University of Alberta

Ambivalence, The External Gaze and Negotiation: Exploring Mixed Race Identity

by

Jillian Elizabeth Paragg

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Sociology

©Jillian Elizabeth Paragg
Fall 2011
Edmonton, Alberta

ABSTRACT

Between fall 2009 and fall 2010 I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 19 young-adult women and men of mixed race in Edmonton, Alberta. A prominent theme that emerged was being asked the question 'what are you?'. I position the 'moment' of being questioned as a manifestation of the external gaze. People of mixed race are subject to questioning because they do not fit within dominant racial binaries: they exceed the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse and are socially identified as ambivalent (Anzaldua 1987). Within the literature on the 'racial gaze,' it is often positioned as something that fixes (Fanon 1967). However, the very ambivalence people of mixed race pose to the gaze allows them to negotiate it. The narratives of my respondents demonstrate that the inability of the social gaze to 'fix' them opens up the possibility of making identity through negotiating the gaze in multiple ways.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

particular Kelly for our discussions on the writing process, insights on her experiences and helping me to think about context, and always willing to be my presentation practice audience!

My fellow grad forum members Heather, Stephen, Barbara, Marie, Goze, and Michelle for their feedback on my work, and for helping me with my mock defense.

My friends, including Terra and Merin for their company during our study sessions. No matter how isolating the writing process, I always knew I would have great company on Tuesdays!

My writing group buddies, also including Terra and Merin, along with Jasmine and Kelly for their feedback, encouragement, and editing skills.

Eryn and Majeda for their help in recruiting research participants and for their continued support and interest in my project from the very beginning – it means so much to me.

Jasinta for her support and enthusiasm for my project, and for willingly reading my papers!

Brenna and Beth for their support. It was always comforting knowing we were in this together – although in three different graduate programs and across three different provinces!

Zach for always making me laugh, and for always challenging my ideas (no matter how frustrated it makes me).

Paige for always being there for me, and for listening to my stories and helping me de-stress!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER FIVE: THE GAZE, AMBIVALENCE AND HORIZON OF RESPONSES

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

REFERENCES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

> I don't really use that term…but yeah, I am. I am mixed…but I don't use it specifically. I just say what I am.

This quote from my interview participant Veronica highlights how people of mixed race may feel uncertain about the term 'mixed race' and using it as an identifier for themselves. As Mahtani (2002c) found in her research on women of mixed race in Canada, people may be ambivalent about claiming 'mixed race':

> …it was not simply that some women identified with the term [mixed race] wholeheartedly while others wholly discouraged its use. Rather, the very same women who were enthusiastic about the label 'mixed race' were often, at other times during the interviews, highly dismissive of its use (Mahtani 2002c: 478).

From the beginning, then, the subject of 'mixed' race' and attempts to study it are fraught with complexity. Firstly, the term has social meaning yet it is not necessarily directly claimed as an identity. For example, all of my research participants had responded to recruitment material that used the term 'mixed race,' yet only two of them said in interviews that they consciously claimed 'mixed race' as an identifier for themselves. Secondly, while people may identify with being 'mixed,' what this means varies; sometimes it is racial, sometimes it is 'cultural' or 'ethnic,' other times it is a combination of both.[1] Jennifer, one of my respondents, put it this way: "I usually say I'm…yeah, a combination of things. Not necessarily 'mixed racial.'" In addition, many respondents expressed they consider themselves to be of a 'mixed racial background' but not 'mixed race.'

---

[1] That 'mixed' is there, but not necessarily as 'mixed race' is likely influenced by the Canadian context. In contrast, a particular social environment for claiming 'mixed race' has formed in the United States (Nakashima 1996). In this thesis I will not be able to answer why this social environment has formed in the US and not in Canada, as that is a topic for a thesis in itself. But it is important to wonder and ask why this is occurring.

Overall, people of mixed race may face uncertainty in terms of how to identify themselves. Why might this be? What is the status of 'mixed race' in contemporary Canada, and why and how do people both recognize and/or identify with it *and* seek to distance themselves from it or complicate it? And what does this tell us about understandings and enactments of race in the Canadian context?

I assert that the uncertainty and impossibility of 'mixed race' as an identity speaks to how the self and the social make each other: identity construction is a constant process of negotiation between the self and the social (Fuss 1995). Therefore, the uncertainty and impossibility of 'mixed race' as an identity for people of mixed race signals the ambivalence with which they are socially identified. While the majority of my respondents were reluctant to directly and consciously claim the term 'mixed race' as an identity, they expressed an awareness that they are engaged in a constant negotiation with the external gaze, in that others are unable to place them.

This thesis is a study of making identity through negotiating the external gaze in multiple ways. In the fall of 2009 and between the summer and fall of 2010 I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 19 young-adult women and men of mixed race in Edmonton, Alberta. A prominent theme that emerged in the everyday lives of my respondents was being asked the question 'what are you?'. I position the 'moment' of being questioned as a manifestation of the external gaze. Such questioning demands an explanation, and is a gaze that 'others.' People who belong to racialized groups are 'marked' by race, and experience an 'external racial gaze,' which seeks to fix racial categories on them.

Through the interaction of 'the gaze' power is exerted over the one who is 'looked upon' or 'read' by the gaze. Overall, the questioning demand reflects the binary racialized landscape of the Canadian context: people of mixed race are 'hypervisible' (Mahtani 2002a) to the external gaze, and are therefore subject to questioning, because they do not fit within dominant racial binaries. They exceed the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse, and are therefore socially situated in a space of uncertainty or ambivalence (Anzaldua 1987).

The external gaze is formed within a wider race discourse operating in the Canadian context. Two key and linked components of this discourse include first, the binary of white/non-white and second, official multiculturalism. Within the Canadian social landscape, race discourse operates within a set of binary oppositions. There is an oppositional way of thinking about race categories: a need to fix the self and Other as white or non-white (Bannerji 2000). This binary is influenced by multicultural discourse, due to its positioning of 'Canadian' as white, and non-whites as Cultural Others (Bannerji 2000; Elliot and Fleras 1992).

The Canadian government defines official multiculturalism, stating "Canadian multiculturalism is fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging'' (Government of Canada, 2001). Canadian multiculturalism reinforces the need to 'belong' to a culture and emphasizes ethno-cultural identities and origin over other identities, such as racial identities. This works to perpetuate a liberal 'different-but-equal' colour-

blindness (Bannerji 2000; Compton 2002; Mahtani 2002a; Taylor 2008b). As

Mahtani (2002c) further states:

> …multicultural policy, where ethnic identities are celebrated as a backdrop for
> Canadian identity, often ensures that forms of institutionalized racism are
> rendered invisible (Kobayashi, 1993; Kymlicka, 1995). As a result, the concept
> of racialized ethnicities (as opposed to 'race') has figured largely regarding
> questions of identity for visible minority Canadians (Bannerji, 2000) (Mahtani
> 2002c: 475).

This, in turn, leads to a common Canadian narrative, the assertion that 'race does

not matter' (Compton 2002). However, this is highly problematic in a society

differentiated on the basis of race. Together, official multiculturalism and the

white/non-white binary set up a messy set of racialized discourses for people of

mixed race to navigate.

My respondents' self-identification narratives, the narratives they gave

when I asked them 'how do you self-identify?' in the interview were multiple.

Nonetheless, these narratives cannot be separated out from how they experience

the external gaze (Fuss 1995). There is no pure separation between my

respondents' 'self-identity' narratives and the narratives they have to deal with the

racial readings and questions of others, which I refer to as their 'identity-for-

other' narratives. Furthermore, through their 'identity-for-other' narratives, my

respondents demonstrate they are aware of the 'racial gaze.'

 However, at the same time, my respondents themselves wrestle with the

salience of race, through their expression of the 'curiosity narrative.' The

'curiosity narrative' is a key narrative my respondents have to make sense of why

the gaze reads them, but through the narrative they dismiss the gaze as simply

'curiosity' (and thus colour-neutral). Through the 'curiosity narrative,' my

respondents position the gaze to 'not be about race.' This further speaks to the liberal 'different-but-equal' colour-blindness that operates in the Canadian context (Compton 2002; Mahtani 2002a; Taylor 2008b). Overall, my respondents' have self-identification narratives and the 'curiosity narrative' to make sense of why the gaze reads them, however these narratives are entwined with how they experience the external gaze.

Within the literature on the 'racial gaze,' the gaze is often positioned as something that fixes and paralyzes (Fanon 1967; Hall 1990; Weate 2001). While the gaze on 'mixed race' bodies is still a social product of binary categories and multicultural forces, this does not necessarily mean it paralyzes. Through the ambivalent space in which they are socially situated, my respondents are able to negotiate the gaze. The very ambivalence they pose to the gaze allows them to negotiate it: ambivalence is not paralysis, and people of mixed race are able to engage with this space. The narratives of my respondents demonstrate that the inability of the social gaze to 'fix' them opens up the possibility of making identity through negotiating the gaze in multiple ways. This is evident through the horizon of responses my research participants have devised for the questioning external gaze. These include developing 'conscious identity-for-other narratives,' 'turning' the gaze, 'playing on' the gaze, and 'playing to' the gaze.

Defining 'Mixed Race'

Race discourse is a complex area, but for the purpose of my project, by 'mixed race' I am referring to people who are of a mixed racial background,

which I define as those whose biological parents are from different racialized groups, meaning different "socially defined racial groups" (Streeter 1996: 316). For example, this could be a person who has one parent who is socially marked as white and one parent who is socially marked as non-white, or a person whose parents are both socially marked as non-white,[2] but from different racialized groups. Furthermore, I would like to note by using the term 'mixed race' I am not necessarily referring to how members of the population self-identify: I am only using the term to describe the research population.

Some may argue studying 'mixed race' reifies the socially constructed category of race and works to essentialize racial identities. Within critical race theory (CRT), race is positioned as a social construction, no longer thought of as a biological category, although it is still thought of as a biological category in popular discourse. I therefore align myself with critical race theory, in that while race is a social construction, it is a category nonetheless significant in people's lives, one with real social meaning and effect, and its impact needs to be addressed (Crenshaw 1995). Omi and Winant (1986) provide a useful definition of race. They state:

> …there is a continuous temptation to think of race as an *essence,* as something fixed, concrete and objective, as (for example) one of the categories just enumerated. And there is also an opposite temptation: to see it as a mere illusion, which an ideal social order would eliminate. In our view, it is crucial to break with these habits of thought. The effort must be made to understand race as *an unstable and "decentered" complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle (*1986: 68)

---

[2] The use of the terms "white" and "non-white" may be objectionable to some. For instance, it could be argued that by using the term "non-white" one privileges the term "white," making it the norm against which all other groups are measured (James 2001). However, by using "white" it is not my intention to privilege the term. The term 'white' that has been used in mixed race scholarship as a point of reference, in that research on mixed race identity has been largely focused on individuals with white and black parentage. It is my intention to disrupt this and capture a more diverse range of experiences. Furthermore, other scholars have argued that using the term "white" is useful in that it denotes the existence of power relations at work in our society. For instance, Mukherjee states: "I use the term 'non-white' in order to talk about the binary relationship of power in which 'white' is the dominant term" (2001: 214).

