied. My first research question therefore examines what appearance alterations phenotypically racially ambiguous mixed race adults engage in and why. Do they, like Kaw's (1991) Asian American interviewees, view their actions as non-racialized; or do they, like Khanna and Johnson's (2010) mixed race black/white interviewees, make sense of and understand their appearance changes as changing how others perceive them racially?

Secondly, if one can alter one's appearance and it results in, for example, being perceived as black versus Hispanic as in MacLin and Malpass' (2001) experiment, what does this variable ontological status mean for one's racial identity? If racial identity for mixed race individuals is related to appearance via reflected appraisals, then what does it mean for someone who does not receive consistent reflected appraisals? Moreover, does one feel equally 'like oneself' with different perceived racialized appearances? If so, what are the implications for existing theories of the relationship between appearance and identity? If not, in what contexts and under what circumstances would one engage in a particular racial "look?"

Finally, I examine the different ways phenotypically racially ambiguous mixed race individuals respond to thinly veiled racial questions such as "where are you from?" and direct racial questions such as "what race are you?" Such questions are asked as a result of others' uneasiness with racial ambiguity (Bradshaw 1992); and understanding responses to them will show how one can micro-manage, control and/or change others' impressions of ambiguity, racial appearance and identity. Taken together, this research seeks to reveal how mixed race individuals "do race."

Looking Forward

In the first of four empirical chapters I present an analysis of mixed race identity, discussing the role of gender, peer interactions (especially conflict), parental socialization, environmental influences, and life course changes. One unique contribution of this chapter to the literature on mixed race identity is the recognition of hip hop as a significant factor in mixed race men's identity formation. I analyze how hip hop inspired male interviewees' fashion/style and validated their physical appearance and social experiences. The validation was especially important for British men's identity development. For example, hip hop being upfront about the black one drop rule resonated with them because it reflected their lived experiences in way that the dominant media and messages in British society does not.

The next two empirical chapters begin from the premise that people can and do alter their physical appearance for various reasons, and for mixed race individuals, this body work (e.g., hair styling, make-up, tanning, etc.) may alter how they are perceived racially. Building on Khanna's work (2004, 2010) these chapters examine what appearance alterations phenotypically racially ambiguous mixed race adults engage in and why. Chapter 4 analyzes interviewees'

accounts of hair styling and piercings which were the body work practices found to be sometimes used to purposely to influence one's racial appearance. Chapter 5 then analyzes skin color management, men's facial hair styling, women's make-up use, and plastic surgery which were the body work practices that were reported to not be used for racial purposes. In addition to shedding new insights on the body work practices already discussed in the literature, multiple interviewees detailed their desire for and/or acquisition of a personally designed tattoo that provides a pictorial representation of one's understanding of her/his mixed race self-identity. While one can tick a box in the UK or select multiple boxes in the US to indicate one's identity, to inscribe an image on one's flesh conveys much stronger connection to the identity. In Chapter 4, I theorize that the use of images allows for the expression of a synergistic racial identity that text, such as written categories on forms, or verbal affirmations of one's identity, such as responses to questions like "what race are you," cannot convey.

I analyze and theorize from my interviewees' experiences being asked "what race are you?" in the final empirical chapter. This and similar questions reveal not only an awareness of racial ambiguity (Bradshaw 1992) but often also a sense of discomfort with it as a momentary crisis of racial meaning (Omi and Winant 1994). The mixed race adults in this study were frequently asked a variety of overt and indirect questions about their racial heritage; and though the experiences varied based on the nature of the location, historical era and life-stage of the person, in general the questioning was felt as a microaggression (Sue at al. 2007) or "Nigger moment" (Anderson 2011) when posed from mono-racial people but was welcomed as an opportunity for bonding and "mixed race solidarity" when posed from other mixed race people. Moreover, intersectionality was found to play a crucial role in "what are you" encounters. In particular, the intersection of race, gender and class combine to make mixed race women and

service workers more susceptible to being asked about their race, especially by strangers in public, than men or those in prestigious occupations. In addition to being asked their race, mixed race adults in the United States and United Kingdom are often assumed by others to be a specific race. In both countries they are often mistaken for hailing from regions that are historically known for wider spread racial mixing, Latin America and the countries of the Mediterranean, which suggest that others may be inaccurately identifying their sociolinguistic heritage but, given the history of racial mixing in those regions, they *are* actually identifying their *racial* heritage accurately.

My dissertation concludes with a discussion of body work and responses to racial questions as instances of "doing race." According to West and Fenstermaker (1995) categories like race, class and gender emerge within social interactional. While only two types of body work, hair styling and nose piercing, were found to have been purposeful manipulations of phenotype to accomplish being perceived as a given race, I argue that other body work practices for which the interviewees offered non-racial alternate rationales may be, upon closer examination, also "doing race." I propose that they may be unrecognized as such, however, due to white hegemony obscuring the overt racial character of the aesthetic to which many were aspiring. Regarding responses to racial questions, the unique contribution to identity theory of this dissertation is my refining of the theory of reflected appraisals with regard to mixed race populations. Rather than viewing mixed race individuals' constantly being mistaken for different races and being asked about their race as receiving inconsistent reflected appraisals, I argue that accumulated inconsistent reflected appraisals verify and validate a mixed race identity by collectively serving as one consistent reflected appraisal of their mixed race heritage.

The study of racialization in different cultural contexts will help race scholars better understand how race works in the twenty-first century and advance our understanding of the social construction of race. As whole, this dissertation interrogates the micro-politics of embodied racialization and demonstrates how by daily navigating ambiguity mixed race adults "do race."

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

Study Population

Admittedly not all mixed race individuals appear racially ambiguous, and there are certainly some "mono" racial individuals who *do* look racially ambiguous. *Phenotypically racially ambiguous mixed race adults* were chosen as the study population rather than all phenotypically racially ambiguous persons because I want to examine the relationship between appearance and achieved (rather than ascribed) racial identity. Since mixed race individuals' racial identity is often more an accomplished identity than an ascribed status, their practices to that end betray the micro-performative aspect of race-- an aspect of the social construction of race that is not typically examined. Self-identified mixed race adults of any combination of racial backgrounds were eligible to participate.

To reveal the cultural specificity of how mixed race individuals "do race," I studied two national contexts: the United States and the United Kingdom. As Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005:120) note "the direct link between appearance and identity is *profoundly mediated by social context*," (emphasis in original). The UK was chosen as the second research location for a number of reasons. Firstly, at 2.2 percent of the population the percentage of mixed race Britons is comparable to the US figure of 2.9 percent (Office for National Statistics 2012, Jones and Bullock 2012). Additionally, while there is a flourishing literature in Critical Mixed Race Studies comparing the United States, Puerto Rico, Brazil, and South Africa, dialogue between British and United States scholars on race is still scarce. Finally, the UK was chosen due to practical considerations such as the existence of established professional networks, the availability of on-site support should it to be needed, and financial practicalities.

Recruitment: Online and In-Person

Due to absence of population "membership" lists from which to sample randomly, targeted recruitment is the normative sampling methodology for mixed race research. This method has the advantage of securing respondents who have had the specific experience or who possess the specific characteristics of theoretical interest. I first utilized the internet to recruit mixed race adults for interviews from mixed race organizations' websites and social network sites for mixed race individuals. Online recruitment for participation in offline data collection is a recent technique (Hirsch et al 2014). This method of recruitment has a number of advantages, however, principally that it allows the researcher to more easily locate members of the targeted population, in this case mixed race individuals (ibid). Moreover, with respect to cross-cultural research such as the present study, it holds the recruitment method constant by sampling among the same sub-population of mixed race people in both countries (i.e., those for who their mixed heritage is a prominent aspect of their life, as evidenced by joining a mixed race organization / online community). A limitation of this method, however, is that it is biased in favor of internet users. There is no cost for posting an advertisement for research participants on a website, however some organizations do request a copy of the final project or other written documents based on one's findings in exchange.

The British organization People In Harmony (PIH) was recommended by colleagues at London South Bank University and Southampton University who are currently working or have previously worked with them to recruit participants for their research. PIH was contacted via email and agreed to both post a request for participation on their website and send an email with the request to their membership. I also contacted the British web-community Intermix via email for aid in recruitment. The administrator told me to join the site and post the request in the

message boards section, which I did. Lastly, I joined and posted a request for participation in the Facebook.com group "Mixed Race UK."

Recruitment of American participants likewise began by contacting online mixed race organizations. In the USA, the largest mixed race group is the Association of Multi-Ethnic Americans, which is an umbrella organization composed of local affiliate members in nine US cities. I contacted the affiliate organizations IPride (San Francisco), The Biracial Family Network (Chicago) and Multiracial Americans of Southern California (Los Angeles). Requests for participation were emailed to the membership of The Biracial Family Network and a post requesting participation was posted to the website and Facebook page of Multiracial Americans of Southern California.

In all cases, the advertisement included asking if the reader is often asked "what race are you" or "where are you from;" this was to ensure a theoretical sample of not just mixed race participants but mixed race participants who are perceived by others to be phenotypically racially ambiguous. I received six responses (four UK, two US) from internet recruitment, and it resulted in five interviews (three UK, two US).

Despite the development of newer sampling methods such as internet recruiting, snowball sampling from personal and professional contacts remains the most widely used recruitment method for research with mixed race populations. The second method of recruiting participants was therefore snowball sampling, in other words, direct solicitation of people who were members of the research population with the request that they refer other population members as potential participants as well. While in London I asked friends, colleagues and new acquaintances if they knew a mixed race person who might be willing to sit for an interview. Snowball sampling yielded eight mixed race adults and resulted in seven interviews.

Having learned from early interviews that given the different histories of immigration, that light skinned people of color in the United Kingdom are more likely to be mixed race than light skinned people of color in the United States, I also recruited participants by asking light skinned people of color if they happened to be mixed race. Of the three individuals I asked -- in a store, a pub, and once walking down the street -- all were in fact mixed race and two agreed to an interview.

The majority of American research participants were located via snowball sampling beginning with personal and professional contacts. Colleagues, family and friends were asked if they knew any mixed race people who would be willing to participate. Methods of contacting suggested potential participants included calling, texting, emailing, and asking via Facebook message. Eighteen mixed race people were contacted, and sixteen were interviewed.

Data Collection

Data for this study are the experiences of 30 mixed race adults and were collected via semi-structured in-depth interviews. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to an hour and a half and were conducted in the location of the participant's choice. Popular locations in both countries included but are not limited to: cafes, coffee shops, bars and the participant's home. All interviews were conducted by me, 25 in person and five (two UK, three US) via telephone. Digital[2] audio recordings were taken during all interviews for the purpose of transcribing the data for analysis.

An interview guide was the data collection tool for this study. Racial background, identity and early racial socialization were established first, followed by a discussion of their

[2] An analog tape recorder was also used as a back-up for the first four interviews. This 20 year old device malfunctioned during the fifth interview and thus no subsequent interviews have a back-up to the digital audio data.

experiences with questions such as “where are you from?” (UK) or “What are you?” (US) due to having an ambiguous physical appearance. The third set of questions pertained to the practice and effects of body work such as hair styling and tanning that intentionally or unintentionally may alter perceived racial appearance. Interviews ended with collection of demographic information such as gender, age, socioeconomic status and finally allowing the participant, if s/he wished, to ask me any questions about the project or about me personally.

The interview guide was pilot tested in the United States and England in the Spring of 2011 to ensure questions were clear, appropriate, not offensive, in good order, and resulted in the type of data sought. Suggestions for how to improve the instrument were received from all interviewees, American classmates, and American and British professors. This feedback was incorporated into crafting the final tool.

During the first data collection period several additional themes emerged as relevant and deserving of further investigation. For example, during the first two interviews I conducted the respondents spontaneously discussed piercings and tattoos, which are both body work practices I had not initially included on the interview guide. Due to use of Grounded Theory (discussed below) topics that emerged spontaneously from the participants in early interviews were then explicitly explored in subsequent interviews (Charmaz 2006). A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix A, and an asterisk indicates that the topic or question was added to the interview guide during the course of the project in this manner.

Data Analysis

Audio files of interviews were transcribed verbatim. Eight were transcribed by me and 22 by a hired transcriptionist. Transcripts of interviews that were transcribed by the transcriptionist

were checked before use in analysis. I read them while listening to the corresponding audio file to ensure accuracy. Finally, all transcripts were uploaded into the qualitative data analysis computer program NVivo.

Analysis began by creating an NVivo Node (i.e., code) for each of the fifteen main questions and the four emergent theme questions that were asked during data collection. Interviewees' answers and comments were coded at as they pertained to each of the 19 main nodes. I then examined the data pertaining to each node in turn, looking for themes, processes and similarities and differences across cases. These were noted by nesting them as sub-nodes under each main node. Sub-nodes were discovered via both inductive and deductive analysis. During the inductive analysis, consistent with grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), no pre-conceived variables, constructs, or processes were "sought" in the data. Instead, during this phase of the analysis I examined the data to define what was happening and what it meant to the respondents (Charmaz 2006). Sub-nodes were generated until they accounted for all variation in the data. I then thematically grouped the sub-nodes to discover themes. Within each theme, I noted the number of respondents who discussed the particular sub-node, as well as how many times the sub-node was discussed in the sample as a whole, in order to ascertain which elements of a theme were most prominent.

Deductive analysis examined the data with an "eye" for "doing race." According to West and Fenstermaker (1995) categories like race, class and gender are "ongoing interactional accomplishments." During the deductive analysis I coded the data for interactions and concepts akin to those mentioned by West and Fenstermaker, including but not limited to:

- what constitutes a "successful" or "unsuccessful" accomplishment of race/gender/class
- in what context and with what consequences does one "do" race in a certain manner

- holding others and being held "accountable" for one's actions as a member of a particular racial/gender/class group
- gendered accomplishments of race and racialized accomplishments of gender

Comments on Coding Native Americans

Regarding the classification of Native Americans, two caveats must be noted. First, I am choosing to use the word "Native American," even though some interviewees used the term "Indian," because in the UK sample "Indian" refers to people from India. To avoid confusion regarding to which type of Indian I am referring (i.e., American Indian or Asian Indian), I use "Indian" to mean a person from India, and I use "Native American" to refer to the indigenous peoples of North America.

Secondly, eight of the 18 American interviewees mentioned "Native American," "Indian" or a specific tribe when asked about their racial background. Due to historic forced and voluntary mixing, many more Americans than the 1% who mark Native American on the Census could in fact have native background. However, I am skeptical that this ancestry really exists. Statements from interviewees such as their family's connection to the native tribe they mentioned "has never been proven" or that it was just "rumors" support my assessment. Therefore, American interviewees were not considered part Native American unless connections to a tribe, Native family member, experience or other account pertaining to Native Americans were mentioned or referenced in their interview beyond the first question to describe their racial background. This coding decision follows Waters (1990) by drawing a distinction between those for whom a racial group membership materially and consequentially affects one's life chances and experiences and those for whom it can be donned and discarded at will. Since the focus of

this research is on lived experience of race, not symbolic ethnicities or racial affiliations, only those individuals who discussed experiences of being Native American are included in the analysis as part-native American.

On the Interpretation of Results

The data were considered the interviewees' subjective truth. By analyzing their thoughts, perspectives and experiences and juxtaposing the emergent trends thereof with the current literature and available statistics on various topics, my results seek to convey both how *mixed race people view and feel* about certain topics and to discuss the potentially more objective *social forces actually at work*. Guba and Lincoln (1981) recommended a number of strategies for assessing the reliability and validity of the results of qualitative research such as this. I chose to conduct a modified member check to assess the result of this study. Verification of the overall results with participants has, albeit not uncontroversially, been the predominant practice of qualitative researchers attempting to follow Gruba and Lincoln's prescriptions (Morse et al. 2002). One potential problem with this practice is that "investigators who want to be responsive to the particular concerns of their participants may be forced to restrain their results to a more descriptive level in order to address participants' individual concerns," (Morse et al. 2002: 7). To avoid this pitfall, I conducted a modified member check. Instead of seeking verification of results by a study participant, I requested feedback on the analysis and results from a member of the study population whom I had *not* interviewed for either the pilot study or principle data collection of this research. "Maya" is a phenotypically racially ambiguous 23 year old black/white American woman. She read the manuscript and returned comments via email. Repeated declarations such as "Totally happened to me" speak to the data's representativeness.

More to the point, her notes such as "Yes! This is such a good point" and "I really like this analysis" boosts confidence in the reliability and validity of my analysis and results. Her commentary is occasionally noted in footnotes; however, given that the phenomenon of reflected appraisals is a crucial element of the theory, her divergent experience with identity non-verification is discussed in text.

Despite not seeking verification of results from any study participant, I nonetheless received it in an unsolicited email. Unbeknownst to me at the time, Dave (30, UK, black/white) was in the audience when I presented a selection of results from Chapter 3 at a conference. Following the presentation he emailed me to say:

> "I really liked your analysis of it, and the conceptual framework that you used to provide that analysis - you've really helped me to understand myself, and youthful fascination with Hip Hop, much more than I did before, and why I and others might've latched onto it as UK born mixed race men, more than some of the Americans in your study. So thank you, I thought it was excellent.[3]"

Taken together, these modified member checks from mixed race individuals of both genders and from both countries suggest that the analysis and results presented herein are valid and reliable.

Sample characteristics

Appendix B displays the demographic information for the sample. There were 30 interviewees, 12 British and 18 American. Eleven were male and 19 were female. The racial composition of the sample, discussed in depth in the next chapter, is, briefly: 18 black/white interviewees, six Asian/white interviewees, two Asian/black interviewees, one black/Latino interviewee, one Native American/white interviewee, and two multiracial interviewees. Two respondents, one American male and one American female, identified as bisexual; all other interviewees (28) identified as heterosexual. The age range spans from 19 to 49 and consists of

[3] "Dave," email message to author, May 19, 2013.

one teenage respondent, 11 in their twenties, 13 in their thirties and five in their forties. Half of the UK sample described their family of origin as middle class and half described it as working class or between working class and middle class. In the US, the majority of the interviewees (10 of 18) described their families as middle class. Six said their families were “poor” or “lower middle” class; and two said their families were “upper middle” class.

CHAPTER 3: MIXED RACE IDENTITY

This chapter presents an analysis of the interviewees' racial identities as revealed in the interviews. During its zenith in the 1990s and early 2000s, research on mixed race identity uncovered multiple factors associated with identity choice. These included individual characteristics such as age (Kerwin et al. 1993, Harris and Sim 2002, Roth 2005), gender (Kerwin et al. 1993, Rockquemore 2002, Brunsma 2005, Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005), socioeconomic status (Kerwin et al. 1993, Rockquemore 1999, Brunsma 2005), and phenotype (McClain 2004, Khanna 2004, Rockquemore and Brunsma 2004a, Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005, AhnAllen et al. 2006, Khanna and Johnson 2010); interactional dynamics such as parental socialization and cultural exposure (Kerwin et al. 1993, Rockquemore 2002, Khanna 2004, Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005); and ecological factors such as community racial composition (Xie and Goyette 1997, McClain 2004, Herman 2004), cultural context (Brunsma 2006) and cultural exposure (Khanna 2004). After enumerating the interviewees' expressed identities, I compare and contrast the main themes-- gender, type of mixed race heritage and the influence of national context -- to past research findings. After having discussed the interviewees' identity, the second part of the chapter examines how mixed race people identify themselves to others, in particular their reporting behaviors on the Census and other forms, and what influencing socialization agents (e.g., parents, peers, outside influences, etc.) may have contributed to both their identity and identification. The final section notes reported changes over the life course.

Racial identification of British and American mixed race adults

Appendix B shows the racial background and racial identification as well as the gender, age and country of residence of the 30 mixed race British and American adults (all names are interviewee selected pseudonyms) who were interviewed for this study. Based on their reported racial heritage, usually parents' races, there are 18 black/white interviewees (seven UK, 11 US; seven men, 11 women); six Asian/white interviewees (four UK, two US; one man, five women); two Asian/black interviewees (one UK, one US; one man, one woman); one black/Latino interviewee (US male); one Native American/white interviewee (US male); one black/Native American interviewee (US female); and one multiracial (Asian/black/Latino/white) interviewee (US female).

In terms of self-identification, eight of the 18 black/white interviewees (one UK, seven US; five men, three women) identified mono-racially as black, and an additional two men in the UK identified as "black or mixed race." Eight other black/white interviewees (four UK, four US; all women) identified as mixed. Four of the six Asian/white interviewees (all British; one man, three women) identified as mixed race as well. One Asian/white American female identified mono-racially as Filipina and the other identified "broadly as a person of color. As a nonwhite person."

Of the two Asian/black interviewees, the male (UK) interviewee identified as black while the female (US) interviewee identified as mixed or black. The one black/Latino (US male) interviewee identified as black as did the one multiracial (US female) interviewee. Finally, regarding to the two part Native Americans, the male (US, Native American/white) identified as mixed and the female (US, Native American/black) identified as black or mixed.

There are no white identified interviewees in this sample. Despite potentially being between 3% and 17% of the black/white mixed race population (Harris and Sim 2002, Rockquemore and Arend 2002), about 86% of the Native American/white population (Harris and Sim 2002) and roughly half of the Asian/white population (Xie and Goyette 1997, Khanna 2004), no white identified mixed race individuals of any type of multiracial background volunteered for the study (e.g., none contacted me after seeing a web posting advertising the study). One white identified mixed race person was approached on referral during snowball sampling, however the person emphatically declined participation.

"It might be gendered a bit:" Theorizing gender specific patterns of mixed race identification

Looking at the sample as a whole, 13 interviewees identified as mixed race and 12 identified mono-racially as the non-white race, or in the case of a double minority, as the "lower" status race. (Of the remaining five, four identified as both mixed race and black, and one as "a person of color" broadly). While the ratio of mixed race identification to hypodescent identification appears comparable, stark disparities are apparent when sorted by gender. Sixty-three per cent (7 of 11) of the men in this sample identified mono-racially versus only 26% (5 of 19) women. In other words, 74% of women identified as mixed race whereas literally half of that percentage, only 37%, of men with mixed race background identified as mixed. While differences in identification by gender were not evident in early (i.e., 1990s) research on mixed race identity, (c.f., Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005) this pattern is consistent with recent research. An online survey of mixed race Britons conducted by Song and Aspinall (2012), for example, yielded a sample of 258 women but only 68 men. The authors suggested that the gender imbalance may be due to a "gendered propensity [for women] to see themselves as

mixed, as opposed to one race." Lopez (2003) found that significantly more girls at the American high school she studied identified as multiple races than boys, regardless of how the race question was posed (e.g., select all monoracial categories which apply, providing combination categories, free response, etc.). Discussing potential reasons for the propensity for women to identify as mixed more often than men she surmised that it might "reflect adolescent gender differences in cognitive development" or that it might point to a context specific culture in which "AHS or the surrounding community could in some way be influencing female and male adolescents to conceptualize their racial/ethnic identifications in different ways," (ibid). My results however confute both possible explanations. The earlier cognitive development of girls compared to boys may explain why adolescent girls are "more able to think overall in less binary and more nuanced terms" but it does not explain why the same patterns appear in my sample of adult men and women. Moreover, we can also eliminate Lopez's suggestion of a context effect because I found the same pattern outside of the community Lopez studied.

Another potential explanation that Lopez, Song and Aspinall and others frequently mention is whether phenotype is the reason that more women than men identify as mixed race. Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005), though maintaining their claim that men and women identified singularly and multiracially in comparative numbers, nonetheless suggested that phenotype was the catalyst for developmental pathways to women's racial identity. Based upon black/white experience, their thesis is that because black/white mixed race women are usually light skinned with less Afrocentric features, and because there is a history of colorism in the black community due to Eurocentric beauty standards in the broader society, that mixed race and black women experience tension due to black males' sexually racist preference for the former. As evidence they offer contrasting stories of light and dark skinned mixed women which reveal

that only the former had (real and perceived) "problems" with a homogenized black female population who is assumed to be resentful of their greater attractiveness to black men. The accounts from light skinned mixed race women in this study contain almost identical experiences. Judy (30, US, black/white) remembers:

> "It was a nightmare growing up. Because I had this long hair down to my butt and it was all poofy and curly and I've got green eyes. And you know so white kids, you're not white enough to hang with them and then the black kids are like, 'oh, you think you're cute 'cause you've got green eyes.' Okay, I actually didn't say that but all right. So things were a bit complicated."

Tia (37, US, black/Native American/white) is a little darker than Judy but with similar long "poofy and curly" hair. She reveals that this type of phenotype based harassment is on-going even in adulthood and has "been happening since high school. Prior to high school. I think I was twelve going to the teeny bop bar getting the mean mug from the black girls." And like in the accounts from multiple research studies synthesized by Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005), interviewees in this study too claim the cause of this tension is black men's sexual racism. Tia describes black high school boys' single-minded valuation of Eurocentric physical features:

> "I can remember in high school the assumption like, a description of me and 'oh, I gotta get with her, she must be fine'. Light skin, long hair, it was over. I could have had a dog face, teeth over here and eyes over here. But that was the assumption."

Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) only discussed research on American mixed race women; however, the British women in this study offer strikingly similar accounts. Fleur (34, UK, black/white) for example describes herself as a light skinned woman with (dyed) blonde hair, blue eyes and "quite Negro features in terms of my nose, my lips." She was brought up in foster care and usually resided with black families; consequently, she says, she "felt that I was black given that that was my immediate um home environment." She recalls that this changed, however: "[A]s I grew a little bit older and experienced some rejection from black people then I

began to not see myself that way. Or question whether I saw myself that way." The types of experiences that Fleur called rejection were specific instances such as "a black kid saying to me saying 'you're not black'" but also generalized "hostility, I guess, from black people. Particularly women… I would get not particularly friendly looks from um black women." In addition to describing accounts similar to the women in American studies, Fleur comes to the same conclusion as them as to the source of the conflict:

> "[W]e're in England. We've got this thing about, black people have got a thing about people with good hair or people with light skin being more attractive to black men than women who are more darker skinned with more afro kind of hair and features. So I kind of felt that, I mean, I think I have had more, quite a lot of attention from black men in my experience. And I think that some black women I've come across in [unintelligible] have felt a bit threatened I guess. Because of my appearance. Or because of the fact that they might think that I'm more attractive to a black man because of my fairer skin and my more European features like my blue eyes. So I think there have been you know times when I've felt that black women have been hostile towards me because they've seen me as a threat and they've seen me as um taking their men, I guess."

Given that research on colorism in non-white communities has shown light skinned women do in fact "have higher status in the marriage market and are more likely to marry high status men than are darker skinned women with the same credentials" (Hunter 2004), Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005:144) conclude that "dark-skinned girls can feel devalued and in turn, express their rage toward lighter-skinned girls," (144).

To be fair, Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) also acknowledge the active role that light skinned mixed race women often play in the conflict. Due to internalization of society's colorist ideology they point out that:

> "some mixed race women honestly do think, feel, and act as if they are 'better' than their darker skinned sisters… This belief can fuel a deeply implanted sense of superiority that plays a catalytic role in the hostility they receive they from darker skinned girls," (146).

The mixed race women in this study, while not reporting to think of themselves as "better" or "superior" to darker skinned women, nonetheless acknowledged that their *behavior* may

inadvertently give that impression. It is interesting to note, however, that disparate and even opposite types of behavior lead to the same charges of "'oh, you think you're cute" and/or to rejection/conflict. For example, Tia (37, US, Native/American/black/white) characterizes herself as "feisty" while Fleur (34, UK, black/white) notes that she is "a bit quieter." That both ends of the behavioral spectrum were interpreted as stemming from thinking one is "better" suggests that the stereotypes about mixed race women's supposed sense of superiority and greater attractiveness to black men are extremely durable. This places mixed race women in a bind in which almost any type of behavior, within an already charged encounter, may potentially elicit rejection and cause conflict[4].

It is this dynamic that Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) say effects (black/white) mixed race women's racial identity. More specifically, like Fleur the mixed race women in their book who experience it report feeling as though it is a rejection of their blackness, and many strongly identify as mixed race. (Conversely, many of the darker skinned mixed race women in their book do not experience it and often identify as black.) Rockquemore and Laszloffy offer that this view of rejection is incorrect, though, and that actually the negativity light skinned mixed race girls experience in interaction with dark skinned blacks girls is in fact *affirmation* of the former's in-group status with regard to the black race since they are being seen by the latter as competitors. However, since out group members can be one's competitors for black male attention as well-- as evidenced by the fact that a quarter of American black men (Wang 2012), half of British Caribbean men and 20% of British African men (Alibhai-Brown 2007 [2001])-- marry non-black women, light skinned mixed race women's feelings that darker skinned black women's negativity towards them is racial group rejection may be more accurate than the authors acknowledge.

[4] Casey Stockstill, email message to author, June 22, 2014.

Regardless, *feeling* rejected by black people of your same gender might explain why more women than men choose a mixed race identity given that the men in this study describe far fewer, if any, frequent negative social encounters with black men like the ones the ladies discussed with respect to black women. Moreover, men did not internalize the comments made by black men about/against their appearance as rejection from black men. Bo (36, US, black/white) for example is phenotypically similar to Fleur in that he too is very light skinned with African facial features. When his white mother died when he was seven, he went to live with his black father in a "black and brown" neighborhood. When asked if he was ever teased about his race he said "No, no, not at all." When pushed he conceded that:

> "[S]ome of my boys used to joke with me, you know. Like 'you're on both sides of the fence. You can throw rocks and then jump over to the other side. Jump back over when they come to get you.' You know so it was um. Yeah. I've never had anyone [tease]."

These comments, however, can be seen as friendly and playful given that Bo ends the story by reiterating that he "never" experienced teasing. In the UK, Dave's (30, UK, black/white) black male friends made comments about his appearance, but did not tease him proper, as well. Dave is also very light skinned with thick lips like Bo; but unlike Bo, he has a narrow nose and loosely curled hair. When going through a self-described "self-righteous pro-black phase" in college (discussed below), a black male friend harshly criticized his claims to blackness rooting his critique in Dave's physical appearance. He remembers:

> "I once had a black friend, a black male friend, who just kinda checked me and said 'look Dave it's not the same for you as it is for me you know. You don't even really have an afro and anyway what you have is always mediated by your light skin so you're never in danger of looking too negro, too black, or too much like a threat to the white man. You look much more like an entertainer than a threat you know so it's not the same set of issues for you.' And um and that it was very good of him to provide that corrective for me."

The differences in the men's and women's accounts of appearance-salient encounters with blacks of their same gender are multiple and stark. Firstly, the men recall such comments as infrequent and in the past whereas they are frequent and chronic for women. Secondly, the comments the men received were either "good natured" adolescent teasing (to Bo) or an educational, critical articulation of the effects of differential racialization (to Dave). No women reported either of these kinds of comments; in both this study and those presented in the literature only "mean spirited" comments and "disses" are recalled by female interviewees. Thirdly, while both genders received comments that referenced their physical appearance, the men's comments did not use phenotype characteristics to make ad hominum attacks. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the appearance comments did not cause men to question their racial identity as it did women. It is evident, therefore, that while "appearance plays a salient role in racial identity development for all mixed race people" (Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005) the dynamics as to *how* that usually discussed are female specific. After presenting the findings regarding both women's and men's appearance in depth in Chapter 4, the Conclusion will address the often neglected topic of the pathways by which appearance shapes men's identity.

Much mixed race research (including all of the studies discussed by Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005) focuses on only black/white mixed race individuals. A strength of the present study therefore is the inclusion of other mixed race people as well. Individuals with Asian and white heritage were the second largest subgroup in this sample. Regarding the five women, the three British women identify as mixed race (as does the one male) while the two American women do not. Unlike their mixed race identified black/white counterparts, the mixed identified Asian/white interviewees did not report any negative interactions with Asians. This is not to say that mixed identified Asian/white Britons never have negative interactions with others or

received comments about their appearance; it just does not involve other Asians. None of the Asian/white interviewees mentioned a single negative interaction with other Asians. Moreover, no one mentioned any light hearted or friendly teasing either. While this may be because they were all raised in predominantly white areas so there was little opportunity to interact with other Asians, Claire's (40, UK, Asian/white) case suggests this is too simplistic of an explanation. The youngest child of a Welsh father and Sri Lankan mother, Claire was actually born in Sri Lanka and spent many summers there during her childhood. Accordingly, she had amble opportunity to interact with monoracial Asians and, being "quite light skinned compared to Sri Lankans, who tend to be quite dark," potentially experience the type of hostile looks and comments described by the black/white interviewees. Yet she reported no experiences of negativity or hostility from Sri Lankans.

The only Asian/white interviewee to describe any ill treatment based on race was Emma (22, UK, Asian/white). She recalls that during her early childhood in Dover, England she was called racist names, bullied in school and was "sort of pushed out of the group sort of thing." However, this was not done by other Asians or even because she was part Asian. She explains that:

> "I actually got bullied because at the time, they were having problems with Czechoslovakians and like 'cause of the war that was going on in the '90s. A lot of them were migrating into Dover. So I used to get quite a few problems in the street. Like racial problems. Because of my skin color."

In other words, Emma was the target of anti-Slovakian prejudices because of her light brown skin resembled the controversial Slovakian immigrants.

Rather than negative experiences with the mono-racial non-white group pushing them away from that identity and towards a mixed race identity like with black/white women, the

Asian/white female British interviewees in this study identified cultural exposure as most influential to their racial identity development. Khanna's (2004) results showed that increasing cultural exposure (with the exception of living abroad) increased the odds that her American respondents would identify monoracially as Asian versus white. However, rather than having a clearly dominant culture (e.g., hegemonic white American) with only peripheral elements of another (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Indian), the Asian/white female British interviewees appear to be closer to fully bi-cultural than their American counterparts. They have lived in or extensively visited both parents' country of origin, speak both languages, and frequently consume traditional foods of both cultures. In contrast, neither Asian/white American female interviewee is bi-cultural. Sally (19, US, Asian/white) was raised in a racially diverse environment but predominantly in the Filipino-American culture. Anna's (24, US, Asian/white) mother is ancestrally Korean. According to Anna, however, her mother has no knowledge of Korean culture due to being adopted by Swedish-Americans. Her mother identifies with Swedish culture and married a white man, Anna's father, with the result that Anna and brother were also raised with no knowledge of Korean culture. Anna recalls that she and her brother "grew up in a little bit of a cultural vacuum… Not really collecting cultural artifacts or celebrating specific holidays outside of those within the US." Due to white culture being the hegemonic culture within the US, Anna's "cultural vacuum" was more specifically white culture; however, because she is not phenotypically white, Anna identifies "broadly as a person of color. As a nonwhite person" rather than as Asian like Sally or as mixed race like the British women. In sum, unlike mixed race identified black/white women, among Asian/white women mixed race identity appears to be a function of degree of bicultural orientation more so than social reactions to one's intermediary appearance.