They go on to describe their concept of racial formation, stating:

> We use the term *racial formation* to refer to the process by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings (Omi and Winant 1986: 61).

However, as St Louis (2005) states, it is useful to discuss the social significance of race as opposed to what race is or is not.

Streeter (1996) recognizes there exists a tension in mixed race scholarship, in that researchers must negotiate the language of race in order to articulate mixed race realities. She states that in this case "discourse is simultaneously a trap and an enabling condition" (Streeter 1996: 320). The existence of this tension is something I needed to be aware of throughout the research process. However, as Song (2003) argues, the existence of mixed race people requires "a profound rethinking not only of existing racial categories and their legitimacy, but also of the everyday belief that there are such things as 'pure' and distinct races" (2003: 61). In this way, rather than essentializing racial identities, mixed race scholarship works to disrupt reified notions of race. Shedding light on the experiences of people of mixed race shows that while race discourses are powerful, they are also precarious.

It should also be noted countless terms have been used to try to capture this population; mixed race scholars, including those whom I cite in this thesis, also use different terms in the academic literature. These include 'mixed race,' 'mixed heritage,' 'mixed parentage,' 'mixed origins,' 'dual heritage,' 'dual parentage,' 'interracial,' 'multiracial' and 'biracial,' among others (Aspinall 2003; Gilbert 2005; Ifekwunigwe 1999). Despite this range of terms, I have chosen to

use 'mixed race' to refer to this population in this thesis and in my research as it

as a term that is becoming widely used and recognized in popular culture, media,

and public discourse. For instance, while my research participants responded to

the term 'mixed race' in my recruitment material despite their ambivalence

around claiming the term as previously discussed, many of them were not familiar

with the terms 'biracial' or 'multiracial.'

Furthermore, it is also important to note the choice of the term 'mixed

race' as opposed to 'multiethnic.' Those who have 'multiple ethnicities' do not

necessarily face the same social consequences of hypervisibility as those who are

'mixed race.' People who have multiple ethnicities are not socially identified

with the same ambivalence as those who are considered to be of 'multiple races.'

As Hier and Bolaria argue "because of the fact of 'racial' visibility, race and

ethnicity function differently" (2006: 133). Similarly, Waters (1990) notes:

> If one believes one is part English and part German and identifies as German, one
> is not in danger of being accused of trying to "pass" as non-English and of being
> "redefined" English…. But if one were part African and part German, one's self-
> identification as German would be highly suspect and probably not accepted if
> one "looked" black according to the prevailing social norms (Waters, 1990:18–
> 19).

However, as Sollors (2002) argues, ethnicity has come to replace 'race'

within popular discourse, and in the Canadian context, there is constant slippage

between race and ethnicity, as a result of multicultural discourse (Taylor, James

and Saul 2007). This is problematic in contexts that are differentiated on the basis

of race and place significance on racialization (Crenshaw 1995). I will expand on

this in relation to critical race theory later in the chapter.

Moreover, 'white' is a dominant and normalized category and is not seen as 'raced,' and in the Canadian context, racial discourse is premised on the white and non-white binary (Bannerji 2000). There exists a mutually exclusive binary racial discourse, and within this discourse those who are racialized as white are separate from those who are racialized as non-white (Gilbert 2005; Song 2003). Those who transgress this binary face particular consequences, and are situated in a space of ambivalence (Anzaldua 1987; Taylor 2008b). People with two white parents of different ethnicities do not transgress the racial binary. In addition due to the white/non-white binary in the Canadian context, there is a tendency not to consider those who have parents from differing non-white racialized groups as 'mixed race.' I particularly found this in my interviewee recruitment. I was only able to recruit one person with parents from differing non-white racialized groups as a research participant, which may speak to the predominance of the white/non-white binary and its influence on understanding who is 'mixed.' I will expand on this in the following chapter.

Identity Approaches

A number of theoretical approaches to identity have informed this project. Firstly, the symbolic interactionist perspective has been useful in terms of considering the 'everyday' types of interactions people of mixed race experience. Theorists working within a symbolic interactionist framework (Blumer 1969; Goffman 1959) position the individual as an active and reflective self, and assert that the self makes choices in determining how it is presented in social space. Yet

the self also develops in interaction with other external social actors: between how individuals understand themselves and how they are understood by others in their social environment. However, there is a possibility of the symbolic interactionist perspective failing to recognize individuals as already imbricated in social discourse and structures: of reifying a discrete individual.

Therefore, the concept of 'identification' has also largely informed this project. As Hall argues, "rather than speaking of identity as a finished thing, we should speak of identification. And see it as an ongoing process" (1995: 608). The use of 'identification,' as opposed to 'identity' connotes the process of identity formation. It positions identity as a socially produced process, as opposed to reifying a unitary subject. Identification occurs between the self and the social: identity construction is a constant process of negotiation between the self and the social (Fuss 1995). Furthermore, as Fuss (1995) argues, identity is never fully formed: it is constantly forming. Therefore, identity "is a work in progress, a negotiated space between ourselves and others" (Taylor and Spencer 2004: 4). The literature around intersectionality, which addresses negotiating intersections of identity, has also been useful in term of thinking through identity formation as a negotiation between the individual and the social. For instance, Anthias (1998) positions the individual and the social as operating in the same identity formation sphere; there is no separation but rather a constant negotiation. In this way she rejects the "binarisation of social process" (Anthias 1998: 512).

Furthermore, "identification names the entry of history and culture into the subject, a subject that must bear the traces of each and every encounter with the

external world" (Fuss 1995: 3). Therefore, critical race theory has also been useful for considering how structural and cultural forces shape the discourses people of mixed race are subject to in their social context. Critical race theory considers the impact of structural forces on how race is constructed and perceived, and how structural forces are themselves constructed through race. Therefore, critical race theory views race as a social construction: it does not position race as one-dimensional or fixed, rather its meanings change according to historical and structural forms and contexts (Delgado and Stefancic 2000; Stoler 1997).

Such a lens therefore enables me to consider the impact of discourses surrounding race in the Canadian context on how people of mixed race understand their identities and on how others perceive and position them. Furthermore, in the Canadian context it is necessary to consider the impact of official multicultural discourse and institutionalized practices on how people understand their identities, and how racial identities are understood within society (Mahtani 2002a). As Thornton states, it is necessary to "address cultural and structural forces that determine how [people of mixed race] view themselves and are viewed by others" (1996: 119).

Also central to critical race theory is its positioning of the necessity of race-consciousness. It seeks to problematize the emergence 'colour-blindness' within liberal discourse. Within such a discourse, race is no longer deemed significant, and the proliferation of this discourse is evident within the Canadian context through multiculturalism. Critical race theory perceives colour-blindness as a silencer, not an equalizer: it is a way of masking the

continued racial stratification of society, and argues that colour-blind thinkers

have a "curiously constricted understanding of race and power" (Crenshaw 1995:

xv). Critical race theorists argue that race and racial identity have social

meanings, and failing to recognize that race affects a person's life experiences in a

society that is differentiated on the basis of race is highly problematic.

Thesis Overview

This thesis is a study of the making of identity through negotiating the

external gaze in multiple ways. People of mixed race are socially situated in a

space of ambivalence because they do not fit within dominant racial binaries.

This leads the external gaze to question them, because it cannot place them. I

seek to demonstrate that rather than being fixed by this gaze, the ambivalent space

in which my respondents are socially situated enables them to negotiate the gaze

in multiple ways. The very ambivalence they pose to the gaze allows them to

negotiate it: ambivalence is not paralysis, and people of mixed race are able to

engage with this space.

Chapter one has introduced the ambivalence with which my respondents

are socially identified as a result of dominant racial binaries, and how this enables

my respondents to negotiate the gaze in multiple ways. Furthermore, how the

external gaze perceives, reads and approaches my respondents and how they

perceive themselves and make sense of the gaze is influenced by two key and

linked components of race discourse in the Canadian context: the binary of

white/non-white and official multiculturalism. I have also outlined the identity

approaches that have informed this thesis, as well as the definitions and basic writers I am working with.

Chapter two outlines the method and methodology of the project. It describes the context of Edmonton; considers the methods I used and the methodological choices I made; discusses race, identity, and method; introduces the interviewees; and reflexively considers my own positionality as 'mixed race.'

Chapter three provides an overview of the literature on 'mixed race,' moving from the early literature to the current, critical scholarship, and discusses how my findings build upon the existing literature. Next, the chapter introduces some literature on the external gaze and how mixed race experiences and narratives illuminate the external gaze in a different way. It then provides an overview of two key and linked components of race discourse in the Canadian context: the binary of white/non-white and official multiculturalism. These discourses shape my respondents' context as well as how the gaze perceives, reads and approaches them.

Chapter four discusses my respondents' self-identification narratives, that is, the narratives they used when I asked them "how do you self-identify?" in the interview, and a key narrative they have to make sense of why the gaze reads them: the 'curiosity narrative.' These narratives are entwined with how they experience the external gaze.

Chapter five focuses on the horizon of responses my research participants have devised for the questioning external gaze. I have devised this typology based on my analysis of the interviews. Their horizon of responses include

developing 'conscious identity-for-other narratives,' 'turning' the gaze, 'playing to' the gaze, and 'playing on' the gaze. However, gender also complicates my respondents' responses to the gaze.

In the concluding chapter, I expand on how this project has implications for theorizing agency. Identity and agency are blurred through the negotiations my respondents engage in with the external gaze: the making of identity is itself agentic. In turn, mixed race identification itself opens a new window on questions of agency: agency is possible, because race discourse is precarious, which the narratives of people of mixed race open up. I then propose some possible directions for future research in order to further develop an understanding of the identity and negotiating experiences of people of mixed race.

Chapter Two: Methods and Methodology

Introduction

I conducted semi-structured depth interviews with 19 young adults of

mixed race in Edmonton, Alberta in the fall of 2009 and between the summer and

fall of 2010. Four of these were interviews I had conducted for my Sociology

518: Qualitative Research Methods project in the fall of 2009, which ultimately

became the pilot for this thesis project. The other 15 interviews were carried out

over the summer and fall of 2010. This chapter describes the methods used in this

project, and also considers methodological choices; discusses race, identity, and

method; introduces the respondents in the study; and reflexively considers my

own positionality as 'mixed race.' Overall, my project has helped me to

reconsider in my own experiences the moment of the 'what are you?' question as

a space of possibility for negotiation as opposed to an imposition.

Context of Edmonton

The location of the project, Edmonton, Alberta, was a result of my

physical location and that of my University. However, it should also be noted that

this context shapes the study's findings. Edmonton is becoming an increasingly

racially diverse city, however, it is not as racially diverse as Canada's largest

cities. For instance, according to the 2006 Federal census what Statistics Canada

refers to as the "visible minority" population, meaning those belonging to

racialized non-white groups, included 165,465 individuals, or 22.9% of the total

population (Statistics Canada 2006). This is an increase of 3.2% from the 2001

Federal census (Statistics Canada 2001). Overall the experiences and narratives

of my respondents reflect the racialized character of the city of Edmonton.

Furthermore, the other contexts my respondents have found themselves in

throughout their lives have also largely impacted their experiences. Many

respondents talked about growing up in smaller towns whose populations tended

to be predominantly white, and contrasted these experiences with the racial

diversity of Edmonton, or other cities where they have resided. I will expand on

this throughout the thesis, as context shapes not only how my respondents are

perceived and how people approach and respond to them, but what negotiations

they engage in.

Participant Recruitment

My research participants were recruited through word of mouth and

snowball sampling, as well as through various university department, student

association and student organization listservs at the University of Alberta. My

respondents ranged in age from 21-32. As my peer group, this population was

easily accessible to me. I also only sought out Canadian born research

participants. This helped to manage the range of the study, in that my respondents

are from a particular historical cohort: one who grew up in an officially

multicultural and increasingly diverse Canada.

In my recruitment material, I used the term 'mixed race' to describe the

population I was recruiting. I used this term because it is becoming widely used

and recognized in popular culture, media, and public discourse to describe my

population of interest (Mahtani 2002c). However, in the interview, when I asked my respondents "how do you self-identify?" only two responded saying 'as mixed race,' which I further expand on in chapter four. All of my research participants responded to an ad that used the term 'mixed race,' yet the majority do not directly and consciously claim an identity based on that. My respondents recognize 'mixed race' to some extent as a term that describes them, or a term used to describe them. Or they understand their background is 'mixed' yet they do not claim the term as their own, instead expressing uncertainty towards it. Overall, this speaks to an ambivalence my respondents have towards the term's usefulness for their self-identification, perhaps further speaking to the ambivalence with which they are socially identified, in that they are hesitant or unsure of how to be 'named.'

In her research on women of mixed race in Canada, Mahtani (2002c) found her respondents used the term 'mixed race' to create a space of 'home' or belonging, as a way of identifying outside of the binaries of race discourse in the Canadian context, yet they also challenged, contested and rejected the identity label depending on what contexts and circumstances they found themselves within, engaging in a negotiation of how they used the label 'mixed race' in their everyday lives. Similarly, in her research on mixed race people in Canada, which consisted of an analysis of the narratives of people of mixed race in memoirs and documentaries, Taylor (2008b) found people of mixed race struggle over what language to use to talk about themselves and their experiences.

One of my respondents, Anne, asked me about how I have found using the term 'mixed race' in my recruitment, to which I responded:

> …that's certainly been a challenge with my recruitment in a way. Because I think that 'mixed race' is kind of – is much more predominant in the US, and so, I think here people do have an understanding of what it means, but it's just not something that you …people who are of a 'mixed racial background' don't necessarily explicitly use that term to describe themselves. Yeah, but…yeah, it's definitely something really interesting that I've had to negotiate in my project…

Similarly, Mahtani (2005) states of her research on women of mixed race in Canada "although I used the term 'mixed race' to recruit the population I interviewed, the women interviewed did not limit themselves to the use of the phrase 'mixed race' to describe their racial identities" (2005: 80).

I also had two research participants of Aboriginal background respond to my recruitment material, which I was initially surprised by. The term 'Métis' is associated with people of Aboriginal background who are 'mixed,' and tends to be positioned as separate and distinct from 'mixed race' discourse or other racialized discourses in the Canadian context, in that it has formed within its own specific historical context (Mawani 2002; 2009). Overall, I was not expecting people with Aboriginal backgrounds or identities to respond to my recruitment ad, as I did not think the term 'mixed race' would have any meaning for them because of how such identities are socially situated. However as it turns out, only two of my respondents out of my whole sample explicitly claimed 'mixed race' as an identity for themselves.

Perhaps those who responded to my recruitment ad are representative of people who cross and challenge dominant racial binaries: those who exceed the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse and are therefore socially situated in a space of ambivalence (Anzaldua 1987). They are aware they are

engaged in a constant negotiation with the external gaze as other people cannot place them. This has particular consequences for them and exposes them to particular experiences. In turn, perhaps such individuals, who are socially situated as ambivalent, recognize that 'mixed race' is one way they are named. It is a term being employed within discourse to describe how they are socially situated, although they may not claim it for themselves.

Research Ethics

The University of Alberta Research Ethics Board approved this project in May 2010. In terms of ethical considerations, potential risks of participating in the project were not high, but were taken into consideration. There was a possibility of some respondents experiencing emotional distress as a result of discussing their experiences, for instance through talking about family issues or their experiences with racism, which are potentially sensitive subjects for research participants to discuss. As Widdershoven (1993) asserts, through recalling experiences within the context of the interview, not only is the experience revived, but so are the emotions attached to the experience. In order to minimize this risk, upon approaching my respondents to be interviewed I clearly articulated to them the purpose of my research. Upon their agreement to be interviewed, I confirmed with them that they understood I would be asking them personal questions regarding their experiences. At the interview the respondents were given a consent form (see Appendix A) that included a concise statement of

purpose and summary of the project, as well as a description of the interview process.

Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were also addressed in the consent form, stating all information from the interview is kept confidential. Furthermore, all respondents were given the option of being assigned a pseudonym, and I also assigned pseudonyms to those who could potentially be identified. Two of my respondents were also brother and sister. However they both mentioned to me in their separate interviews that they knew that their sibling was being interviewed, so I did not foresee any issues with confidentiality by interviewing both of them.

Voluntary participation was also explained on the consent form: respondents had the right to opt out of answering any questions asked of them in the interview, and they could end the interview at any time. In addition it was explained if they wish to have the transcripts of their interview removed from the project, they had the right to do so up until the completion of the project. It was also clearly stated to the respondents that they had the right not to participate and to withdraw from the interview at any time without penalty. Overall, my respondents seemed at ease throughout the interview process and did not express emotional distress during the interview.

Interview and Analysis Process

All of the interviews took place in coffee shops around Edmonton, Alberta. They were conducted in such semi-private spaces for the comfort of my

respondents. Respondents were not compensated monetarily, although I did offer

to buy them a beverage while we talked.

I used an interview guide (see Appendix B) throughout the interview, yet

at times the conversation deviated from the guide, depending on what the

interviewees wanted to talk about, following the semi-structured depth interview

model. In addition, I adjusted my interview questions as the project progressed,

depending on themes I saw emerging and approaches that did or did not work. As

Bloor and Wood state "semi-structured interviews have an informal,

conversational character, being shaped partly by the interviewer's pre-existing

topic guide and partly by concerns that are emergent in the interview" (2006:104).

This model enabled me to ask the questions I wanted to, yet was flexible with an

open-ended approach, which was the best way to make my respondents feel

comfortable sharing and talking about their experiences.

All of the respondents granted me permission to record their interviews.

As soon as possible after the interviews, I transcribed them using ExpressScribe

software. I also re-listened to each interview after transcribing, checking the

transcript for accuracy. Through this process I also developed familiarity with the

interview content. I completed my preliminary coding electronically as I

transcribed and checked the transcript for accuracy, highlighting emerging

concepts and themes. As Saldana states, "coding is not just labeling: it is *linking*"

(2009: 8). Overall, I followed "an open coding framework without the

assumptions of grounded theory" as put forth by Rubin and Rubin, "coding as you

go, rather than preparing a list, refining the concepts, and then marking them in

the text." They further describe this framework as a "hybrid model, part-way between the responsive interviewing formal coding schema and grounded theory models" (Rubin and Rubin 2005: 223).

Throughout the research process I kept a research journal and log. I noted my analytical and methodological reflections on each interview as soon as possible after the interview, as well as memos on concepts and themes I saw emerging across the interviews, throughout the interview and analysis process. As Saldana states, one can accelerate the process [of formulating rich ideas] through analytic memo writing" (Saldana 2009: 29). Once all of the interviews were completed, transcribed and coded I copied and pasted the individual interview excerpts, organizing them according to their respective concepts and themes, into Microsoft Word's Notebook Layout view. This process led me to further see concepts and themes emerging across the interviews, and helped me begin to formalize my findings.

I unfortunately lost the audio recording of my interview with one respondent, Jane, as the file became corrupted when I attempted to upload it on to my computer. Therefore for this interview I do not have any direct quotes, and I instead relied on my notes taken during the interview. Jane also reviewed the notes for accuracy.

Interview Respondents

I attempted to recruit interview participants from a variety of backgrounds, including individuals with one white and one non-white parent, and individuals

with parents from differing non-white racialized groups, as I was interested in capturing a diversity of experiences. Research on mixed race identity has tended to focus on individuals with one white parent and one non-white parent, and in particular, individuals with one white and one black parent, resulting in the identity experiences of individuals of mixed race from other groups, including those who have parents from differing racialized non-white groups, remaining largely ignored (Gilbert 2005). However, I was only successful in recruiting one respondent with parents from differing non-white racialized groups. I can only speculate as to why this may be. Firstly, it may speak to how Edmonton is less racially diverse than larger cities, resulting in less people who have parents from differing racialized non-white groups.

Secondly, it might be representative of the proportions in the population. The 2006 Canadian census counted 289,400 "mixed unions," meaning marriages and common-law unions involving a "visible minority" person with a "non-visible minority" person or two people from different "visible minority" groups. According to a Statistics Canada report entitled *A Portrait of Couples in Mixed Unions* (2010) mixed unions now represent 3.9% of all unions in Canada, compared with 3.1% in 2001: "between 2001 and 2006, mixed unions grew at a rapid pace (33%), more than five times the growth of all couples (6.0%) (Milan, Maheux and Chui 2010: 71). However, the report found:

> …the majority of mixed unions were between persons who belonged to a visible minority group paired with persons who were not a visible minority group member (247,000 or 3.3% of all couples in 2006), a growth of 31% since 2001. An additional 41,800 couples were comprised of members of two different visible minority groups, accounting for 0.6% of all couples, up almost 50% from five years earlier (Milan, Maheux and Chui 2010: 71)

Thirdly, it may speak to how within popular discourse 'mixed race' is default for someone who has one white and one non-white parent. Perhaps this played a role in who people suggested to me to interview when I recruited through snowball sampling.

I also attempted to recruit both male and female respondents, as I was interested to learn if there were differences in their experiences and in the overall influence of gender in mixed race identity formation. However, I was only able to recruit four male respondents. I can also only speculate as to why this may be. Firstly, it may speak to a gendered difference for males, as a result of their socialization, not feeling as comfortable sharing and talking about their experiences, leading to a lack of interest in participating in research. Secondly, my lack of male respondents and abundance of female respondents may also speak to how women's experiences as 'mixed race' are more pronounced. Women of mixed race, due to the importance of appearance in cultural narratives of femaleness (Baker 1984; Lakoff and Scherr 1984; Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005) may face consequences men of mixed race do not, and thus their experiences may have a more substantial impact on their everyday lives.

Furthermore, because the majority of my respondents were recruited through the University of Alberta, it likely limited the range of their socio-economic statuses, as individuals with access to post-secondary education tend to be of higher socio-economic status. In turn, post-secondary education provides access to knowledge and language and ways of thinking about identity other contexts may not provide. In her study of women of mixed race, Mahtani (2005)

found through post-secondary education her participants "began to learn a language by which to define themselves outside of restraining racial labels. Their education affected how they 'read their race'" (2005: 80). However, post-secondary education may also teach students ways of being 'politically correct' in their language, which came out in the narratives of my participants, particularly through many of them expressing an aversion to the term 'race.'