As noted above, the three Asian/white women who identified as mixed race are British while the two who did not identify as mixed race are both Americans. In addition to the differences in being bicultural versus monocultural, another possibility for the difference in their identification patterns may be the different goals of the Multiracial Movements in the two countries. In Britain, mixed race people and their supporters successfully achieved a "mixed race" box on their forms; in the US, all but a small sect of the movement wanted and were pleased to achieve, a "check all that apply" format (Hamako 2008). In the US, a mixed race box was hotly contested due to suggestions "that a Multiracial option might open the door for other Blacks to futilely attempt to escape Blackness and anti-Black racism," (ibid). But, as it was pointed out, "Although some Multiracial Black people did want to distance themselves from Blackness" it must not be forgotten that "many Multiracial people had and have no Black heritage," (ibid). Mixed race Asians, for example, "mobilized not to get *away* from Asian groups, but to be *included* in those groups.[5]" Whereas for part black mixed race Americans the increased array of identity options available to mixed race people means the opportunity to reject the racial ascription of the one drop rule, which increasingly part black women are doing, for part Asian mixed race Americans it appears to mean the opportunity to be fully included in the Asian racial group.

Sally (19, US, Asian/white) exemplifies this. The daughter of a European descendant Jew and a Filipina woman, she is identifies mono-racially as Filipina. She grew up in a mixed race community but with a mostly Filipino family support network:

> "My dad's family was kind of small. And my mom's family was all in the Philippines. But we had a lot of like really close family friends that kind of like helped her when she came here. And then they just kind of became my second family. And I mainly grew up with them."

[5] Eric Hamako, email message to author (emphasis in original), November 10, 2012.

As mentioned above, Sally's cultural orientation is singularly Filipino. Though she will "give the whole list" of her mixed racial background if inquiring minds press her, she expresses exasperation ("I'm just like 'oh my gosh, I really have to list all of this?'") at not being accepted, unequivocally, as Asian.

In sum, there is an extraordinary emphasis on mixed race individuals' physical appearance (Bradshaw 1992). For part-black women, the higher position on the beauty hierarchy afforded them by their non-African features appears to lead to conflicts which, when internalized, push them towards developing a mixed race identity. Despite also being lighter than monoracial minorities, however, neither part-black men nor non-black mixed race women reported any such negative interactions. Their racial identities were influenced more strongly by non-corporeal factors such as cultural orientation demonstrating that the effect of appearance on identity is not only gendered but differs by mixed race subgroup.

"I'm black, B-L-A-C-K, with a capital B": The differential influence of the one drop rule

In addition to men identifying as mixed less frequently than women, part black interviewees identified as mixed race less frequently than interviewees of other backgrounds. Only 35% (8 of 23) of part black interviewees identified as mixed; including those who identified as mixed and black increases the total, but only to half (52%). This finding is in contrast to the mixed race identity expressed by the overwhelming majority of those interviewed in previous studies (e.g., Khanna and Johnson 2010, Brunsma and Rockquemore 2001). All but two, representing 71% (5 of 7), of the interviewees with no black ancestry however identified as mixed race. This points to the continued prevalence of identification by hypodescent for persons with black ancestry at least for members of this sample. Consistent with this conclusion are the

interviewees' explanations for their mono-racial black identification. Bo (36, US, black/white) was most explicit, saying "I am considered black and having one drop of African American blood in you makes you black." Others agreed, describing how peers viewed them as black regardless of their mixed heritage. Larell (22, US, black/white), in discussing why he marks African American not white on forms explained that:

> "If I put white, I'm looked at as like, dude, you're not even white. If I put African American, though, it's accepted that I'm black. Oh yeah, you're black. Cool. Oh, you're mixed? You're mixed with white too? Okay. That's cool. But you're still black."

Women, too, discussed the continued influence of the one drop rule in their lives. Judy (30, US, black/white), for example, bases her claim that "I would say that that is not optional and I am black" on the fact that "When the police stop you, they say 'I've got a black female here'. They don't even ask."

It should be noted that only Americans were quoted thus far. This is because 60% (9 of 15) of Americans with partial African ancestry mono-racially identify as black compared to only 25% (2 of 8) of Britons with partial African ancestry. As British mixed race scholars have noted, for example Song and Aspinall (2012), a "less stringent 'one drop' rule seems to have operated in Britain," (6). Interviewees, too, mentioned this. For example, Dave (30, UK, black/white) identifies as black and mixed race but has experienced tensions for his mixed ancestry from both the white and black communities during his youth in Yorkshire and in London as an adult. While establishing rapport prior to the interview proper he expressed a desire to move to my country of origin, the United States; and later during the interview he elaborated as to why:

> "I mentioned me wanting to go to America to you and in honesty I think one reason that I might want to go there is for what I imagine might be, although listening to you it's perhaps not, is you know just kinda essentially being seen as black, just light skin, and not having to kinda reconcile the parts of me."

Despite being the target of anti-black racism in his youth, Dave feels like it is America, not Britain, that has a one drop rule and 'accepts' mixed race blacks as 'essentially' black. Dean (27, UK, black/white), a black identified Londoner who has family in both the US and UK, also drew a distinction between the way the two nations perceive blacks. Discussing why he is less frequently asked questions such as "what race are you?" in the US versus the UK he explains that "like America because of like the history and that and the one drop thing like black is black you know like Mariah Carey is black so [laugh] We don't have that here you know."

While it is evident that the one drop rule appears to be laxly applied to light skinned part black individuals like Dave and Dean in the UK, darker skinned individuals of partial black heritage also may experience less automatic racial assignment to black in that country as well. Vincent (36, UK, black/white) for example is a very brown skinned man from Yorkshire who is presently living in London. He mentioned that, were friends to describe him, they would likely say "'oh, you know Vince. Black Vince'. 'Oh, I know black Vince.'" Nevertheless, he feels that this is not a hypodescent-based ascription to the mono-racial black racial category but that his friends are simply "describing you in this literal sense. To use a coarse definition. 'Oh, you know Jim. Fat Jim'. 'Oh, right.' People would describe in very literal terms." Whether or not Vincent's friends are or are not meaning 'black' in the racial sense of seeing him as mono-racially black versus mixed race is up for debate; however the fact that Vincent does not *feel* like his peers are applying the one drop rule to him further demonstrates the weaker nature of this ideology in the British context.

Just because part black interviewees identified as mixed race less frequently than interviewees of other races does not mean that all bowed to the one drop rule's prescription for monoracial black identification. Half of the interviewees identified as mixed or as mixed and

black. In older studies, upwards of 75% of black/white (American) mixed race people identified monoracially as black (c.f., Harris and Sim 2002, Brunsma 2006). Over the past decade, then there appears to have been a decline in the influence of the one drop rule. In other words, while part black mixed race people, Americans in particular, may still be held to the ideology of hypodescent more than mixed race people of other races, the strength of it is apparently, slowly, declining.

"Londoner does not equal white": The intersection of national identity and race

Continuing with the theme of national comparison, more British than American interviewees of all racial backgrounds identified as mixed race versus mono-racially. Ten of the twelve UK interviewees (83%) identified as mixed (alone or in combination with a single race) while only seven of the 18 Americans (38%) did. Moreover, some form of national identity was embedded in UK interviewees' racial identity in a way that was not evident in the Americans' narratives. Claire (40, UK, Asian/white) for example credits her stable "half white, half Asian" racial identity in part to the national pride that was instilled in her as a child:

> "I mean, I think I've always felt I was half white, half Asian you know. Well, half Welsh. Because I think growing up in Wales it's one thing that you do get a sense of is the Welsh is very proud of their identity. They're not British. They describe themselves as Welsh. So yeah, I still think of myself as half Welsh, half Sri Lankan. So yeah. I don't think it has shifted really."

Other UK interviewees similarly discussed nationality and race as intricately linked. Smith (25, UK, Asian/white) in answering my question of what was his *racial* identity reported that "I always identify myself as mixed race white and Chinese. I'd say I was British though." He explicitly combined nationality as an embedded element of his race.

The additive "though" on the end of his statement is noteworthy. While Smith sees himself as British, others often do not. This is because in general 'British' (and English which is often though erroneously used interchangeably) is associated with whiteness. Leddy-Owens (2014) for example interviewed an ethnically diverse group of 60 Londoners about their feelings of "Englishness" and found that across races it was discussed in essentialized terms and said or implied that only whites were (seen as) "proper" English. Other interviewees in the present study in addition to Smith also felt that English and British equaled white. Married couple Mary (41, UK, Asian/white) and George (41, UK, Asian/black) explained in our post-interview chat:

> George: Uh would you say that that black person is British or English they would say no
> Mary: They would say no, yeah. Cos for many people British or English equals white
> George: That's it, that's it. Not black, not Ind-, not Asian

Mary revealed that "Londoner" was more salient for her than English or British because "Londoner could be literally anything, absolutely anything because it's a guess cos it's not a national identity. It's very specific." Most importantly Mary prefers identifying as a Londoner because "Londoner does not equal white." Her husband concurs, adding:

> "I grew up in London, now I'm in south London, but I was in east London and that's all I've known, you know, and that's how that's what I feel. I don't feel British at all I feel London, that's it."

While all of the UK interviewees were presently living in London at the time of their interview, unlike George all but one other were raised elsewhere; and with the exception of Smith, they strongly preferred their regional or national identification versus considering themselves "British." Vincent (36, UK, black/white), as previously mentioned, grew up in Yorkshire in northern England, which has a strong regional identity, history and culture distinct from central and southern England. Understandably, despite living in London, he identifies as "I'm a Yorkshireman." However, he adds that "People don't think I'm a Yorkshireman." In other

words, Yorkshiremen, like Leddy-Owens (2012) and Mary and George all noted of Englishmen, is a category that is raced as white. Vincent's identity as a Yorkshireman, then, is seen as contradictory to his non-white appearance because in the UK "blackness and Englishness are viewed at best as problematic and at worst as mutually exclusive," (Back 1996).

Sara (38, UK, black/white) experiences this invalidation of her national identity too. She grew up in southern England with "all English influence" due to her Jamaican father's absence from the family. As an adult she identifies as English and is frustrated when people do not accept that. She rhetorically asks:

> "[W]hy do you need to know where my ancestors 500 years ago came from? It's not important. I mean historically they are something to do with me but the way I behave I'm English it's nothing to do with me really. I've never been there, I don't live with them so why do you need to know just cos I have different colour skin."

By "different colour skin" Sara means not unambiguously white; and Anglo-Saxon 'white,' moreover, because her "Spanish" olive skin color is light but not sufficiently 'white' for automatic inclusion in Englishness. Like the participants in Leddy-Owen's study, Vincent and Sara identify culturally with the place of their birth and upbringing; but as those locations are racialized as white, their non-white physical appearance makes receiving validation of their identities more difficult than it is for, say, Vincent's fraternal twin brother who is phenotypically Anglo-Saxon white. As Leddy-Owen concludes, "ultimately their appearance to many within society as not white marks them out as un-English. Therefore, for these participants their non-whiteness makes their experience of English identity precarious," (9).

Whether half-Welsh, Londoner, Yorkshireman, Englishwoman or even British Asian, racial identities in the UK were expressed in tandem with national and regional identities (precarious and otherwise). In the United States however, despite some interviewees using terms like African American or Native American, no one discussed their racial identity as connected to

their nationality. Californians, such as Larell (22, US, black/white) and Sally (19, US, Asian/white), did express intense pride in and identification with their home state; but they gave no evidence that this influenced how they identified racially or that that civic affiliation was racialized one way or another. Moreover, despite the fact that American identity is consistently raced as white similar to British and English identity (Devos and Banaji 2005), no American interviewees mentioned having their national identity challenged due to their racial status, not even the three part Asians who one might have predicted would have experienced being seen as a "forever foreigner" (Tuan 1998).

One reason that race and nationality are so intertwined for the British but not American interviewees could be the different immigration histories of the two countries. Native Americans, Africans, Asians and Mexicans have all been in the United States, some in significant numbers, since the first colonies. In contrast, it is only since the large scale immigration from then colonies (e.g., India and the Caribbean) in the post-World War II era that a sizable number of non-whites have settled in the UK (Alibhai-Brown 2001). This is evident when looking at the immigrant generation of my interviewees. While only four of the Americans are second or third generation immigrants, every one of my British interviewees is the child or grandchild of an immigrant. The British interviewees, therefore, are closer to the immigrant experience than the American interviewees; and when that recent immigrant ancestor is a different race than the majority of the population of the country in which he or she settled, race and nationality appear to be highly linked.

"Jedi": Indicating identity on the Census and other forms

One major similarity with regard to race in both countries is the timing of official recognition of the mixed race population on the Census. These official forms have historically been a site of tension for mixed race populations in both countries, with social movement activists in the 1980s and 1990s pressing both governments to change their respective Census forms to allow mixed race identification. Those in favor of instituting a mixed race option framed their cause as the right to a self-definition which encompasses all aspects of one's heritage (Sims 2006). Framed in the negative, it argued that mixed race individuals should not have to deny parts of their heritage due to bureaucratic requirements (ibid). In this sample, however some of the interviewees actually never minded the forced choice. When I asked Lisa (40, UK, black/white) how she identified on forms prior to 2001 when the UK instituted a mixed race box she replied that she "always chose black…It would have been nice to have more choice but I wasn't unhappy choosing black. It was fine." In the US, a 'mark all that apply' format was adopted in lieu of a standalone mixed race category. Aaliyah (25, US, black/white) presently marks black "if I'm checking forms and they don't have a check all that apply sort of thing." Anna (24, US, Asian/white) "would always check the Asian or Asian American box. Korean, if that was it." Marking only race did not upset these interviewees. None of them expressed feeling like they were being forced to misrepresent their identity or to deny a parent or part of their heritage.

Other interviewees, however, enthusiastically welcomed the 2000/2001 change because they saw the former single choice format as a source of great annoyance. Dave (30, UK, black/white) for example remembers that filling out forms "was um always a bit of a 'damn what do I write.' Usually click, tick 'other' and write in underneath um 'black white' and 'black

Caribbean[6].'" Sara (38, UK, black/white) also greatly prefers the new format, saying that "I mean now there is a box on the forms for mixed race so I just tick that but before it was a bit of a nightmare having to put 'other.'" Lisa (40, UK, black/white), despite not minding marking black, does consider the UK's new mixed race box "really good;" and Claire (40, UK, Asian/white) concurs, saying the collection techniques have "sort of caught up to the twenty-first century."

Some Americans too expressed preference for their country's new select 'all that apply' format. Mark (49, US, Native American/white) expressed exasperation at forms that ask one to select only one, saying:

> "If it is the case where it's like, no, you have to pick one. It's like, okay, fine, I'll choose Native American. And I always feel as though I've sort of lopped off an arm in the process of doing that. It's kind of like, why do I have to do that? So if I have the opportunity to check more than one box, that's exactly what I do."

Heather (25, US, Asian/black) also likes the ability to mark all. Previously her strategy was to mark 'other' but she says "I feel so oppressed with 'other', I feel like a creature or something." Mixed race people like her and Mark consider it "really important to specify what your multi races are."

Regarding the UK's mixed race box, despite appreciating it, it was definitely *not* seen as a panacea. Many British interviewees pointed out that there were problematic assumptions that accompany the new box. Sara (38, UK, black/white) explained that:

> "[W]hen they have mixed they have white with everything. But they don't have black and Asian as mixed which I always think is a bit weird. Yeah, it's assuming that everybody whose mixed is gonna be half white but that's a load of crap really cos if you're Chinese black what do you put? So they really, it's a bit of an obvious oversight."

[6] Reporting of mixed race heritage in the UK is two layered. One first identifies the two broad races (in Dave's case black and white) then, secondly, one further specifies the non-white race (in Dave's case black Caribbean versus black African).

George (41, UK, Asian/black) is one such double minority who is affected by this oversight. Of mixed Indian and Jamaican heritage, George ticked the mono-racial black box on his most recent census. This may be in part because there is no Asian/black sub-option to select had he selected the mixed box in the in main race question.

Another assumption inherent in the UK's mixed race category scheme is that Asian equals Indian. This assumption creates issues for Smith (25, UK, Asian/white) who is Chinese and Irish. Reflecting on filling out forms he says that:

> "There's never really an option for what I really am you know. It's either, you can be mixed race white and Asian but that implies mixed race white and Indian in this country. I always select that box and people get surprised if I get called for interviews and things."

While Smith ticks the Asian/white box despite the knowing the assumptions therein, Dean (27, UK, black/white) does not tick the black/white box because of his awareness of what that implies. As Sara (38, UK, black/white) noted, 'mixed race' is assumed to be half white; but Dean is one quarter white, his mother was half white / half black and his father was black. And despite being raised by his mother and white grandmother because his father "wasn't really there, he wasn't proper absent but he was, wasn't a good dad and he died when I was about 5," he nonetheless does not identify as mixed race. When asked why he is reluctant to respond that he is mixed when asked he said:

> "[I]t's not like I'm saying I'm not part white, it's like where do you draw the line? And I know mixed race people really mean half white half black… And you know I'm not half white so that's why… But obviously, technically I am mixed race, but in a broader sense."

Despite assertions that mixed means 'half' white, Sophie (22, UK, black/white) is accepted as mixed despite not meeting this criteria. Like Dean, her mother is half white/ half black; but unlike Dean, her father is white rather than black. Sophie made no mention of anything like "knowing mixed race people really mean half white half black" in her interview. On the

contrary, she reported that her mixed race identity was always validated and accepted. The assumptions that correspond to the (black/white) mixed race box, therefore, appear to be that the person has half or less of the non-white ancestry. 'Mixed race,' in other words, at least in the UK, appears to assume 'white with a little non-white ancestry' more so than 'non-white with a little white ancestry,' and definitely not, given no boxes exist for it, 'multiple non-white ancestries.' In the United Kingdom, then, the underlying assumptions about what it means to be 'mixed race' appear to be constraining some mixed individual's choices like the previous 'tick only one' format did.

In the United States, some participants in the Multiracial Movement advocated for the inclusion of a new mixed race category on the Census; but a 'check all that apply' format was instituted in 2000 instead. As in the UK, some Americans, as quoted above, were pleased with the change. Others, in particular those with a social science background, while appreciative of the effort to allow mixed identification, nonetheless were critical of the new format from a methodological standpoint. Annette (31, US, black/white) recalls that:

> "[W]hen I was in school and I heard people discuss about what to do about racial data, and how it fit or didn't fit with their hypothesis when they're running statistical tests. I've been more and more wary about um surveys that are actually going to be used for studies um, about what I would check off. Because I saw, I just saw people, how they analyzed the data, being in school. And now I'm concerned like well if I check off one thing, you know, how is that going to-? Are they going to throw me as an outlier? Are they going to make a judgment for me?"

Finally, three interviewees took a philosophical stance against filling out forms completely. Frost (28, US, black/Latino) for example identifies as black but does not mark that on forms. He explains that "I usually type in 'other' and put 'human being' to be honest with you." Begun "probably around high school. But it might have been sooner than that," it was influenced by his father who is "African American but he's practicing Buddhist and more

interested in oneness and unity as opposed to separation. So he started doing that and I picked up on it." Annette (31, US, black/white)'s father, who is white, went even further. He does not fill out racial questions on forms at all. Regarding the Census, she told the following story:

> "My dad has never been, sort of approving of people asking nosy questions. So he's one of those people like 'this is the number of people in the household. That's what you're constitutionally allowed to ask. Don't bother me.' I know that when I-. I guess it was the '90 census, I guess he got a call from one of their enumerators. And he basically said 'I don't want to be bothered with this.' And I guess they left him alone. When 2000 came, um that was kind of funny because you know I'm hearing all about, okay, now you can check off more than one race and everything. And I knew that my dad was just going to do what he did for the '90 census. I didn't really bother him about it."

As Frost's father influenced the way he fills out forms, so too did Annette's father influence her adult behavior. While she identifies as mixed race, Annette nonetheless "got in the habit of um clicking 'refuse to answer' a lot."

Of the UK interviewees, only Sara (38, UK, black/white) expressed any reluctance to fill out forms in general or the Census in particular. Discussing the latter she states that "I don't fill in the census… Um I don't like the government to basically track me, I'm pretty anti-state so I don't really agree with it." Sophie (22, UK, black/white) estimates that due to these kinds of sentiments "null point two of our population are technically Jedi according to the census, it's like 'I don't care this is so stupid fuck the government man.'"

While some mixed race people refuse to answer, others, especially American interviewees, answer the question on forms but do not provide consistent responses. In other words, some people alternated between marking one racial category and marking multiple. Sally (19, US, Asian/white) identifies as Filipino; but on forms she marks "either like Pacific Islander or 'one or more races.'" Chris (30, US, black/white) says that "my race is you know black, I guess," but adds that "Sometimes I flip flop back and forth between black and mixed. It's all dependent on, whatever. I really can't tell you."

Other interviewees explained that the "whatever" that causes the flip flopping was context. As Dave (30, UK, black/white) poignantly stated: "identity is context dependent." Aaliyah (25, US, black/white) for example identifies as multiracial but sometimes marks only black. She says that racial composition of the immediate environment influences what she marks on forms.

> "[I]f I'm in an all-white place that's where I feel the most different you know no one can necessarily look at me and say that I am biracial. And so I think that's where the black is maybe more salient."

Larell (22, US, black/white) also articulated under what circumstances he marked different races: youthful uncertainty. He describes going through what he calls a "phase" in high school when he was "just trying to find myself" during which he would he would mark white on some job applications and black on others. He says he was "curious to see you know what would look better as far as the perception on jobs. Who would they pick? Would they pick Larell Caucasian or would they pick Larell African American?" Heather (25, US, Asian/black) also sometimes marks black and other times mixed or Asian, but for less innocuous reasons than Larell's youthful curiosity. Discussing applying for jobs and scholarships whose applications ask for racial data she reveals that:

> "I'm learning the politics around race. I know that race is you know is a man-made categorization system. So I know that it's socially constructed. Therefore, I know that society is a tool that I can use to and against my advantage-, you know to my advantage depending on what I say, how I categorize myself, how I describe myself."

These interviewees' context dependent reported race is an example of race as a situated identity. Situated identities are aspects of the self which "emerge and are elaborated through the total sequence of events within a situation," (Alexander and Wiley 1981). Rockquemore (1999:201) termed this a "protean" biracial identity, i.e., one which changes "according to the context of any particular interaction."

In addition to interviewees responding to forms based on the present context, the forms themselves, i.e., what categories and formats are offered, appears to have an influence on identity as well. Gull and Morning (2011) explain that there is a difference between race and ancestry; and when one's race, operationalized as one's racial identity, does not reflect all of one's ancestry, the question arises as to what to mark on forms, your race or ancestry? Due to this dilemma, some mono-racially identified interviewees have begun marking mixed race or selecting "all that apply" on forms; or, if they do not, have begun feeling like they "should." Bo (36, US, black/white) identifies as black and used to mark only black on forms. While there was no check all option or mixed race box in his youth, he never marked "other" and wrote in mixed race or marked multiple races despite the instructions, all pre-2000/2001 tactics other interviewees mentioned. Recently, however, Bo has begun marking both races despite still only identifying as black. He does not, as others have, credit the Census change with this new development but says it is his age:

> "[A]s I've gotten older, I put more of mixed race. You know 'cause technically I am a mixed race. Even though I am considered black and having one drop of African American blood in you makes you black. So you know yeah. As I've gotten older, I've kind of kept it real. Really, I am two races."

John (25, US, black/white), a decade Bo's junior, is unsure about "keeping it real," i.e., marking himself as both races on forms. He explains:

> "I'm kind of of two minds about that. On the one hand, I want to say I think I probably should [mark both races]. And on the other hand, um, it's hard for me to go, 'all right, yeah, I am biracial.' Because factually, that's true. But in reality, in my experience, in my life experience, um, like I think you were talking about before, the way I was treated was like an African American. All my friends were African American. Like so I've lived according to this life narrative that's embedded in our culture. And for me to go, 'all right, but this isn't who I am, this is who I am.' It's really difficult for me at this point."

These men's contemplations demonstrate that changing bureaucratic processes have an effect on identity, if only to make one question it. Rather than simply "recording" the mixed race

population, the 2000/2001 Census change in the US and UK respectively may actually be influencing people with mixed ancestry to begin to see themselves as mixed race. Form options, therefore, and administrative processes (like filling them out), may need to be added to the enumeration of factors that impact a mixed race person's identity choice.

"They always made a big deal of letting me know that I was both:" Examining Parental Socialization as a Factor in Racial Identity Formation

Frost's (28, US, black/Latino) and Annette's (31, US, black/white) fathers' lessons with respect to how to fill out the Census and other forms exemplifies the influence of parental racial socialization. This is because families are "the places where children receive some of the most powerful and lasting messages about their own identities and the world around them," (Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005). Regarding parents in particular, Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005:60) point out that "all parents, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, for better or worse, send their children messages about how to view and response to matters of race and how to understand themselves racially." Based on the childhood memories of the adults in this sample, parental socialization occurred via explicit lessons, implicit lessons or through the messages they received from that which was *not* said or done by their parents.

Explicit racial lessons. One common explicit lesson taught by parents was what race the child is. Dean (27, UK, black/white) for example recalled that he was called a 'Paki' in primary school. His mother explained that "'oh they called you this and they are ignorant and they called you this because,' she said 'but you're not Pakistani you're black.'" Dean said from then on he was aware of being and identified as black. Similarly, Aaliyah (25, US, black/white) who

identifies as mixed race, learned her racial background explicitly from her mother, saying "I remember her explaining that like I am white and black or African American."

Both Dean and Aaliyah as adults still identify as their mothers explained to them as children, i.e., as black and mixed race respectively. However, both also had single mothers; so with no other parent in the home the mother's racialization of the child was primary. In two parent homes, however, issues can arise when parents label the child differently. When a little white boy on the playground "compared his arm to my arm and said 'what are you?'" to Judy (30, US, black/white), whose skin color is "somewhere between caramel and butterscotch," she says she:

> "had no idea what to tell him. So I went home and asked my mom and she says 'you're mixed. Your mommy's white, your daddy's black.' My dad overheard this. He was coming into the room and overheard what she was saying and went berserk. 'She's black, no white person will ever look at her and see another white face, she is black, blah blah blah'."

Judy "trailed out of the room very quietly, allowing them to argue." Consequently, unlike Dean, Aaliyah and those from two parent homes in which their parents were agreed upon a racial designation for the child, Judy did not learn her racial category from her parents. Moreover, their argument demonstrates that what racial socialization to given one's mixed race children can be a source of contestation among members of relationships and is one of the "particular challenges faced by parents raising mixed-race children," (Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005:59).

In addition to explaining racial labels and categories to their mixed race children, some parents, especially British parents, also explicitly told their mixed race children to be proud of all aspects of one's heritage. Mary (41, UK, Asian/white) for example was told by her parents "to be proud of being a bit different. Definitely that was the thing, proud of, to be proud of that and

you know [I] very much retained that to today." Pride was such an important message that it was often mentioned as something interviewees planned to pass on to their future children. In contrast to how her parents reared her (discussed below), Lisa (40, UK, black/white) stated unequivocally that regarding her future children "I'll be telling them where they come from, absolutely. And to be proud of it."

Americans on the other hand did not recall explicit messages "to be proud" from their parents, though, as discussed below, other things parents did or said implicitly conveyed and instilled racial pride. One message that American parents appear to have explicitly communicated more so than British parents, was parents' positive affirmation of the child's socially devalued racial categorization. Joy (27, US, black/white) for example remembers that:

> "[W]hen I was living with my mother, I would be living in like Wyoming, South Dakota, Colorado. And we were very black for those areas that we're growing up in. And um so when the kids would call us 'nigger' or something like that, my mom would try to, like, reaffirm our blackness in different ways, in positive ways through like music or going to see the black side of our family or something like that."

A fourth way parents explicitly socialized their child about race, and in so doing influenced their racial identity development, was through pointed discussions about being mixed race and racially authentic. Mark (49, US, Native American/white) recalls that:

> "One of the things that my father told me when I was a kid was 'look, you're not going to ever get accepted in every place as being Native American. You're not always going to be seen as being Indian. So you should be as Indian as you want to be. So don't get hung up on other people's definitions of who you are. Just be you.' And that stuck with me. That stuck with me uh you know pretty much through my entire life. And gave me a certain confidence in dealing with these things."

Annette's (31, US, black/white) father had a similar talk with her. After being called "Oreo" by one of the other little children, Annette's father explained about racial names:

> "I remember my dad was telling me, he mentioned some names and said 'you know people might call you these names. People call blacks these names, people call whites these names and you have to expect to be called both.' And I didn't-. And these were

> names I had never-. You know, the N word, all sorts of things. I had never heard any of them, um that I knew of, at the time. I was just kind of like, what's the big deal? I did kind of understand that he was saying you know that I might have a problem with both blacks and whites accepting me."

Mark's and Annette's fathers' actions are exactly what the clinical literature on parenting mixed race children suggests is best. They were "fostering the development of skills and strategies for negotiating the pressures of living within a racially oppressive environment," and Mark and Annette, as adults, in fact displayed the "stronger sense of self-esteem" and other positive traits that research has shown develop in mixed race children when parents chose active racial socialization (Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005).

Another form of active racial socialization is explicit exposure to ethnic customs and culture. Tia's (37, US, black/ Native American/white) white adoptive mother made a concerted effort to expose her daughter to both black and Native American culture. For example she took her to visit the reservation from which she was adopted and she purposely befriended a black family at church, both of which allowed her daughter to meet Native American and black peers since they lived in a majority white environment. Tia appreciates these actions, remembering fondly:

> "I grew up always being told about being black and Native American. My mom, I think, really did a good job as a Caucasian mom. Especially one that adopted. She didn't have any cultural experience of her own. So it was kind of together, we went and found these things. I think she did a really good job of doing that. Um, I always remember being really proud of those things in me."

Tia continues this style of parenting with her own children, for example by taking them to the annual powwow held in their city.

Judy's (30, US, black/white) father exposed his mixed race children to their black culture via movie watching and direct conversation. She recalls that her father:

> "was going to force you to watch movies, like, historical movies like Roots and Queen. And Amistad. And a lot of those-. Mississippi Burning. And a lot of those documentary style films. We were going to watch those. I like stuff like that now. Maybe it's because of that. But I guess that was his way of teaching us black culture."

Judy's father also gave his children lessons on the falseness of Biblical portrayals of Jesus as white and on the incorrect media portrayals of Africa as "always this destitute place that we see on television," instead emphasizing to them that "it was one of the richest countries and it was basically pillaged." Living in "a society where blackness is categorically devalued while whiteness is treated with reverence" both Tia's mother and Judy's father were making the "conscious effort to push against the tide of negative messages about blackness" (and in Tia's case Nativeness) that Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) suggest is crucial to the healthy development of a mixed race child's self-esteem and identity.

Cultural exposure, or lack thereof. Not all parents made the effort to exposure their children to cultural influences or even to talk to their children about race, however. Many of the interviewees with part Asian background had no involvement in Asian culture. Khanna (2004) found that increased exposure to Asian culture increased her Asian/white respondents' odds of identifying as Asian. Lack of exposure to Asian culture reduced the odds of identifying as such. This pattern was borne out in my data as well. For example, as mentioned above, Anna's (24, US, Asian/white) mother is "ancestrally Korean;" but she was adopted by Swedish immigrants and raised in a white community in California. Unlike Tia's (37, black/Native American/white) adoptive white parents, Anna's grandparents did not expose their daughter to any Korean culture; and thus Anna has not received any such exposure either. With no such exposure, Anna's mother is, according to her daughter, "almost more Swedish than Korean," and Anna identifies as "a person of color. Not necessarily as an Asian American or as Korean."

In the UK, Smith's (25, UK, Asian/white) Chinese mother tried to avoid this result. Smith's family is from "Cheshire which is a county near Liverpool city;" and apart from his family, there were not many Chinese people with whom to interact. Due to the diligence of his mother and grandmother, though, he and his brothers initially:

> "did get raised I suppose in a very Chinese way like we only ate Chinese food, we spoke Cantonese, um yeah. But we lived in a very English area so when we turned about 6 years old, when you start primary school, we stopped speaking Cantonese."

At this point his mother attempted to maintain the Chinese cultural influence by taking Smith and his brothers to a Chinese community center. He remembers that "she took us to a Chinese community center when we were young, but I don't think we liked it she said. So we just didn't go." With no further sustained exposure to Chinese culture, Smith, who identifies as mixed race, nonetheless characterizes himself as being mono-culturally British. He offers as further evidence the fact that he has no Chinese friends and says that apart from going to medical school, which he characterizes as "a very Asian thing," he does not think he is "anything like" other Asians.

Discussions with parents about race, racism or identity was likewise absent from some interviewees childhood experiences. Vincent (36, UK, black/white) and his siblings knew their mother was from Trinidad and Tobago and their father was from Yorkshire; but with regard to race or racial identity he stated that "There was nothing specifically. There was no real conversations about heritage or this is where you're from culturally...There was never really a conversation, oh, you're black or you're white and this is what it means. Or anything like that." Lisa (40, UK, black/white) grew up similarly. She says her parents told them "Nothing. Zero" about their racial heritage, adding about her and her siblings' racial identity development that "We were kind of left to it. It's really weird, isn't it?" While Vincent and Lisa grew up with their biological parents, Fleur (34, UK, black/white) was raised in the UK's foster care system. As

noted above, she remembers feeling black due to being placed in a black home even though "we didn't really talk about race or my identity or my background very much. That wasn't something that we talked about. It was just instinctive that I was a black person, really."