An issue I have struggled with during the writing process is how to organize the introduction of my respondents within the thesis. Do I categorize them according to their gender, since there does appear to be a difference along gender lines regarding people's experiences? Do I categorize them along racial lines, either according to their 'mix' or how they self-identify? However, this may work to reify racial categories and essentialize my respondents' experiences. Another option I considered was categorizing them according to the kinds of narratives they expressed, in terms of how they responded to the external gaze, for instance positively, negatively, or with uncertainty. However, this has the potential of doing violence to my respondents' experiences and narratives, by positioning some responses as 'correct' and others as 'incorrect.'

My struggle of how to organize the introduction of my respondents is demonstrative of the problematic nature of the social categorizations employed within race discourse in our social context, and also speaks to the larger ways race operates within our social context. Therefore, I decided to introduce my respondents individually, organized in the order I conducted the interviews. Below are listed my respondents along with their age, occupation, and how they

described their racial background in their own words when I initially asked them

"what is your racial background?" in the interview. By outlining how each of my

respondents define themselves, as Mahtani (2002c; 2005) suggests, I do not

impose my reading of their identities. Similarly, in some instances throughout the

thesis I have highlighted my respondents' narratives, in order to let their

narratives speak for themselves, as opposed to imposing my interpretation:

Ja, age 29, a not-for-profit arts sector coordinator: "I am Trinidadian and Dutch-Canadian."

Jess, age 24, an occupational therapist: "My mom is from Hong Kong, and her parents were both from Hong Kong, and then my dad was born in Saskatchewan and his mom is German, Polish, and my grandpa is Norwegian."

Veronica, age 32, an engineer: "I am half-Chinese, and half-Caribbean. So, my mom was from Trinidad and Tobago; San Fernando, Trinidad and Tobago. And then my dad was from Shanghai, China."

Maseray, age 24, a speech pathologist: "my mother is 100% Caucasian, and my father is 100% West African - black African."

Rachel, age 22, a student: "I'm half Chinese on my mother's side, and then Caucasian (hesitant) on my dad's…so half-Chinese."

Sarah, age 26, a graduate student: "My dad's background is Japanese and my mom's is Scottish, but both my parents were born in Canada."

James, age 24, a customer service representative: "I guess I usually describe myself as 'half Chinese,' which specifically means my mother was born in Grande Prairie (laughing). But, her family – her parents are from the Southern part of China, kind of near Canton. So that kind of Chinese mixed with miscellaneous redneck white."

Monica, age 32, a provisional psychologist: "my mom's from the Czech Republic, and my dad's from India. I'm…half white and half brown."

Anne, age 21, a student: "…very Canadian I would say. Because a lot of – like my dad grew up – was born and raised in Hong Kong, and he moved here when he was about 17, and he went to school, he worked, and he met my mom in Manitoba. And then they got married. So, there was never like a time where we were raised in Chinese culture really, or really strong Chinese culture. Like we

picked up some things from him, and we picked up some German things from my mom."

Ali, age 27, a graduate student: "my mom's side of the family is of…Japanese ancestry, my dad's side of the family is Polish and Norwegian, and so…mixed between Caucasian and Asian I would say."

Jolanda, age 25, a retail manager: "I am half Jamaican and half Dutch."

Jennifer, age 24, a graduate student: "my dad's African American and my mom is Danish."

Jane, age 25, a children's theatre manager: described her father as being from the Philippines, but mixed Filipino and Chinese, and her mom as being from Winnipeg, but of a Polish background.

Miranda, age 29, a student: "my mom is white… mixed of every like white European (laughter)…and…my dad is Cree."

Melissa, age 27, a high school teacher: "my father was born in Ethiopia, and my mother was born in Canada. So my father is black, and my mother is white."

Ted, age 23, a graduate student: "I would describe my dad's - my paternal side of the family as being of Native descent, of Native ancestry and heritage. And…my mother as being from European background."

Erin, age 30, a not-for-profit coordinator: "my father was from Pakistan and my mother was second generation Canadian, she was British."

Neil, age 27, a graphic designer: "my father is from Holland, he's Dutch, and… he's a pure Hollander, or Dutch….Pure Dutch, and…my mom is from, China. I think it's Beijing, and she's pure – pure Chinese."

Michael, age 27, a software developer: "my mother is Hispanic from Peru, my father is from Canada."

Furthermore, it is evident that how my respondents think about their 'racial background' is formed in a specific way, in that only certain narratives are considered intelligible in their social context. This was reflected in many of my respondents' use of their parents' 'nations' or 'countries of origin,' when I asked them to describe their racial backgrounds. In this way, race is also positioned as

an inheritance by blood through their parents' nation, which speaks to the 'haunting of blood' that exists within racial discourse, resulting from the legacy of race being positioned as 'biological' (Alcoff 2006; Morris 2007; Winant 2007). Furthermore, many of my respondents expressed an aversion to the term 'race,' stating they preferred the term 'ethnicity' or 'culture,' signaling the influence of official multiculturalism, which privileges these as identities over racial identities (Mahtani 2002a), which I will expand on in chapters three and four.

My Identity and Concluding Thoughts

With the increase of mixed race scholarship over the past two decades, mixed race scholars have also started to take into consideration the methodological issues of conducting research with people of mixed race (Mohan and Chambers 2010; Root 1992). It has been remarked that mixed race scholarship is predominantly carried out by researchers who are themselves of mixed racial backgrounds (Rockquemore and Brunsma 2004; Samuels 2009). Furthermore, as Samuels (2009) and Song and Parker (1995) assert, those who are of 'mixed race' doing mixed race scholarship have a valuable lens, although they also bring their own biases to the table.

To position myself, my personal interest in this topic extends from my own identification with a mixed race identity, and from a desire to understand my own identity negotiating experiences. Throughout the research and analysis process it has been necessary for me to continually reflect on finding a balance between the potentially problematic nature of my own identity, in terms of it

blinding me to experiences and meanings that are not like my own, and the potential helpfulness of my own identity, in terms of it helping me to be empathetic with my respondents and putting them at ease (Mahtani 2002c; Tizard and Phoenix 1993). As Rubin and Rubin state throughout the research process "researchers need to continually examine their own understandings and reactions" (2005: 31).

Reflecting on my own relationship to the term 'mixed race' I realize that, similar to my respondents, I also have an ambivalent relationship with the term. Although 'mixed race' is the term I have chosen to use in my research, I do personally find the term off-putting. Being 'mixed' may connote a sense of impurity or of being 'mixed up.' I prefer to self-identify using the term 'biracial': my father is West Indian - of Indian descent from Trinidad and Tobago,[3] and my mother is white – of English and Irish descent. Overall, I feel the term 'biracial' challenges the notion of race as a biological category and the existence of such things as 'pure' and 'distinct' races. It offers an alternative positioning of race and speaks to race as a social construction, expressing the fluid sense in which I experience my racial identity.

However, as I become more familiar with the literature on mixed race identity, and am exposed to the sense of collective politics implied by the term within the literature in the US context (Mengel 2001; Parker 2004), the more I embrace it. This may also be the case with my respondents. My two respondents who did directly and consciously identify as "mixed race," Monica and Melissa,

---

[3] I identify my father's side of my family as West Indian as opposed to East Indian. This is because their 'cultural practices' are 'West Indian,' and because I think it is important to recognize my ancestors' history of indentured labour in the West Indies, which is not implied by the term 'East Indian.' Therefore, 'West Indian,' for me, is an explicitly politicized identity.

talked about their awareness of the use of the term in the US context, and expressed a familiarity with the literature on mixed race identity: Monica as a graduate student who also conducts research on mixed race identity and Melissa through the literature she has read as a result of her own personal interest in the topic. As Monica states of her research and its impact on her self-identification as 'mixed race': "[it] gave me something to – you know, something solid. In terms of theory – kind of standing on that. Standing firm with that label."

I am also aware that my own identity and experiences affect the context of the interview, in terms of the "social relationship" (Bornat 2007) formed between myself, the interviewer, and the interviewees. For instance, because of my identity respondents may have been further motivated to share their experiences with me. As Rubin and Rubin state, "trust increases as people see that you share a common background with them" (2005: 92). Throughout the interviews, my respondents were able to share their experiences and talk about their identities in the way they wanted to. Therefore, the interaction of the interview worked to validate the identities of my respondents. It gave them an opportunity to express themselves as well as share their experiences with another individual of mixed race. Overall, the interviews themselves worked as a context through which my respondents could have their identities validated, and make meaning of their experiences.

Overall, there is a strong tradition in qualitative research of 'disclosing' one's positionality as a matter of ethical practice (Rapley 2007). However, during the interview process I was concerned if I 'disclosed' my identity, my respondents

would attempt to tailor their narratives or responses in order to fit what they thought I wanted to hear, or would think I had particular responses in mind, which has been referred to as 'social desirability bias' (Sprague 2005). Reinharz and Chase argue that researcher "self-disclosure can increase social desirability bias: the more the respondent knows about the beliefs, values, and feelings of the investigator, the more he or she can take these into account in constructing a response that would please the investigator" (in Sprague 2005: 135). This was a concern of mine, stemming from an interview I conducted for my Sociology 518: Qualitative Research Methods pilot project in the fall 2009 with Jess. I 'disclosed' my identity to her, and she mentioned a number of times in the interview she was worried she might not be able to answer the questions in the way I 'wanted' her to.

During the interviews I conducted in the summer and fall of 2010, if my respondents asked me about my identity or what my background was I would 'disclose' and did not have a problem doing so. In a few instances I did not disclose my identity in my interviews. However, often times if they did not explicitly ask me, it would come up in the interview if my respondents were relaying a story, and I had a similar experience I wanted to share. In this way, the interview also provided me with the opportunity to share my experiences with another person of mixed race. Furthermore, in a few instances, it took my respondents time to ease into the conversation and talk about their experiences, and I 'disclosed' in order to reinforce our connection. I also 'disclosed' in order to show my respondents I knew where they were coming from, that this was a

'safe' space, and to get them to talk more if I felt like they could elaborate on their experiences. Therefore, the *politics* of the question 'what are you?' change when it is an exchange between two people who presume each other to be 'mixed,' which I expand on in chapter five.

This brings up some issues around what is known in the literature on qualitative research as 'insider credentials' or working as an 'insider researcher' (Mohan and Chambers 2010; Watts 2006). This refers to the idea if a researcher shares something in common with their participants, as 'insiders' they may have an advantage in that it may make it easier for them to recruit respondents, and it may serve to reinforce their connection with their respondents, which may in turn impact what information they receive from respondents, and their ability to interpret this information, compared to 'outsiders.'

However, Mohan and Chambers (2010) argue the qualitative research insider/outsider literature and the terminology it employs does not capture the experiences of scholars who are of mixed race who conducted research on people of mixed race. They seek to challenge previous assertions of those who have addressed methodological issues of conducting research with people of mixed race such as Root (1992) who do claim 'insider' status for such researchers. Mohan and Chambers (2010) argue mixed race researchers' status as 'insiders' is problematized in that they may not share any of the same experiences as their respondents, as phenotypically they could be very different from one another, resulting in differences in others' perceptions, and therefore treatment, of them. They also note the likelihood of sharing other characteristics with respondents that

shape experiences such as age, gender, socio-economic status, religion, or sexuality is small. However, from their own experiences as people of mixed race engaging in research on mixed race identity, they did find a sense of commonality of experience existed between them and their respondents. This commonality of experience shared between such researchers and their respondents could in turn position them as 'insiders.'

This was also my experience in the interview, in that even though the appearances of my respondents and my own appearance differed, my respondents often recognized we likely had similar experiences. In this way, I was seen as having, to some extent, 'street cred' in the eyes of my respondents, in that I had an understanding of their experiences, through my own. This came out most in my interview with Anne. She stated:

> …you probably have the exact same kind of…you can identify kind of with the same things that everybody else has been saying….That's funny, yeah. I bet you probably – like you associate, you understand what I'm saying with all my answers kind of thing.

Furthermore, Anne discussed how my understandings of my respondents' responses would likely differ if I was not of 'mixed race':

> Yeah, and it would be so interesting if you were of like – I don't want to say 'a whole,' as in they're more 'pure' or anything, but of a singular ethnicity, to how this would all differ too. Like how you would perceive the interview, or how you would think of, I don't know 'mixed race.'

However, it is interesting to note that despite many of my respondents' acknowledgements of our shared experiences, and the sense of collective politics created by the interview, there remained an ambivalence toward the term 'mixed race.' This is in contrast to the US context where the term more readily connotes a sense of collectivity of experience (Mengel 2001; Parker 2004).

During the recruitment process I had an interesting experience in terms of recruiting a respondent. This potential respondent's expectations of who I was and whether I had 'street cred,' made me think about the process of 'disclosing' to my respondents and prompted some self-reflection on the notion of 'insider credentials.' I had my recruitment ad sent to a listserv of an anti-racism group. I received an email in response from someone on that listserv, but all it said was "what's your racial make-up?" I emailed back asking if they were interested in participating in the project by being interviewed. I then received a response stating, "your answer to my question determines my answer to yours." Throughout this whole interaction, I felt incredibly uncomfortable, which I think is important to unpack. My initial reaction was if my 'background' was the deciding factor of whether or not someone wanted to talk with me, I did not want to talk to them. I felt if the interview was contingent on my background, it was just another form of Othering.

Upon discussing the matter with my supervisor, her response was "welcome to the politics of identity." Her thoughts were this particular individual likely wanted to know if I was a white researcher, which comes from a history of feeling like there is the chance of stories being appropriated into the usual power dynamics of race (Mohan and Chambers 2010). Upon further reflection, I also realized if I was being recruited to participate in a research project on 'mixed race,' I would also be more willing to talk with someone who is also of 'mixed race,' because if they were not, I would be concerned they would not be in the position to understand my perspectives or experiences.

In addition, my supervisor pointed out that through the interview, I was essentially asking my respondents to 'disclose': to talk to me about their identities. I ended up 'disclosing' to this potential participant, as my supervisor also pointed out this person's interest in my identity and potential political stance would be an interesting reason in itself to interview them. However, the potential participant was not in the age range I was recruiting for the project, and the interview did not end up happening.

Overall, I now realize it may have been beneficial for me to explicitly 'disclose' my identity to all of my respondents, so they would have an idea of where my interest in the topic stemmed from. This is something I will do differently in future projects. Overall, from my experience with the interview participants who I did 'disclose' to, my disclosure made them feel more comfortable in the interview and worked to reinforce our connection, and I did not see it as overtly influencing their responses. In fact, one of the things that has been most fascinating for me throughout this project is the moment of being questioned, which I position as a manifestation of the external gaze, serves as a moment of negotiation for my respondents. In contrast, in my own experience, the moment of being questioned is one I had previously considered and experienced as an imposition, which rendered me as the Other, and was an interaction which I always deeply resented. In this way, rather than influencing my respondents' narratives as I feared, their narratives made me reconsider the moment of being questioned as an instance of negotiation.

Chapter Three: Mixed Race Literature, the External Gaze and the Canadian
Context

Introduction

People of mixed race are socially situated in a space of ambivalence
because they do not fit within dominant racial binaries, but they are able to engage
with this space. The inability of the social gaze to 'fix' them opens up the
possibility of making identity through negotiating the external gaze in multiple
ways. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, this room for negotiation contrasts
with how people of mixed race are positioned in the early mixed race literature
and current critical mixed race literature.

This chapter begins with an overview of the literature on 'mixed race'
moving from the early literature to the current critical scholarship, and the debates
within it. I then discuss how my thesis builds upon this literature: firstly, within
critical mixed race scholarship, it is recognized that people of mixed race engage
in identity negotiations, and that this is a shared experience among people of
mixed race. However, I argue what people of mixed race share is not just the
ability to negotiate identity, but the social space that enables them to engage in
this negotiation. Secondly, by challenging racial categories and boundaries I
argue people of mixed race do exist in a type of 'social limbo,' as they are socially
identified as ambivalent, in contrast to some of the critical mixed race literature
(Root 1997). However, rather than creating a pathology or being fixed into a
category, as posited by those in the early literature (Park 1928; Stonequist 1937)
or in the literature around passing (Larsen 1928; Johnson 1912), the very

ambivalence they pose to the gaze allows them to negotiate it: people of mixed race are able to engage with this ambivalent space.

Next, I introduce the literature on the external gaze, and demonstrate how mixed race experiences and narratives illuminate the external racial gaze differently from how it has been positioned in the literature: the gaze can be confounded, if not fully, by the ambivalence of mixed race. Lastly, the chapter provides an overview of two key and linked components of race discourse in the Canadian context: the binary of white/non-white and official multiculturalism. These discourses shape my respondents' social context as well as how the gaze perceives, reads and approaches them.

Mixed Race Literature

This section begins with an overview of the early pathologization and passing literature, and a discussion of psychosocial developmentalist models. It then provides an outline of the literature that is the most useful for my discussion: the discourses circulating within critical mixed race scholarship and the debates within this literature. These include: people of mixed race challenge racial categories and boundaries; people of mixed race are able to move in and out of different categories, possessing fluid identities; people of mixed race have become more assertive in claiming their identities; people of mixed race are 'beyond' race; people of mixed race share a 'unique common experience'; and people of mixed race engage in identity negotiations. Next, I consider the use of hybridity literature within mixed race scholarship, and debates around its use, as well as

how gender is addressed within current mixed race scholarship. I then discuss what is missing in current literature, and how my findings build upon the existing literature.

Early Literature and Psychosocial Developmentalist Models

1. Pathologization

The earliest academic literature on mixed race identity, situated in the US context, tended to emphasize the existence of a 'mixed race pathology.' For instance, the early sociologists Park (1928) and Stonequist (1937) developed a psychosocial theory of 'the marginal man,' to describe the experiences of those with one white and one black parent in the US. The status of being in social limbo from not fitting into either racial group was said to result in a psychopathology for the person of mixed race, as a result of being socially, emotionally and psychologically confused (Owusu-Bempah 2006). As a result, Stonequist (1937) argued people of mixed race develop certain personality characteristics, including inferiority complexes, self-consciousness, and discontentedness. However, this has been disputed in recent literature. For instance, Root (1997) argues any emotional issues related to being 'mixed race' likely stem from a racist environment, as opposed to an internal conflict as suggested by the early pathologization literature.

2. Passing

Early literature that addressed mixed race experiences can also be found in the African American literature that dealt with 'passing' (Streeter 1996). For instance, African American fiction writers such as Larsen (1928) and Johnson (1912) centered their novels on their main characters' experiences with passing. Often 'passing' is positioned as a phenomenon for people of mixed race. 'Passing' refers to a socio-phenotypical reading of people that allows them to perform or be read as belonging to one group or another. Depending on how race is constructed in a particular context, people may 'pass for white' if they appear unproblematically white, or they may 'pass' as a member of a racialized community (Daniel 1992; Song 2003; Spickard 2001). In some contexts individuals may choose to 'pass' in a certain way, but passing is not only or always a matter of choice. As a result of the one-drop rule, one may be forced to 'pass' by following a certain racial narrative. The one-drop rule is a predominant ideology in the US which posits that anyone with black ancestry has 'black blood' and is therefore black 'racially,' stemming from the legacy of slavery (Davis 1991; Song 2003). Overall, early mixed race literature rarely situated identity formation as an interactive process (Thornton 1996), and positioned people of mixed race as fixed by their social status.

3. Psychosocial Developmentalist Models

Since the 1980s, following Park (1928) and Stonequist (1937) psycho-social developmentalist models continue to be dominant within mixed race

literature. Most of the models suggest people of mixed race experience some conflict during their identity development process (Kerwin and Ponterotto 1995; Kich 1992; Poston 1990). For instance, Kich (1992) theorizes individuals of mixed race go through three major stages in the development of their identities. First; from three years of age to 10 years of age individuals move between self-perceptions and external perceptions in their identity formation. Second; from eight years of age to late adolescence individuals struggle for social acceptance and self-acceptance of their identities. Third; from late adolescence to young adulthood individuals fully internalize a bicultural and biracial identity. Kich (1992) argues individuals of mixed race move from having a questionable sense of self to having a valued and secure sense of self, and this partially occurs through the validation of their identities by others.

Overall, identity development models are problematic as they may end up becoming normative: they position identity development as linear. Furthermore, individuals of mixed race may not experience all or any of these stages in their identity development. The continued prominence of mixed race identity models is also problematic as they deemphasize the negotiations made by individuals of mixed race in the social world, instead emphasizing the supposed set of stages of identity development individuals of mixed race progress through (Gilbert 2005).

Discourses within Critical Mixed Race Scholarship

In the past two decades, 'mixed race' has become a topic of interest in popular culture and discourse. In popular literature there has been an increase in

memoirs and collections of narratives by people of mixed race (Spickard 2001;

Song 2003), including those in the Canadian context (Camper 1994; Hill 2001;

DeRango-Adem and Thompson 2010). Two documentaries have also addressed

the topic within the Canadian context: *Domino* (Thakur 1994) and *Between:*

Living in the Hyphen (Nakagawa 2005). In addition, mixed race identity and

experiences have become topics of interest to popular media. There has

particularly been a proliferation in coverage because of changes to the Canadian,

US, and UK censuses (Aspinall 2003; Hirschman, Alba and Farley 2000; Parker

and Song 2001) and questions surrounding US President Barack Obama's identity

(Coates 2007; Navarro 2008). This popular media coverage has led to an

increased awareness of the existence of a mixed race population by the general

public.