Some American parents too left their mixed race children "to it" as Lisa phrased it as well. Bo (36, US, black/white) cannot recall his father, who raised him after his mother died, ever saying "'this is what race you are'. There was nothing really ever said." It was the same situation in John's (25, US, black/white) two parent home: "Race wasn't talked a lot about among us. So it's nothing that's ever been a topic of focus in my family."

Colorblindness. While the clinical literature on rearing mixed race children discourages parental silence on issues of race, racism and racial identity, (c.f., the suggestions for practitioners and parents in Crawford and Alaggiait 2008), it does not appear to have been negatively affected the mixed race adults in this sample. None of the interviewees whose parents told them "Nothing. Zero" about their mixed race heritage or who did not provide them with (non-white) cultural exposure mentioned anger or frustration at their parents' choices nor did they mention feeling alone or unsupported by their parents. Those interviewees who parents' strategies included explicit colorblind rhetoric and socialization, however, expressed frustration with how they were raised and discussed weathering more identity issues than those who parents explicitly discussed race or those whose parents said nothing. Sara (28, UK, black/white), for example, tells a story of coming home from primary school upset that the white children had called her a racial slur. However, Sara's mother neither explains to her daughter what she was called nor tries to positively reaffirm the slighted identity, both practices other interviewees' parents employed in this situation. She recalls that instead "my mum she just said to me 'oh just take no notice of it.' I don't think she really understood it cos she never really experienced it

herself." Aaliyah (25, US, black/white), despite appreciating that her mother "always supported me in whatever, like she was at my black student union functions, and she never questioned that or made me feel weird that I was doing any of that," nevertheless expressed frustration at her mother's colorblind attitude regarding discussions of race. She explained that:

> "my mom has always been like you know 'you don't judge people on their race' and things of that sort and almost has like a colorblind attitude which I've like pushed back against in a sense like saying race is important and it is a part of us and we should talk about it and discuss it."

The interviewees' mothers' colorblind ideology is address in the literature. Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) note that "most [black/white] mixed-race children are raised in families where they received the majority of their direct care and racial socialization from white mothers." However, this can lead to difficulties because, due to white hegemony and privilege, "few white people ever consciously consider the role that race plays in their lives," (ibid). As such, most white mothers are ill equipped to socialize their mixed-race children about race or prepare or council them when confronted with racist experiences. Both Sara and Aaliyah, on reflection of their single white mothers' colorblind attitudes, are planning to explicitly socialize their own children by "talking honestly, openly, and directly about how race shapes everyday life" as Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) suggest. Aaliyah has already begun this process with her younger sisters and son. Sara was considering adoption at the time of our interview and was planning to affirm her adopted child's heritage via involvement in his/her culture of origin through learning the language and taking trips to the country of origin. While these two women's parenting plans are drastically different from their own mothers' actions they are consistent with Rockquemore and Laszloffy's counsel that ignoring race is not the healthiest way to raise mixed race children.

Implicit racial messages. A second major way parents socialized their children was though conveying *implicit* racial messages which the interviewee could not precisely identify. Sydney (39, US, black/white) says that despite her and her parents never sitting down and talking about race, for example as Mark's (49, US, Native American/white) father did with him, her parents "always made a big deal of letting me know that I was both." She says it was "kind of unspoken but spoken" that she "was both and that was kind of what made me unique." The topic of race was unspoken at John's (25, US, black/white) house too as mentioned above; but he understood racialized messages from parents' based on their tone of voice. His black father, for example, used a "skeptical" tone and language when talking about his son's white friends that made it "pretty obvious that um he was kind of skeptical of that person just in general." John's white mother, conversely, used a "suspicious" tone only when talking about her son's black friends, making made it "clear that she had more of a preference for the white people." John says that despite his parents never explicitly teaching him about race "it definitely was indirectly brought up in different ways. So it was pretty clear to me at a young age whose preference was for who."

In the UK, Dave (30, UK, black/white) also learned "whose preference was for who" through the implicit lessons he received from his parents. Whereas John's white mother's tone of voice conveyed anti-black/pro-white messages to her son, Dave's black mother's behaviors taught him the same lesson. He explains that:

> "I love my parents to bits, but people like my mum they would seem to validate the racism that I received in the playground by kinda having moved to all white suburb, being married to a white man, you know listening in to all kind of music by white artists. Um you know reading white magazines, white women's magazine rather than black women's magazines and being critical of black people when they see them on TV and then, it yeah it, as a child it seemed to kinda validate the racism that I'd received, make me think that perhaps you know I do have some kind of deficit or shortfall being half

> black so um, I mean I was always very much very um very ashamed, as a child, and uncomfortable with who I was growing up"

In addition to receiving implicit messages that white culture was superior to black culture, Dave's mother also subtly conveys to her son that non-Afrocentric hair is superior. She was in London visiting him the weekend before our interview, and Dave recalled her sentiments after he washed his hair: "When it gets wet it goes very wavy. So I was kinda combing it back and she was like 'Oh you should keep it like that, wavy, keep it like good hair and stuff.'" Without mentioning race out right, therefore, the implicit message Dave received is that wavy (i.e., more Euro-centric) hair is "good" and his usual Afro is not.

Sara (38, UK, black/white), in addition to receiving explicit colorblind messages from her mother, also received implicit messages about the valuation of white aesthetics over black. As discussed in the next chapter, white mothers' treatment of their part black mixed race daughters' hair has significant influence on their racial identity and self-esteem development. Sara's biological mother, with whom she spent the early part of her childhood, implicitly taught Sara that African hair was undesirable. She remembers:

> "when I was little my mum use to do my hair but she couldn't do it so she use to cut it all the time. So every like whenever it use to get maybe that long and she would cut it, and so I've never been able to have long hair cos she use to freak out and she use to say to me 'you look like a witch doctor' so and then she'd cut my hair."

Her subsequent foster care mother, who was also white, implicitly conveyed the same message when she told Sara to "get it thinned out so I'd look more lady like." As Collins (2000 [1990]) explains, cultural notions of femininity (i.e., what is "lady like") are rooted in a white aesthetic that in turn defines blackness as unfeminine.

Without their parents explicitly saying anything about race, then, Sara and Dave both learned that their African features and culture were subordinate to whiteness. Sara's response to

her foster mother's request to thin her hair ("I just went mental") and Dave's feelings of shame quoted above demonstrate that these implicit messages make mixed race children and even adults feel angry and inadequate. It should be noted, however, that these feelings are not specific to mixed race individuals. Research on mono-racial African Americans has consistently demonstrated that, due to Eurocentric standards, lightness or darkness of skin color, which is "highly correlated with other phenotypic features," is "related to feelings of self-worth and attractiveness, self control, satisfaction and quality of life," (Thompson and Keith 2004:47). Nevertheless, while all people of African descent may be susceptible to society's colorist messages, there may be a qualitative difference in impact for those who specifically receive it at home, especially from white family members as in Sara's case.

Whether explicitly or implicitly, then, all parents convey racial messages to their children (Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005). This can either imbue the mixed race child with self-esteem and the self-confidence to face racism (e.g., Mark), or it can make them feel ashamed and hurt (e.g., Dave). When the latter is the case, the mixed race child must look outside the family unit for validation and racial understanding. For mixed race men, one surprisingly positive outside influence is hip hop/ rap music.

"I love a bit of Snoop as much as the next man:" The Influence of Hip Hop on Mixed Race Men's Racial Identity

While people like Mary, Tia and Mark grew up in homes that positively affirmed their racial group and identity, for people like Dave, Sara and John who grew up in a home environment were whiteness is implicitly preferenced and blackness implicitly denigrated, developing a positive identity and some modicum of self-esteem and pride one's racial heritage

must come from a source outside the home. Musical influence was not originally a part of the research focus for this project. However, after the first three men discussed hip hop/rap on their own in enumerating influences on their racial identity, I began to ask all subsequent interviewees, men and women, about their music preferences in general and hip hop/rap in particular. In total, 7 of the 11 male interviewees discussed hip hop or rap having an influence on them. While the age range for all men in the sample was 22-49, among the 7 who discussed a hip hop/rap influence the age range was 22-41. I identified three themes in the men's descriptions of hip hop's influence: it inspired their fashion and style, it validated their physical appearance and it validated the racialized experiences they have had.

Beginning with fashion and style, in the United States this manifested as black identified mixed race men choosing hip hop inspired clothing and jewelry, a style commonly associated with African Americans, in order to appear more black. When discussing reasons for his ear piercing, for example, Frost (US, 28, black/Latino) explained that part of the reason was:

> "Hip hop culture. I remember at that particular point in time, when certain movements were big, like when Cash Money really exploded and when No Limit had just died out and Bad Boy was on top, there was double piercings and all the bling and the biggest diamonds you could put in your ear and this, that and the other. And just part of that movement in hip hop."

Frost, who says he acquired more of his Mexican mother's features and thus describes his physical appearance as looking more Hispanic, says the earring and general hip hop style of dress "definitely contributed" to his "look[ing] a bit more African American," which is the race he had previously said in the interview that he identifies with the most.

Larell's (22, US, black/white) style was similarly influenced by hip hop and rap, though he did not draw the connection explicitly. When asked how he usually dresses, after he had mentioned being the target of racist treatment for "the way I dressed," he described:

> "I mean just um white Ts, fitted hats. Pretty much the same as I'm dressed now. I didn't really change. I don't do a lot of extra stuff. So just pretty casual, just basic, jeans, t-shirt and a hat. Jordans. But yeah I mean, I think that definitely had something to do with how they profiled me. Otherwise, they wouldn't, off the top, they wouldn't have known what I was."

Despite Larell's description of white T shirts, fitted hats and Jordans as "just casual" it is more specifically the casual attire of many hip hop artists. Like for Frost who appears Hispanic, for Larell, who describes his appearance as looking like "Some type of South American," it is not immediately apparent from his phenotype what his chosen racial identity – African American – is. Donning a hip hop inspired style, however, allows both men to overcome the ambiguity of their physical appearance; and in Frost's case, physically piercing his ear was a manipulation of phenotype (Khanna and Johnson 2010) purposely intended to influence how others' racially perceived him.

Another corporal undertaking inspired by hip hop was how mixed race men styled their hair, and here the data show both American and British men engaging in this body work. British interviewees often explicitly acknowledged choosing hair styles based on what popular African American musicians were wearing at the time. George (41, UK, Asian/black) remembers that when he was younger and had hair:

> George: I use to do a lot of American style hair style cuts really, like flat tops and um like river [moving finger zig-zaggy on side of head] you know?
> Jenn: Shaved in lines and designs?
> George: Yeah yeah you know kind of the Bobbie Browns and stuff.

American men too mentioned selecting hair styles based on hip hop or rap artists. Larell dyed his hair in the 1990's to look like rapper Eminem, who ironically is white but, as a rapper, is associated with black culture; and Bo (36, US, black/white) had a flat top in his youth like George.

While at first it may seem that the men were simply following the popular fashion of the time, the practice actually runs deeper. The popularity of the styles adopted appears to be a validation that black male appearance was valued in societies whose dominant aesthetic images are white. Dave (30, UK, black/white) grew up in all white environment and was teased for how he looked, especially for his hair being "afro." Even Dave's phenotypically white brothers were teased for simply having a brother who had "afro hair." He mentioned that in his youth Australian Soap Operas such as Neighbors and Home and Away, and Brit pop music such as Radiohead and Oasis were popular among his peers and it "reinforces this idea that white is right." Because he (especially his hair) didn't look like that, it "kinda um served to entrench my feeling of alienation." Dave explained that seeing hip hop artists who looked like him, many of whom were mixed race like him as well, helped raise his self-esteem with regard to how he looked. He explained:

> "I could go in Sheffield into the H&V record store and just stand in front of the CDs and see these guys with the natural hair styles, and there's always been a lot of light skinned Latino MCs and few of them are mixed race as well, and it was quite empowering to just to stand in front of the CDs and see how they were wearing their hair and so forth…it was really wonderful for me at that point and helped me to begin to develop a much more positive self-image."

Hip Hop artists, then, by being non-whites who were successful in the cultural arena, appeared to help mixed race men like Dave view their own appearance in a positive light. However, the influence seems limited to part black men. For example, Smith (25, UK, Asian/white) also expressed frustration over not being physically able to approximate the popular looks of the time. During our discussion of facial hair he recalled that as a teen he could not grow a proper beard like his white peers. He explained that:

> "The worst thing was all my friends like when we were like 16 had like massive mutton chops like Sherlock Holmes. It was like the look and it looked so cool and I just couldn't grow them. I really wanted that badly but it just wouldn't work out."

But unlike Dave, hip hop did not offer Smith an alternative appearance that matched his own to value. Regarding hip hop Smith admitted "I love a bit of Snoop as much as the next man but uh. But I didn't, it didn't change anything." He goes on to explain how a lot of British hip hop artists were Indian and hypothesized that Indians might have more of an identity with the musical genre for that reason.

One reason that Smith perhaps listened to but did not identify with hip hop might be because the artists, in addition to not physically resembling him, discussed experiences that he did not share. For the part black mixed race men, however, hip hop lyrics were often just as influential as the artists themselves. Whereas the artists themselves appear to have validated the men's physical appearance, their lyrics often validated their racialized experience of the society. This appears to have been especially salient for the UK men. All but one of men grew up an all-white middle class environment; and in addition to some teasing for looking "different" they reported feeling different and/or feeling like others, including their parents sometimes, didn't understand what they experienced as non-white, specially mixed race people.

For example Dave (30, UK, black/white), in discussing his appearance, notes that he is light but still darker than his brothers who look white. And despite the UK never having an institutionalized one drop rule like the US, he recalls as a child that "People use to come up to me and go 'how comes your brother is white and you're black? That doesn't make sense.'" This experience of being racially ascribed by others as black despite his mixed race heritage was not the type of experience that Home and Away and Neighbors or Radiohead and Oasis addressed. Hip hop, especially American hip hop, however, did speak to Dave's experience. During his interview he quoted verbatim a song from Public Enemy's Fear of a Black Planet album:

"Black man, black woman, black baby

> White man, white woman, white baby
> Black man, white woman, black baby
> White man, black woman, black baby"

Other interviewees similarly discussed being seen and treated as mono-racially. George's (41, UK, Asian/black) grandmother wore Saris and expressed their Indian culture in other ways at home but he was seen as black in society; and Dean (27, UK, black/white) was raised by his white mother and grandmother but says he and his siblings were treated as "black kids" growing up by peers. Hip hop being upfront about the black one drop experience, therefore, validated these men's lived experiences in way that the dominant British media and messages did not.

But as Dean explains, it didn't indoctrinate him as to *what* to think, it expressed or explained what he was already feeling. He explained of Public Enemy, the same artist Dave quoted, that:

> "It wasn't like a lot of their views influenced my views, it was just 'wow he thinks the same' more than me kinda following them and thinking 'oh Public Enemy said this so I'm going to think that.' It's more like I think that AND they think, cool, or kinda reinforcing my own views or teaching me new stuff."

Part black American mixed race men appear to have been similarly influenced by hip hop validating their experiences. Interviewees such as Frost (28, US, black/Latino) made firm, but not well elaborated upon, statements such as "By the time I was of an age where I could appreciate music, there was more music I was identifying with like R&B and hip hop." When asked to explain the racial influence of hip hop, however, the American men were much less able to articulate its influence on them than were Dave and Dean in the UK. John (25, US, black/white) for example, after a long spiel about how he used to listen to rap and hip hop songs ten or more times in a row trying to memorize the lyrics and understand the story, then had difficulty explaining when asked in a follow up question if it influenced his racial identity. He responded:

> "I mean, I can't say no. There's no way I could say no... I think it was like another thing that was just like a given to me. This is the kind of music I like, these are the kinds of people I listen to, um these are the kind of stories they tell. Um, yeah. But given the content of the music, now like it's so evident to me, of course that must have affected it. But I can't recall like you know any events where I actually thought about that."

Frost's curt yes-I-identified-with-it statement and John's inability to put his finger on hip hop's speaking to his racialized experience is likely because, in contrast to the British men, the American mixed race black men all grew up in predominantly black environments. As such, the experiences that hip hop spoke to were the dominant, taken for granted experiences, not ones that stood out as different or which needed validation that was unavailable elsewhere as it was for the UK men in all-white, and non-American, contexts.

For phenotypically racially ambiguous mixed race men, specifically part black mixed race men, hip hop seems to serve several racialized functions. For American men, adopting a hip hop/rap style of clothing and jewelry can communicate one's racial identity to others when one's phenotype does not accomplish that task. For men from both countries, styling their hair after hip hop and rap artists appears to be a common practice; and in the context of growing up in an all-white environment such styles seem to validate and give value to the mixed race person's non-white appearance. The song lyrics and stories of non-white experience, such as the lyrics referencing the one drop rule, appear to validate the men's social experiences, though this process appears to be much more subtle and almost "a given" to quote one man for Americans than Britons.

"Who told you that?" Learning race via negative social interactions

While a person's first socialization and reflected appraisals comes from parents and family, other adults, peers and even strangers as the case of hip hop musical influence shows,

also serve as looking glasses as well. In particular, negative interactions appear to have a strong influence on how one identifies. One type of negative experience that mixed race interviewees reported was identity non-verification, i.e., invalidation. With regard to identity, verification and validation "refers to the social process whereby a particular racial identity is considered legitimate and accepted by others" while non-verification and invalidation occurs when an identity is "deemed illegitimate and ignored," (Rockquemore and Brunsma 2004b). Rockquemore and Brunsma consider interactional in/validation "a primary mechanism in racial identity development among biracial people," (2004). While previous research disproportionately focuses on the effects of invalidation from blacks, in this sample identity invalidation from whites was just as prevalent. Larell (22, US, black/white) for example now identifies as black, but he says in high school, when he was "trying to find myself," he sometimes identified as black and other times as white. He learned, though, that "if I put African American, I'm accepted. If I put white, I'm looked at as like, 'dude, you're not even white.'" As an example, he told the following story of marking that he was white on a job application:

> "I was a sales associate [at Aldo] for a while. And yeah, I said I was Caucasian [on the application]. And they called me back for the interview. And, I mean, I got the job and everything. But I mean, after working there for maybe two or three weeks, the manager, who I was obviously cool with by then, straight up told me. She was like, 'hey, I'm not gonna lie, when I saw your you know application, I thought you were white. Why'd you put that?' And I was like, 'cause I am.' And the manager's like, 'but you're black.' And then I'm like, 'well, I'm half white and half black.' 'Well, yeah, but like, shouldn't you just put black?' It was kind of like, I mean, I didn't take offense to it but, I mean, it kind of made me think. She's right. You know there's been other situations where it's kind of awkward if a mixed person just claims the white side or something. It's like, clearly black. That's how everybody, I feel like, looks at you. You know. So I don't know. I thought that was funny. I was like, 'I can't be white?' She was like, 'no no, it's cool.'"

A recent social psychological experiment yielded similar responses to a mixed race applicant's assertions of being white. Using a racially ambiguous black/white mixed race man's photo and varying his asserted race (e.g., black, mixed, multiracial, white), Stockstill (2014a) asked

business students, 91% of who self-identified as white, to recall information from what they thought was the man's job application. Two-thirds of study participants in the white condition refused to validate the mixed race man's white identity. Some incorrectly stated that the man's race had not been listed. Others, almost a fifth in this condition, incorrectly recalled that his race was black or African American. Written comments such as "marked as white on employee sheets but looked a little black" and "White on the application not in the picture" (Stockstill 2014b) leads Stockstill (2014a: 20) to conclude that "[t]he results of the experiment confirm the prediction of the persistent hypodescent hypothesis, which predicts that any plausible representation of black heritage will render assertions of membership in different racial categories inconsequential." One result, according to the data from the present study, of this type of identity invalidation from whites appears to be the cessation of further identification with that group-- either singularly (i.e., white identity) or in combination with another race (i.e., mixed race identity). This confirms Khanna's (2004:117) emphasis that "people do not form their self-concepts in complete isolation, but allow them to be shaped in part by the actual and reflected appraisals of others."

Anna (24, US, Asian/white) too has been pushed away from her previous identity due to receiving invalidation from white people. Born and reared in California, Anna says she "never really noticed" her race because:

> "growing up, despite the fact that my community was predominantly white, when people reacted to me, um, it was with a number of other statuses before it was as Asian or Asian American. You know 'Oh, you're my childhood friend and a good student' and all these other things. My race was never kind of at the forefront. But moving to the Midwest, I've had experiences that, where that's the first thing that people react to. And that has been different. A different kind of experience. And has made me more aware of my own kind of racial ethnic identity and made me identify more as a person of color than I think I did growing up."

Moving to the Midwest (Wisconsin), however, changed her racial identity. She told the story of attending a concert at which a "middle age white guy who was clearly already drunk" mimed at her in Chinese "in a really inappropriate way" every time he saw her. Experiences like this, experiences in which others (usually whites) react (usually negatively) to her perceived race first and foremost upon encounter, are invalidation of Anna's previous "raceless" identity and has lead, as she explains, to increased identification as a person of color.

In addition to non-verification of asserted identity, negative experiences with whites also take the form of being the target of racial slurs. In particular, part-black interviewees in both countries told stories of being called "nigger" by whites. As children, Dave (30, UK, black/white) was called "nigger, coon, wogg, golliwogg, Brillo Pad head, micro phone head," and Sara (38, UK, black/white) was "called nigger all the time" and told to "go back to Africa." In the US, Judy (30, US, black/white) recalls how as a child living in the South (Tennessee) in the 1980s "the N word was hurled around endlessly." Chris (30, US, black/white), the adopted son of a white family, recalls hiking with his white uncle in West Virginia and being called "nigger" by a police officer. This did not only occur in the South, however, for Joy (27, US, black/white) grew up in Wyoming, South Dakota, and Colorado and was called "nigger" in those states too. Sydney recalls "another little boy said the N word to me" once when she was in fourth or fifth grade in upstate New York. In all cases but one (Sara), the interviewees who repeatedly experienced these slurs identified mono-racially as black. As explained by Judy, it was because of this particular racial slur that she "realized I'm black."

Dave (30, UK, black/white), too, considered what racial slurs he received to be indicative of his race. As mentioned above, he was called nigger and gollywogg in his youth. These are slurs against black people, not mixed race people. Dave notes that he has "never knowingly been

called a zebra or a half breed;" in other words, during the formative years of his racial identity development he was the target of anti-black slurs not anti-mixed race slurs. Now as an adult, he identifies primarily as black and only secondarily as mixed race which suggests that racial slurs may serve as a reflected appraisal that influences how one comes to view oneself.

Other interviewees, however, were called racial slurs that specifically indicate and insult being of mixed race. Annette (31, US, black/white) has a "very, very blurry memory" of being called "Oreo" by a girl at her church when she was three. Judy (30, US, black/white) was called "Oreo or zebra" as a child. Claire (40, UK, Asian/white) was called "half-caste" growing up in the 1970s in Wales. Of those interviewees who were called mixed race slurs, all but one (Judy) identified as mixed race.

A derogatory term for Asian origin people in the United Kingdom is "Paki," abbreviated from the word Pakistani. Curiously, though, Emma (22, UK, Asian/white) was the only interviewee of Asian (Indian) heritage who was called "Paki." It was mainly UK black/white interviewees in this sample rather than the part Asian UK interviewees, who reported being the recipients of this, or any other anti-Asian, slur. Primary school children used to call Sara (38, UK, black/white) "Paki" as well as anti-black slurs. Dean (27, UK, black/white) remembers being called "Paki" on the first day of primary school and having to go home and ask his mother what it meant. While his mother explained that it actually did not refer to people of his race, for a time in his youth Dean strongly identified with his Asian peers. Growing up in a white and Asian populated Northern English town, Dean remembers there were racial tensions at school; and despite being part white and having no Asian ancestry at all, he identified with his Asian classmates not his white classmates. He explains:

> "[M]y high school was a few like, at the beginning there was few like race wars and I was in-between Asian and white kids. Race wars is an exaggeration, but there'd be fights

> mass fights and I'd be on the, I wouldn't fight cos I was younger and it was like older kids in it, but I'd be on the Asian people side."

Dean continues that "it was only until I kinda got older" that he began to disaggregate Africans and Asians and identify solely with the former (though he still feels concern and desire for solidarity with the latter).

Mixed race people also reported negative interactions with non-whites, in particular, being asked if one is, or told one is not, "fully" a member of the race. George (41, UK, Asian/black) has been told "'you don't look fully black.'" Heather (25, US, Asian/black) and Tia (37, US, black/Native American/white) have both been asked if they were "all the way black." In the UK, the question is also phrased as distinction being black and "proper black." Dean (27, UK, black/white), for example, once grew an Afro and a female friend commented "'oh no offence but I see you as proper black now.'" This comment implied to Dean that the friend had previously not considered him "fully" black. Sarah (38, UK, black/white) mentioned being asked outright "You're not proper black are you?" by a man she met on New Year's Eve. The linguistic distinction between "fully" and "proper" black seems to signal the understanding of heterogeneity among blacks and suggests existence of a hierarchy of authentic blackness. Of course, the distinction could also be theorized to exist as a result of a weakening one drop rule, i.e., because a strong one drop rule would not draw distinctions among those it homogenizes.

In addition to being considered not "proper" black, some of the black/white women, like Sara for example, also mention being told outright "you're not black" by others. Jennifer (34, US, black/white) is "exceedingly pale" and says due to this she not seen as black. She currently lives in New York City and says that "out here I'm either Puerto Rican or maybe Jewish or white. Nobody thinks I'm black. Even when I tell someone I'm black, I get a response like, 'uh who told

you that?'" Joy (27, US, black/white) was told "you're not black" by black students at her middle and high schools.

The part Native Americans interviewees similarly experienced non-verification of their Native American identity by being told by others "you're not Indian." Mark (49, US, Native American/white) was often told he did not look Native. He says it is because he does not "match people's stereotypes about what Native Americans are supposed to look like. I mean, I do have black hair but I have relatively light skin." In addition to his light skin, Mark attributed others' disbelief to the situation of many phenotypically white people falsely claiming Native American ancestry. He referenced Deloria's (1969) concept of Indian- grandmother complex, the term given to the frequent but unsubstantiated claims of whites that they have a Native American (usually Cherokee, usually female) ancestor, in his interview saying that when he is asked "Are you really a Native American?" He answers "I really am a Native American. I really, really, really am. I did not have a Cherokee princess to ascribe all this too."

Tia (37, US, black/Native American/white) also mentioned others not accepting that she is part Native American for similar reasons to Mark's. Describing herself as having "a big puffy ponytail" and being "light complected with freckles," she recalled working at a Native American casino in Wisconsin and having her native heritage dismissed. When the Native American employees asked her race, and she responded that she was mixed race black and Native American[7], they replied with "'Oh yeah, a lot of black people say that.'" While Deloria (1969) exasperated over whites' false claims of Native ancestry, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. noted in a 2014 commentary that most black Americans too are erroneously taught to believe that one of their great grandmothers was all or part Native American. Due to the historical geographic separation

[7] Despite being "tri-racial," regarding verbal identification Tia says that "a lot of times in that I leave Caucasian off… I tend to just do Native and African American."

and consequently limited large scale mating opportunities between the two groups, Gates explains that despite the fervent assertions (i.e., despite the fact that "a lot of black people say that") it is not likely historically accurate. The same can be said for white Americans. Despite the "Indian-grandmother complex that plagues certain whites" unless "most tribes were entirely female for the first three hundred years of white occupation" whites' Indian ancestry is imagined as well. This fact appears to make it harder for those mixed race Americans who actually are part Native American, regardless of what one's other heritage may be, to be seen as racially authentic at first assertion.

Negative racialized experiences, therefore, appear to inform mixed race people of how others perceive them. According to identity theory, these reflected appraisals then influence how individuals perceive themselves. Regarding negative experiences with whites, in particular being the target of racial slurs, the reflected appraisals was internalized and affected identity as the theory predicts. Those called "nigger" more often identified as black while those called "zebra" more often identified as mixed race.

Negative racial experiences with non-whites, for example being told one is not "fully" black or not "really" Native American, in contrast, does not appear to have the effect identity theory predicts. Burke and Sets (2009:112-113) theorize that in the face of identity non-verification people respond by "changing their behaviors, perception, and at a slower pace, their identity standard." The results from this study, however, do not indicate that this process is true of mixed race individuals' racial identity. Many of interviewees experienced being told that they were not a given race, i.e., received identity non-verification. Yet in most cases they still identified fully or partially with that race. In other words, they changed neither their behavior

(i.e., their asserted race), perception (their view of themselves as a member of the race) or their identity.

The more frequent response to identity invalidation was to continue identifying in their chosen manner and take the position, as summarized by Mark, that "Even if I'm not your idea of an Indian, I'm still an Indian." In this regard, Mark and others were employing the legitimation mechanism of blaming others for the non-verification (Burke and Sets 2009). They decide that the other person is not knowledgeable enough to competently evaluate them (ibid), which in this case means concluding that the person suffers from having a narrow or stereotypical idea of "what that [race] should be." Consequently, the identity non-verification is delegitimized and rendered impotent to affect identity.

Mediating Factors. In addition to reflected appraisals, identity theory notes that general social learning and direct socialization are other mechanisms of identity development (Burke and Stets 2009). In considering what mediating factors may contribute to the interviewees not internalizing to the non-black (or in Tia and Mark's cases non-Native American) reflected appraisals they received, it can be observed that the mixed race individuals who still identified with a given group, despite others saying "no you're not" a member or mistreating them, all had parents who engaged in the open and honest direct racial socialization discussed earlier in the chapter. Joy's (27, US, black/white) mother reaffirmed her children's black heritage as positive when they encountered public slights. Both Mark's (49, US, Native American/white) and Annette's (31, US, black/white) fathers had pointed discussions with them about the potential mistreatment and rejection they might receive from others. These parents helped their mixed race child to see that racial group membership is socially constructed and so the group can be more diverse than those denying them membership recognize.

As a point of contrast which further emphasizes the influential role of parental racial socialization, only the two interviewees who were in foster care homes and thus lacked the consistent, explicit parental racial socialization others received -- Fleur (34, UK, black/white) and Sara (38, UK, black/white) -- initially and ultimately, respectively, were influenced by other's non-verification of their identity. However, Maya (the 24 year old black/white American woman who performed the modified member check) notes that her experiences do not accord with the conclusion that parental socialization is key to rejecting identity invalidation. She writes: "Not true for me.… I don't think I had explicit racial socialization, but I also have not accepted dis-affirming reflected appraisals.[8]" The fact that Maya is an American and Fleur and Sara are British may explain this difference. As previously discussed, the one-drop rule that stipulates that even those with partial African ancestry are black is weaker in the UK than in the US. Consequently, in the absence of strong racial ascription norms like the one drop rule perhaps parental messages about the heterogeneity of blacks are more crucial for mixed race individuals to resist internalizing dis-affirming reflected appraisals of their blackness. Another difference between the ladies which may explain the differential reaction to dis-affirming reflected appraisals is that Maya, who identifies as black despite receiving dis-affirming reflected appraisals such as "you're not *really* black though," was raised by her biological mother. Fleur and Sara, for whom such comments were influential to their identity development, by contrast were raised completely and partially respectively in foster care. Another possibility, therefore, is that there is a difference in the effect of racial socialization, or lack thereof, from a biological parent versus a foster parent.

[8] "Maya," email message to author, June 22, 2014.

"I was just trying to find myself:" Identity changes over the life course

Some interviewees have had a solid racial identity from childhood to adulthood. Claire (40, UK, Asian/white) has always considered herself mixed race and John (25, US, black/white) has always identified as black. For the majority of the sample, however, their racial identity changed over the life course. The racial category/categories with which one identifies was reported to have changed across both time (i.e., with age) and space (i.e., with their location).

As in previous studies (e.g., Kerwin et al. 1993, Harris and Sim 2002, Roth 2005) age was an important factor in how a person identified. As children, many interviewees "didn't really see a color." Chris (30, US, black/white) explains that initially he was "too young to even realize, you know, what color I was. I didn't really know till I was maybe about, say, between four and five, I started to notice it." Despite beginning to notice racial differences in early primary school, the most commonly cited time period of dramatic identity shift was during one's late teens and early twenties. For mixed race people with black heritage, this was often a very pro-black/anti-white phase. Lisa (40, UK, black/white) for example recalls that:

> "from about eighteen or nineteen, I started identifying much more with black people. Up to nineteen, I was indifferent, really. Didn't really care. In fact, a lot of my crushes that I had when I was young were kind of a white-, which is interesting, looking back now. Um and yeah, eighteen, nineteen, I kind of got my first job. Um and a lot of people that I kind of tended to mix with were black. And my first boyfriend was black. And he was very militant. So that probably colored my choice, pardon the pun, on sort of my view and where I went from there, really. So yeah."

One reason that there is such profound change at this age is due to matriculation at college. Wilkins (2012:180) examined "the peer dynamics that led black women to redefine their racial identities" noting that "[f]or most of the women in this study, race was not salient before coming to college." She explains that:

> "Universities are important spaces for racial redefinition. College exposes students to classes, organizations, and speakers that politicize and historicize their race (and gender) identities often for the first time."

Aaliyah (25, US, black/white) is exemplary. As a child she "wasn't really sure exactly what race was." High school however brought the perceived pressure to "pick a side;" and she picked black. She recounts that she "joined the black student union and did all of that stuff. Um, and I think I identified mostly as black at that point." In college, her sociology classes initiated yet another identity shift. She explains:

> "I started taking sociology classes and we read about, you know I remember, one of my favorite books to this day is um Beverly Tatum's *Why do all the black kids sit together in the cafeteria?* and she has a chapter in that book about multiracial development. So it's about racial identity and racial development and she's a psychologist I think, or a social psychologist, which I consider myself to be also and so that was the first time I was like 'oh well this is why felt that way,' and 'this is why I felt like I had to choose and this is why.' It kind of like helped me to explore my own experiences and so then I could look at it from the standpoint that was a little bit more informed and less, um, and maybe even more objective so it didn't feel like I was, I was just picking a side because I didn't like white people or I didn't like black people it was because I knew I had a choice in whatever I decided. Um and so, I think that's where I finally came to identifying as biracial."