In the 1990s a new generation of mixed race researchers emerged in the

Academy, many of whom self-identified with a mixed race identity (Song and

Parker 1995; Root 1992, 1996b). This has resulted in increasingly critical

reflections and research on mixed race experiences, and a movement towards a

more critical mixed race scholarship. A number of discourses, which I expand on

in this section, have emerged within this scholarship (Parker and Song 2001; Root

1996a; Song 2010). These include: people of mixed race challenge racial

categories and boundaries; people of mixed race are able to move in and out of

different categories, possessing fluid identities; people of mixed race have become

more assertive in claiming their identities; people of mixed race are 'beyond'

race; people of mixed race share a 'unique' and 'common experience'; and people of mixed race engage in identity negotiations.

1. Major Discourses

i. People of mixed race challenge racial categories and boundaries

A prominent discourse in critical mixed race scholarship is people of mixed race challenge racial categories and boundaries (Alibhai-Brown and Montagu 1992; Ifekwunigwe 1999; Mengel 2001; Nakashima 1996; Song 2003; Weisman 1996). For instance, Ifekwunigwe (1999) uses the term 'metissage' in her work to denote this. Furthermore, as Song asserts, "the existence of multiracial people requires a profound rethinking not only of existing racial categories and their legitimacy, but also of the everyday belief that there are such things as 'pure' and distinct races" (2003: 61). Furthermore, many people of mixed race appear to resist these 'pure categories.'

For instance, in her empirical research with women of mixed race in Canada, Mahtani (2002a) found her respondents resisted the occupation of singular identity spaces, and reported having multiple allegiances. Her respondents challenge the "burden of hyphenation" (2002a: 79) found within multiculturalism, in that they employ and intermingle multiple ethnicities in their definitions of their identities. Mahtani (2002a) argues that within official Canadian multiculturalism there exists a "burden of hyphenation," meaning people are not seen as 'Canadian,' but as 'Canadian and fill-in-your-ethnic-background.' The mixed race women who Mahtani interviewed experienced

ethnicity as overlapping layers, and tended to describe their diverse ethnic

backgrounds in great detail, identifying themselves as, for instance, "African-

Persian-Cherokee-European-Canadian" (2002a: 79).

Anzaldua (1987) - who theorizes the necessity of a 'mestiza

consciousness,' for those with a variety of border crossing identity experiences

with race, gender and national identities – has been influential to the formation of

such discourses within mixed race scholarship. Border crossing identities

challenge binary assumptions, which lead to ambivalent identities. For Anzaldua

(1987), the way to cope with this is learning to accept the ambivalence, "turning

ambivalence into something else" (1987:79). This leads to a consciousness of

one's borderland identity, or a 'mestiza consciousness,' and through such a

consciousness, binaries will be further dismantled.

ii. People of mixed race are able to move in and out of different categories

Another way people of mixed race challenge racial categories and

boundaries as presented in critical mixed race scholarship is they move in and out

of different categories, possessing fluid identities (Root 1996b; Tizard and

Pheoneix 1993). Root (1996b) discusses four "border crossings" people of mixed

race can engage in: the ability to carry multiple cultural perspectives

simultaneously, a situational or shifting racial identity with regard to context or

environment, an independent multiracial reference point apart from family and

peers, and the maintenance of a monoracial identity when entering different

cultural environments. Similarly, Rockquemore and Brunsma (2004) also argue

through their empirical research on people of black and white parentage in the US

that people of mixed race possess fluid identities. They found their respondents

identify in a number of ways, for instance with a "border" identity, meaning

exclusively biracial; and with a "protean" identity, meaning sometimes black,

sometimes white, sometimes biracial (Rockquemore and Brunsma 2004). Root

(1996b) also asserts that the identities of individuals of mixed race are comprised

of a variety of elements (from racial and cultural affiliations to religion and

parental influences) and these elements may change over time and in different

spaces.

iii. People of mixed race have become more assertive in claiming their identities

Furthermore, literature from the past two decades emphasizes the ways

people of mixed race assert their identities (Mahtani 2005; Parker and Song 2001;

Root 1996a; Song 2003). For example, in the opening chapter of her seminal

anthology *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier,* Root

(1996) outlines "A Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People," arguing for people

of mixed race to have the right to identify themselves as they choose:

> *I have the right*: to identify myself differently than strangers expect me to
> identify, to identify myself differently than how my parents identify me, to
> identify myself differently than my brothers and sisters, to identify myself
> differently in different situations (Root 1996a: 7).

Accordingly, Song (2003) argues people of mixed race have become more

assertive in claiming their identities. Moreover, in her empirical research,

Mahtani (2005) has found people of mixed race use metaphors to describe

themselves, their experiences, and how they are racialized, indicating how they have found ways to assert themselves, their identities and experiences.

The notion that people of mixed race actively claim and assert their identities is further evident in Rockquemore and Brunsma's (2004) work. For instance, in their research, another way they found their respondents identify is with a "transcendent" identity, meaning 'no racial identity.'

iv. People of mixed race are 'beyond' race

This alludes to another circulating discourse: people of mixed race repudiate and are therefore 'beyond' race, speaking to the emergence of a 'post-race' discourse which posits people of mixed race signal the 'end of race' (Gilroy 1998). However, others (Mahtani 2001; Nakashima 1996; Parker and Song 2001) argue that this has been taken to a celebratory extreme, particularly by popular media and its proclamations that people of mixed race will 'bring an end to race.'

v. People of mixed race share a 'unique' and 'common experience'

Another discourse within the critical mixed race literature exists around how people of mixed race share a 'unique and 'common experience.' For instance, Mengel (2001) argues people of mixed race have the experience of negotiating between their own conceptions of themselves and the conceptions others have of them, and that these individuals experience an especially salient consciousness and reflexivity of this process.

Nakashima (1996) discusses the emergence of the 'mixed race movement' in the US, and outlines three aspects of the movement: The struggle for inclusion and legitimacy in the traditional racial/ethnic communities, the shaping of a shared identity and common agenda among racially mixed people into a new multiracial community, and the struggle to dismantle dominant racial ideology and group boundaries and to create connections across communities into a community of humanity (82-8).

Following this, Mengel (2001) claims people of mixed race are seeking a pan-ethnicity based on their 'mixedness.' Mengel (2001) posits people of mixed race have experiences that are unique from those of 'monoracial' individuals: they occupy a third or hybrid space, and that a consciousness of this space leads to an experiential link between people of mixed race (Mengel 2001). There are a number of debates around hybridity within mixed race literature, which I will address later in the chapter. However, others in the literature (Gordon 1997; Song 2003) challenge the notion that such experiences are 'unique' to people of mixed race, and that there is a common 'mixed race' experience: it is problematic to say the experience of negotiating between one's own self-conception and the conceptions of others is unique to being of mixed race, as the experiences of people of mixed race are no different from those of other racialized individuals.

Berthoud (1998) and Mohan and Chambers (2010) argue people of mixed race are far too diverse in order to have a 'shared' experience, due to factors such as age, appearance, sexuality, and socio-economic status. Moreover, Song (2010) asserts lumping people of mixed race together in such a way works to extend the

pathologization of people of mixed race. Taylor (2008b) argues the mixed race

movement reifies racial categories, which it claims to challenge, because it

demands a "politicized and non-negotiable mixed race identity" (Taylor 2008b:

1). She further asserts that while people of mixed race may have common

experiences, this is not a legitimate basis for the formation of a 'mixed race

community.' Taylor (2008a) notes, however, that within the Canadian context

collective organizing around 'mixed race' is uncommon.

vi. People of mixed race engage in identity negotiations

Despite these debates, there is a consensus within critical mixed race

literature that people of mixed race engage in negotiations with processes of

racialization and identity (Daniel 2002; Mahtani 2002c; Rockquemore and

Brunsma 2002, 2004). In her research on women of mixed race, Mahtani (2002c)

found her respondents use the term 'mixed race' to create a space of 'home' or

belonging, as a way of identifying outside of the binaries of racial discourse in the

Canadian context. Yet they also challenge, contest and reject the identity label

depending on what contexts and circumstances they find themselves in, thus

engaging in a negotiation of how they use the label 'mixed race' in their everyday

lives. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2004) have also coined the term 'interactional

validation' to describe the interaction between how people of mixed race choose

to self-identify and how they are identified by others in their social environment

(Rockquemore 1999, Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002; 2004).

2. Hybridity Debates

In consensus with the discourse that people of mixed race engage in negotiations with processes of racialization and identity, recent literature on mixed race identity has also emphasized how the identification of individuals of mixed race often involves a sense of hybridity. Theorizing 'mixed race' is one way of using the hybridity literature, however, there are a number of debates occurring around notions of hybridity within mixed race scholarship. A key debate is between those who use and see hybridity as transcending and blurring of boundaries, and those who find the term problematic, either because it ignores or reproduces the power of the binary.

Hybridity challenges the dominant order, working outside of binary oppositions, and challenging dominant essentialist disocurses (Webner 1997). As previously introduced in their empirical research, Rockquemore and Brunsma (2004) have found many of their respondents identify with a 'border identity,' meaning they consider themselves to be neither black nor white, but rather a blending of the two. Other mixed race scholars such as Mengel (2001) have theorized that people of mixed race are the 'epitome' of hybridity and constitute the 'ultimate hybrid.' Yet this position has been problematized by authors such as Mahtani (2005) who argue such notions are empty of any consideration for power structures in society and the wider social discourses that affect all racialized groups. Overall, within mixed race work using 'hybridity' literature can be problematic in that it may presuppose the binary.

However, perhaps what is most useful within the hybridity literature for mixed race scholarship is the notion of the 'third space.' Bhabha (1990) positions hybridity not merely as a merging of oppositions, but as creating a new 'third space' (Bonnett 1997). He states "…for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'Third Space' which enables other positions to emerge" (Bhabha 1990: 211). In this way, for Bhabha, working from the hybrid 'third space' itself enables the negotiation of new positions. He further states, "by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves" (2004: 56).

As I have discussed hybridity is both problematic and helpful in understanding the experiences of people of mixed race. Another theoretical concept that deepens one's understanding of mixed race experiences is intersectionality: the intersections between the various social categories that make up identity.

3. Gender and Mixed Race

Issues of intersectionality are important to consider in mixed race scholarship, however intersectionality, and specifically intersections between gender and mixed race, remain conceptually underdeveloped in the mixed race literature (Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005). Only a handful of mixed race scholars, such as Ifekwunigwe (1999) and Song (2010) in the UK; Bradshaw (1992), Nakashima (1992), Rockquemore (2002; Rockquemore and Laszloffy

(2005) and Root (1996b; 1997; 2004) in the US; and Mahtani (2002c) in Canada have addressed the intersections of gender and mixed race experiences in the academic literature, and these have predominantly focused on women of mixed race.

Within the mixed race literature that does address gender, it has been asserted that gender compounds mixed race women's status and experiences. For instance, Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) argue due to the importance of appearance in cultural narratives of femaleness (Baker 1984; Lakoff and Scherr 1984), women of mixed race may face consequences men of mixed race do not. As such their experiences as women of mixed race may have a more substantial impact on their everyday lives. In their research, Root (1998) and Song (2010) found their male respondents expressed they have had overtly negative experiences compared to women of mixed race, in that they are more likely to experience racism. In contrast, their female respondents expressed having positive experiences. As Song states "overall, our female respondents were more likely to report positive experiences of being mixed, especially in terms of the positive sexual attention they believed they received from others" (Song 2010: 353).