Dave's (30, UK, black/white) racial identity development by age was similarly influenced by his collegiate studies. His first degree was in "Race and Culture" which he describes as "the closest thing you could get in England to a Black Studies course really." At this point he says he was "was quite angry at white folks" and "kind of went through a bit of a self-righteous phase with an Afro and I was you know a bit condemnatory of women who didn't wear their hair natural which, you know, is an unpleasant thing to be." Like Aaliyah, he too joined his university's black students' organization, called the African Caribbean Students Society, and was even president for a year. A friend eventually "checked" his more self-described "unpleasant" behaviors and attitudes, however, and like Aaliyah he consequently has developed an "informed" and positive racial identity.

Joy (27, US, black/white) was angry beginning in her late teens as well, not at white people but "angry more so at society and the system and the way my education was set up." Like Dave and Aaliyah, Joy was influenced by learning about race in school. She reveals that "black history was a passion of mine" and she expressed frustration at its lack of inclusion in her high school curriculum. Joy also went through a very pro-black phase, noting that at one point "if anyone called me mixed for a while or would ask me, 'well your mom's white, right?' I'm like, 'what the fuck does that have to do with anything?' I would get really angry." At the University of California- Berkeley, Joy joined a black sorority and had all black friends. Majoring in African American Studies, she, like Dave and Aaliyah, began to study race and have conversations with her professors. It was through this education that she began to understand "the fact that I am kind of racially ambiguous and what does that mean for me and all that."

Also matriculating at the University of California-Berkeley was Anna (24, US, Asian/white), the only interviewee with no black heritage who reported this university influenced identity development. Raised in an all-white environment, Anna says the diversity at Berkeley was "something that I was really seeking out at that point." She explains further that:

> "by the time I was in high school, I was very much aware of the fact that Mill Valley was this incredibly privileged, not particularly realistic or reflecting um you know the rest of the Bay Area even. I kinda wanted to be more aware of disparity and racial disparity. I wanted to be in a place where I could be more involved in communities of color."

Similar to the black student organizations Aaliyah and Dave joined, at Berkeley Anna was involved in programs with non-whites such as coaching soccer in underprivileged communities and founding a scholarship program for underprivileged youth.

The identity development trajectory that my interviewees described -- from being youthfully racially unaware, to immersion in communities of color sometimes coupled with anger towards whites in their late teens and early 20s, to eventual comfortable racial identity by

mid to late 20s and early 30s-- could potentially be a period rather than age effect as all of the interviewees belong to the same generation. However, additional evidence for considering the experience a function of age not period can be seen in when considering that Dean's (27, UK, black/white) mother's experience paralleled Dave, Aaliyah and others in her son's generation. In her late teens and early 20s during the 1960s, Dean's mother, who is mixed race black/white, and her sisters got "very kinda like pro-black" when they "went to university and started reading like Angela Davis and getting into like Black Panther stuff and like power to the people stuff and growing the Afros like back in the '60s." That multiple generations, across two both genders and countries, describe experiencing specific racial identities at distinct points in their lives is robust evidence that mixed race identity varies with age in general and with college matriculation in particular.

In addition to the new social and curriculum influences of college, another reason why this transition causes an identity changes is because it often requires one to make a geographical relocation. As Dave (30, UK, black/white) noted "identity is context dependent;" and because of this, how one is perceived and how one in turns comes to perceive oneself is different in different geographical locations. Among the UK interviewees, the move to London from less racially diverse locales in the UK had a significant effect on one's identity. Dave was considered black in Sheffield such that he says he "never really realized [I was mixed race] until I came to London." In London he was "engaging much more with the black people, realizing that I wasn't really seen as black too much." Leaving the UK had a similar identity changing effect. Emma's (22, UK, Asian/white) family spent time in France where her peers "didn't say Indian" they said "the English girl." Initially Emma rejected this identity saying "I just felt like, excuse me, for your information, I'm actually part French and part Indian. Not English." As the school children

continued to call her English however Emma's identity shifted. She explains: "It's pretty weird actually but it's pretty cool at the same time. Because it felt like it was about my, where I was actually born sort of thing. I was English." Now as an adult, Emma identifies as mixed race Anglo (i.e., English) Indian.

In the US, state-to-state relocations influenced how interviewees identified. In particular, when those born and raised on the West coast move to other parts of the country, their racial identity becomes much more in line with traditional notions of hypodescent. Judy (30, US, black/white) for example was born in California and lived in an area where "there was mixed race people and different types of people everywhere so I didn't think anything of it." Her family then moved to Tennessee, and that was when she says she "realized, yeah, I'm black." Brunsma (2006) notes that the stronger ideology of the one drop rule in the southern United States results in more mixed race individuals in that region identifying, as Judy came to identify, according to its prescription.

The Midwestern United States is also more racially conservative than the West. Anna (24, US, Asian/white) learned this when she moved from California to Wisconsin. As noted above, in the former location people reacted to her "with a number of other statuses before it was as Asian or Asian American." In Wisconsin, however, she says her perceived race has more often been "the first thing that people react to." These experiences have made her "identify more as a person of color than I think I did growing up."

These interviewees' narrative accounts support Brunsma's (2006) survey data and his conclusion that the differences between the regions of the United States (or the United Kingdom as my data demonstrate) effects "the way that public categories bleed into interactional spheres of influence and into the personal identification of biracial individuals." Burke and Sets (2009)

explain that different situations (i.e., regions, countries, cultures, etc.) have different "situational meanings" and that when people move and these change they "lose their normal means of verifying their identities." They note that attempts are often made to restore the previous situational meanings which provided identity validation. Emma for example, upon being called English when she moved to France, attempted to assert her previous ("part French and part Indian") identity. In other words, she attempted to restore the situational identity meaning that was in operation previously (i.e., in Dover, England, where compared to her English born peers she was French and Indian). However, Burke and Sets continue that often this is often not possible, for example Emma could not force the French children to see her as she saw herself. When that is the case, the authors note that the discrepancy "between the identity-standard meaning and the self-relevant meanings in the situation" can only be reduced by "the identity-standard chang[ing] to the match the situational meanings." This is what occurred as Emma came to see herself as English and eventually incorporated that identity into a new self-concept ("Anglo Indian"). Judy's acceptance of a black identity upon moving to the South and Anna's increased identification as person of color since moving to the Midwest can also be explained by this theory of identity change.

A final, female specific, life course identity shift may occur when one begins a family of one's own. While the subsample of mothers is too small (N=4; 1 UK, 3 US) to draw strong conclusions, correlationally it appears that a few women's racial identity changed when they became mothers. Mary (41, UK, Asian/white) for example used to have a strong mixed race identity. In the past, she was "quite activist with this whole area," and in fact had conducted her own research on mixed race topics while in school. She characterizes her former self as "hysterical" that "people should be listening to the mixed race experience." At present, though,

she "realizes that I've changed and really mellowed in the way I feel about the whole issues being multiracial." She says while she "was never worried about what people think" now she is even "less bothered about what society feels about the whole issue." When asked what she thinks lead to her changing orientation towards mixed race identity she mentioned her children and family:

> "I suppose you know because I'm now 41 and um married with kids, settled, I'm less um churned up in myself about issues you know because I'm happy I'm settle so I'm more focused on family and life experiences."

In the US, Aaliyah's (25, US, black/white) transition to motherhood appears to have had a similar effect of suppressing strength of mixed race identification. Having solidified a positive mixed race identity in college, since having her son with her black fiancé in graduate school Aaliyah increasingly refers to herself as black. She explains that:

> "I know I've heard my self say well you know [son] is black, and we're two black parents and that's where I've thought about [mono-racially identifying] more in relation to him. Um he is darker skinned than both me and my fiancé. I don't know where that came from but, so I know that he is, like, even though he's a quarter white… I really want to be careful and cognizant that he understands his black identity and knows what it means to be like a black male in the US."

Citing George Zimmerman's shooting of Trayvon Martin as an example of the fate that could befall her son, she emphasizes that he must be taught "to be very aware that he is black and he is growing up in the United States and [it] has this history of racism that still occurs today." Aaliyah appears to sometimes de-emphasize her (and by extension her son's) mixed race heritage, therefore, in order to foster a black identity which she sees as preparing him for the challenges he will face being perceived as a black man in society. In sum, having children caused the few mothers in the sample to rethink their own commitment to their racial identity and, for various reasons, make shifts if deemed necessary.

CHAPTER 4

"YEAH THAT WAS DELIBERATE:" BODY WORK AS MANIPULATION OF PHENOTYPE

Building on Khanna and Johnson's (2010) work on manipulation of phenotype, this chapter and the next examine mixed race adults' physical appearance and the appearance alterations they engage in and why. Together they offer new insights on the body work practices frequently discussed in the literature, namely skin color management, hair and facial hair styling, make-up application, plastic surgery and piercings. In addition, multiple interviewees detailed their desire for and/or acquisition of a personally designed tattoo that provides a pictorial representation of one's understanding of her/his mixed race self-identity. This is the basis for a discussion of the use of images to express a synergistic racial identity that text, such as written categories on forms, or verbal affirmations of one's identity, such as responses to questions like "what race are you," cannot convey. The present chapter analyzes interviewees' accounts of hair styling, tattoos and piercings which were the body work practices found to be sometimes used to purposely to influence one's racial appearance. Chapter 5 then analyzes skin color management, men's facial hair styling, women's make-up use, and plastic surgery which were the body work practices that were reported to not be used for racial purposes.

"Getting to the root of things. Literally": The importance of hair for racial perception

Interviewees reported that often times others indirectly ask about their race by making comments or compliments about their physical appearance; and one's hair is a main target of comment or compliment during these "what are you?" interactions. Being "perhaps our most

powerful symbol of individual and group identity," hair is "a physiological phenomenon, but it is also a social one," (Synnott 1987). Beginning with the physiological, from Mark's black hair to Fleur's blonde and Mary's straight to Larell's curly, the mixed race adults in this sample had diverse types of hair. Over the course of their lives, the men and women in this study have worn their hair long and short, natural and chemically altered (e.g., permed, dyed), in Afros, dreadlocks, braids, flat tops, Mohawks, mullets, ponytails, weave and naturally curly.

Regarding this last style, naturally curly, a little less than half of the total sample (13 interviewees) reported this as their hair type. Whether referred to as a "mop," "puffy," or "curly," it was considered an "in between-y" texture. As all 13 were who reported this hair texture were mixed race black and other race, "in-betweeen-y" hair can be taken to mean hair texture that is not as course and curly as the assumed ideal characteristic texture of African hair nor as smooth and straight as the assumed ideal characteristic texture of white, Asian, and Latino (in this case Mexican) hair. Moreover, like the stereotypical Hispanic and black hairstyles that participants used in MacLin and Malpass' (2001) experiment to determine the race of otherwise identical computer generated faces, hair was found to be the "racial marker feature" for the interviewees in this study as well. When I asked Aaliyah, for example, what about her appearance she thinks makes other people wonder about her race and/or ask if she is mixed she responded "Well probably my hair." Dave too believes that his hair, which he calls a "hafro" (i.e., half like an Afro) and a "mulafro" (i.e., a mulatto's Afro) racially marks him mixed race, in particular as mixed black/white. Curly "in-between-y" hair therefore appears to be socially perceived as a quintessential and identifying feature of mixed race individuals.

In the Euro-American societies under investigation mixed race hair was seen as a very distinctive physical feature. Sophie for example says that her hair is "a distinctive feature of me,

when people describe me I think it's one of the first things they say you know um 'oh yeah the girl with the really big hair, big curly hair.'" Tia also feels like her hair is a distinctive feature, answering my question of how she would describe physical appearance with "I usually say light skinned with a big puffy ponytail. Because that's usually what sticks out in people's minds."

Moreover, in addition to often having this specific, distinct type of mixed race hair texture, part black interviewees talked about vastly more *experiences* related to their hair than did non-black mixed race interviewees. Hair nodes only accounted for 10% of the non-black interviewees' data on average while they accounted for almost twice that, an average of 19% of the data, from the interviewees with partial black heritage. Looking at only the part black women's interviews, since in general women wear their hair longer than men (Synnott 1987) with the result that their hair texture is more apparent and noticeable, 70% of the women with black ancestry described their hair as this "in-between-y" quintessential mixed race hair type and almost a full quarter of the data from their interviews pertain to hair. Since the hair question on the interview guide was only one of 19 main questions, these percentages suggest that female interviewees with black heritage and curly mixed race hair were responding to other questions with comments, stories, experiences and references to their hair. For part black women, and to a lesser extent men, who have curly mixed race hair, the issue of race and hair is "the biggie" to quote Mary; and it is these experiences that the follow sections primarily examines and analyzes.

The difficulties of curls. One influential experience that part black female interviewees with curly mixed race hair reported was their white mothers' inability to perform adequate hair care and maintenance. Characterized as "unruly" and "difficult to manage," mixed race women's hair was not well styled as children. Tia, as discussed in the preceding chapter, was appreciative of her white mother's attempts to expose her to Native and black culture. Hair care,

though, was "probably the biggest missing link for me, having been raised by a white mom who really didn't have any experience [with non-white hair care]." Aaliyah was missing this link as well, remembering that when she was younger, "my mom did not know what to do with my hair, like, it was horrible. I looked back at pictures and I feel bad for myself. It was so bad." As a child, her hair was either "a frizzy mess" or in braids that occasionally became so matted they had to be cut. Joy had the same experience, recalling that:

> "I always felt like you know when I was younger, my hair was always looking a mess. Because I have a black dad and he didn't know what to do with it. Because he's just a man. He's like, I don't know. I would just have a terrible frizzy ponytail. My mom, it would be the same thing because she's you know a white woman. She doesn't know what to do with it. She would try to perm it or slick a whole bunch of grease it in or put a whole bunch of gel. And it would just-, always looked a nightmare."

Black/white British women had the same issues. Like Aaliyah, Lisa looks back on childhood photos and characterizes them as "hideous... And it was mainly because my mom didn't know really how to look after our hair." Sara, too, disliked her childhood hair styles because her mother would "cut it all the time" because "she couldn't do it."

Sydney was the only one of the part black women in the study with curly mixed race hair who had a white mother who took good care of her hair. She recalls:

> "my mother loved my hair. Loved my hair. Which I think was very helpful. Because she would lovingly take care of my hair. She would, every night, we would comb it out. She'd take me to get it styled or whatever. Even when my hair was short, she always very much made me feel like my hair was nice. Even though it might have been a little difficult."

In her interviews with mixed race children and their parents, Ali (2003) uncovered this same theme of white mothers' neglect of their daughters' mixed race hair and similarly found only one exception to the trend. One of her white female interviewees was aware of how others "used to talk about being at school and being able to tell the children who had white mothers because they were 'the one bunch of kids,' the ones whose mothers could not do their hair properly;" and so

the woman learned about "the complications and intricacies of caring for black hair" because she was "determined that this should not happen to her child," (81). Yet it is rare for a white mother to learn to care for her mixed race child's hair. Ali's interviewee received "astonishment and denial from black and white" people that she herself styles her daughter's hair. This is unfortunate because, as Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005:71) stress, "how parents respond to a child's physical characteristics sends the child direct and indirect messages about race... and what is considered valuable." White mothers' inability to care for their daughters' hair, whether manifested as allowing it to be a "horrible" "frizzy mess" or cutting it all off so as to not have to "deal" with it, and their lack of effort to learn the "complications and intricacies" of how to properly care for mixed race hair, sent the message that part-black mixed race curly hair is unattractive and not valuable.

Evidence that daughters of white mothers who did not learn how to care for their hair received the indirect message that their hair was unattractive and not "nice" comes from my interviewees' accounts of how much they used to dislike their naturally curly hair. Sophie went "through a phase of like straightening it and really dying for it to get straightened." Aaliyah also straightened her hair as an adolescent because "I thought that straighter hair was prettier, it was more manageable, it made me look better and so that's what I did a lot throughout high school." Aaliyah explicitly makes the connection between her mother's (in)actions and subtle messaging and her own (de)valuation of her hair, saying "I wonder if my hair was done well when I was younger if I wouldn't have, I would've still straightened it as much. But to me having my hair, it looked messy and not well kept."

To be fair, some white mothers attempted to care for their daughters' hair by taking them to a hair salon rather than trying to do it themselves. Unfortunately, due to the "in-between-y"

nature of most mixed race individuals' hair, stylists at neither mainstream/white nor black salons did a very good job. Lisa's mother took her to a black salon where they:

> "put this really strong chemical relaxer. And I could smell, it was so strong. And basically all my hair fell out um because it was too strong. They just didn't know the [mixed race] texture. Basically it was, they just did the black hair thing, like full black people hair thing. Big mistake."

Mainstream salons, however, were no better. Joy recalls a white stylist who, upon seeing her curly hair, erroneously thought it was dreadlocks and did not know what to do. Tia summarizes that "If I go to a white salon, they don't know how to handle it, if I go to a black salon, they're afraid to cut it. It's crazy."

Difficulties getting a haircut was actually also reported by a few of the mixed race part-black men who had curly mixed race hair, though it was white barbers' ignorance of how to cut curly hair not blacks' fear of doing so as in Tia's case. For the British men, the scarcity of black barbershops due to the small black population and its concentration in larger cities such as London meant that it was "a big hassle," according to Dean, to get a haircut if one lived in a predominantly white area. The reason was that white barbers did not know how to cut non-white hair. Vincent explains of the barber shops he tried in Yorkshire that "the ones I chose were pretty much just, buzz, all off. Grade one, please, or grade two." He continues that "after a while, I ended up buying my own pair of clippers." The other male interviewees similarly have their own clipper sets and avoid dealing with others' ignorance of mixed race hair care by cutting their own hair at home.

Complete home/self hair care, however, is an option that is more readily available to men than women. Synnott (1987:384) writes in his article "The Sociology of Hair" that "conventionally, men tend to have shorter (and less stylized) hair than women." Women, by contrast, "are more likely to use more styles, and change them more often, than men," (385).

While the men in this study did report having experimented with different styles throughout their lifetime, only Larell, who works part-time as a model, reported consistently styling his hair as often or elaborately as the female interviewees.

The fact that even untrained, non-professionals (e.g., none of the men in the present study were trained barbers or hair stylists) can successfully execute the majority of men's hair styles is an individual level factor that causes mixed race men to have fewer issues surrounding hair than mixed race women. Women's styles, for examples braids, weaves, straightening and curling, often require specific tools and/or training to be able to properly accomplish. As such, complete home/self hair care is an untenable solution to being unable to find a competent salon or stylist to do ones hair.

Moreover, women's styles require the use of more products (e.g., creams, sprays, gels, detanglers) than men's styles. This is an institutional level factor that causes mixed race women to have more hair issues than men because the majority of the products available in the US and UK are not designed for curly mixed race hair. As with salons, white hair care products (those labeled racelessly as "regular" due to white hegemony) nor black hair care products tend to work well on mixed race women's "in-between-y" hair. In discussing hair care products, Lisa says "It's just about, what's the word, just experimenting. Because I have another mixed race friend and she said years ago, she said to me, 'I've tried every product on the market.'" Tia too has tried many products and says it is "ridiculous to find a product that works."

With the population of mixed race people increasing in the US, UK and other countries, new products especially formulated for curly mixed race hair have recently become available (Johnson 2013). Sydney, who is 39, notes that:

> "it would have been nice to grow up now when there are so many hair products for people of mixed race….And you know all these people on the internet[9] that have my hair. I don't even have to think about it. That's definitely made styling my hair and my hair a lot less of an issue."

One particularly effective line of hair care products is called Mixed Chicks®, about which Sydney states simply "It's amazing!" As a small American company, however, Lisa lamented that "they don't deliver out of the States. I looked it up. They're in Manhattan. So the next time I'm in New York, you know I'm filling my suitcase.[10]"

Mixed Chicks® is advertised as "a curl-defining system for 'us'" (Mixed Chicks®). As noted above, curly hair is seen as quintessentially mixed race hair. Nevertheless, female interviewees disliked their curls and wanted straight hair until they developed the "confidence" to wear it natural and curly. One reason they disliked their hair and were uncomfortable wearing it curly was due to peers' teasing and insults about it. White children would call Afro-centric hair "crap hair" according to Dave, and Sara's white mother repeatedly told her that her naturally curly hair made her ""look like a witch doctor.'" According to Judy and Tia, being in predominantly black areas is difficult too. Black children, in misdirected frustration at Euro-centric beauty standards' higher valuation of mixed race over African hair, would pull mixed race girls' hair and make disparaging comments. Judy recalls hair pulling accompanied by taunts like "'oh, you think you're pretty'. Or you know 'your hair ain't real'. That type of stuff."

Due to the negative appraisal of their curly hair, many mixed race women straightened it. Aaliyah remembers a little boy in school who:

> "would call me coco puffs because of my hair. But I know we would joke with each but I really hated that because I felt like my hair was frizzy and they were making fun of my

[9]Sydney is likely referencing the natural hair social network sites, blogs and vlogs (i.e., video blogs) which rose to prominence in the early twenty first century and which, according to Johnson (2013:10) "provide acceptance, affirmation, and belonging to a population that strays from dominant society's expectation of hair aesthetics."

[10] Lisa's interview was in 2011. No doubt due to other non-American mixed race women sharing Lisa's desire to purchase Mixed Chicks® products, the company has since begun shipping internationally (Mixed Chicks®).

> hair and even the black kids who had black moms their hair looked better than mine. I didn't really I know what I was doing with my hair and so when I tried to straighten it I felt like helped me fit in better."

In the UK, Sophie too used to want straight hair to fit in with her white and Asian childhood peers. She explains that "when you start looking at your style and you're like 'okay well every other girl well has their hair like this and like my hair just does not do what they do'" you begin to dislike your "different" hair.

A curly revolution. The distinctive mixed race curls were preferred by the interviewees as adults, however, and a variety of factors were reported to have caused the shift in opinion. Sophie discusses how when she was older attention and compliments from boys changed her view of her hair:

> "When I was 16 we went to New York <singing>New York </singing> and um, it was cool but we uh we went out one night and I just decided like I kinda wanna have my hair slightly loose tonight and I got quite a few like 'ah your hair looks really nice tonight'…a really cute guy was like "I like your hair" and I was like <flirty> 'thanks' </flirty>"

After her return from New York, Sophie increasingly wore her hair naturally curly and continued to receive "some good comments" and "positive feedback." By the time she graduated high school two years later she says "it was all good," meaning she no longer disliked her naturally curly hair.

Aaliyah began to embrace her curls when she "realized that I didn't really need to try to fit in." As discussed in the last chapter, Aaliyah and other mixed race women and men developed a positive self-image as mixed race people, including the confidence to be who they are and not feel like they need to "pick a side," during their late teens and early 20s. Regarding their physical appearance, women like Aaliyah came to love their naturally curly hair during this transition as well. For example she states "I was more confident in myself and my hair that I was fine wearing it curly."

Additional evidence that the age specific identity shifts discussed in the last chapter, in particular maturation to adulthood with its accompanying cessation of adolescent desire to "fit in," is the catalyst behind mixed race women's changing attitudes regarding their naturally curly hair comes from Fleur's explicit statements about wanting to be distinctive. As a child, due to her race and her status as a foster care child she says she "definitely was not the same as everybody else. And I think there was probably part of me that did want to be like everybody else." Fleur used to chemically straighten her hair "[f]or years and years and years and years" until "about two, three years ago, I stopped relaxing my hair and I was kind of quite adamant that I wanted to wear my hair natural." One reason is that, as an adult, she actually wants "to kind of be a bit more striking." In this effort, in addition to wearing her hair naturally curly Fleur also purposely does other things such as dying her hair blonde to "make me stand out a little bit more."

Another contributing factor to the women's adult appreciation and preference for their naturally curly hair is a recent cultural shift in the black community called the "Natural Hair Movement." Despite the popularity of Afros and "Black is Beautiful" during the Civil Rights Movement, straightened hair has been the absolute standard style for women of predominant or partial African ancestry since the early 1900s (Johnson 2013). Recently, however, there has been an increase in:

> "emphasizing that Black women should not use chemical relaxers to straighten their hair (though this practice was overwhelmingly popular) and opt instead for natural hair styles (i.e., Afros, braids, and dread locks) that are in direct contrast to Eurocentric ideals," (Johnson 2013:8).

The movement also stresses how "much healthier [black women's] hair could be in a natural state," (ibid). Regarding mixed race people in particular, the message is to be "proud" and wear ones curls (Mixed Chicks®). Lisa references this cultural shift and credits it with giving her the confidence to wear her hair curly as adult:

> "I think natural hair, since Jill Scott and all the sort of-, I think it's becoming more accepted. When I was twenties, going out clubbing, young, with my friends, absolute relaxing hair. No one had natural. Do you remember? So basically it was kind of peer pressure as well and stuff."

While Lisa contributes her adult decision to wear her hair naturally curly due to the influence of the ideology of the Natural Hair Movement, Heather and Aaliyah, both 25, stated that they began wearing her hair natural "way before this alleged Natural Hair Movement." Heather specifically dated her transition away from straightened hair in "fifth year in college. This was the '09, '10 school year." However, by this time, just two years prior to her interview, other women in the sample had already "gone natural" years prior. Discussing her curly hair, Tia for example stated that "Now it's natural. I haven't had to put a perm in my hair since 2000." The year 2000 is also the year that Jill Scott, who Lisa credited with legitimizing natural hair for her, released her debut album (Miss Jill Scott 2014). The references to different dates suggest that the ideology of the Natural Hair Movement diffused to different areas of the Africa diaspora at different times. Heather and Aaliyah are from the West and Midwest of the US respectively; but both had been graduate students in the southern state of Tennessee for a number of years at the time of their interviews. This may suggest that natural hair gained legitimacy in that region later than it did in more racially progressive areas such as the UK and the non-Southern regions of the US. Heather and Aaliyah, both of whom still had family and other ties to their regions of origin, may have become exposed to the ideology of the Movement via those contacts and begun transitioning away from compulsively straightened hair prior to the message diffusing widely in the South.

Finally, the increase in the mixed race population in both countries was reported to have contributed to the mixed race women in this sample deciding to wear their hair naturally curly. Lisa commented on this "curly revolution" (Mixed Chicks®) observing that:

> "more and more mixed race girls are coming up now. I've noticed there's tons of mixed race younger people. So I think through having more of each other around or whatever, we can give hair tips. Because there's websites[11] on mixed race hair. There's products for mixed race hair."

Wearing one's hair curly, in sum then, is the result of both individual shifts and larger societal shifts. Women's individual maturation away from the childhood desire to "fit in" gave them the confidence to "stand out" as they inevitably do when wearing their naturally curly hair. At the same time, the style was gaining legitimacy via the ideology of the Natural Hair Movement and the necessary tools, both knowledge and material, to care for such hair were being introduced to the market due to the increased demand created by the increase in the mixed race population.

The difficulties of curls revisited. The interviewees' newly found adult appreciation of their hair naturally curly hair, however, did not mean that their hair related social issues ceased. Because straight hair is still the norm, mixed race women received a lot of attention when they wear their hair naturally curly. Joy explains that when she began wearing her hair curly that "no one didn't have a reaction." Other interviewees report similar experiences. Some reactions and attention are positive, for example the compliments that Sophie is quoted discussing above. Other times the reactions and attention to mixed race women's curly hair is problematic. One type of problematic attention was the continuation of the teasing and rude comments received from black girls in childhood. Tia notes that this still happens even though she is nearing 40. One of the few women who did not compulsively straighten her hair in her youth, black girls used to pull her long naturally curly hair. In her interview, she told stories of adult black women "scowling" and "picking" at her and concludes it can only be the old hair issues resurfacing:

> "I'm not a little skinny something anymore, I'm not wearing the hotty hot skirts. When I was younger, I think I figured as I got older the reason that girls don't like me was

[11] See footnote 3

> because I had an older brother and I knew all the boys. And I was friends with them. But I still wore the little hoochie mama skirt. And so I figured maybe they just assumed that I was a hoochie. So of course don't like her. But now as an adult… you get to this age, I think that that should not be an issue. So I don't look for it like I probably did in high school. But that's the same thing that's been happening since high school. Prior to high school."

Another type of problematic issue with wearing one's hair naturally curly is others' uninvited touching. Joy reported that people touch her hair "All the time. All the time. At work. School." She gives as an example the first day she wore it naturally curly to the law firm where she works, recalling that:

> "[T]he first day I did it at work, it was like, a huge discussion topic. And I was like, whoa. People touching it, wanting to play in it… like 'whoa! Is that-? Whoa, Joy, is that you're hair? Can I touch it?' A grown man. I'm like, 'no. It's my hair.'"

Other interviewees, even men, describe similar instances of others asking to touch or uninvitedly touching their hair. Larell says "It's a awkward situation for me. Like, it's happened at work. I'm ringing a customer up. Customers have asked, like, 'can I touch your hair?"" Aaliyah thinks the reason is because curly hair is out of the ordinary. She explains that "I know like a lot of people who have naturally straight hair so a lot of white people are like always talking about my curly hair like wanting to touch it and stuff." They want to "pull it and watch it spring back up" according to Larell.

Mixed race people varied in their responses to others touching their hair. Larell, despite sometimes inward wondering "where your hand's been… I mean, there is filthy things that we come across and we encounter every day," nonetheless will "tilt my head real quick" to let people touch his hair. He explains that it "doesn't bother me. You know what I'm saying? People give change to bums. This isn't even costing me any money. Do a good deed." The female interviewees were not as accommodating, likely because in addition to asking as people do Larell, often people touch the women's hair without asking. Self-described as "feisty," Tia's

initial reaction is to say "'stop touching me, why are you touching me?'" Joy is the same way, expressing frustration that:

> "when it's curly, everyone wants to dig in. At work, it would happen all the time. I would be just kind of sitting at my desk. People would come up from behind and just-. It's like disgusting. I don't want your hands in my hair."

In addition to being the root of inter-group conflict and soliciting unwanted touching, another issue mixed race women face when wearing their hair curly is the cultural associations that accompany straight versus curly hair styles. Despite including style with length, color and quantity in his discussion of the "theory of opposites" for hair, Synnott (1987) did not discuss any particular types of styles as he, for example, discussed the opposite cultural associations regarding particular hair colors (e.g., brunette and smart versus blonde and ditsy). Based on the data from this study, however, it appears that curly/straight should be added to his long/short (length), blonde/brunette (color) and extensions/balding (quantity) pairs. Straight hair, according to my interviewees, is considered "tamed," "smart," "corporate," "professional" or "serious," "mature" and "elegant" and associate with whites and conservatism. Curly hair is seen as "unruly," "funky," "creative" or "fun," "playful" and associated with blacks and liberal political ideology. Fleur elaborates:

> "I tend to wear it straight, it's a bit tidier, and it's a bit neater, it's a bit smarter. But also I kind of don't really think, I work in a very kind of white climate. I don't think they're kind of ready for the kind of funky curls. And I kind of think that they'll take me a bit more seriously. But when I'm out of work and I'm doing a bit more of my creative stuff, then I wear it curly. Because to me, it's a bit more kind of, you know, free flowing and less kind of corporate. I see my straight hair as very work, corporate, and my curly hair is creative and funky."

The perception of mixed race curly hair as "creative and funky" is a refined version of Ali's (2003) findings that such hair is considered "crazy." Discussing mixed race super star Melanie Brown, i.e., Scary Spice of the group the Spice Girls, with British school children, Ali found that

among those who did not like the group their negative opinions on this particular singer always included disparaging characterizations of her hair, which, at that time, she wore naturally curly not straightened. Called "bushy," "crazy," "horrible" and "spider hair" Ali shows how the children revealed society's prescriptions on respectability and attractiveness as they were constructed at the intersection of race, sexuality and gender (72). Despite the children supporting the ideology that to be "nice" and "decent" one ought to "be yourself" and be "natural" (in contrast to being "fake" or "plastic" as detractors criticized the Spice Girls for being), Mel B's *naturally* curly hair, and by extension other mixed race women's naturally curly hair as well, was not seen as nice or decent by the majority of her interviewees. Ali's work shows that straight hair is clearly the norm and deviations from that, even if it is the natural state of one's body, open on up to criticism.

Due to understanding the social views of their naturally curly hair, there were two key events for which the female interviewees would still straighten their hair: special occasions and job interviewees. When attending weddings, nights outs, and dressy or formal affairs straight hair was the chosen style. Sophie recalled that she straightened her hair for her secondary school's "Prom[12]" when she was 16 and 18. Reflecting on her decision after the fact, however, she says she does not really know why she did it, especially because straight hair is not at all practical for such events. Due to dancing, the straightened style "doesn't last long" because:

> "if I start sweating… It starts form the roots and then it gets frizzy it's just nasty… like you know you're dancing around and like it just becomes an absolute mess and by the end [of the Prom] I just felt so crap… I just don't, it's not how it should be its not the natural way like I'm taking away how it naturally should be and I feel that like my hair is like 'no' like resisting it like 'I will turn crap, so that you learn.'"

[12] Prom is in quotations because it is an American event; thus the dances at Sophie's schools were not really Proms as they were in England not America. Sophie actually mentioned "we want to be so like you" in discussing these dances which conveyed that the event was in fact an acknowledged copy of the American tradition as there is no such thing indigenous to British culture or schools.

Unfortunately, Sophie did not "learn" at Prom, and she straightened her hair again for her big 21st birthday celebration a few years later. That decision resulted in her disliking all the pictures from that special day because "as much as people say 'oh like your hair looks really nice' like when I look back at pictures I much prefer how my hair is when its curly."

Aaliyah, who like Sophie now confidently wears her hair naturally curly, also nonetheless straightens it for special occasions, a trend she was a little surprised to realize:

> "I was like completely okay with my curly hair but then I noticed that like when I have something to go to like maybe a wedding or I was taking pictures I would always straighten my hair. And I looked like-, like I didn't notice-, it wasn't a conscious thing to me until after the fact I was realizing like all these pictures I had straight hair and I was like 'why am I doing that?'"

Despite making the decision to wear her hair curly and reject thinking "'oh when it's straight its better so I should straighten it for this big event' or something like that," when I asked her how she was planning to wear her hair to her upcoming wedding she admitted she was going to straighten it:

> "I have thought about that actually. And I did actually think, I'm probably going to straighten it but it will have curls in it but like they obviously won't be natural. Yeah so I guess even as a, as it is, I did ask, I went to a bridal show and I did ask I said 'I'm not sure how to do to good up dos with curly hair, could you show me?' And it got interrupted actually so I didn't get it. But I thought about it, I just um, like I said I think maybe I think that it's more sophisticated when its straighter and I feel like when its curly it's, never really know how it's going to turn out that morning and so it's more predictable when its straight."

The association of straight hair with elegance and sophistication and of curly hair with at best fun and playful and at worst horrible and crazy was cited by US women, but not UK women, as the rationale for not only straightening their hair for special occasions but for job interviews as well. Joy says of straight hair: "I felt personally that it could be considered more professional than me wearing my curly hair. But by more professional, probably more white. Like more what white people would feel comfortable with or feel was professional." Heather

phrases it more succinctly as “the corporate look is European. And the corporate look is straightened hair.” The interviewees’ perceptions are supported by the literature. Johnson (2013:2) for example writes that:

> “A Black female Clerk of court in Savannah, Georgia, faced suspension from her job for wearing her hair in twists. A dress policy for Savannah Courts deemed twists unprofessional. Unfortunately, Bostick and many other black women who desire to wear their hair in a natural state, in dreadlocks, braids, twist, and Afros, are informed by the dominant White cultural norms, traditions, advertising, and employment dress codes that such looks are wrong, bad, and unacceptable.”

Johnson explains that since non-Eurocentric culturally specific hairstyles are deemed “unprofessional” this means that “the choice of a natural hairstyle can be read by the dominant culture as a troublesome sign.” It is troublesome because eschewing Eurocentric straight hair in favor of Afrocentric hair suggests the rejection of the ideology that white is superior to black, which is a radical stance in white supremacist societies such as the UK and US.

When asked later in their interviews if they had ever done any body work on purpose to alter how they would appear racially, American women returned to this theme and admitted straightening their hair for job interviews. Joy says that it:

> “was conscious when I was interviewing at my law firm to wear straight hair. Like I do remember-. And I don't know that it was to look more white. Maybe um maybe to a point in the fact that I realize that it would probably help me as far as appearing-, making less of a statement with my hair. Because I do feel like you know the size of my hair, white people always have a reaction to it. Whatever it is. And so I just felt like-. I talked to some of my friends before. Like what do you think? Should I wear my hair straight for all these interviews? Should I wear my hair curly? Like what? And everyone was like, just wear your hair straight.”

Annette had similar thought process:

> “There was one time when I remember a job interview, I decided to straighten my hair because I knew that-. It wasn't so much that I was afraid of looking black, but it was that I knew that people considered black hair kind of unruly and I didn't want to appear messy. And I knew that that has always, historically been a problem for black women. Like how do you make your hair look feminine while at the same time, you know, not-. There's

> been arguments about dreadlocks and braids and afros and. I think your hair looks cute but somebody might say it doesn't look professional enough. So I remember for like job interviews, I was like, okay, I'm just going to straighten it. There will be no problem."

American men, for their part, felt that short hair was more professional than longer and like the women purposely wore that style to job interviews. Chris for examples says that "if I go to job interviews, you know I'll go clean shaven or a little bit scraggly. I might shave my head or something like that." The difference in the men's body work and the women's, however, is that unlike the women the male interviewees asserted that their motivation was only to be "clean cut." In other words, they denied that they were doing their hair for racial reasons. Mark for example remembers that he:

> "cut my hair short once to, because I expected that it might be easier for me to get a job. But that had more to do with fitting notions of what it meant to look clean cut and professional. Now, you could take that a step further and say yeah, clean cut, professional, white. But I didn't do it because of that. Never done that. Never done anything to look more Indian, never done anything to look more white."

While some interviewees use manipulation of phenotype to approximate whiteness or white standards, deliberately or not, others used it, like Khanna and Johnson's (2010) black/white interviewees, to "pass for black." Tia, for example, due to the negative reactions to her hair from black women discussed above, is planning to get braids or "something that makes it more acceptable for me to have all this hair" prior to beginning a new job in parent engagement. As she will be working with black parents, she believes it will "make my journey into people's homes a little easier if I don't come there with poofy wild hair." She considers her plan to disguise her mixed race hair "sad because I like the poofy wild hair" and adds that it is "unfortunate that I have to change myself for you to take what I'm saying in a different way." Nonetheless, she is committed to her decision but says she will be "glad for a day when we don't have to go through that. I really will."

Dave also uses his hair to pass for black. He allowed his hair to grow long when he was a teen in order to have an Afro, hoping that he would be seen as "black, just light skin." As an adult, he wears his hair shorter; yet due to the effect on his racial appearance, he takes care to not cut it *too* short, i.e., so short that the Afro-centric texture is not apparent. He explains: "[I]f I've got short hair- in London- you know I could be Turkish, Asian, even white and even worse with a skinhead [Laughs]. So you know I tend to go with this."

While Dave's choice to not wear short hair is "connected to it making me look I think more racially ambiguous," which is a perception he wants to avoid, other mixed race adults utilized hair for manipulation of phenotype for this very purpose, i.e., to appear more racially ambiguous. Fleur for example had recently dyed her hair blonde when I met her for our interview. When I asked her why she did it she replied:

> "I mean, it was kind of coinciding with trying to establish my music career. And you know I just thought it would make me stand out a little bit more… just to grab attention really, I guess. You know I quite like the fact that I don't look like everybody else. Which is completely different than how I felt, you know, fifteen years ago when I wanted to look like everybody else. Now I quite like that I don't look like everybody else."

In conclusion, MacLin and Malpass (2001) found that for racially ambiguous people hair is a "racial marker feature" that others use to racially categorize them. In particular, curly "in-between-y" hair, which almost half of the sample described themselves having, appears to be a quintessential feature of mixed race phenotype. Individuals with this type of hair reported a myriad of experiences from childhoods of nightmare hair styles to calculated adult decisions about the best way to wear one's hair for one's occupation. Sydney's declaration that "definitely there's a love hate relationship when you are a mixed race person with your hair" appears to capture the complex issues that surround this particular physical feature for this particular population.

"I'm just, regular, normal:" An addendum on mixed race hair

The preceding section focused on the hair and hair styling of mainly women with partial black heritage who had "in-between-y" curly hair. Since the literature on mixed race people and hair is almost exclusively on black/white women, this study also examined other types of mixed race men's and women's experiences with hair. This was both to compare their experiences with black/white women and to attempt to uncover any unique trends or issues that may have been overlooked thus far given the research focus on just one subgroup of the mixed race population.

However, as revealed by the coverage statistics, hair nodes accounted for significantly less data for non-part-black interviewees. Moreover, of the data on hair, none of the Asian/white interviewees (who comprise six of the seven non-part-black mixed race adults in the study) discussed their hair as having any impact whatsoever on their racialized experiences or playing any role in their life in general. This did not mean that they did talk about their hair. Smith told an entertaining story of promising a high school teacher he would cut his then longer hair if he made an A in a class (which he did and so he cut his hair). He also told a funny story of people treating him gently and talking quietly because they thought he had recently had brain surgery due to his accidently cutting his hair shorter in one place thus giving the impression that area had been recently shaved as is done prior to brain surgery.

Anna discussed an uncomfortable trip to a South African salon while studying abroad during which a racist stylist was informing her "that the black economic advancements were essentially like a reverse apartheid. So now white South Africans were experiencing all this discrimination." Despite being "very upset with" herself for it, she recounts that she said nothing because she "really didn't want to challenge his world view and his racial opinions as I was sitting in a barber chair and he was wielding scissors around my face."

But unlike the experiences of mixed race people of African heritage, none of these instances had anything to do with the mixed race person's race. Anna's story could perhaps be indicative of her being passed as white and therefore assumed to share the stylist's negative views of blacks; but even if so, Anna did not mention the encounter having any effect on *her* racial identity or even that she saw it as an experience that bears on *her* race. It appears that hair is simply not an overtly racialized feature for Asian/white mixed race people. Mary's response to me I asking about her hair reveals that for Asian/whites hair is a non-issue:

> Jenn: So what are the different ways you've worn your hair?
> Mary: Me? I'm, well as you can see it's fairly kinda European so I'm just, regular, normal. Um my hair hasn't been too much of an issue. I did it, I had plaits once or twice but such a palaver that I just couldn't be bothered, and I'm a bit lazy with things like that, so I haven't really bothered. However the kids [big sigh] that's a whole next story.

Mary's two children, a boy and a girl who kept trying to sneak downstairs to the sitting room to listen to their parents' interviews, have Iranian, Italian, Indian and Jamaican heritage. Mary characterizes their hair as curly and discussed the battles with frizzyness that other part-black interviewees mentioned. She added that the children were very "relaxed" about their hair and that when they reach teenagehood she would allow them "experiment" if they wanted. She herself, however, has:

> "never particularly used my hair as a ethnic signifier although I've never had it short short, I've always preferred it, I've just had it cut recently cos it was getting a bit tangled, but I've always preferred long Mediterranean hair, you know, thick hair, never dyed it or anything like that that."

Despite Mary's claim that she never used her hair as an ethnic signifier, her "long Mediterranean hair" *is* just that-- a "racial marker feature" (MacLin and Malpass 2001) indicative of her part-white race/ethnicity. That she does not view her hair in racialized terms, that she characterizes it as "regular, normal," when juxtaposed with her discussion of her part-black children's hair in

explicitly racialized terms, reveals that hair is only considered a racialized feature when there is visible African influence. Further support for this conclusion comes from part black interviewees like Suzie who has "pretty much white girl hair. I can wash and go. I never dry my hair. I used Pantene." Part black mixed race interviewees with such hair, like the Asian/white interviewees, did not discuss their hair as having any racial meaning or any influence in their lives at all. Taken together this suggests that the significance of hair for part-black mixed race women, and to a lesser extent men, who have quintessentially mixed race, curly, "in-between-y" hair, and the root of their use of hair to alter how they appear racially, stems from the continuing devaluation and stigmatization of African features in white hegemonic societies.

Ink-Racing: Mixed Race People's Use of Tattoos as (Racial) Identity Management

Over half of the mixed race adults in this study, 16, had tattoos; and of the 14 who did not, four expressed desire for or willingness to acquire one. Tattooing dates back to the 6000 BCE; but the first westerners to get tattoos were European seamen who, in the 1700s, encountered Pacific Islanders on their travels (Burgess and Clark 2010). Until recently, tattoos were stigmatized as being associated with "masculine outsider groups, such as prisoners, the military, and motorcycle gangs," (ibid). Dave, one of the interviewees who desired a tattoo, also points out that European slave masters used to brand their African captives, a practice which also may have contributed to the stigmatization of persons with tattoos. Smith, one of the interviewees with a tattoo, explains that tattoos were viewed negatively in Asian cultures as well:

> "You know it's funny 'cause there's like a big stigma with tattoos in, especially in Japan more so than China because it is like a mark of a criminal because the only people who have tattoos in Japan traditionally are Yakuza, and in China it's just usually the mark of like a criminal."

Another tattooed interviewee, George, has this very type of tattoo. When asked to tell me about his tattoos he recounted:

> "Uh well this one [on hand] is one of the longest ones I've had. This isn't, this is a, a bit of a, I like it a lot, but it it, the symbolism around that is to do with prison. Um, and the ones on my face here [two small round dots, one on each check bone area, that I'd previously not even noticed were there], are to do with prison as well. … [I]t's just basically just signifies um when you have two spots on your face it just tells the other person, its, another person who's done a lot of prison sentences, done a lot of prison, would, they put two spots and that means you know kinda you've done a lot a lot of prison."

George was the only one of the 16 tattooed interviewees who had a prison tattoo. This accords with the recent change in practice of tattooing. The current historical moment, which began in the 1990s, is one that emphasizes individuality, and thus activities that allow of the process of identity construction have expanded (Atkinson 2003). With respect to tattoos specifically, whereas in the past the images were limited to nautical, military, and prison associations, there are now many different styles from which individuals can choose; and tattoos are increasingly being obtained to express who one is, what one has experienced and how one sees oneself (Kang and Jones 2007). Images are no longer simply stock designs that many people select but are often unique to the individual and mean something personal to her/him.

In the United States, one in five (21%) of the total adult population has a tattoo and about 40% of the under 40 adult population have tattoos (Braverman 2012; Kohut et al. 2007). While the UK figures are half of that number, it nonetheless represents a recent substantial increase (Henley 2010). Tattoos are part of a larger body modification trend that also includes plastic surgery and piercings (Atkinson 2003). This explains why interviewees sometimes brought them up without my directly raising the topic. For example, when during our discussion of hair styling I asked Mark whether he had ever dyed his hair he responded more broadly by noting his lack of many types of body modification:

> "No. Actually, uh, let's see now. I don't know if this marks me as being Neolithic but I've never felt any desire to dye my hair, never felt any desire to get a tattoo, piercings, really anything."

Nevertheless, for those who do engage in this type of body modification, research has shown that the social stigma previously associated to tattoos is changing. There is a qualitative distinction made between "cute" modern designs (e.g., suns, dolphins, small brightly colored shapes) and traditional or "tribal" designs (e.g., black artistic designs, Celtic patterns, tigers, snakes, barbed wire) (Burgess and Clark 2010); and research has shown that the stigma associated with tattoos is diminishing for the former type of tattoos. In a lab experiment using photos and resumes, Burgess and Clark (2010) found that people with visible "cute" tattoos were perceived as just as suitable for a job as were people with no tattoos; people with visible "tribal" tattoos, however, were rated as less suitable for employment than their "cute" and non-tattooed counterparts.

Identity in ink. Regarding the 20 mixed race interviewees in this study who either had (16) or desired (4) tattoos, all but George had or preferred the newer modern styles of tattoos. Nine the 20, almost half, of the respondents, had images of animals. Eight had words, phrases, or quotations; four had images of people; three had flowers; three had or desired iconic symbols of their place of birth; three had shapes; two had or desired religious symbols; two had nautical symbols; two had or desired their astrological sign; and two had crowns and/or jewels. Moreover, the reasons expressed for getting these tattoo echoes the literature on current tattooing practices (c.f., Kang and Jones 2007). All but three interviewees viewed them as a well thought out form of self-expression or intended to commemorate important life events such as birthdays and personal milestones.

Regarding the most frequent image, animals, female respondents in both countries explained that they see themselves as sharing characteristics with the chosen animal. Fleur for example has a jaguar panther tattoo on her back. When asked why she chose this particular animal she replied:

> "I've always seen myself very much like a cat. Quiet. You know, not sly but I think my characteristics are very-. I'm always very associated them with cats, I love cats. Love cats. And I don't know. I just really wanted to get a kind of symbol of a very powerful, but also very kind of sleek and you know beautiful, that kind of, going with the manifestation of how I wanted to be portrayed or portray myself or be seen."

Suzie has a dolphin tattoo on her shoulder. Although she acquired it "as soon as I got out the house and went to college and was eighteen. And could get tattooed legally without my parents' consent" she explains that "[i]t wasn't a rebellion thing." Having just completed her PhD in biology at the time of her interview, she explains that the dolphin was chosen because she's "always been big into marine biology." Were she to get another tattoo in the future, she would consider "a little turtle" or, if she wanted to "be a real geek" she might "put the organism we work with in lab."

As other research on tattoos has shown (e.g., Shapiro 2010) there are gender differences with respect to tattoo image selection. In this sample, while no British men had animal tattoos, two of the three tattooed American men did. However, both males chose animals that are fiercer than the "cute" animals their female counterparts chose. Chris has a spider on this right calf to commemorate that he "got bit by a hobo spider and almost lost my leg." Larell is planning a tattoo sleeve, part of which will consist of "a king cobra wrapped around my arm." The fierce snake will be guarding "gold and jewels and treasures" which to Larell symbolize respect, a very important value to him. He explains:

> "I fell like respect is a treasure. You have to earn respect. You have to give respect to get respect. You have to you know what I'm saying give money to make money. Everything

> kind of goes hand in hand. For me, at least. In my mind. The way I think. And that's all that matters. It's on my body. But um so that's what that would represent to me."

The second most frequent type of tattoo mentioned was lettering, i.e., quotes, phrases, and words. As with the animals, the eight respondents who had or desired text based tattoos intended them to represent their unique sense of self or personal philosophy of life. On her right forearm Jennifer has "a phrase from the book The Giving Tree. It's 'and the tree was happy'" in addition to "know thyself" in Latin on her chest. Joy has considered getting a Nietzsche quote on her arm, and Anna has "'remember Ilyusha,' who is a character from Dostoyevsky's novel The Brothers Karamazov" on her ribcage. John who has "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield," which is a quote from the end of a Tennyson poem, on his ribcage, sums up the motivation behind the trend:

> "I really like the quote and it just kind of embodies my philosophy on life. Well I like the whole poem but. And yeah, I wanted to take a risk and do something. You know. A life affirming event."

In addition to quotes and phrases, text based tattoos were also single words. Larell has "respect" on his inner arm, and Chris has "enigma" tattooed across his upper back. The latter explains, like John does above, that the tattoo is an embodiment of himself:

> "I'm very spontaneous. I do things that make no sense. Like I'll just drive out to like the Eastern shore, just to go there. I don't know. I've always been just kind of strange I guess. Not strange but um, I don't know, just kind of did my own thing and people never really understood it. And one time my friend was like 'you're an enigma. I just can't figure you out. What are you doing, where are you going?' I don't know. Going to Ocean City. A couple days later, I was like, why don't you tattoo 'enigma' on my back."

Representing an aspect of one's life was also done with images. Vincent's image represented his philosophy of questioning of life. Jennifer's butterfly and bee design symbolized how she is not a "girly girl." The picture of a girl's face that is half skull with a finger pressed to her lips that Larell has is to represent his beliefs that beauty is only skin deep and that people

ought not kiss and tell. Anna and her friends and Tia and her friends all received a matching tattoo to honor their friendship bond. Other interviewees had, were planning or would get tattoos of loved ones names or initials.

Taken together, whether acquired for social or individual reasons, tattoos often are private affirmations of personal sentiments including self-identity. When visible, however, they communicate the person's self-perceptions and values to others. Nonetheless, as the literature shows, people who have tattoos are aware of the continuing, though declining, stigma associated with their chosen form of body modification. For this reason no doubt, interviewees in this study expressed the importance of placing tattoos in concealable locations (arms legs, torso, back) on the body.

Racial images as tattoos. The use of tattoos regarding racial identity has yet to be analyzed in depth. However, the third most frequent type of tattoo discussed by the adults in this study was Chinese characters. Six of the 20 interviewees who had or wanted tattoos had or wanted Chinese characters. Another Asian image tattoo acquired by two additional respondents (Chris and Larell) was the yin yang. Whereas Chris admits he "never really gave much thought to the meaning of it. It's just the design I like," Larell described a racialized motive for the desiring the image. Larell, who learned of the image from a book of poetry he read as a child, considers the image a reminder of his childhood that quite literally is descriptive of his racial self. "It represents me" he said, "Just um, I'm white and black. Very spiritual." As with the Chinese characters that Dean use to desire, Larell was reading his own racialized experience into another culture's image.

The fact that only one of the six interviewees with or desiring of Chinese character tattoos, and neither of the interviewees with yin yang tattoos, actually had Chinese heritage

underscores the popularity of Chinese character tattoos among non-Chinese descent people. This was brought up by Heather who feels that "Non-Asians have messed [Chinese characters] up for Asians. You don't see Asian people with Asian tattoos. Not often. I won't say they don't. But I would say it's a rarity." Heather, who is black and Asian, was very critical of non-Asians who acquired "trendy" Asian language characters as tattoos, saying "You're not Asian, you don't know what that little character means. Cause it could really mean something else like." Yet her sentiments, while specifically about Chinese characters, were actually part of a larger critique of cultural appropriation via tattooed images. Dave explained that "tribal" images are standard shelf designs in tattoo parlors but that he felt they "appropriate and at the same time strip of meaning" the "indigenous art" of Hawaiian, Samoan and other Pacific Island cultures. John agrees; and for this reason, despite liking the designs, says he will not get a tribal tattoo. He says:

> "I really like those uh, like Samoan warrior tattoos. I think those are really cool. I'm not fucking Samoan so I'm not going to do it. I'm not Samoan. So that's why I didn't. But I like the designs, I like the way they look. And it just seems like it has this really classical feel to it um that I admire. But I don't think I would get it."

In addition to appropriating Asian and Pacific Island images, Mark lamented the use of native symbols and images as "tribal" tattoos. When asked how this practice made him as a person of Native heritage feel, he used the words "aggravated" and "subversive." Chris for example, has what he calls a "tribal heart" tattoo on his left calf that he got for "just the hell of it." Mark described in his interview how he reacts when he encounters non-Native American people like Chris who have "tribal" tattoos:

> "[S]ometimes I question, if I'm feeling a little snarky, I'll be like, 'which tribe?' 'Uh, it's a tribal, man.' 'Yeah, okay, but I want to know which tribe did you appropriate?' Because if you're going to appropriate something for a tribal tattoo, you know, we should know. Right? Which one? Like 'You're not taking me seriously.' Oh no, I'm taking you very seriously. I just want to know why you call it a tribal tattoo. You know. [sigh] Snarkiness abounds."

As it is mostly white Americans who Mark says he sees with these tattoos, he feels that white hegemony's effect of rendering whiteness invisible leaves whites with a "curious um lack of identity. Um, which they then sometimes, some of them, will try to uh fill that space by appropriating something from some other culture that may not be their own." He sees them as "playing tourist" (or in Deloria's (1999) language "playing Indian") and wants to "destabilize their notions of why it's okay to go around doing stuff like that" in an attempt to "remind them that the world doesn't always play by their rules." Mark admits that this effort "can sometimes get people pissed off" but says he's "okay with that. I'm very okay with that."

While Asian, Pacific Islander and Native American symbols are used as tattoos by people other than the members of those races, other cultures' symbols seem to be only acquired as tattoos by people with that particular continental or country specific background. For example, Aaliyah and Dean discussed having and desiring, respectively, a tattoo of an African symbol and both have black heritage. Likewise, interviewees who had or desired tattoos of cultural images that were specific to a country also had familial connections to that culture. For example Smith's tattoo includes a Celtic knot, and his Father was Irish; Heather has a Jamaican flower tattoo, and her grandparents were Jamaican; and Sally has a tattoo of the Filipino flag, and her mother is Filipino.

Original synergistic designs. Another type of image that comes from one's own culture was seen in the four respondents who specifically discussed having or wanting a self-designed image that represents their mixed race racial identity. I call these original synergistic designs. Dave explained why he desired such an image. He explained that the stock images in tattoo shops do not reflect who he is. He said that there are patriot symbols (e.g., Bulldog, English flag), sexist images, (e.g., naked women), goth and mental images (e.g., symbols of death,

knives), and the "appropriated" indigenous artwork (e.g., native American or Samoan patterns) discussed above. Considering these options he says that:

> "I've never really seen anything that I really feel kinda represents you know I wanna make some kind of statement about racialized identity or something but I've never really see anything that represents any at tattoo parlors I often find the designs quite uninspiring."

When asked why he does not design an image himself he responded "I'm not good at that." Smith also reported poor artistic skills; but he was able to take advantage of tattoo artists' increasing professionalization as artists. He explained:

> "I'm pretty crap at art like really so like I put it together how I wanted and [the tattoo artist] was like 'well this won't work well,' so he like uh gave his idea of what it would look like and I thought I wouldn't like it but I saw it and really liked it and so I got it done."

Smith wanted a personalized image of his racial self, so his tattoo consists of: "[Chinese writing] because my mum is Chinese, Dad was Irish so I have a Celtic knot, and I was born in England so I have the English rose." Appendix C contains an artist's rendition of the image based on this description. Smith went on to disclose, however, what the Chinese lettering meant:

> "And what this says it say 'Flowers bloom roots grow deep,' it's a reminder to me that should I see any success I shouldn't change the person I am, or be any different you know cos you know how some people they get a bit of success they change a lot and get quite arrogant and a bit of a tool really, I've always been the way I am and I want to stay that way no matter what."

In other words, Smith's tattoo not only displays symbols of race but is also a part of the contemporary trend of acquisition of images and words which represent oneself and one's life philosophy.

Female respondents, one in each country, also stated a desire for race based tattoos with an original synergistic design. Emma described her desired tattoo design in detail. To signify the place of her birth (England), she wants to draw on her astrological sign, Aquarius; but instead of

the usual western style water pitcher she wants an Indian water pitch to connect with her mother's Indian heritage. The water flowing out of the tilted pitcher will flow into, thus forming, a personalized motto, which will be in French – the home land of one of her grandparents and where she herself lived for a while as child. Finally the image will be book ended by music notes because "I really love music. I've grown up around music." An artist's rendition of Emma's idea is presented in Appendix C.

Sally has a tattoo of the sun and stars from the Filipino flag; however, she originally wanted the image to combine her paternal European heritage as well. She explains that she "wanted to get the Filipino sun and stars. And then it's three stars. So I wanted each star to be like the colors of like the flag of the country that is like on the European side."

In sum, mixed race people in this sample favor tattoos with racial meaning. Some acquire images of symbols of their own culture while others follow broader trends such as getting images of Chinese characters and symbols as tattoos. A few like Larell and Dean read their own racialized life experiences into the symbols, thus attempting to meaningfully use another culture's image to express their own racial identity and experience. However the majority, like Chris and Carmen, simply acquire them because they were "just the design I like, " which "aggregated" Heather, Mark and others who see it as subversive cultural appropriation.

A unique type of racialized tattoo was identified by this research. Original synergistic designs provide a pictorial representation of one's understanding of her/his mixed race self-identity. It is one thing to tick a box as in the UK or to select multiple boxes as in the US; to inscribe an image on one's flesh conveys a much stronger feeling of identification. Moreover, the use of images allows for the express of a synergism that text (e.g., selecting a Census category)

or verbal affirmations (e.g., responses to "what are you?"), cannot produce. Finally, if the tattoo draws on common cultural symbols, when it is placed in an especially visible location on the body it may perhaps reduce the racial ambiguity of the person; and others who see it have an answer to the "what are you" question that is often raised by the natural elements of a mixed race person's phenotype.

With two-thirds of the sample tattooed or desirous of one or more tattoos, mixed race individuals of both genders and in both countries appear to be participating in the growing trend of tattoo acquisition. Aligned with the new norms of "respectability" (Burgess and Clark 2010) they either get "cute" tattoos or have their images placed on easily concealable body parts. Moreover, their reasons behind their acquisition also accords with the larger body modification literature. They are seeking to express individuality and personal meaning. While animals were the most frequent type of image chosen as a tattoo, if one aggregates all racial / ethnic symbols into one category, then racialized tattoos, acquired or desired by 13 of the 20 respondents who have or desire a tattoo, are actually the most frequent type of tattoo in this sample. From appropriation of other cultures to symbols of one or more of one's own cultures, the findings presented herein point to the need to pay attention to the hows and whys of racialized bodily adornment.

"A bit rebellious. A bit of a statement:" Practices and perceptions of piercings

Another wide spread form of bodily adornment practiced by the mixed race interviewees in this study is piercing. The topic was not a part of the original interview guide, but once interviewees began bringing it up on their own I began to ask questions about it to all subsequent participants. Of the 26 mixed race adults with whom I discussed piercings, all but three (Smith,

Bo, and Mark) had at least one piercing. The majority (19 of the 23 with piercings) had one or both ears pierced. Nose piercings were the second most frequent type of piercing reported. However, of the eight interviewees (four from each country but only one male) who pierced their noses, half no longer used the hole by the time of the interview. Belly button and tongue piercings were similarly received in the past (by three interviewees each) but were no longer being used by the respondents' mid-20s.

In both countries and for both men and women, ear piercing was done during childhood. Emma says she "got my ears pierced when I was two." When he was eight, Larell's step father took the boys in the family to get their ears pierced. He remembers it was "Me and my twin and my stepbrother. We all got them pierced. So. It was cool." Having one's ears pierced while young was seen as normal by the interviewees. Sydney reaffirmed this by discussing how she did not get her ears pierced "until" she was a teenager. She explains this deviation from the childhood timeline was due to her mother's restrictions. Despite characterizing her mother as "a very open, liberal person" she adds "but she didn't let me get my ears pierced until I was fifteen." The more usual case, however, is someone like Suzie, whose ears were pierced once as a child but then "in college you go 'I'm old enough to get tattoos, I'm old enough to-'. So I got [my ears] pierced again but I never wore the second earring. And then I tried to get one piercing on the top of my ear. Like you know in the cartilage." Youthful personal "statement" making was cited as a key motiving factor in getting piercings beyond the singular hole in one's ears. Fleur reveals that she "had a nose piercing when I was younger that was just kind of being young and wanting to be a bit different. A bit rebellious. A bit of a statement." Anna too had a nose piercing at one time. When asked why she did it she explained:

> "I guess I just wanted to kind of,- I think at the time, it was a nice form of self-expression in body modification. And I had kind of gotten used to piercings, doing that through piercing. And so I thought I'd kind of venture out from the ears onto the face."

The association of piercing with youthful rebellion is perhaps a reason why some interviewees see it as unprofessional. Discussing facial piercings, Sydney, who is a physician, says:

> "Some people it looks great on. Some people get piercings and look really, really cute. Someone told me one time, 'oh, you should get your nose pierced.' And I was like, as a professional, if you're really pierced up, people are going to be like, 'what's wrong with you?'"

John agrees that visible piercings, even just the ears, would be viewed as unprofessional; but he cites the racial association with "thugs" as the reason why it looks unprofessional for part black men in particular. Despite having both ears pierced and liking to wear earrings, John, a clinical psychology graduate student, never wears earrings when he sees clients. He explains that as a black male graduate student, more so than other graduate students:

> "everything that we wear and everything that we do is like, micro analyzed by professors. Um so I think when I wear my earrings, it gives off more of a, what's the word I want to use here? Um, at least to them. It gives off more of the um classic street thug vibe. Because I have two, as well. Um, yeah. I wouldn't dare wear like a necklace or anything. Even though I wish I could."

Vincent, too, seeks to avoid association with stereotypical blackness. While stressing that he doesn't have anything "against" black culture, he is a self-described purposefully "smart" dresser, a British descriptor akin to "preppy" or "clean cut" in the United States. He is shaven, has close cropped hair and no visible tattoos or piercings. Explaining his choice of self-presentation, which he acknowledges is not what is typically associated with blackness, he says:

> "I was also very aware of perception. And how we perceive people based on different factors. And I was very much aware that I didn't want to become a stereotype. Because I know what stereotypes lead to. Um you know prejudice, et cetera, et cetera."

The association of earrings, at least for part black men, with black "street" culture, while a liability for professionals such as John and Vincent, is, by contrast, advantageous for Dean, an aspiring musician in the UK. Dean only has one ear pierced but surmises that were he to pierce the other and wear two earrings he would look more like a "proper rapper," which would be beneficial not detrimental to him. Frost, as discussed in the section on hip hop in chapter 3, originally pierced his ears in high school to achieve the hip hop/rapper look Dean mentioned.

Certain styles of earrings in ear piercings have specific cultural connotation for women as well. The interviewees who most explicitly discussed their piercings in terms of their race and being mixed race were part-Asian women in the UK. British Asian women like Mary and Claire used jewelry and piercings to look more Asian. Mary recounts that:

> "This nose piercing, funny enough I got that done when I was studying um my own masters and I was doing British Asian youth culture, and a lot of Bengali kids, well not a lot, but some of the Bengali community have, you know, nose piercings and I just always use to think that's really attractive and pretty. And also for some reason in my mind I identified that with, as quite *Persian*, quite *oriental*. So because I was studying that group and sort of identifying with the more *oriental* side of myself in a way, I got it done and I've just always kept in (emphasis in original)."

Claire's piercing too is related to her Asian culture. She mentioned a diamond nose stud from her Sri Lankan grandmother during our interview, elaborating that:

> "It is quite common in Sri Lanka to have a nose stud. And I think you know it was quite trendy at the time, in the '90s. And I've got a good excuse anyway 'cause I'm half Sri Lankan, so I'll have it done. And I think part of me was sort of trying to identify a bit more with my Asian roots. And I did actually look more Asian. More people were more, I think, kind of, less surprised, put it that way, when I told them I was half Asian. When I had my nose stud."

Claire's and Mary's quote reveals that unlike hair or skin color, piercings, more so like make-up and certain tattoos, exercise their influence on racial persecution via the association with a culture.

CHAPTER 5

"I JUST LIKE THE WAY IT LOOKS:" THE NON-RACIAL DISCOURSE OF BODY WORK

"I will tan my life away:" Skin color management

"I don't come across as mixed race. Most people assume mixed race as being slightly lighter in skin colour" explained Vincent when talking about his identification as a black man. Other mixed race interviewees (e.g., Lisa, Aaliyah) similarly noted that in the collective imagination a mixed race person is light skinned. The appearances and self-descriptions of the interviewees in this study lend validity to Vincent, Lisa and Aaliyah's causal conclusions. About three quarters of the sample (73%) were by their own characterization considered "light skinned" for a non-white person. Twelve of the 30 interviewees actually used the words "light" or "pale" to describe their skin tone / complexion. "Olive" and "tan" were also said in the UK and US respectively. Among the mixed race interviewees, in both countries, the antebellum term "high yella" and the more modern "light bright" were both invoked as descriptors. Four Americans referenced food to describe their skin color, with caramel being mentioned thrice. Only three interviewees - George (41, UK, Asian/black), Vincent (36, UK, black/white) and Heather (25, US, Asian/black) - were the darker brown color of hot chocolate or a Reese's Cup, to use Heather's dessert references.