However, in her earlier work Root (1996b) argued, as has Mahtani (2002b), for the significance of the impact of women of mixed race's appearances on their experiences. They argue since men do not have to deal with the same gendered emphasis on physical appearance as women, they are likely less susceptible to society's reactions to their ambiguous features (Mahtani 2002b;

Root 1996b). Therefore, the emphasis placed on the appearances of women of mixed race results in experiences which are more salient for them.

4. What is Missing

Academic literature on mixed race identity has increased in volume in the past two decades, especially in the UK and the US. However, this research has mostly focused on individuals of black and white parentage (Ifekwunigwe 1999; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002; Root 1996b) rather than a more diverse range of socially defined racial groups, including those who do not have a white parent. As Mahtani and Moreno note (2001), there is a lack of work, and even acknowledgement around people of mixed racial backgrounds without white ancestry. Mahtani and Moreno (2001) seek to claim a new path of mixed race scholarship, one that embraces a diversity of voices, going beyond the black and white binary that seems to exist within mixed race scholarship itself (Mahtani and Moreno 2001). Furthermore, more research is needed on the intersections of gender and mixed race experiences, as discussed in the previous section.

In addition, despite the increasing frequency of mixed unions and mixed race populations (Milan, Maheux and Chui 2010), 'mixing' among non-Aboriginal or non-Métis groups is a largely neglected area of study in Canada (Aspinall 2003; Taylor 2008a). Therefore, there is a dearth of literature in the Canadian context. Those who do address 'mixed race' within the Canadian context in the academic literature include Mahtani (2001; 2002a, 2002c, 2005), Taylor (2008a), and Taylor, James and Saul (2007) as cited throughout this

chapter. It is also useful to turn unpublished works, such as theses, to find literature that addresses 'mixed race' in the Canadian context (Taylor 2008b). These scholars have begun to develop a knowledge base on mixed race identity in Canada through their writings and empirical research, and I seek to build upon their work in order to further contribute to the knowledge base of mixed race scholarship in Canada.

5. Building On the Literature

Overall, within critical mixed race literature there is a recognition that people of mixed race engage in identity negotiations, and this is a shared experience among people of mixed race. However, building on the critical mixed race literature, I suggest what people of mixed race share is the social space that enables them to engage in these negotiations. People of mixed race cross and challenge dominant racial binaries: they exceed the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse and are therefore socially situated as ambivalent (Anzaldua 1987).

Furthermore, my findings suggest in contrast to some of the critical mixed race literature (Root 1997), by challenging racial categories and boundaries people of mixed race do exist in a type of 'social limbo,' as they are socially identified as ambivalent. However, rather than creating a pathology or being fixed into a category, as posited by those in the early literature (Park 1928; Stonequist 1937) or in the literature around passing (Larsen 1928; Johnson 1912), the very ambivalence they pose to the gaze allows them to negotiate it: people of

mixed race are able to engage with this ambivalent space. The inability of the social gaze to 'fix' them opens up the possibility to make identity through negotiating the gaze in multiple ways.

The External Gaze

The 'external gaze' has been theorized across a range of literatures. For instance, the external gaze is an important concept within feminist theory, which posits that power is exerted over women as they are constituted as objects of 'looking' by what has been termed the 'male gaze' (Mulvey 1975). Therefore, through the interaction of 'the gaze' power is exerted over the one who is 'read.' People who belong to racialized groups are 'marked' by race, and also experience an 'external racial gaze,' which seeks to fix racial categories on them. By 'reading' people through the act of 'looking,' the external gaze seeks to name them. Within the literature the external gaze has been positioned in a number of ways, for instance as the 'imperial gaze' (Mawani 2002) or as the 'white gaze' (Perkins 2005).

The literature on the 'racial' gaze has, firstly, emphasized how the gaze 'fixes.' Fanon (1967) is considered a key contributor to the development of the literature on the 'racial gaze.' He positions the racial gaze as something that fixes and paralyzes the people who are subject to it, so much so they internalize how they are 'read' by others as how they understand themselves. The 'external racial gaze' permits only a limited horizon of possible narratives. Therefore, those who are subject to the gaze are not able to negotiate this: they are fixed.

Secondly, the literature on the gaze has usefully linked everyday experiences to structural forces. Fanon's (1967) work has served as a foundation for others to theorize on the gaze (Hall 1990; St. Louis 2005), as well as those who address race using phenomenological frameworks (Alcoff 2006; Weate 2001). Addressing the external gaze within a phenomenological framework, Alcoff engages in a discussion of "the act of perceiving" (2006: 188). Phenomenological approaches take into consideration how people read bodies. For instance, Alcoff (2006) and Weate (2001) position how bodies are read as a fundamental cue for racialization or racial categorization. Furthermore, phenomenological approaches highlight the need to consider the 'everyday lived experience' (Douglas 1974; Luckmann 1978).

Essed (2002) argues while this attention given to the 'everyday' within phenomenological frameworks is important, often the literature fails to consider power relations at work within 'everyday' social relations. In order to redress this, Essed (2002) theorizes about the 'everyday experience' of racism and its impact. She states "there is no structural racism without everyday racism….yet….everyday racism is always structurally contextualized" (Essed 2002: 214).

Furthermore, Essed asserts, "everyday racism is not about extreme incidents. The crucial characteristic of everyday racism is that it concerns mundane practices" (2002: 204). Similarly, people of mixed race are continuously subject to questions in their everyday lives, such as 'what are you?' or 'where are you from?' which are positioned as mundane or ordinary by the

questioner (Bradshaw 1992; Huang Kingsley 1994; Nakashima 1992; Root 1998; Song 2003). Overall, the constant questioning people of mixed race are subject to can be positioned as a manifestation of the 'everyday gaze,' as the interaction of the gaze greatly impacts their everyday lives.

Overall, within the literature on the 'racial' gaze (Fanon 1967; Hall 1990; Weate 2001), the gaze is often positioned as something that fixes and paralyzes: it permits a limited horizon of possible narratives. Yet, as indicated above in my discussion of the mixed race literature, the gaze can be confounded, if not fully, by the ambivalence of 'mixed race.' In addition, the external gaze reflects and is formed through discourses at work within its social landscape. Next, I provide an overview of two key and linked components of race discourse in the Canadian context, which the external gaze my respondents encounter reflects.

The Canadian Context

The external gaze is formed within a wider race discourse, and for my respondents the experience of the 'everyday gaze'- their encounters with questioning - are where race discourse and its components are felt. In my project, I focus on the Canadian context in particular. Two key and linked components of race discourse in the Canadian context that influence the social landscape and inform the external gaze include the binary of white/non-white and official multiculturalism. Therefore, Canadian theorists are particularly useful when interpreting what is happening in the Canadian context.

Within the Canadian social landscape, race discourse operates within a set of binary oppositions. Binaries are mutually exclusive, hierarchical, and oppositional (Anthias 1998; Derrida in Hall 1997). As Anthias states:

> Binary oppositions, common in Western social and political thought, construct mutually exclusive categories. They also construct a necessary relation of super and sub ordination of one by the other and are therefore never free of evaluative connotation (1998: 516)

This is reflected within race discourse in the Canadian context, as there is an oppositional way of thinking about race categories, resulting in the external gaze seeking to fix or impose a limited horizon of possible narratives or bounded categories. Firstly, binary notions can be found within historical official policy and state discourses, such as the state's policies towards Indigenous groups, through its policing of the Indian Act, its anti-miscegenation laws, and its attempted regulation of mixed race people of white and Aboriginal background (Mawani 2002). Adherence to binaries can also be found within the Canadian census historically. Overall, a tyranny of binaries exists in the Canadian context. For instance, the Canadian census of 1901 stated:

> The races of men will be designated by the use of W for white, R for red, B for black, and Y for yellow. The whites are, of course, the Caucasian race, the reds are the American Indian, the blacks are the African or Negro, and the yellow are the Mongolian (Japanese and Chinese). But only pure whites will be classified as whites; the children begotten of marriages between whites and any of the other races will be classed as red, black, or yellow, as the case may be, irrespective of the degree of colour (as quoted in Hill 2001: 208-9).

As Song states of the UK and US contexts, "the politicized discourse around racial identity tends to be dual and exclusive in nature: i.e. black or white rather than black and white" (Song 2003: 63-4). The white/black binary particularly manifests itself in the US context through the historical 'one drop

rule' (Davis 1991): the notion that anyone with 'black blood' is black 'racially,' stemming from the legacy of slavery.

However, within the Canadian context, binaries manifest themselves differently. In Canada there seems to be no particular binary, but rather a need to fix the self and other as white or non-white (Bannerji 2000). The binary has emerged in this particular way in the present Canadian context due to official multiculturalism. This multicultural ideology functions as a wider social force in the Canadian context, and greatly influences social discourse, impacting how people think about themselves and understand and perceive each other. Overall, within the Canadian context, a particular discourse around race has emerged through official multiculturalism, and my respondents' narratives reflect this.[4]

There exists a well-established critical literature that addresses and theorizes on race discourse and its components of binaries and multiculturalism in the Canadian context (Bannerji 2000; Day 2000; Elliot and Fleras 1992). Therefore, I do not seek to theorize on these issues in this project, but my findings demonstrate what has been addressed in the literature and expand on this literature.

Bannerji (2000) argues a white/non-white binary exists within the multicultural Canadian context. She theorizes there exists a hegemonic understanding and assumption of Canada as organically white, giving whites an automatic pass as Canadian. Non-whites are in turn racialized as the Other, and are positioned as the multicultural element that enriches Canada culturally.

---

[4] Aboriginal identities in Canada have also been formed in a specific historical context in Canada, but I will not be discussing this separately here, as it is out of the scope of this project.

Therefore, non-whites are reduced to solely having a cultural status: they are positioned as 'static cultural beings.' Furthermore, as Andersen and Collins state this "focus on culture tends to ignore social conditions of power, privilege, and prestige" (1998: 7). Overall, Bannerji (2000) sees official multicultural policy as equating Canadianess with whiteness, setting up the basic binary structure of 'white Canadian' and 'non-white Other.'

Following Bannerji, (2000) others within the literature argue that within the Canadian context, official multiculturalism sets up fixed ethnic categories. Day (2000) argues official multicultural policy grants all groups the right to an ethnic origin. In the early twentieth century, the Canadian state first attempted to position itself as a nation of 'two founding races,' English and French. Nonetheless, Day (2000) asserts once the state concluded it needed immigrants in the 1960s, it abandoned its position of official bilingualism and biculturalism in favour of 'multiculturalism in a bilingual framework.' This granted all groups the right to an ethnic origin: "the policy of multiculturalism in a bilingual framework…[offers] official recognition of possession of identity [to the Other Ethnic Groups]" (2000: 178-9). However, as Bannerji (2000) argues, in the Canadian context these fixed ethnic categories get translated as a white/non-white reading, and their fixedness is taken for granted.