Across both countries many interviewees strongly disliked their light/pale skin tone. Dave confides that he is "quite insecure about my complexion in many ways." Joy has "a fear of getting too pale." Mary says "I really hate being pale. Hate it." Claire feels her self-described "unpleasant beige colour" makes her "look a bit unwell, really;" and Anna agrees, saying her "pasty whiteness to me seems a little less healthy." For these and other reasons, almost two-

thirds of the sample stated that they preferred how they looked with a tan to their "natural" skin color. Judy admits that "[i]t makes me feel prettier when I'm tan…. I like a nice bronzy complexion." Fleur says "I think I look better definitely with a good tan. Darker the better." Mary, too, prefers herself "definitely darker." Sydney is more specific, noting how a tan makes her legs in particular look "longer and thinner" and more muscular. John, who is a body builder, prefers himself with a tan similarly because it enhances the appearance of muscles. Heather likes to get a tan "[e]ven though I am dark…. So I just have a really cute little sun kissed glow about me."

Fortunately for many mixed race people (a third of the total sample) they can achieve their desired shade because they "brown up quite easily" as Smith puts it. For the UK women, living in a city with limited sun like London, this feat was a source of jealously among their white friends. Sophie explains:

> "I felt people were like kinda jealous like actually no I *know* people were jealous everyone was like "you're so lucky! you're so brown! oh my god" and I'm like "I have a genetic advantage, love" do you know what I mean? I'm meant to be brown."

Emma has had the same experience with her white friends, reporting "I tan really easily. And quite a few of my friends are jealous of it. And they're like, 'oh, I wish I had your background in that.'" As Sims (2012) noted, certain characteristic features of non-whites, namely light brown skin, may be shifting position within the racialized beauty hierarchy. Light brown skin, rather than very pale skin, appears to now be the shade considered most attractive.

The most frequently reported method of intentionally tanning for mixed race people in both countries was laying out. Over half the sample said they enjoy the experience and the effects of laying out at the beach, pool or park in the summer or when on vacation. Some, like Sophie, even plan vacations with tanning in mind. During our June interview she revealed that

she was “planning a trip to Barbados in November to top up” her summer tan. According to Dean, laying out or “catching” the sun from being outside (discussed below) was “natural.” Other methods of tanning however were “cheating.” Specifically he “see[s] a tanning salon as cheating whereas the actually natural sun that’s fine.” Most of the sample shares his diastase for sunbeds, and no British and only three American interviewees (Joy, Judy and Tia) have ever tanned on a sunbed.

Whether tanning outside or inside, mixed race people, especially those with black heritage, who do tan often meet with incredulity from others. The cultural myth that non-whites cannot tan or burn and the assumption that mainstream white society’s negative valuation of dark skin is universally shared causes mixed race people who tan to receive at best funny looks and at worst racist comments. Sydney, for example, remembers a white friend in high school who told her father that she and Sydney were going to lay out tanning. The father, her friend later recounted to her, “knew that I was of mixed race but he had never met me. And he went 'haha, how can she get a suntan?"’ She characterized the comment as “Just sort of, a very ignorant thing to hear,” but admits it’s “not uncommon, unfortunately.” Lisa who is mixed race black/white and her husband, who is black, lay out while on vacation; and she notes that they receive “weird looks on the beach. Like, ‘what are you doing? You don't need a tan.’” Judy, one of the three interviewees to frequent tanning salons, says the white employees always “kind of stare at me, kind of puzzled” while she’s there. Some non-whites, too, are puzzled at mixed race people who purposely tan. Judy has a mixed race black/Mexican friend who told her “"you're crazy, why are you going into the tanning bed? Da da da da. That's weird."’

One reason part black mixed race tanners are greeted with such puzzlement is because tanning in general, and frequenting tanning salons in particular, is, as Heather said, “not a black

girl thing to do." Tia learned this in her youth. The adopted multiracial daughter of white parents, she spent her early childhood in a small, predominantly white town in southern Wisconsin and remembers that "as a child, I definitely laid out in the sun with all my little white friends. And it never really was brought up to me that it was weird to do." Upon the family moving to the bigger, more racially diverse city of Madison when she was nine, however, she "started realizing [tanning] was only a mixed girl, white girl thing." A similar sentiment appears in the UK as well. Vincent for example is critical of non-whites who lay out to tan, saying he does not "stay for like twenty minutes and turn. No. Some people do. 'Oh, I want to get a tan'. 'Dude, you're brown.'" Mixed race people with no black heritage who tan, like white/Asians Anna (US) and Mary (UK) for example, tell no such stories of weird looks or ignorant comments. Anna recounted how in high school she made "a concerted effort" to tan. While she says she never went to tanning salons, she and her friends used to "love the beach so we would go out you know and lay out for the day and go swimming." Her account ends here, with no reports of weird or puzzled looks while on the beach and no mention of any comments about her ability to tan or questioning her sanity for engaging in the activity.

In addition to being an activity that is culturally associated with whites, mixed race people who tan get "weird" looks because light skin is valued over dark skin. Desmond and Emirbayer (2010) observe that there is a "nearly worldwide acceptance of European standards of beauty" that epitomize "white beauty," with its "long, straight, blonde hair, blue eyes, and pale skin," and demonize "'black ugliness'- epitomized by short, curly, black hair, brown eyes and dark brown skin," (34). For this reason, many non-whites avoid the sun and/or even use products to lighten their skin color (ibid). Sophie talked about an Indian friend who felt this way:

> "[S]he was really really good friend of mine but she was constantly like 'oh my god I'm gonna get so brown' and I was like 'yeah that's good' and she was like 'no I don't want to be that brown' she was really worried like she really wanted to be light."

Emma's brother, Asian and white like her, is the same in that he too "hates being in the sun because it makes him darker." Vincent generalizes that in the UK, in the Indian community especially, "lighter skinned is deemed to be more, valuable is the wrong word. But you know it's a social cache with the lighter skin."

A similar social cache exists in the black community in the US. Aaliyah, who describes herself as "darker than a lot of the mixed people I know. Um and darker than some black people I know too," used to "run from the sun 'cause I thought I would get too dark." John's friends were like Aaliyah, and while he tans he says he has "heard a lot of my friends say 'no, I'm staying the fuck outa the sun. I'm not going in the sun.'" Only two interviewees mentioned they prefer their non-tanned skin color, part black American women Carmen and Annette who described their skin tone as caramel brown and medium respectively.

As a member of a society that values light skin over dark and as member of a "[sub]culture where people actually avoid the sun" (as Tia puts it), purposely aspiring to darker skin seems illogical to both mainstream and black and Indian subcultural sensibilities. One is already brown, as Vincent points out, and so the ideology that lighter is better would logically lead one to desire to maintain one's skin color, or lighten it, but not to purposely darken it.

While some interviewees continue to "tan my life away" as Joy would say, regardless, others do not go out of their way to intentionally tan. Nevertheless, though, they also do not mind, like Carmen and Annette do, if they happen to get a tan. "Just bumbling around" or doing "outdoorsy" activities was the most frequent way to tan unintentionally. For Mark, for example, "skin tone was never a big deal in that sense. Mostly what it would boil down to, it's summer, I

get a tan, yay. But that's about as much as it ever got to." Jennifer "wouldn't mind a tan at all" and can tell she is "a little darker already just by being out for a few hours" walking around the city. However as her native Seattle is "grossly humid" and she doesn't find the "sun beating down on me" comfortable, she prefers to stay in the shade to laying out or using a sunbed. The gentlemen in the sample likewise will tan from just being outdoors (e.g., playing football, cycling, walking on the beach with one's wife), but none do it on purpose. In fact, Chris and Smith specially have a "whatever" / "I don't care" attitude towards if they are tan or not.

Whether tanning was intentional or unintentional, more interviewees felt like having a tan altered others' racial perception of them than felt like it did not. Almost all of the black/white interviewees in the UK felt like being tanner makes others more likely to perceive them as "straight black" than when their skin tone is lighter; and all three female white/Asian interviewees felt they looked more Asian with a tan versus not. Dean offered the observation that he gets asked about his race less when he has a tan as evidence that others are perceiving him as unambiguously black. Mary feels like she looks more Asian when she gets "quite dark" in the summer; but unlike Dean and other black/white interviewees, tanning for Mary leads to "you know, Arab kinda Iranian questions." When she is "sort of pale" in the winter she does not get asked about her race as much and feels like "maybe people just think I'm English."

Interviewees and other Londoners with whom I discussed my research explain that the reason that light skin is not seen as authentically black or Asian is the recent immigration history of the United Kingdom. Despite claiming to not be "up" on his African diaspora history Dean explains why in the UK, unlike in the US or Caribbean, only darker skin is seen as "proper" or "straight" black:

> "it's a shorter history even though we have been here for actually quite a long time like literally like 1500s and stuff there was a black presence even earlier but our mass, we

> came over from like Jamaica and uh in the 50s and yeah African immigrants here is like late 70s/80s uh so it's not a long history like America…a lot the time it's not a parent why you're light skinned it's just because its 'cause of a parents' parent or a parent's parent parent and- Styles P had a line… 'I'm black even though my skin's kinda light/ it means my ancestors was raped by somebody white.'"

As discussed in chapter 3, Indians and other Asians began immigrating to the UK in mass only post-World War II (Alibhai-Brown 2001). For this reason, a light skinned non-white person in the UK is more likely than a light skinned non-white American to be the child or grandchild of recent interracial (white/non-white) union. Due to the longer history of racial mixing (albeit often unilateral in desire) in the US, an American non-white person who has light skin color may have received those genes not from a white parent or grandparent but from a white ancestor as far back as the slave master.

Despite the historically conditioned perceptions that accompany skin shade, a few interviewees felt that having a tan did not alter their racial appearance. Fleur for example responded to my asking if having a tan altered her racial appearance with an unequivocal "No. I think it brings out my contrast more. I think it brings out the contrast of you know my skin color versus my [blue] eye color and now my [blonde] hair color." In the US, Joy similarly does not think darker skin affects her racial appearance. Unlike Dean, she still gets asked about her race when she has a tan, which leads her to conclude that it "might mean I'm not getting as dark as I think I am in my head." In other words, there appears to be a threshold shade only darker than which one is seen as unambiguously black. Tanning appears to push some mixed race people over the threshold but not others.

Alternately, instead of a shade threshold the key perceptual factor may be type of brown as Claire explains she thinks it is for Asians. Discussing the difference between herself and her brother when they tan, she notes that when she tans:

> "I never look Asian. I still look like I've got a tan. So with my brother. He looks more Asian than me. He's got a sort of slightly different brownness to him... He goes sort of brown brown. Like Asian. Like my cousins or you know my mum. And I look like I've got a really good tan. So not like a reddy brown. More of a deep golden sort of colour."

Likewise, for Asian/white American Anna, tanning does not make her look more Asian. She admits having a tan alters the way she looks but doesn't believe it "would affect it to the point where people would begin thinking something else."

Of purposefully altering one's skin color, Mary observed that "half the world is trying to be darker and half, the other half, is trying to be paler. And everyone is trying to get to Beyoncé's shade, roughly, aren't they?" Based on the results of this study, mixed race people fall into the former group, i.e., those trying to be darker. Yet despite many admitting a preference for darker skin and acknowledging that it alters others' racial perception of them, all but one cited their love of the sun (e.g., liking the heat, how nice the sun feels on one's skin) and the positive physical and mental health benefits of sunlight as the reasons for tanning rather than management of racial appearance.

Regarding physical benefits, the word "even" was repeatedly invoked to describe why one wanted or preferred a tan. Sally for example explained that tanning is "not really about the skin color, it's just about having, like, an even tone." Lisa agrees, noting of her skin when she has a tan that "It looks nice because it's more even." The reason skin looks "nice" with a tan is because, for these mixed race interviewees, paleness was equated with illness. Claire's family and friends' comments to her in the winter are illustrative:

> "It's a joke with my friends, I go beige in the winter because I get really, really pale. But I'm not white. But I kind of look a bit unhealthy. And my mum is like 'oh, darling, you look so pale. Are you all right? You look really ill'. You know. So I have this unfortunate pallor in the winter where I look a bit unwell, really."

In the US, Anna agrees that "that kind of pasty whiteness to me seems a little less healthy. It just looks less healthy." Having a tan, by contrast, looks healthier. Moreover, in addition to looking healthier, interviewees reported that their skin *feels* better with a tan as well. Sophie, who had had a tan earlier in the summer before our interview, discussed the feeling:

> "I think it's just nice and you feel good you know like I feel, like not right now, cos like my skin's now like 'well where has the sun shine gone,' like I'm just gonna go crusty and stuff. And it's all really ashy like I just have to constantly moisturize it's disgusting but like whereas when I was in sun I felt good."

Tia, one of the three interviewees to use a tanning bed, admits to using one "a couple winters here and there" because tan skin "feel[s] moister and nicer." As Sally noted of tanning and evenness, Tia too claims her tanning is "not really about changing my skin color as more like the tone and the healthiness."

In addition to interviewees like Sally and Tia stating that their tanning was not about changing their skin color as much as it was motivated by the non-race-based reasons given, others were more explicit about denying racial appearance alteration as the reason by specifically stating that their affinity for tanning and/or darker skin was *not* to look more like a given non-white race. Smith does not care about tanning, but his younger brother is "always sunning himself, the sun comes out he's out in the garden." Nevertheless, Smith stresses that "I don't think he tans up to try to look foreign." Judy does not either, saying altering her racial appearance is "not the reason I tan. I just like the way it looks." Sophie loves tanning but "that's not because like I want to seem appear blacker or be whatever I just think it just sort of gives you a healthy glow."

Unlike in Khanna and Johnson's 2010 study, none of the interviewees in my sample discussed intentionally tanning as a conscious manipulation of phenotype. Dave did admit he likes it when he gets a tan because "it's linked to me trying to escape I think an ambiguous

appearance and be seen more as black or black mixed race you know." Dave is "very light" and in both the UK and US light skin is seen as inauthentic for non-whites (Ali 2003, Khanna and Johnson 2010). Dave's appearance, therefore, does not accord with his "radical" black identity, so tanning is a way to not only be seen by others as black but, perhaps more importantly, to create congruence in his own mind between his outward appearance and inner identity. Nevertheless, he characterizes himself as "not like a really committed sunbather." In other words, despite liking the effect on his racial appearance he does not tan on purpose as a conscious manipulation of phenotype.

Despite the interviewees not using tanning to influence others' racial perception of them, they were aware that other mixed race people do so and were critical of the practice. Heather for example says she "used to feel some type of way about light skinned women who go to tanning beds… like, what are you doing with your life? Like you're getting skin cancer to be browner? But really, you're tanning to look the way white people look when they tan." Heather, like Dave, has what can be described as a "radical" (or in academic terminology "critical") black identity. But unlike Dave her self-described "brown" /"dark" skin color corresponds with her ideology. Due to different experiences of embodiment, Heather is unable to relate to the internal reasons a light skinned mixed race person might purposely tan. She draws the conclusion that the appearance one is seeking is the dominant Euro-centric look when, in both Dave's case and in the case of Khanna and Johnson's one interviewee, that is actually not what is motivating the person.

Unlike Heather, Mark, who is very light skinned, understands the rationale behind Dave and others' tanning efforts; but he says that tanning to look more Native (or by extension black, Latino, or Asian) is "on some level, that seems kind of wrong…. it's like, wow, someone who is

so insecure in their identity as to want to do that." Mark recognizes that there may be "good reasons for people maybe feeling that way," but nonetheless characterizes tanning to look more like a given race as the actions of an insecure person. Like Dave, Mark's outward appearance (mainly his skin color) does not correspond with society's ideal type phenotype of his inward racial group membership feelings. A 49 year old Native American/white man, Mark is not bothered by this fact as much as the 30 year old black/white Dave is however. Whereas not appearing "black" by society's construction bothers Dave and so he appreciated a tan so as to more closely approximate it, Mark by contrast rejects society's narrow conceptualization of what a Native American looks like and thus does not feel a mis-match between his appearance and identity like Dave does. He states that "Even if I'm not your idea of an Indian, I'm still an Indian." Perhaps this comfort with one's self is a privilege of age that mixed race people like Dave, who admits to aspiring to value "natural" beauty, will achieve as he ages. Or perhaps, as Mark is part Native American and Dave is part black, it is further evidence of the unique difficulties of mixed race people who are part black compared to those who have no black heritage. Regardless, discussions of tanning, for whatever stated reasons, highlight the continuing importance - physical, mental, personal and social - of skin color for mixed race adults.

"I was meeting you:" Facial hair, or lack there of

For the men, often hair and facial hair were conceived of together. Dave for example, began his response to my question about facial hair by talking at length about his afro. Vincent, in discussing why he prefers a clean shaven look, mentioned that styles like dreadlocks are not

for him, as if, in his mind, facial hair is a part of such a style. Mark also mentioned hair/facial hair combination styles.

Ten of the eleven men discussing having, having had, or wanting to have facial hair. John explains that he was happy to grow it because he "wanted to show off my masculinity." Conversely, Smith lamented not being able to grow the "massive mutton chops like Sherlock Holmes" that was "the look" among his peers in high school. Additionally, another reason the men gave for preferring facial hair was to avoid having a "baby butt face" as Bo puts it.

Nevertheless, the men were sometimes clean shaven. When asked if he usually has facial or not Vincent replied that he "just shaved today actually. I was meeting you." That an interview is occasion to shave is a view shared by the other male interviewees. Being clean shaved is considered a "quite smart" look to use British vernacular, one that is more "presentable" and professional than facial hair. There were racial undertones, however, in the characterizations of clean shaven versus having facial hair. Due to the association of whiteness with presentably, failing to arrange ones facial hair to accord with the dominant group's vision of well-groomed leads to non-white racial ascription. When asked if wearing his facial hair different ways alters how others perceive him Larell replied:

> "Definitely. People say I look more black when I like wear my beard. I think it's just because I look more gutter, kind of… Like, hood. I don't know how to explain it. Like if I have a whole beard and stuff. Um, I guess it's just like, the opposite. I guess I use that just because it's the opposite of like clean cut, groomed. You know what I'm saying. That's kind of a white perspective, almost. Even though you know brothers can be clean and groomed too."

Other men, too, believe that wearing their facial hair different ways "totally" affects the way they appear racially. Frost says that "the full beard has also made, given me a more Hispanic appeal. And usually when I'm in a goatee, a lot of times I can, I come across as more neutral." Mark says that with short hair, a mustache and goatee he feels he probably appears more white.

Were he to "let my hair grow out. But keep the facial hair neatly trimmed" he suspects that he would "probably get taken more readily for being Native American."

Despite knowing that how they wear their facial hair affects others' racial perceptions of them, none of the men discussed arranging their facial hair in certain ways to that end. The men discussed their day to day facial hair styles in terms of "laziness," not calculated choice. Smith explained the presence of his facial hair saying that it was "not intentional it's just out of laziness 'cause I'm on I'm on like a little trip in London and didn't carry a razor with me." Dean discloses that "if I'm not lazy yeah pretty clean shaven." In the US, Frost prefers having a goatee but "hate[s] the maintenance on it." John says he would only wear a full beard if he had not "had a chance to shave."

That the men characterize not shaving as "lazy" tells us that being clean shaven, or at least having very trimmed facial hair, is the predominant look for a man in both countries. Despite recognizing the racial underpinnings of this ideal type, the men through their explanations and self-chastisement (i.e., calling themselves lazy) are revealing that they have bought into it as well. Larell, who identifies as African American and who noted that having facial hair was associated with blackness nonetheless admits that he feels he "look[s] more presentable when I don't have it."

"Just more, vivid I think:" Make-up, or lack there of

As with maintaining facial fair for men, wearing make-up for women hinged on perceived amount of effort involved. Five women reported wearing make-up frequently, 8 reported wearing little or none and the rest fell in the middle of the two extremes. Of the women who do not wear (much) make-up, half admitted to wearing it in their youth but not anymore due

to too much effort being required. Tia for example rarely wears make-up but remembers when "I used to be obsessed to put it all on. But now I don't." When asked what made her change she says "I just grew up and I guess my priorities changed…. I started being a mom, mom of five, I got way too much other crap to do than worry about putting on my face." This "laziness" as Tia calls it was the main reason cited for the women's' make-up-lessness. Mary, for example, like Tia, is a mother and says "I can't be bothered during the day, I just don't have time." It is noteworthy that in spite of acquiring new responsibilities as a mother the women nonetheless refer to not putting on make-up as "lazy." This suggests the deep internalization of the belief that a well-groomed/properly attired woman wears make-up.

Some women, who are not mothers, cite laziness/not being able to be bothered too. For example, Judy says that "I don't want to be bothered and it's too much to put on and it melts off." More frequently however non-mothers offer other explanations for their bare faces. Sophie and Claire are "not big into" make-up and both feel they do not "even look like me you know" when wearing make-up. Annette and Aaliyah both feel like they have yet to "master" make-up application, with the former adding that "whenever I'm made up, that's what I feel like. I'm made up. And I hate that feeling." Suzie (and Sophie) claims that she does not wear much make up because she is not a "girly girl." These women all prefer their "natural beauty" to lots of make-up.

Nevertheless, a handful of the ladies in the sample did frequently wear make-up. Even among these, however, Joy was a rarity in reporting that she wears "Everything. Um, I wear foundation, mascara, eyeliner, eye shadow and I line my eyebrows. Probably everyday." Sally's statement that "I pretty much just do my eyes" is more representative. Eye make-up was the most

commonly mentioned practice that was discussed in detail. Emma for example described, while looking for pictures to show me, how she wears her eye make-up:

> "I put loads of fake black eyeliner on my eyes with gold. Like, I always wear gold. Um, black eyeliner. I do quite thick at the top, quite thick at the bottom. And just do the fake bits on the ends of the eyes as well."

Heather likewise does heavy eye make-up, explaining "I like eye makeup because I like my eyes to match my outfit or whatever. You know. A little pop of color."

A result of eye make-up, particularly dark eye liner, is a highlighting of one's eyes, which has racial perception implications for some of the ladies. Emma, 22, white and Indian, wears dark eye liner as described above. The effect is that she is mistaken for, or asked if she is, Egyptian. Mary and Sally both feel that make-up, particularly eye make-up, makes them look more Persian and Filipino respectively. It appears that eye make-up emphasizes non-white heritage, one's actual heritage or some other heritage. Sally hypothesizes it is because "[eye-liner] makes my eyes look kind of more almond shaped."

While eye shape is made more pronounced with make-up, which affects racial perception, eye make-up also highlights or even subtly alters the perception of the color of one's eyes as well. This too has effects for racial perception. Fleur "always" wears eye liner, mascara and eye shadow and admits it is "probably" to further highlight her distinctive blue eyes. As discussed in chapter 6, though, her blue eye color juxtaposed with her light brown skin is one of the main reasons she has been so often asked "where are you from." Highlighting them serves to reinforce the contrast and, by extension, increase her racial ambiguity. A similar phenomenon occurs when Emma wears dark liner as she does. Her normally light brown eyes "stand out more with the black. And um people have asked me if I've put contact lenses in." Indirect questions about physical features were shown in chapter 4 to be "slick" ways of inquiring about a

phenotypically ambiguous person's race. Emma, like Fleur, can be said to become more ambiguous in appearance due to application of make-up.

In addition to make-up influencing racial perception via its effects of highlighting racialized corporal features, because women in different cultures wear make-up differently, how an ambiguous woman wears her make-up can influence her racial perception. Annette and Jennifer are taken for Latino more often when they are wearing make-up, particularly "if I do my eye makeup crazy"; but unlike Mary, Emma, and Sally, it is not because a physical feature associated with Latino phenotype is highlighted. Instead, it is because of the differential make-up practices associated with women of different races. Annette explains:

> "Um I do know that in general, a lot of black women do not wear makeup and a lot of Hispanic women do. So if you're going to look at more of a cultural aspect, if I'm already being mistaken for being Hispanic, um by wearing makeup, that might you know increase the likelihood of that happening. Um just like wearing certain kinds of clothes might do that."

Annette lives in Los Angeles and Jennifer in New York City, so the association of Latinas' heavy make-up application, at least vis-à-vis black women, appears to be, if not throughout the country, at least bicoastal. Carmen and an Indian American friend used this association to manipulate their phenotype in high school to appear more Latino. Carmen explains that:

> "[W]hen I was about fifteen or so, I was going through confirmation at Church. And I was hanging out with a lot of Hispanic kids. Because their parents are really into you know getting baptized, first communion, confirmation, Catholicism. And I started hanging out with some Hispanic girls. And wearing the dark lipstick and the thick black eyeliner. And just wearing my clothes like Hispanic kids wear their clothes. And getting a belt that had like, my initial. I don't know what I was thinking. You know. But I did that a little bit."

Despite saying that they accomplished their goal of looking Latina, as evidenced by people speaking Spanish to them, Carmen reveals that she did not really fit in because "I knew that I'm

not straight Hispanic. I didn't speak Spanish. I didn't talk like they talk…. And it didn't last that long. Because I felt uncomfortable, like, weird."

The two mechanisms by which make-up influences racial perception just discussed can work in tandem as well as separately. For example, Heather's Asian heritage is highlighted when she wears make-up for both of the reasons above. Regarding her eyes, she notes that "with some eyeliner on, some mascara, okay, I'm going to look a little bit more Asian." But, at least in her native Seattle, Washington, blush too makes her appear more Asian because:

> "At home, they say only Asian girls wear blush. So putting pink on my cheeks. If I'm in Seattle, that's like an Asian thing. Black girls will do, like, bronzer. But that's a little different because you put it on your forehead and stuff like that. But pink cheeks. That's very, not quite all the way Harajuku, but you know that's Asian. That's what Asian girls do. So yeah."

Harajuku is a one square mile area of Tokyo, Japan that has not only become the fashion center of the country but is now established with London, Paris, New York and Milan as an iconic global fashion capital (Godoy 2007). Heather's darker skin would usually preclude others from automatically categorizing her as Asian or part-Asian; however with make-up, both because it highlights her stereotypically Asian physical features and because of the association of her make-up style with Asian fashion, her mixed race heritage is more evident. She did not, however, mention or imply that this was ever the reason for her make-up choices.

While Heather characterizes her style as "not quite all the way Harajuku," Sara on the other hand is "quite Goth." She often wears "dark eyes," "a lot of piercings" and is into heavy metal music. Because "there's not many black people who are Goth," she is often not perceived to be "proper black." As an example, she tells a story of meeting a gentleman on New Year's Eve who said to her "'oh you're Goth! And your black!' and the next day he said to me 'You're not proper black are you?'" Styles of make-up, then, are associated with particular sub-cultures

which are themselves associated with particular races and not others. Make-up, therefore, is able to influence what race a phenotypically racially ambiguous mixed race person is perceived to be both by highlighting physical features which are associated with a particular race and via particular styles of make-up which are generally associated with particular races.

In discussing make-up's effect on one's appearance, a few women, notably only black/white Americans, reported that they did not feel like make-up alters their racial appearance[13]. Regarding drawing attention to (racialized) physical features, Lisa, an American expatriate who has lived in the UK her entire adult life, notes that "I'm still black, whatever colors I wear on my face." According to her, make-up can simply allow one to "get dramatic or subtle or whatever else. You can make yourself look a bit more awake. You know if you're tired and stuff," but not alter how she appears racially. Suzie references femininity, saying that her appearance changes if she wears make-up but it "has nothing to do with race. That's just, she's dressing like a woman, okay."

These and other black/white American women's claims that make-up does not alter how they appear racially but makes them look more "awake" and "like a woman" are verbatim echoes of Kaw's (1993) Asian plastic surgery patients' characterization of the effects of their eye lid surgery. Kaw focused on the cultural and institutional forces that motivated Asian American women to have plastic surgery with particular attention to their discourse around surgically altering racialized facial features such as the shape of their eyes and noses. As noted in the foregoing discussion, Kaw's interviewees' stated motivation for their surgery was to "look their best as women," (75). Nevertheless, since the "small, narrow" or "small, slanty" eyes and "flat"

[13] Maya by contrast did comment on how make-up affected her racial appearance, noting that the juxtaposition of lipstick emphasizing her larger lips and her ability to use "white girl hues" due to her skin tone meant make -up made her look mixed. In this regard she is like the black/white men in the sample who attributed their ambiguous/mixed look to the combination of their light skin and African facial features.

nose they sought to alter are "conventional markers" of Asian heritage (75), Kaw pointed out that "the standard of beauty they try to achieve through surgery is motivated by a racial ideology that infers negative behavioral or intellectual characteristics from a group's genetic physical features," (79). Consequently, as make-up highlights black/white American women's features in such a way as to make them look more "awake" and "like a woman," it cannot be ruled out that perhaps make-up does in fact alter black/white women's racial appearance in so far as it may highlight white heritage with which alertness and feminine beauty are associated.

"Michael should have stopped at the Bad album": Mixed thoughts on plastic surgery

Not one of the mixed race people in this study with whom plastic surgery was discussed (N=26) reported that they would ever even consider any facial plastic surgery such as the eye or nose surgeries Kaw's interviewees received. In fact, 65% said they would not consider any type of plastic surgery at all. The main reasons given were that it was too expensive / not worth the money and, more substantively, that they were "quite happy with the way I look." References to God, such as "God made me the way I am" were also used to disavow plastic surgery. John summarized the general sentiment with: "Physically, stuff like that, I'm comfortable with myself for the most part. Obviously I have insecurities like everybody else. But there's nothing that I would go under the knife for."

Despite John characterizing "everybody" as having insecurities, only a small handful of interviewees actually mentioned these in their interviews. Smith was the only interviewee who discussed disliking his overall appearance. He recalls that:

> "I remember I didn't like being half Chinese because like I said it was a, it was a very white area, and although we didn't really get any racial trouble or anything I suppose

> when you're young you know you want to fit in and you don't want to be different, so I never liked uh being half Chinese."

Smith's feeling changed, however, when he was about 15 because girls "thought it was, a little bit exotic I think. Um, yeah that's why I think, I remember distinctly that's why, like, it became cool it became okay."

Early to mid-teens was about the time two black/white interviewees, Dave in the UK and Sydney in the US, both "didn't like how my nose looked," albeit for opposite reasons. As discussed in chapter 3, Dave went through a "pro-black" phase in his late teens. It was at this time that he "used to really dislike my nose actually… it's very much my father's nose, and it seemed very European and I was quite angry at white folks at that time and didn't want a European nose." Dave also disliked his nose because he felt it contributed to the "pretty boy" image he resented. While he never considered plastic surgery he recalls that he "use to kinda hit it a lot like I wanted to break it and in way it was to move away from this kind of pretty boy mixed race stereotype."

Whereas Dave disliked his nose for being too European, Sydney disliked her nose because she "thought it was too wide," i.e., quite Afrocentric. Heather makes a keen observation regarding (de)valuation of physical features associated with different races saying "That's something for years and years and years we've been told. That we've got that monkey nose… No, you don't need to get your nose changed." At 14, however, getting her nose changed was precisely what was on Sydney's mind. She discussed potentially having the plastic surgery with her mother who responded:

> "'[I]f you really don't like it by the time that you're nineteen, maybe we will consider plastic surgery'. But she said to me 'your nose is going to change'… Your nose is going to get a little longer like mine'. And it did. And now I like my nose."

Whereas Dave eventually "came to accept it more though by looking at people such as Bob Marley who of course has a very straight nose," Sydney's resolution came from achieving closer approximation to the Eurocentric ideal, albeit naturally by simply finishing "growing into" her body. Both cases suggest that noses are a very racialized facial feature for those with black ancestry and, as Heather pointed out, the dominant society has ingrained in its members the ideology that black's noses should look a certain way (i.e., wide, not "straight") but that that way is "not cute."

Other interviewees also gave their folk sociological analyses of plastic surgery. While Sophie mused that she might like "maybe a bit of Botox or something when I'm older, like much older," other interviewees like Sara, Bo and Tia expressed ill feelings towards desire for plastic surgery to reverse signs of aging. Sara used to think she would get a face lift and/or breast lift when she got older, but now she has changed her mind. She now sees plastic surgery as "it's like saying I don't value old people" and considers it "buy[ing] into the ageist thing." Tia agrees, reporting that a friend has been depressed since turning 30 and is "flipping out" over "getting old." The friend wants get plastic surgery but cannot afford it, and Tia speculates that "If I dropped a million dollars in her lap, guarantee, [plastic surgery] would be on the first five. Yeah. She'd do what normal people do, then she'd go nip tucked and sliced up."

While not something they themselves would seek, most interviewees expressed a laissé faire stance regarding other people obtaining plastic surgery. George would never consider it for himself but said "if someone needs to have it done and they choose to have it done that's their choice you know I wouldn't dishonor them in any way." Larell likewise would never have it but says "I don't knock people who get it." Aaliyah says to "do you" and Tia says "to each their own." Nevertheless, this non-judgmental stance breaks down if the person considering the

surgery is doing so for what is considered the "wrong" reasons. Tia, despite having said "to each their own" regarding plastic surgery, nonetheless does not approve of her newly 30 year old "flipping out" friend's desire for it. She explains:

> "Now, in her case, I'm working against that. 'No, don't do this, don't do that. Love yourself.' I'm trying to encourage her to love herself as she's coming. 'You earned this age. We've been through a lot you've earned every last one of these years.' So in her case, I'm like, 'you don't need it, you're flipping out, it's a mental thing.' I don't think it's good in that case."

Like reversing the signs of aging, plastic surgery to "make you look more European" is frowned upon as well. Heather, who is black and Asian, is quoted above discussing blacks' dislike of their wide nose; but she also had a strong opinion on the eye lid surgery received by Kaw's interviewees and other Asians:

> "I do not believe in the eyelid surgery. That breaks my heart. I saw an episode of Tyra with these girls. And Tyra's clearly not a credible journalism source. But I was watching this interview about this girl that did it because her white boyfriend wanted her to. And I was just like, girl, I can't believe you."

Lack of self-confidence was the most frequently cited reasons interviewees felt others received plastic surgery to alter age or race related features; and while Larell saw increasing one's self-confidence via plastic surgery to be a legitimate endeavor, the rest of the sample did not. Frost, a clinical psychologist, responded to my question about plastic surgery both lightly and seriously:

> "Michael should have stopped at the Bad album. He looked the best then. No, um. Feelings on plastic surgery. I really don't feel-. How to say it. Dealing with the population in the field that I'm in and dealing with people and understanding reasons why that population would get plastic surgery, I'm not a fan of it. Too much insecurity and self-esteem issues related to the reason for why."

With regard to the minority of interviewees who stated that they would consider plastic surgery, the procedures mentioned by all but one (who was the only male) were body alterations

such as tummy tucks, liposuction and breast augmentation. Moreover, the timeline for receipt of these procedures is following the physical changes of child bearing. Aaliyah says she:

> "use to be very anti plastic surgery just because I felt like it was altering the body that God gave you. However, since having my son and him altering the body that God gave me I'm a little more pro."

She now says she will get a tummy tuck when she and her fiancé finish having children. Tia, who describes herself as "bigger boned" and who is a mother of five, says if she "thought I could wake up tomorrow and have exactly the figure I wanted and it wouldn't be like really abusive, horrible and expensive, I probably would cheat too." Carmen, who is also "getting bigger" since having her four children, "would consider would be maybe like a tummy tuck or some lipo…But nothing with my face." Judy does not have children yet, but in anticipation of how child bearing will change her body responded "hell yeah" to my asking if she would have plastic surgery. She explained: "I mean nothing to change my you know nose or my lips or anything like that. But if I pop out some kids and my boobs are hanging to my knees, I'd be happy to get those done."

If facelifts tell us old age is not valued, and eye lid surgery and nose jobs tell us Asian eyes and African noses are not valued, these women's planned tummy tucks and breast augmentations suggest that the post-partum female body is not valued either. More to the point, tummy tucks and breast augmentations, which do not alter a feature that is characteristic of a given race, are surgical procedures that white women, more so than women of color, obtain (Kaw 1992). That these are also the procedures that the mixed race women in this sample would consider suggests that while mixed race phenotype may be seen as racially ambiguous, ambiguity may not carry as negative of associations as mono-racial non-white characteristic features. To the contrary, mixed race adults are generally considered very attractive by Western societies' standards (cf. Sims 2012; Lewis 2010; Rhodes et al. 2005). And unlike Kaw's mono-

racial Asian American plastic surgery patients, my mixed race interviewees reported being satisfied with their appearance and did not feel their faces "needed" restructuring.

It is interesting to note however that the only interviewee in this study to report having disliked his over-all appearance at one point in his life was Smith, one of five part Asians and the "most" stereotypically "Oriental" in phenotype; and the only interviewees to report having disliked their nose at one time were a part black man and woman. Nevertheless, none of the mixed race adults in this study actually had the plastic surgery to change their features. Those few who reported willingness or desire to have plastic surgery all mentioned procedures which, according to Kaw, "do not correspond to conventional markers of racial identity," (75). In societies with Eurocentric aesthetic values, one's self-esteem, with regard to one's liking or disliking one's appearance, can be related to how one's features are racialized. However, to again quote John, despite mixed race adults various and sometimes even race-based insecurities regarding their appearance, they do not consider it urgent enough as to "go under the knife" to change it.

CHAPTER 6

EVERYDAY ENCOUNTERS: THE MICRO-POLITICS OF RACIAL AMBIGUITY

"What are you?" "Are you mixed?" "Where are you from?" Where are you *really* from?" Every day mixed race children and adults in the United States and United Kingdom are asked these questions. This chapter will analyze and theorize from my interviewees' experiences with these encounters. Drawing on Anderson's concept of the "Nigger moment," Sue and colleagues' work on racial micro-aggressions, and other potential theoretical explanations, I discuss what questions about racial ambiguity suggests about how racial identification structures everyday encounters. I will also examine interviewees' experiences with racial assumptions, that is, with others assuming rather than asking if they are of one race or another. Finally, I will discuss the implications of inconsistent reflected appraisals for mixed race identity and for the social psychology of identity.

"A lot. Very often": Frequency of the "what you are?" question

While a few respondents (e.g., Joy) remember others asking their parents what race they (the child) were when they were very small, for the majority of the respondents others questioning their race began in middle school or high school. Prior to that, as Annette explains, there was no need for questions because the child was primarily accompanied by his/her parents. In Annette's worlds: "Well, when I was a kid, people just see my parents. And so I think that's why I didn't get asked a lot. Because they could look at my parents and guess."

As mixed race children get older and begin interacting with others independent of their parents, however, the questions begin. Suzie explained:

> "In middle school and when I started doing programs or when I started playing basketball on Saturdays with the Rec League. Um and people hadn't necessarily seen both of my parents. Or any of my brothers for that matter. Just saw me there. Or meeting people, yeah you start to broaden your social horizons, whatever. When I'd meet people, I would just get that question a lot. What are you? That sort of started when I was probably around middle school."

As adults, about half of the sample "often" receives questions about their race. When asked to recall the most recent occurrence of this experience they gave examples ranging from the month before to the week before to earlier in the very day of the interview. Regarding the regularity with which people ask them, UK interviewees reported being asked ("Where are you from?") "quite a lot" or "quite a bit." Fleur elaborated that "It's not many weeks go past without me being asked that. At least once a week on average." US interviewees similarly recalled being asked ("What (race) are you?") "all the time."

One difference between the accounts of experiences with questioning in the two countries is that in the US it can be the first question a person receives at the start of a conversation. Sophie, a Black/White Londoner, explains that in the UK "it's probably on their mind from the beginning but people [are] quite sensitive now a days. They're not gonna wanna just say "Oh hi, you're Sophie! Where you from?" American respondents, however, reported this exact scenario occurring frequently. When I asked Tia if people ask her what race she is she responded, "Oh yeah. Right away. Sometimes it's the first thing people ask. Sometimes people I'm not even talking to will stop and go, 'I just really want to know, what race are you? What are you?'" Frost described similar experiences, explaining that "What are you?" is "Usually one of the number one questions I get asked."

Despite the frequency reported by the majority of the sample, a minority of interviewees maintained that they were not often asked about their race (and two, discussed below, claim to almost never receive the questions). Citing time values like "periodically," "maybe a handful of times," and "not too often really," one explanation offered for the infrequency of the event was the multicultural or cosmopolitan nature of their current city of residence. Dean for example stated that he is "maybe a little less asked in London" than in racially homogenous Yorkshire which is "a little more ignorant." He feels that people who have been exposed to racial diversity recognize that he is mixed race, thus leading to fewer inquires than he would receive in places that are devoid of diversity. In other words, Dean's phenotype is only ambiguous to those who lack previous exposure to a variety of racial others. Other Londoners agree that the nature of a city influences the frequency of their being questioned about their race, though for different reasons. Sara believes one gets asked less in London as well, but rather than citing ignorance versus cosmopolitanism she explains it in terms of the practicality of facilitating interaction. She states that "because it's so many people from all over the world" it would be "a bit of a conversation overhaul always asking where someone's from."

In the US, interviewees noticed differences in frequency based on region. Anna, who is white and Asian, credits her move to racially homogenous Wisconsin as increasing the incidence of her being asked about her race. Of her home state of California and her visits to New York City, Washington DC and Boston, she remembers that "on the East Coast and in the Bay Area, um, because it's more diverse and just metropolitan and busy, I tend to not [be asked as often]." Sydney, who now lives in Los Angeles, also notes the difference in cities and regions, recalling that being asked about her race "happened to me I think more when I was younger. Living in upstate New York definitely got a lot of 'well, what are you?'"

In addition to the role of location, another explanation offered for infrequently being asked about one's race is that people actually ask less now, although whether this is due to a time period or age effect is unclear. Dave suspects the former. Growing up in "an all-white environment in the north of England in um the county of Yorkshire" where he was "the only black in the village as it were" he was often asked about his race as a child. Now, at 30 and living in London, he says that "I'm not so much a curiosity as much as I use to be." When asked to elaborate, he hypothesizes that the increase in media exposure of mixed race people since the 1980s has contributed to their "demystification." In his words:

> "I once heard an expression which I quite liked, I read it on Intermix actually but, 'mixed race people are in many ways the acceptable face of black,' in advertising and so forth. And you know we, we appear so often on TV, on billboards, etc., often to the exclusion of black people sadly, that um I don't get asked it that much more."

Annette describes seeing the same demystification during the 1980s in the US. Comparing her and her younger brother's experiences she says:

> "I think part of it is that the '90s were different from the '80s. The '80s-, when my parents got married there were no mixed marriages and I was the weirdo. And my brother, he was born in '89, he doesn't,- he had grown up with so many mixed kids, it's the norm."

Heather also grew up in the 1980s being asked about her race; but she speculates that the decline in frequency through the 1990s and until now is an age not a period effect. She observes that "kids are ignorant. So middle school, high school, I would get 'what are you?'" Judy recalls being asked as a child as well:

> "I was about six years old, five or six years old. And I came home from school. And asked my mom what I was one day. Because a little boy had compared his arm to my arm and said 'what are you?' And at first I looked at him like he was nuts. And said 'I'm a girl, duh.'"

Similarly, in the UK, Lisa recalled how "growing up, teenage, twenties, thirties, people would ask. Um and I guess, I don't know, people don't ask so much anymore, which is odd." Lisa

does not attribute the question to youthful ignorance as Heather did, but to the social circumstances of young people, namely attending school and other situations that involve meeting many new people, which decrease in frequency as one gets older:

> "At university, people are always interested in your background. Especially like in the first week, in the freshers' week, when you're getting to know people. Where are you from, where's your family from. You sort of got that quite a lot."

Other interviewees recall that school, and later university for those who attended, was a key location where they were questioned about their race. As young adults age out of school settings, however, the opportunities to meet large numbers of new people diminish and thus the questioning of their race declines as well. Lisa concludes "I think as I've gotten older and more established, I think people in their professional background are more interested in your skills and what you can do in the job."

"They'll ask you that while you're working?": Locations of question encounters

Adult place of employment was not a refuge from questions for most interviewees, however. Judy recalled being asked about her race at work from her very first job:

> "[W]hen I was about eighteen years old. One of my first jobs. This woman sitting in the break room. And I had talked to her lots of times before. But she randomly asked me, she said 'are you mixed?"'

Others discuss similar experiences. Mary is a teacher and her students ask. Smith, a medical student who works as an extra in movies, was asked on set mere hours before his interview for this project. Vincent, who works in book publishing, recalled a client asking him at a networking event. Heather, a graduate student who works as a waitress, is asked by restaurant patrons, as was Anna during her brief stint as a café barista. Larell summarizes this experience:

> Larell: So I work at Trader Joes… People come in there all the time like, "hey, what ethnicity are you? Like what are you mixed with?" Or, "are you mixed?"
> Jenn: They'll ask you that while you're working?
> Larell: Yeah. Ringing them up. We'll just be talking and stuff, casual conversation just to you know keep the customer service appeal up. For my managers. Just little small talk. And they'll ask me. Honestly, every time I go to work, I get asked at least once.

Those in high status occupations, like Sydney and Frost who are physicians, Joy who is a law student interning with a law firm, and Bo who is the manager of an iconic venue in his city, are not asked as often, if at all, in the work place. Bo describes how people "give you that look like 'what race are you?' and 'oh and you're the manager?'" but says no one asks. Sydney believes her job status is the reason, stating "[T]he position that I'm in as their physician, they don't feel a, maybe comfortable to ask me initially." In other words, while people may ask a retail employee such as Larell what race he is upon first encounter, Sydney suggests that they do not ask a person in prestigious occupation upon first meeting. Another interpretation that can be gleamed from the juxtaposition of Larell and Sydney, Bo, and others experiences is that perhaps present status relation, rather than society wide status, is what is important. At Trader Joe's, Larell is working for the customers and is thus serving them in a subordinate capacity. In her practice and at his restaurant, by contrast, Sydney and Bo respectively have the higher status vis a vis the patients and patrons. With regard to the decision to ask someone what race they are, be it a consideration of one's comfort level like Sydney speculated or something else, the interviewees felt that people ask more often when they are in the socially dominant position at the time.

Other interviewees who were not asked "what are you?" attribute it to type of relationship, personal or professional only, with co-workers. For example Annette, who works at a community college, explained "At work, at any of the jobs I've ever had, I wouldn't get asked

that question. And I think it's because maybe my work relationships were never very personal. Some of them were but they were generally more professional."

Supporting Annette's theory that questions of one's race are asked in personal more so than professional spheres is the fact that about half of interviewees discussed in detail being in asked in social situations and locations. Whether at parties, dance clubs, pubs, bars, gatherings at friends' houses, sporting events, weddings, and (when a child) on the playground, mixed race people are primarily asked about their race in social settings. While some interviewees (e.g., Judy, Chris) recalled that it is complete strangers who asked about their race in these places, the majority said it occurs within the context of meeting and getting to know new people and friends of friends. Sally explains that if she's "hanging out with my friends and they have some of their friends who I don't know, they're just like, 'what race are you?'" The same thing happens to Mary at social gatherings: "[W]ell anytime we're at a party of any sort, that, it usually comes up. I think generally it comes up, uh, when meeting stra-- new people, it always comes up, somehow, within about half an hour." Mary is twice Sally's age and still being asked about her race at social gatherings. Unlike school, it appears that social gatherings, which are not limited to one stage of the life course, are perpetually a setting that is conducive to being asked about one's race.

In the US, another key location where mixed race people are asked about their race is stores. One of Joy's earliest memories of questions about her race, directed to her mother because she was a child, occurred in a grocery store. She recalled: "That's one of the first um, I was probably like, maybe like four. I wasn't in kindergarten yet. But I remember we were visiting, we were in Denver, Colorado. And some woman stopped my mom to ask her about

me." As an adult, Joy deals with fellow shoppers who "just you know start talking." Sales clerks engage in this practice as well. Anna recalls a trip to the mall with her brother:

> "[M]y brother and I went shopping at The Gap recently. And you know just a few months ago. And the saleswoman approached us and was like, 'oh my gosh, are you guys Hapa?' And she was really excited about the fact that we were mixed Asian and white."

This woman, it transpired, "was white. But she was married to an Asian man. And had Hapa children. So she was excited about that." Anna says that she "get[s] that occasionally." Joy does too. Recalling a recent trip to Target she says, "You know sometimes I'll have white moms I think maybe stop me a lot to ask me. Especially when my hair was curly. They'll be like, you know 'what do you do? I don't know what to do with my daughter's hair.'" Black mothers of mixed race children ask Joy's race and then advice on hair care as well, though not as frequently.

In addition to hair, Joy receives questions about her upbringing and identity, which she describes as the mother or parents being "intellectually curious." They ask her questions like:

> "if my parents were still together…oh, where did you grow up? How was it for you growing up?'…'oh, what kind of schools did you go to? What are you kind of doing now?'…'do you identify with a particular side? Or why do you think that?'"

As discussed in chapter 3, parental efforts to recognize the unique social location of one's child(ren) and efforts, however modest, to socialize one's child(ren) regarding racial issues was appreciated by those who received it and was consciously missed by many of those who did not. As someone whose own parents "didn't think about any of those questions," Joy seems to appreciate these mothers' recognition that they are "raising someone who is mixed and this could have an impact on them;" and so, despite preferring to "get in and get out" of stores and trying to not even make eye contact with other shoppers, Joy nonetheless answers their queries.

Being asked about one's race in a grocery store or other public place by strangers can be seen as violation of the rules of civility in a cosmopolitan canopy. Anderson (2004:15) describes

a cosmopolitan canopy as "heterogeneous and densely populated bounded public space which cities" that offer refuge from urbanites' "pervasive wariness towards strangers" and says it is where "a diversity of people can feel comfortable enough to relax their guard and go about their business more casually." Grocery stores are specifically mentioned by Anderson as an example of such a location. In cosmopolitan canopies people "feel they have something of a license to speak with others" and so "strangers engage in spontaneous conversation, getting to know one another as they do," (2004: 18). People are cordial and polite and are unencumbered by thoughts of race. When race is brought to the forefront of an interaction, however, the non-white person realizes:

> "that some of his colleagues are not who they pretend to be. The situation becomes unavoidably racial. At that transformative moment, the black person discovers that he or she is utterly unequal, not accepted as normal but racially circumscribed," (262).

Anderson (2011: 271-271) calls this a "Nigger moment," but clarifies that "'nigger' can be taken as a metaphor for outcasts status" and consequently "virtually anyone with provisional status may experience a 'nigger moment' at any time because issues such as sexual preference, poverty, gender, age, and skin color can and do tear the canopy from time to time." Mixed race people experience such a moment when they are asked about their race in public spaces. Like Anderson's example of a black person discovering that, contrary to the purported, communally accepted definition of the situation as racially neutral, others have been viewing him or her not just in racial term but unequally, being asked "what (race) are you" abruptly reminds mixed race people that they are perceived, first and foremost, in a racialized manner.

"Why are you so interested in what I'm mixed with, bro?" Gender Norms and Trends Regarding Asking About Race

Social encounters with members of the opposite gender are particularly fraught with questions about race. Half of my sample discussed frequently being asked "what are you" / "where are you from" primarily by persons of the opposite gender. Both male and female British interviewees felt that often men asked women these questions as part of what is called 'chirpsing' or 'chatting up' in London, which is equivalent to 'picking up' or flirting in the US. In Sara's experiences men, both in person and on online dating sites, have asked her about her race as "an ice breaker or something." Men who "just wanted a date" or "Guys on the pull" who are "sort of you know looking for something to say" would come up to Emma, Lisa and Claire and begin chatting them up by asking about their race. Sally and Heather were the only American women who had this experience however. The others, such as Carmen, Judy and Anna, do not recall men using questions about their race as a pick up line or a "conversation starter."

Whether it's in the context of being chatted up or not, both British and American women nonetheless still recall being asked more often about their race by men than by women; and noting this trend has made some black/white interviewees suspicious of men's, particularly black men's, motives. Heather, who is Black and Asian, wonders if men are trying to "exoticize" her and it makes her hesitant to answer. She explains: "I don't know if I want to answer this because they have some sort of sexual stereotype about me. Why are you asking me this?" Jennifer's theory is that "they want to know what you are before they decide if they like you or not." Fleur calls this a "vetting exercise" and predicts that if she says "'I'm mixed race'. It's almost like, okay,

then we can kind of carry on the conversation. I think if I were to say I was white, or, you know they might think okay, I can't really go there, sort of thing."

Regardless of the men's intentions, if asking a woman's race is a vetting exercise or simply a conversation starter, it was often seen as "a turn off, him asking all the questions." Women like Emma and Lisa in the UK and Heather and Aaliyah in the US are likely not to even continue the conversation if a male uses racial questions as a pick-up line or conversation starter. Aaliyah stated that it "really pissed me off" when a man asked her race "within the first few minutes of the conversation." Lisa appears to feel the same, saying that when this occurred she was "like 'get away from me, I don't really care what you're asking me'. I didn't tend to listen."

Despite its limited success, race based pick-up lines, or chirpsing, point to the importance of partner's race and phenotype for men pursing heterosexual relationships. Given the female interviewees' experiences, they speculate that, were they to state they are one race or another the man would or would not be interested in dating them regardless of their appearance. It appears, then, with respect to racial ambiguity in potential heterosexual relationships, that men may privilege ancestry over appearance.

Of the nine men who reported being frequently asked about their race, four recalled that women asked noticeably more often than men. Larell and Frost both responded "definitely women" when asked which gender questions them the most. While Dave echoes the ladies discussed above in that he feels a bit "vetted" by blacks, Chris appears to speak for the other men when he speculates that the reason is "it's just making conversation. That's the only thing it adds up to." Nevertheless, as Larell tries to explain, it would be an awkward conversation to have with another man:

> "It'd be kind of awkward if a guy-. Which, I don't know, it wouldn't be awkward but as a guy, I think it would be awkward if I went up and was like-, some guy was ringing me up

> and I was like 'hey bro, are you mixed?' or 'what are you mixed with?' It doesn't seem awkward like at the time. Like if it actually happened face to face, man to man it would be like 'Why are you so interested in what I'm mixed with, bro?'"

As with men's intentions when asking women, the motive is less important than what the end outcome, the action or inaction, suggests about the unwritten gender norms for conversations about race. Perhaps in American and British society it is more acceptable to ask racial questions cross gender than within gender. Perhaps the question of one's race, since it stems from detailed attention to one's body, conveys potential sexual interest in the other person. This would explain why in heteronormative societies like the US and UK men pose the question more often to women than to other men, it is "definitely women" who ask men the most and when the question is asked to a person of the same gender an explanation is offered (e.g., the mothers in Target who ask Joy then specifically mention their purpose is information to aid them with their own mixed race children).

"You're so pretty" vs. "Human being, punk:" Strategies for Talking About Racial Ambiguity

The information being sought when someone asks a mixed race person "what are you?" or "where are you from?" is the supposed biological race of their biological parents. This is revealed when the mixed race person is not forthcoming with that exact information because often their inquisitor will reformulate the question or challenge the technically correct answer that was given. Upon being asked "what are you?" or "where are you from?" eight interviewees reported that they specifically say the words "I'm mixed." While sometimes this "kind of seems to satisfy people's curiosity" as Claire puts it, more often the other person digs deeper to acquire the specific mix. Sara's exchanges with a man on a dating website and with a woman while on vacation are exemplary:

> "I was on this um like online dating site once and I sent my picture to this guy and he sent a response back saying 'are you Brazilian' so I said um 'no I'm actually British' and then he's like 'what are you,' I'm like saying 'I'm you know I'm a mixture,' and he's like 'what! Of what?'"

> "Once, when I was in Turkey one Russian girl asked me she says to me um 'where are you from' and I said England and then she said 'were you born there' and you know that's a racially [sic] question wasn't it. Whenever I'm abroad people say 'were you born there' and its only cos I'm not white that they ask that obviously. They think that everybody brown skin has immigrated in the last five years or something."

Whether it is phrased "what are you" or "where are you from" Sara feels like people are "not satisfied until they know" where your "ancestors 500 years ago came from." Considering this information "not important" she attempts to withhold the desired information on purpose. Lisa, too, withholds the actual information being sought when she responds to racial queries. A black identified black/white woman, when she is asked what she is in the UK or in her father's native Kenya she replies with her racial identity "African." She gives this answer knowing full well that it is not what the person asking her is really seeking. She explains:

> "And then if I got drilled a bit more. 'Oh but you're not, really?' Even, I went to Kenya and it was like, 'African'-. It's like 'yes, I am, actually.' And then some of them would guess. And others would say 'really? Come on now'. And it's like yeah. And I wouldn't give them any help. So evil. I was like, what do you want me to do? So I would say African. Um and that's, yeah. I would get 'both your parents?' And I would say 'no, only one.' So yeah. But that's only for the ones who wanted to drill a little bit more. I'd say African."

After years of experience with these questions, mixed race people like Lisa are able to distinguish between those who are asking to genuinely get to know them and those who, as Sara puts it, "want to put you in the pigeon hole." In dealings with the latter, a few interviewees not only withhold the desired information but do so in such a way as to convey to the person questioning them that their query was an unwelcome intrusion. Fleur for example, when asked "where are you from," responds with a return question of "[I]n terms of where do I live? Or

where are my parents from?" Even though she already knows they mean the latter, she asks in order to make a point. She explains:

> "Sometimes it's to make people think, do you actually know what you're asking me? And, I guess it's a kind of a defense kind of thing, really, in some way. Because it's kind of making somebody realize they're actually asking a quite personal question and I'm not going to kind of make it easy for them by giving them an answer straight away. It's almost like I want them to kind of acknowledge that they are asking something that's quite personal. And usually it makes them feel quite uncomfortable as well. Which is good. Because I think they should feel uncomfortable about asking a question like that to somebody they've never met before."

American interviewees ask follow up questions to make a point as well. Aaliyah for example sometimes responds with "does it matter?" Other American interviewees, however, make the point a little more confrontationally. Outside of a getting to know you context, Frost responds to "what are you?" with "Human being, punk, what are you?" Tia also sometimes responds with "sassy" remarks such as "human, a person, you know. Or 'what are you?' 'I don't know, what are you?' Things like that." Their purpose, like their UK counterparts', is to hold the person accountable for asking a stranger a personal question. According to Tia it works because "Then they usually realize, 'oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be rude, I just meant-'. You know I think people don't realize."

Other times the person may in fact realize that they are asking a quite personal and almost racially taboo question. Joy reports that people "have a story to tell usually" after they ask their queries that suggests to her "They kind of feel like they might need to explain a little bit." The follow up Joy receives is "'oh, yeah, I have a friend that's half black, half white, but she doesn't really look-, so I couldn't really tell.'" People asking Annette's race follow up as well, saying "'oh, I know somebody or I've seen somebody and you have a similar look. Or you look to be mixed also.'"

These explanations, drawing on a mixed race "friend" or "somebody" the person knows, are similar to the colorblind racism verbal strategies that Bonilla-Silva (2010 [2003]) discusses in his book *Racism Without Racists.* He states that phrases such as "Some of my best friends are black" have "become standard fare of the post- Civil Rights racial discourse. They act as discursive buffers before or after someone states something that is or could be interpreted as racist" (57). A similar phrase being offered after asking a phenotypically racially ambiguous person her/his race, therefore, suggests that others recognize on some level that the question "what are you" violates the contemporary colorblind racial zeitgeist. Were Americans truly "colorblind," such questions would not be posed because peoples' race, or in this case racial ambiguity, would not be noticed.

Asking indirectly is another verbal strategy mainly American interviewees note people using that also suggests recognition that, in asking someone's race, they are violating contemporary colorblind ideology. While in Judy's experience white people "seem to be very abrupt" the rest of the interviewees in both the US and UK feel that that educated, upper income and/or white people especially are, as Frost puts it, "uncomfortable to ask upfront sometimes. And they're usually more slick about it." Their "slickness" involves "lead[ing] in with something maybe nice. To get to their question" according to Joy. Compliments like "'oh, wow, you're so pretty," "I like your hair" and "oh, you have really pretty eyes" immediately precede "can I ask you what you are?" "what are you?'" and "where did you get your eyes from?" Like references to a non-white friend, these compliments are verbal strategies to facilitate asking a racially othering question while shielding oneself from charges of racism. They demonstrate that people, especially in America, recognize that they are violating colorblind ideology in asking what race someone is.

When asked to consider what about themselves caused others to ask "what (race) are you?" or "where are you from?" interviewees' responded that it was their appearance, their behavior, or both. Beginning with physical appearance, there was a difference by gender with regard to which characteristics were believed to be the cause of their physical ambiguity. Black/White men like Dean and Bo felt that the combination of their light skin with African facial features (e.g., broad nose, thick lips) caused people to question their initial categorization of the men. Black/White women, however, felt that it was their hair texture more so than their skin color that caused their ambiguity. They offered as evidence their perceptions of being asked more often about their race when their hair was curly versus straight. As discussed in chapter 4, naturally curly hair is a quintessential, distinctive mixed race feature. Straight hair, by contrast, is the natural texture and style of persons of non-African heritage; and, by means of perms and weaves, is also a mainstream style of blacks since their natural "kinky" hair texture is stigmatized and devalued by Euro-centric beauty standards (Collins 2000 [1990]). When a mixed race woman's hair is straight, then, to quote Annette, "I look like a black girl with straight hair. Straightened hair. Other times I look like a Hispanic girl with straight hair." Curly hair, therefore, appears to suggest that one is mixed race; and perhaps the curiosity of what that mix is leads to the "what are you / where are you from?" questions.

Eyes (color for those with African heritage, shape for those with Asian heritage) was also cited by the women in this sample as more important than skin color in causing people think "you look like you're kind of something going on" as one man told blue eyed Fleur. She elaborates that "having blue eyes kind of throws people.… Because it's unusual to be a mixed race person with blue eyes." Anna mentioned her eyes as well, but discusses their "vaguely Asian" shape rather than color:

> "my eyes have a little bit, not entirely that kind of crease, that lid crease that a lot of Asians have. When I smile, my eyes kind of have that form. My skin tone is a little darker and I tan very easily and have that. But I think the facial structure [is what kind of makes people wonder]."

For both genders, in addition to their appearance their non-stereotypical minority behavior elicits questions about their racial make-up as well. Part black interviewees, for example, have been told their "intonations and vernacular" sound "quote-un-quote white." That the person is mixed race, i.e., part white, is a common solution to the conundrum of a phenotypically non-white person having characteristics that are associated with whites. This (il)logic is demonstrated by an experience that happened to Judy. When asked by a coworker if she was mixed Judy told her "'yeah, my mom's white and my dad's black,'" to which the woman replied "'oh, I just knew it. You're just so well spoken'."

In addition to speech, overall comportment contrary to negative racial stereotypes causes others to ask about one's race. Smith appears "half oriental" but says he is more British in personality. Asians he says stereotypically are:

> "very studious hardworking, stick together, possibly and I use it loosely 'cause I don't mean to be rude but, maybe a bit socially inept. Um I don't think I'm anything like that…. I mean I suppose I'm doing a very Asian thing by going to medical school. But I mean apart from apart from that, I would say I was very much British."

As Mary and George explained in chapter 3, "for many people British or English equals white." Smith, therefore, who looks Asian but is very much British "in the way I think and the way that I am" confuses others who seek resolution to their cognitive dissonance by asking what race he is or where he is from. Chris recalled an incident while traveling during which a woman voiced the assumptions behind her cognitive dissonance at the mismatch between his phenotype and comportment:

> "They always ask what I'm mixed with. But this one time in particular, I went to Kentucky. And I used to do semi-pro for BMX. So I did a little bit of touring around.

> Anyway, I ended up in Louisville, Kentucky. And it bothered me because this one woman said 'you're nothing like the black people on Cops'."

In other words, people question a person's race when there is a mis-match among one's physical characteristics or when there is a mis-match between one's physical appearance and the stereotypes associated with that phenotype/race. Judy's former co-worker proclaiming she "just knew it" when Judy confirmed she was part white suggests that being part white is the standard, at least initial, explanation for being "nothing like" others of one's non-white race, i.e., "nothing like" the negative stereotypes the speaker holds of that race.

"It's not like I go home and I'm depressed:" Emotional responses to racial questions

Judy, Smith and Chris, unlike the interviewees discussed at the beginning of the section, usually provide the desired information, the races of their biological parents, when asked, even by strangers. Smith says being asked his race "doesn't bother me" because "no one's ever asked me maliciously what I was." Jennifer likewise answers because "I've never been in a situation where it seemed rude or sort of intrusive to me." Neither Claire, Carmen, nor Sally are bothered by the questions either. These interviewees chalk up the questions to others "curiosity." Larell for example says when asked his race "I just tell them. I smile. It's cool that they're interested in you know what I am. Obviously they're curious. So I just answer questions. It brings up good conversations." Mary too believes being asked is a positive experience. She is a teacher and each year her students ask her where she is from. She explains:

> "I mean I teach um RE and citizenship… RE, religious studies. And citizenship. Which is a sorta bit of politics, sociology, economics, intro kinda course. And what we do discuss ethnicity in those lessons and it always comes up then 'oh miss where are you from' you know, so that's that's, it's always a positive."

Others in the sample however disagree and cite negative feelings about these encounters. Especially with regard to being asked "what are you?" by strangers it is considered "kind of rude." With regard to all manner of questions about one's race - from the blunt "what are you?" to the indirect "where did you get your eyes from?" - a common word used by the interviewees to describe the experiences was "annoying." Aaliyah recounts how she used to answer people's questions when she was younger but now, in her late 20s, it has become wearisome:

> "I mean I think when I'm younger I would just say 'I'm black and white' and it wouldn't bother me as much. But over time it's definitely been annoying I guess… it's just, it's just, more of like a hassle than anything. It's not like I go home and I'm depressed because someone asked me what race I am. But it's just like frustrating I guess.

Chris finds being asked about his race annoying as well, saying "It's one of those questions that's unnecessary. Why does it matter?" Judy and Suzie agree, rhetorically asking during their interviews "it's like, why do you care?"

Mixed race people also had emotional responses when the person questioning them would not accept their response. At times, many interviewees, depending on their "mood or the context or the way they approach the question," would just state a single race. For example Carmen says she sometimes "try[s] not to go through the whole spiel. I just say I'm black." When Sally doesn't "really want to, like, give the whole list, I just say I'm Filipino." Chris at times will "flip flop back and forth between black and mixed." In these instances, though, often the response is met, as when Lisa above stated she is African, with counter remarks such as "uh who told you that?" Jennifer received this remark when she answered someone's query by saying she was black. Once when Mark responded "I'm Rosebud Sioux" he was told "you're no Indian." John, who always responds that he is black, illustrates the importance of validation of ones identity in interaction by relating how insulting having his racial identity questioned feels:

> "[I]t was like almost like invalidation of, well, I'm black. You know like, it was like invalidation of that, just being asked that. It was like inherently kind of like almost disrespectful to me, in a way."

Aaliyah, a sociology doctoral student, considers the concept of micro-aggressions the "best way to capture [the feeling]." According to psychologists, racial micro-aggressions are "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group," (Sue et al, 2007: 273). Of the three types identified by Sue and colleagues - microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation - mixed race people being questioned about their race can be classified as a microinsult. Microinsults are "[b]ehavioral/verbal remarks or comments that convey rudeness, insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity" and are "frequently unknown to the perpetrator," (ibid, 274). American participants in this study, for example Frost and Tia, stated that they considered others' asking "what are you" to be rude; however those posing the question, exactly as postulated by Sue et al., do not always fully realized this, as evidence by the person who said "'oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be rude'" when Tia responds with a "sassy" remark. Regarding being asked "where are you from," the way the question is phrased in the UK, Sue et al. specifically discuss this question as an instance of the "Alien in own land" theme they identified in their work. Since in practice Englishness is raced as white (Leddy-Owens 2014), non-whites are assumed to have "immigrated in the last five years or something" as Sara put it. For racially ambiguous mixed race people, however, the presumed country of origin is not readily apparent, hence being asked where one is from. Like directly asking one's race, asking where one is from is demeaning. The underlying message is that the person does not belong, i.e., that s/he is a foreigner.

Racial microinvalidation - "communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color," (Sue et al., 2007, 274) - can be said to occur when others' challenge or reject a mixed race person's answer to "what are you" / "where are you from." John, a psychology graduate student, in fact used the word invalidation in discussing his experiences. Sara, who is sometimes mistaken for white and told by others "you're not black" finds it insulting too, explaining:

> "I particularly you know don't want to perceived as white more because the abuse I had when I was younger. So it kinda like I have the abuse off of all white people and to be told that I'm white kinda nullifies that. It kinda says, if someone says you're white, it like saying your never experienced that abuse… so it's kinda like, you know denying what I've kinda been thru when I was little and stuff."

Though she did not use the word, Sara's account, like John's, represents a microinvalidation.

"That's actually how I met Suzie": Empathetic asking and the building of mixed race solidarity

Given the array of often conflicting feelings that mixed race people have towards being asked "what are you?" or "where are you from?" it is no surprise that most do not ask other people these questions. Judy explains that she asks others about their race "rarely" and adds that "It has to be like, you have to just be puzzling the hell out of me for me to ask." Nevertheless, a third of the sample did admit to more than rarely asking others the very same questions. Claire says she has "a curiosity as well about, of people…And I'm interested in you know finding out where they're from and what their mix is." Suzie claims to have "mixed people radar" and says "I'm not going to lie… I'll be like, 'are you mixed?'"

Moreover, mixed race people recognize the irony in asking other people's race given their own feelings on the questions. Chris, when asked if he ever asks other people what race

they are revealed “that's actually how I met Suzie…I guess I'm guilty too.” Dave laughs that “it’s quite funny ‘cause as mixed people as it were we, we hate this question yet it’s sort of the first thing we ask one another.” Interviewees feel that it is qualitatively different, however, when another mixed race person asks their race. Fleur describes feeling “an affinity with that person because I know they've probably been asked that question lots of times. And it's almost like a, you know, bonding thing really.” Dave describes how its “not a kinda probe you’re not kinda constructed in a, I don’t know, some kind of fetishistic way. It’s more empathic.” In the US, Heather phrases it as wanting to “feel that sense of connection” with other mixed race people while Aaliyah and Larell explicitly describe a mixed race “solidarity.” Discussing the difference in men and women asking him, Larell, as discussed above, says it would be weird if a man asked him, unless he was also mixed race himself. In that case he says “it's kind of like a mixed power thing. ‘Hey, what are you? Mixed? I knew it man. I'm mixed too.’ ‘Yeah we got this, bro.’”

Many interviewees discussed important close and long term relationships that they have developed with other mixed race people. Mary and George are married; and the friendship group of their two children contains many mixed race children, including one who’s “mum and dad are more or less the same mix as us.” Aaliyah’s and Tia’s closest friends in high school were other mixed race girls. In the case of the latter, the group identity was so strong that, as discussed in chapter 4, all members acquired matching tattoos to commemorate their bond. Interviewees Suzie and Chris met at a party of a mutual friend and have remained friends. This mixed race solidarity is no doubt highly valued due to the small mixed race population, and thus the small number of others who can personally relate to one’s social experiences, in both countries.

"I might be one of the few:" On not *being asked "what (race) are you?"*

Despite being a frequent occurrence for the overwhelming majority of the sample, Black/White American men Bo and John both reported that they were not bombarded with questions about their race. While John recalls that he was asked about his race as a child, Bo does not even remember being questioned during that period of his life. What is more, the men are aware that theirs is a unique experience for mixed race people. Bo knows that he "might be one of the few that I don't get it that much." John says he has "heard a lot of experiences of other people who have been asked directly and I'm really surprised that that doesn't happen to me."

When asked why they think others do not question them as other mixed race people are questioned, the men offered different hypotheses, though both are based on aspects of their physical appearance. John, a psychology graduate student, says that his facial expression keeps inquiring strangers at bay. He explains:

> "I've got this feedback ever since I was in, like, high school. That like when I walk around and stuff, I look like I'm upset…. And like I'm always in my head, so I look like I'm mad because I'm thinking. But I'm actually not. So that's why I think people don't ask me directly."

He also believes his size may discourage people from asking him. A tall, muscular body builder, he says people "tell me I look mean though. So I think that's probably why." At 6'1 1/2 and 270 pounds, Bo is a tall, sizable man as well. By contrast, Dean and Larell are frequently asked about their race, even by strangers. Like John and Bo, both Dean and Larell are black/white with light skin and African facial features; and as noted above, men believe their light skin color coupled with their African facial features is what elicits questions. The difference between John and Bo and Dean and Larell, however, is that the latter pair are significantly shorter and thinner

than the former, which suggest that the incidence of being asked about one's race is mediated by how physically intimidating one is. Anderson (2011:255) explains that:

> "Many Americans feel apprehensive about encountering anonymous black people in public places. A strange black man can be viewed as criminal or crime-prone until he can prove he is not, which is difficult to do in the split-second interaction that typically occurs in public spaces."

As such, others' sense of personal safety vis-à-vis large men of color may override their curiosity at their exact racial background with the result that men like John and Bo are not approached and questioned as others in the sample described. Annette suggested as much when she speculated that she is often asked because she appears "more approachable than maybe some other people."

"No hablo Español:" Assumptions of racial group membership

In thinking about why people do not ask him about his race Bo speculated that his appearance is not actually ambiguous after all:

> "[A]s soon as they look at me once, you know, they go off appearance.… I get more Hispanic than you know. Everyone thinks I'm Puerto Rican or something. Or they think I'm from the islands somewhere. You know. No, I'm from Indiana."

While he and John may not share other mixed race people's experiences being asked about their race, they do share the experience of being incorrectly assumed to be Latino or "some type of South American" in the United States. Twenty of the 30 respondents, a solid two-thirds, reported being assumed by others to be Latino when in America. Fifteen of the 19 black/white respondents reported it which is approximately 80%. Fifty percent (3 of 6) of White/Asians' and both part Native Americans also reported being frequently mistaken for a Latino or a Spanish speaking nationality. Puerto Rican, Mexican and Brazilian, at about a quarter of the sample each, were the most frequently reported nationalities that interviewees recalled people mistakenly

considering them. The only racial mix to not report assumptions of being Latino were Black/Asian (i.e. neither George nor Heather).

The main indicator that conveyed to interviewees that others perceived them as Latino was having Spanish automatically spoken to them. Fifteen of the 20 respondents mistaken for Latino recall incidents like Lisa's:

> "I was in Florida a couple of years ago. And this guy was in a store, a shop, buying clothes and stuff. And he was working there at the time. And he took a phone call. And he was speaking in Spanish. And I was waiting outside the fitting room. And he came out and he started speaking in Spanish to me. Just normally. And I said 'no, no hablo Español sorry.' And the look he gave me was like 'really?'"

Mixed race people who live in areas with high Latino populations, for example the six Los Angeles residents, must constantly say "no hablo Español" due to others speaking Spanish to them. Joy preemptively tells people she does not speak Spanish since she knows many will assume it of her. For example, as a law student, she was interning at a law firm the summer she sat for our interview. She recalls of her application process:

> "[E]veryone would always assume I could speak Spanish. And so one of the things actually, in my interview at my law firm, I had to make sure that they knew. I don't know if you need someone bilingual but I'm not. Because everyone kept assuming that I was. And I'm definitely not."

Unlike being asked "what are you" or "where are you from," interviewees did not express annoyance at being assumed to be Latino. The exception was Annette. In her work at a local community college, students and staff alike assuming she is Latino and therefore speaks Spanish is a daily hindrance to performing her tasks. She explains:

> "[At] community college, you get people of all sorts of ages and stuff. I would get these elderly-, well not too elderly, but older Mexican women who can't speak a word of English who are insulted that I can't speak Spanish. And because they look at me and obviously I'm Hispanic, I should be able to help them. And I would be like, wait here,

> because I would have to get a student assistant or somebody who knew Spanish to help me. And it was so frustrating."

Difficulties at work were just one of ways mistakenly being assumed to be Latino frustrates Annette; it also negatively impacts her dating relationships. In discussing her and her sisters' dating history she recalls that:

> "Black and white guys would ask us out thinking we were Hispanic. And then not like you know when they find out what we really were. The case of white guys, I think that they weren't quite sure what to make of a black girl. And so it was like, you're Hispanic-, oh no, you're a black girl. That somehow changes things. And then with black guys, I got the impression that with some of them it was, oh, you're white. And then with others, I got the impression that they didn't want to date black girls. They were purposely looking for another race. And so then it was, oh, you're black, you're just like my mom, I don't want you."

Due to these negative experiences with being perceived as Latino, Annette is extremely happy when people "guess correctly" what her race is. She states that non-Mexican Latinos often say to her "'oh, you're mulatto;'" and while she tells them "'don't say that too loudly, okay? You might get your car window bashed in'" she herself has "positive associations with that term." She explains that "When you are constantly mistaken, assumed to be Mexican" it is nice to have someone recognize what your actual background is, even if the term they use is politically incorrect. This echoes Remedios and Chasteen's (2013) work which found that "multiracial people value interaction experiences in which others are accurate about their racial backgrounds," (459).

When people perceive mixed race individuals as Latino they may be inaccurately identifying their sociolinguistic heritage but, given the history of racial mixing in South America, they *are* actually identifying their *racial* heritage accurately. Latinos, and the various South American nationalities Americans overwhelmingly mistakenly assume mixed race people are, are themselves generationally mixed of white, black and in some countries indigenous and Asian

peoples. When a mixed race person is assumed to be Latino/South American therefore, their mixed ancestry *is* correctly being perceived. The fact that mixed ancestry, especially black/white ancestry, is assumed to be non-native to North America, however, speaks to the continued denial of racial mixing as endogenous to the United States, a fact Nakashima (1992) lamented 22 years ago when she wrote that "the dominant U.S. culture" denies "the existence of multiracial people, both as individuals and as a group."

In the United Kingdom, people are also able to recognize mixed ancestry; and like their American counterparts, they attribute it to foreign lands. While the man who contacted Sara on the dating website asked if she was Brazilian, the more common location from which mixed race Britons are assumed to originate is the Mediterranean region which, like South America, historically has been a locale of racial mixing. Half of the UK interviewees have been mistaken for hailing from countries such as Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, or Morocco. Claire's experience is exemplary:

> "everyone else, ever, who I've met, have thought I'm sort of Greek, Italian, Spanish. Or sort of like Iranian, Middle Eastern. A few people think I'm Middle Eastern. But the majority of people think I'm sort of Mediterranean-y of some description like Spanish."

As with people in the United States automatically speaking Spanish to mixed race people, when visiting these countries mixed race Britons are addressed in the local language. Fleur's travels are typical. When asked if she is asked "where are you from" when she is on holiday she responded:

> "Very rarely get asked it when I'm away. I do get, quite a lot I get people talking to me in their own language. Like if I go to Turkey or I go to Greece or to Morocco or to anywhere kind of Mediterranean, other people will talk to me in their language. And then I'm kind of like 'I don't understand you, I'm English'. And they're like 'okay'. So I kind of think they don't ask me because they just assume that I'm one of-, I belong there. I'm part of their little race."

Fleur's experiences being assumed to be "part of their little race" was referred to by other interviewees, both British and American, as being seen as a "local everywhere." Lisa says that she has been "been told by many people that I tend to blend in wherever I go." As examples she says:

> "I've been to Mexico. I don't know why people thought I was Mexican. I've been to Hawaii. People thought I was Hawaiian. I've been-. It's quite crazy… I'm kind of chameleon. I guess people will see you where they see-. They'll couch their opinions and their thoughts on where they're from. So wherever I am, I tend to blend in."

Blending in has its advantages as well. From a financial standpoint Sara notes that "Well you get in a lot of places on the local rate not the tourist rate so you save money… Long as you don't open your mouth or you don't make eye contact you can go thru as a local." Frost's "universal appeal" and the fact that others "identify with me thinking that we have [race] in common" has been financially beneficial as well. He tells me that he has "built some really good relationships with food proprietors. And to keep them delivering to me in areas that they wouldn't always deliver to or discounts or anything like that."

Another benefit of being seen as a local everywhere is increased ease of movement through social space. Anna used to be a community organizer in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, one of the most segregated cities in the country. She says that:

> "Not being easily placeable into a particular racial category was kind of advantageous for me… in terms of being out in different neighborhoods and having people respond to me or open their door for me. And I think it was confusing to a lot of people but was helpful in that it was harder for them to kind of assume that there was this particular place that I should be."

Another way language conveys assumptions of shared race is others' use of inclusive pronouns. Aaliyah says statements using the word "'us' whatever" let her know the speaker is assuming she a member of their race. Sydney's experience is similar; being told "'you know how

we make this food'" by Latinos lets her know they are erroneously assuming she is Latino as well.

Finally, in addition to the form of language used, the content of statements can convey racial assumptions as well. In particular, when racist remarks against out groups are uttered it can be inferred that the speaker assumed s/he was not in mixed company or talking to a member of the group s/he just disparaged. Dave tells a story about an incident which really upset his brother:

> "[H]e was working in a bar once and, in the university with a, you know very high proportion of black students, and he had this white bartender as well who'd kinda come up to him and go 'these fucking niggers man far too many' you know. And he didn't realize he wasn't white and that was probably the most poor thing for my brother, this guy not registering."

Annette has had similar experiences as Dave's brother. A black/white 31 year old, she was often assumed to be Latino during college. She remembers:

> "I went to Santa Ana College, which is predominantly Hispanic, everyone thought I was Hispanic and that baffled me. That baffled me. And it was interesting because I got to see people's true colors. Because when people don't realize that you know you're the group they're attacking, they will say-, things will come out. And you will know, you will learn a lot about people. And that really opened my eyes to how people-, how Hispanics felt about blacks, how Hispanics felt about whites. Um and I probably would have never learned a lot of that had I been obviously one or the other. Um and so I mean, there's, sure, there's a bright side to that. But it was very hurtful at times."

Linguistic racial affirmation, therefore, be it via the language or pronouns used or the content of the speech, was a key indicator to mixed race interviewees that others were incorrectly assuming they were members of a certain race.

"They can never really figure it out right away:" The micro-politics of racial ambiguity

The mixed race adults in this study were frequently asked a variety of overt and indirect questions about their racial heritage, though the experiences varied based on the nature of the

location, historical era and life-stage of the person. Given both societies' purported colorblind racial ideology, verbal strategies such as flattery and claiming non-white familiarity were reported to be employed by those who pose these questions. With regard to how race structures everyday encounters, being often asked these questions suggests that neither the US nor the UK are truly a colorblind society as of yet. Race is still relevant in every situation as evidence by the myriad of locations the interviewees reported having these experiences. While experiences with questions in grocery stores were often recalled by the interviewees, maybe it is not so much that grocery stores are particular places that mixed race people are asked about their race, but it is likely the grocery store is one of the only common places people of all races mix in racially segregated and/or homophilous societies. Of course grocery stores are also potentially segregated based on neighborhood, but perhaps it is still very likely that different people will cross close paths at this locale. It is a cosmopolitan canopy of sorts, hence the potential location of "Nigger moments."

Moreover, intersectionality plays a crucial role, particularly the intersection of race, gender and class. It appears that asking about race across gender is more acceptable than asking a member of one own gender, especially for men. Moreover, that women, even at work if not in high status positions, service workers and children / young adults are asked more often than large men or those in prestigious occupations, suggests that in American and British culture asking one's race is perceived to be a bit intrusive by potential questioners; hence those with "diminished personhood" (Alice Goffman, personal communication) are seen as valid targets to satisfy one's curiosity should it arise. While the questioning is not extremely offensive, it is nonetheless felt as a microagression when posed from monoracial people while being welcome as opportunities for bonding when posed from other mixed race people.

In addition to being asked their race, mixed race adults in the United States and United Kingdom are often assumed by others to be a specific race. In particular in both countries they are often mistaken for hailing from regions that are historically known for wider spread racial mixing. Being addressed in foreign languages, having others use pronouns such as "us," "we" and "them" and having racist remarks made in one's presence are all sociolinguistic indicators that the mixed race person is being assumed to be the race of the speaker. While this can have beneficial results in terms of building relationships and movement through space, some interviewees expressed strong feelings of hurt and frustration.

Both the results on mixed race people being asked "what are you"/"where are you from" and being assumed to be different races bolsters the existing literature (e.g., Herman 2010) that posits that mixed race people are not correctly or congruently perceived by others. Less than one third of the sample were perceived as mixed race, and practically no one was consistently perceived as the mixed combination that they actually were. As such, it cannot be said that the mixed race people in this sample receive the consistent reflected appraisals that identity Khanna (2010, 2004) theorizes leads to a stable racial identity. Moreover, the mixed race individuals in this study not only did not receive consist reflected appraisals of what race they *were*, they frequently *did* receive reflected appraisals of what race they were *no*t. Nonetheless, as discussed in chapter 3, the mixed race interviewees in this study did in fact have positive and stable racial identities despite inconsistent and sometimes negative or disaffirming reflected appraisals.

In light of the findings presented herein, I conclude that accumulated inconsistent reflected appraisals serve to verify and validate a mixed race identity. Previous research has suggested that mixed race individuals value other's accuracy about their race because they view race as "an aspect of the self (like personality traits or values) requiring verification from others

during interactions (Remidios and Chasten 2013). Based on the results of this study, I would argue that consistent mis-identification and requests for clarification of racial ambiguity are in fact one such verification for mixed race individuals. Consequently, inconsistent reflected appraisals are, when taken as a whole, actually not inconsistent at all. They are a consistent reflected appraisal of mixed race appearance and as such can lead to mixed race identification similar to black or Asian appearance leading to those identifications. That Bo and John were not often asked their race (and expressed surprise over it), were not assumed to be as many different ethnicities as others and both identified mono-racially as black not mixed race supports my conclusion that others' inability to correctly recognize one's race reflects a mixed race appraisal.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: DOING MIXED RACE

In this dissertation, I have sought to explore the ways in which race is an "ongoing interactional accomplishment." This perspective, as laid out in West and Fenstermaker (1995), views race as emerging as a result of interaction between actors. Previous research on the topic by Khanna and Johnson (2010:393) found that black/white mixed race Americans "use a variety of strategies to 'do race'—verbal identification/disidentification, selective disclosure, manipulation of phenotype, use of cultural symbols, and selective association." Focusing on verbal dis/identification and manipulation of phenotype, I extended this research by looking at the experiences of mixed race people from a variety of racial backgrounds in two countries. This allowed cross group and cultural comparisons and provided the opportunity to ascertain the applicability to mixed race populations of identity theories such as reflected appraisals beyond the frequently studied black/white American subgroup.

One method of doing race is with strategic manipulation of phenotype, the term given to the act of purposefully altering the physiological state of an aspect of one's appearance with the intent to influence how one is perceived racially by others (Khanna and Johnson 2010). My first research question asked what appearance alterations phenotypically racially ambiguous mixed race adults engage in and why. The mixed race adults in my sample cut, dyed, straightened and curled their hair; shaved or styled facial hair or wore light make-up; sought suntans; pierced their ears and noses; and tattooed their arms, legs, back, chest and other concealable body parts. While seven interviewees did not think this body work altered their racial appearance, the other 23 believed that it did.

Nevertheless, most types of body work were characterized as not being the outcome of conscious racial presentation of self, even if it was acknowledgement that the practices likely did in fact alter ones racial appearance. Skin color management, via sun tanning or sun avoidance, for example, was practiced by the interviewees in this study; but they stressed that it was not for racial reasons. Non-racial explanations such as enjoying the warmth of the sun and a tan looking "healthy" were cited instead. Regarding gender specific body work practices, men were aware of how facial hair altered how they appeared racially and women were cognizant of how make-up changed how others perceived them racially. Yet neither, except in one case, said they used this fact to purposely style themselves in certain ways to influence how others would view them racially. Both genders cited non-racial explanations, such desiring to look their best as men or women, as the determining factor in whether or not these body work practices were performed. However, the apparently non-racial alternate rationales the interviewees offer may be, upon closer consideration, actually racially influenced due to white hegemony obscuring the overt racial character of the aesthetic to which many were aspiring.

In contrast, wearing piercings and changing one's hair were acknowledged by various interviewees as being performed to purposely influence their racial appearance. Part Asian women in the UK pierced and wore nose rings. As that particular type of body modification and adornment is associated with Asian cultures, it had the intended result that they appeared even more "oriental." In both countries, women with African heritage said they purposely straightened their naturally curly hair, and men with African or Native American heritage said they cut theirs short (to the point that the texture/curl pattern was not immediately apparent), in order to fit Euro-centric appearance standards. This manipulation of phenotype was only performed in very specific contexts and circumstances though: for special occasions and job interviews.

A new contribution to the literature on race and body work is the finding that the majority of the mixed race adults in this sample had or would consider getting a tattoo with racial meaning. Moreover, in addition to symbols of one of their own cultures and trendy images of other appropriated cultures, I find that mixed race adults value images that combine symbols from all aspects of ones mixed heritage, what I call original synergistic designs. With the societal trend towards individualized body modification, scholarship on race and the body will need to move beyond only examining the racial associations of "natural" elements (e.g., skin color, hair, eye shape) of the body to also considering the ways in which adornment racializes as well.

My second research question asked if racial identity for mixed race individuals is related to appearance via reflected appraisals, then what does being consistently treated as an enigma, or a member of a race to which you do not belong, do for one's racially identity? Based on the results of this study I conclude that the experience of receiving chronically inconsistent reflected appraisals is *itself* a consistent reflected appraisal of mixed race identity. This mixed race identity, however, was found to be dynamic, changing across time and space.

Finally, my third research question examined the different ways phenotypically racially ambiguous mixed race individuals respond to the racialized questions, such as "where are you from" and "what (race) are you" that were shown to be mixed race reflected appraisals and what this illuminates about the micro-construction, politics and performance of race. The frequency with which, and the varied locations in which, mixed race people are asked about their race is further evidence that identifiable racial assignment is expected in even the most mundane and impersonal everyday interaction. Despite purporting to be colorblind societies, the fact that some mixed race people like Joy and Tia are asked what race they are by strangers passing on the street or in the grocery store reveals that everyday social interactions in both the US and UK are

still heavily influenced by (perceived) racial group membership. To be fair, it is likely that many of these inquirers do not consciously realize the magnitude of what their simple "curiosity" implies about the racial zeitgeist of their cultures. Nonetheless, it can be taken as evidence that racial identification is so strong of an element in everyday interactions in these societies that some members cannot even comfortably be co-present with others unless racial information is first established.

Mixed race people's variable responses to these questions, ranging from "just telling them" their parents' races (Mary) to "snarky" remarks such as "human being, punk" (Mark and Frost) to "evil" tactics like withholding the desired information in order to purposely make the inquirer feel uncomfortable (Lisa), demonstrate that they realize they have agency to resist "pigeon holding" and being racially objectified. When these questions stem from the juxtaposition of their appearance and their non-adherence to negative stereotypes of about various non-white groups, it reveals the continued existence of essentialist notions of race and assumptions about how members of certain groups "are." The mixed race person's response in these instances therefore has the potential to be an anti-racist lesson that, at the micro-level of a one-on-one interaction, challenges racist ideology in the US and UK.

A return to gender

As mentioned in chapter 3, despite claims that "appearance plays a salient role in racial identity development for *all* mixed race people" (Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005, emphasis added), the specific dynamics as to *how* appearance influences racial identity development that are discussed in the literature are all female specific. Therefore, a contribution to the literature of

this dissertation is the identification of potential pathways by which appearance influences racial identity development for mixed race men. First, men's physical size as tall/large or short/thin appears to play a role in the type of racial identity they develop due to its influence on how often they are asked about their race. The experience of constantly being asked about one's race and/or mistaken for other races, as stated above, was found to be a reflected appraisal of mixed race identity. In this study, men who were over six feet tall and over 200 pounds reported being asked about their race less frequently than shorter, thinner, less "stocky" men; and none of the former identified as mixed race. Consequently it can be concluded that when some men, due to their tall/large appearance, do not receive this mixed race reflected appraisals, they may be less likely to develop a mixed race identity. While the men in this study surmise that it is the combination of their light skin and non-white facial features that makes others *wonder* about their race, for those whose appearance, due to size, is "intimidating," others less frequently *ask.* Thus, mixed race identity is not reflected in the looking glass and consequently, for the tall/large men in this study, mixed race self-identification did not develop.

Moreover, while the tall/large men in this study were not asked about their race as often as shorter/thinner men, tall and large women (e.g., Joy who reported her height to be six feet and Tia who calls herself "bigger boned") *were* asked just as often as shorter/thinner women; and women, as discussed in chapter 3, identified as mixed race more frequently than their male counterparts. This suggests that with regard to appearance playing a role in the development of mixed race identification, size is a male specific mediating factor. Further support for the saliency of physical size only for men is the fact that 72% (8 of 11) of the male interviewees included their size (e.g., height, weight, and/or build) when asked to describe their physical appearance, while only a third (6 of 19) of the women reported their size. Moreover, whereas

size was often the first physical characteristic the men mentioned, only one woman, 5'7 Carmen, began her description of her physical appearance with her size. Size, then, appears to be a mediating appearance factor that, due to the interactions it facilitates or impedes, specifically affects mixed race males' racial identity.

Secondly, a key finding of this research is that hair, in particular curly "in-between-y" hair of a texture in between course and smooth, is seen as a quintessential, distinctive feature of the mixed race population. As in previous research, this study found that for mixed race women with curly hair their hair was a source of conflict with other non-white (primarily black) women which, when internalized as a dis-affirming reflected appraisal, sometimes pushed mixed race women away from mono-racial identification and towards mixed race identification. While not via this particular pathway, hair also plays a role in mixed race men's racial identity development as well. As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, most of the male interviewees wore both the hair on their heads and faces cut short, which obscures the distinctive mixed race appearance of it. While this "clean cut" look is reported to be have been chosen for the non-racial reason that it is "professional" and makes one look "more presentable," nevertheless short hair and limited facial hair partly obscures their mixed race heritage since hair, especially when it is curly, is so strongly associated with mixed race status. Like the women in this study who noted that others assumed they were mono-racial black or Latino when their hair was not curly, the men who wore short hair and limited facial hair reported others perceiving them mono-racially as black or Latino, especially when in the United States where the longer history of racial mixing has resulted in more mono-racial light skinned people of color. The role of hair in identity development for men, therefore, appears to occur via the effects of its absence rather than via the effects of its presence as it does for women.

Limitations, Directions for Future Inquiry and Conclusion

As noted in chapter 2, the initial method of recruitment of the study sample was through posted advertisements on mixed race organizations' webpages and emailed requests for participation to membership lists. Secondary snowball sampling also utilized the internet in that recruitment aids (i.e., colleagues, family and friends who were asked if they knew any mixed race people who would be willing to participate) heavily used email and Facebook to approach potential interviewees. A limitation of this method is that it is biased in favor of internet users. While the digital divide between those who have access to the internet and those who do not is decreasing, nonetheless senior citizens, adults with less than a high school education and lower income adults are less likely than other adults to have internet access (Zickuhr and Smith 2012). That the resulting sample was disproportionately young adults (83% under 40) who were predominantly middle class and highly educated is no doubt in part a by-product of the heavy use of the internet for recruitment.

Also as noted in chapter 2, some mixed race individuals monoracially identify as white. While this group is in the minority for some mixed race groups (e.g., only between 3% and 17% of the black/white mixed race population identifies as white (Harris and Sim 2002, Rockquemore and Arend 2002) it is the majority identification for others (e.g., about 86% of the Native American/white population identifies as white (Harris and Sim 2002)). Another limitation of this study, then, is that there are no individuals who identified as white in the sample. None responded to the internet posts for participation, and the one white identified mixed race person who was located via snowball sampling declined to participate. The generalizability of the findings to mixed race individuals who identify as white, therefore, is unclear.

Future research would benefit from oversampling among underrepresented segments of the mixed race population such as lower income adults and those who identify as white. Research on this topic in other countries with increasingly mixed race populations such as Canada and Australia would also be beneficial; similar findings would be evidence of the robustness of the results reported here and differences would further define the exact role of context. Additionally, future studies using experimental methods would provide the ability to test some of the perceptions and trends described by the interviewees, for example that one is taken more "seriously" when one has straight versus curly hair. Finally, men's physical appearance and how it structures and influences their racial identity and social experiences deserves more scholarly attention.

With increasing racial mixing in society, how we present ourselves and how we talk about race will become increasingly foregrounded. In this dissertation, I explored the role that ambiguous physical appearance plays in mixed race people's lives with regard to racial identity, body work and interpersonal conversations about racial categorization. I found that phenotypically racially ambiguous mixed race people "do" race in a variety of ways, from using hair styles, piercings and tattoos to convey racial group membership to holding those who question them about their race accountable for breaking the civility of the cosmopolitan canopy. Mixed race adults, therefore, are not only a source of others' "momentary crisis in racial meaning" (Omi and Winant 1992) but, by daily navigating the micro-politics of ambiguity, help resolve that crisis by contributing to re-creating racial meaning one micro-interaction at a time.

Appendix A: Interview Guide

I Identity questions

~ please describe your racial background / heritage

~ what did your parents teach you about your racial background/heritage
~ what type of racial environment did you grow up in

~ how do you identify yourself:
- on forms
- to ppl you just met
- at work
- to friends
- to family

~ how has your identity changed from when you were younger vs now

* music, hip hop

II Appearance ambiguity questions

~ describe your physical appearance
- how do you think you appear racially
- what do you think makes you look racial ambiguous
- when did you first become aware that you looked racially ambiguous

~ do you ever get asked "what race are you?" or "where are you from?"
- can you tell me about a time when someone asked
- how did you respond. why
- can you tell about a time when you responded a different way
- * Do you ask other people what race they are?

~ regarding the people that ask you:
- do men or women ask more
- which race are the majority of the people who ask
- in what context do you get asked the most
- do any of these factors influence how you respond? in what way?

~ do people ever assume you are a certain race / from a certain place
- can you tell me a time when someone assumed something incorrect about you
- how can you tell if a person is perceiving you as being of a certain race
- do men or women assume the same or different things
- do people of different races assume the same or different things
- in what context do people assume what things

* Travel

III Appearance altering questions

~ tell me about the different ways you wear your hair
from whom or where did you learn how to do that style
do you wear different styles on different occasions
which style do you think is most attractive on you
which style do others think is most attractive on you
do you think different styles alter how you appear racially/where you appear from
in which style(s) do you feel most 'like yourself'

~ when did you first began to have facial hair (men only)
tell me about the different ways your wear your facial hair
from whom or where did you learn how to do that style
do you wear different styles on different occasions
which style do you think is most attractive on you
which style do others think is most attractive on you
do you think different styles alter how you appear racially/where you appear from
in which style(s) do you feel most 'like yourself'

~ when did you first begin to wear make-up (women only)
tell me about the different ways you wear make-up
from whom or where did you learn how to do that style
do you wear different looks on different occasions
which look do you think is most attractive on you
which look do others think is most attractive on you
do you think it alters how you appear racially
in which look(s) do you feel most 'like yourself'

~ have you ever gotten a sun tan
did the darkening skin color change how others perceived you
have you ever been to a tanning salon
do you feel more 'like yourself' with or w/o a tan

~ have you ever had / would you consider having plastic surgery
What did you have done / would you like to have done
Why did / would you have surgery (or Why didn't /wouldn't you have surgery)
do you think the surgery altered (or would alter) how you appear racially
do you feel (or think you would feel) more or less 'like yourself' afterwards

* Piercings

* Tattoos

~ have you ever done something on purpose to alter how you would appear racially
(if no: do you know anyone that purposely alters how they appear racially)
what types of things do you do to alter how you appear racially
when did you realize you could do this

from whom or where did you learn how to do this
how do you know when they are successful
when or on whom do efforts not have your desired effect
do you feel ‘like yourself’ when you do this

* What will you teach your children?

IV Demographics
~ gender
~ age
~ ses growing up

Appendix B: Sample Demographics

TABLE 1: SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

"NAME"		GENDER	AGE	RACAIL BACKROUND*	RACIAL IDENTITY
Dave	UK	male	30	black/white	black or mixed
Mary	UK	female	41	Asian/white	mixed
George	UK	male	41	Asian/black	black
Sara	UK	female	38	black/white	mixed
Dean	UK	male	27	black/white	black
David Smith	UK	male	25	Asian/white	mixed
Sophie	UK	female	22	black/white	mixed
Emma	UK	female	22	Asian/white	mixed ("white Asian")
Vincent	UK	male	36	black/white	black or mixed
Lisa	UK	female	40	black/white	mixed
Fleur	UK	female	34	black/white	mixed
Claire	UK	female	40	Asian/white	mixed
Larell	US	male	22	black/white	black
Carmen	US	female	31	Asian/black/Latino/white	black
Sally	US	female	19	Asian/white	Filipino
Sydney	US	female	39	black/white	mixed ("multiracial")
Joy	US	female	27	black/white	black
Annette	US	female	31	black/white	mixed
Heather	US	female	25	Asian/black	mixed ("Chamaican") or black
Judy	US	female	30	black/white	black
Bo Jangles	US	male	36	black/white	black
Suzie Que	US	female	33	black/white	black
Aaliyah	US	female	25	black/white	mixed ("biracial")
Frost	US	male	28	black/Latino	black
Tia	US	female	37	Native American/black/white	black or mixed
Chris	US	male	30	black/white	black
Jennifer	US	female	34	black/white	mixed or other
Mark	US	male	49	Native American/white	mixed
Anna	US	female	24	Asian/white	person of color/non-white
John Doe	US	male	25	black/white	black

Appendix C: Artist Recreations of Interviewees' Original Synergistic Designs

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