Race and culture are represented in particular ways in the Canadian context, and this in turn mediates how people come to understand their identities (Elliot and Fleras 1992). Official Canadian multiculturalism reinforces the need to 'belong' to a culture, yet it places very strict boundaries on who can belong and

what identities are acceptable. For instance, although the Canadian context is differentiated on the basis of race, because of the influence of official multiculturalism, people have come to emphasize ethno-cultural identities and 'origin' over race, perpetuating a type of liberal 'colour-blindness' (Bannerji 2000; Compton 2002; Mahtani 2002c; Taylor 2008b).

Official multiculturalism privileges ethno-cultural identities, yet race continues to be a main differentiating factor in the Canadian context. Furthermore, the terms 'race' and 'culture' are often read next to each other in the Canadian context. For people of mixed race, this slippage between race and culture is especially salient. As Taylor, James and Saul assert, "multiculturalism discourse conflates the categories of race, culture and ethnicity and negates politicized and personal categories of mixed race" (173: 2007).

Overall, the language Canadians use to discuss race reflects official multicultural discourse. Furthermore, a common Canadian narrative is 'race does not matter' (Compton 2002), reflecting the liberal 'different-but-equal' colour-blindness that operates in the Canadian context (Compton 2002; Mahtani 2002a; Taylor 2008b).

Present day official policy and state discourses continue to reflect binary oppositions, particularly emphasizing the white/non-white binary. The possibility of being 'mixed race' was officially recognized for the first time on the 1996 census, when a question was introduced with regard to the visible minority population that allowed for multiple responses. Even so, respondents were instructed not to print 'mixed race' in the box provided (Aspinall 2003).

Despite Statistics Canada allowing individuals to identify as belonging to more than one ethnic group on the census itself, they continue to classify individuals who report a non-white category among their 'multiple ethnic origins' as belonging to a 'singular' non-white category, reflecting the binary opposition of white/non-white. A report on the 2006 Canadian census entitled *Canada's Ethnocultural Mosaic, 2006 Census* (Statistics Canada 2008) outlines how the incidence of individuals reporting multiple ethnic origins is increasing. In 2006, 41.4% of the population reported more than one ethnic origin, compared to 38.2% in 2001, and 35.8% in 1996 (Statistics Canada 2008:10). However, this statistic includes white individuals reporting more than one white ethnic identity, for instance it includes someone who reports that she or he is both English and Irish. In 2006, 17.1% of what Statistics Canada terms as the "visible minority" population, meaning the non-white population, reported two or more ethnic origins on the census (Statistics Canada 2008: 15).

However, those within this 17.1% who reported both white and non-white ethnic origins are classified as solely belonging to a singular non-white visible minority group. For instance, the report states that 13.1% of "South Asian visible minorities" reported multiple origins. However out of this number, 2.5% reported British Isles origins, such as English, Irish, and Scottish, and 2.6% reported other European origins (Statistics Canada 2008: 16). Furthermore, 30% of those classified as "Japanese" reported multiple ethnic origins. This may also reflect the finding from the 2006 census that "Japanese visible minorities" had the highest proportion of mixed race unions (Milan, Maheux and Chui 2010: 71). By

classifying these individuals as "Japanese and South Asian visible minorities"
Statistics Canada works within the binary opposition of white/non-white and fails
to take into consideration those who claim 'mixed race' identities.

Conclusion

The experiences of people of mixed race tell us how the gaze works within
the Canadian context. The external gaze is formed within race discourse and its
components, namely, the binary of white/non-white and official multiculturalism.
The encounters my respondents have with the questioning external gaze are where
race discourse and its components are felt.

In the following chapter, I highlight my respondents' self-identification
narratives, the narratives they gave when I asked them "how do you self-
identify?" in the interview, and a key narrative they have to make sense of why
the gaze reads them: the 'curiosity narrative.' These narratives are entwined with
how they experience the external gaze.

Chapter Four: Self-Identification and the 'Curiosity Narrative'

Introduction

My respondents expressed a number of narrative types in the interview when describing their self-identification narratives, the narratives they gave when I asked them "how do you self-identify?", which also speak to race discourse circulating in the Canadian context. In addition, these self-identifying narratives are not discrete. Some respondents claimed one over the others, but in other cases some were drawn on together. Furthermore, how my respondents self-identified may or may not be the response they use towards the questioning external gaze, indicating how they have multiple narratives as well as certain stories they tell themselves, and stories they tell others. However, there is no pure separation between these narratives for my respondents.

My respondents' self-identification narratives cannot be separated out from how they experience the external gaze (Fuss 1995). The narratives they have for themselves and for others are blurred: there is no pure separation between my respondents' 'self-identity' narratives and their 'identity-for-other narratives' – the narratives they have to deal with the racial readings and questions of others. Furthermore, through their 'identity-for-other' narratives, my respondents demonstrate they are aware of the 'racial gaze.'

However, at the same time, my respondents themselves wrestle with the salience of race, through their expression of the 'curiosity narrative.' The 'curiosity narrative' is a key narrative my respondents have to make sense of why the gaze reads them, but through the narrative they dismiss the gaze as simply

'curiosity' (and thus colour-neutral). Through the 'curiosity narrative,' my respondents position the gaze to 'not be about race.' This further speaks to the liberal 'different-but-equal' colour-blindness that operates in the Canadian context (Compton 2002; Mahtani 2002a; Taylor 2008b). Overall, my respondents' have self-identification narratives and the 'curiosity narrative' to make sense of why the gaze reads them, however these narratives are entwined with how they experience the external gaze.

In this chapter, I begin by highlighting the various ways my respondents self-identified in their narratives, and then discuss how there is no pure separation between my respondents' 'self-identity' narratives and their 'identity-for-other narratives.' I then introduce and expand on the key narrative my respondents have to make sense of why the gaze reads them: the 'curiosity narrative.'

Self-identification

My respondents expressed a number of ways of self-identifying in their narratives. Several key themes or narrative types arose across the range of self-identification narratives expressed, including self-identifying with a singular racial category; as generic/human/Canadian; with their origin/ background, which was defined as national or racial; and as 'mixed race.' However, these self-identifying narratives are not discrete. Some respondents claim one over the others, but in other cases some are drawn on together. In addition, my respondents varied in how they used the term 'mixed race' in their narratives. Only two respondents expressed a direct and conscious claiming of 'mixed race.'

Other respondents' narratives suggested while 'mixed' is there, it is not necessarily 'mixed race.' Sometimes it is racial, sometimes it is cultural or ethnic, other times it is a combination of both.

Miranda's self-identification is with a singular category, although not directly with a 'racial' category. She stated, "I identify myself as being Cree as opposed to…'mixed.'" When I asked her to expand on her self-identification, she stated:

> Well I guess it's – part of it is…my mom's kind of ancestry doesn't really have a culture associated with it. It's…there's nothing distinct that makes…my ancestor on that side unique or different then anyone else's. So…I guess that's why I identify with my dad's as well….in the Aboriginal community, if you identify yourself as being 'mixed' they assume you're Métis….Yeah, so…I don't - I'm not Métis, and I don't associate myself as being Métis. I've never been associated with that community.

Therefore, Miranda landed on a single identifier in part because of a specific community or 'external' understandings of 'mixed.'

Other respondents expressed a self-identification of generic/ human/ Canadian when I asked them "how do you self-identify?" in the interview. Jennifer expressed a self-identification that is Canadian/universal/human; but then links it to a kind of singularity, whereby she turns to individual particulars regarding her unique situation, as a way to simultaneously claim universality and singularity:

> I: …so how do you self-identify?
>
> J: I usually just start with 'I'm just me' (laughter)….Like, 'I'm a couple of different things'… it depends which direction you want to go, and then I'll…if people want more of an explanation, I'll be like 'well…my dad is African' - he's from the States, yet he self-identifies as African-American. And my mom…her parents are from Denmark, so - even though she identifies as Canadian. So, it depends.

I: And do you think that – is there a way outside of people asking you that question that you think of yourself? Or is that question completely linked?

J: I – I would just consider myself…a Canadian I guess. I'm just very much 'me here' I don't really identify with either – it's more just of a justification for other people….I don't like to – I don't like boxes, and I don't really feel like I fit into a box, so it's easier to just be like 'I'm just me' instead of being like 'I'm this or I'm that,' I'm a combination of things, therefore, yeah...I don't know, it's just difficult to put it in a box, so I'd rather just say, 'I'm just what I am.'

The majority of my respondents self-identified as 'Canadian' when I asked them "how do you self-identify?". However, they also expressed a sub-identity narrative within their self-identification as 'Canadian,' usually having to do with their parents' origins. This may speak to the influence of official multicultural discourse in the Canadian context, which tends to emphasize 'origin' or 'background' (Mahtani 2002c; Taylor 2008b). Neil's narrative provides an example of the power of origins in my respondents' self-identification narratives. He stated, "I identify myself as Canadian, but I do know that I didn't come from Canada, I came – like my parents came from [Dutch and Chinese] cultures." Ja echoed this when I asked her:

I: How do you self-identify?

J: …well when normally I'm asked that question, I just say "Canadian"….just because it's really who I am. If anything…I have a Trinidadian cultural experience, but it's very Canadian. And, because my parents did divorce, I grew up a lot with my mom, and so it was quite Canadian…spotted with – smattered with exotic things. But, when people ask the breakdown, I just say "well half Trinidadian, half Dutch-Canadian," so. That's it (laughter).

In his self-identification narrative, James recognized the emphasis placed on 'origin' or 'background' in the Canadian context (Mahtani 2002c; Taylor 2008), and spoke to how this has influenced how he self-identifies. Furthermore, through his self-identification using the language of 'half,' James stated he self-identifies as 'half-Chinese' because it is 'different', as opposed to the banality of

'white,' echoing Miranda's point about 'Cree' being more defined than her

mother's white background:

> J: Yeah…my mom's Chinese, my dad's white, so I self-identify most of the time as half Chinese.
>
> I: And so why do you identify in that way?
>
> J: I'm not sure actually, it's – I guess it's kind of something to hang on to, something that makes you a little bit different. It's, you know, a little bit more unique. And like a way to explain who you are. Plus, like I've always felt…people in Canada are always, you know, identifying as something other than Canadian…either ethnically or whatever. So, it kind of makes sense to go with, you know, 'I'm half Chinese' if everybody else is Irish, or French or something like that as well. So yeah, and you know, also…my mom's side, the Chinese side does try and keep a little – a little bit of the culture alive. So, I think that's kind of out of respect for that as well.

In her self-identification narrative, Anne also self-identified as 'Canadian.'

However, through her use of the term, Anne's claim to being "Canadian" might

be seen as a kind of 'third space' (Bhabha 1990), but this is also disrupted, since

'Canadian' is equated with being white (Bannerji 2000):

> I've definitely started identifying with 'Canadian'…in the last couple years. Because…when we were younger [we were] always just 'half Chinese half German,' but I think because my dad started saying that, he's like "no, we're Canadian"…."we're a Canadian family," that really hit me. Yeah, it's not like I'm taking on Chinese traditions and I'm not…taking on any German traditions, really either that, I am more Canadian then I am either of the other.

In her self-identification narrative, Erin expressed how she identifies in

multiple ways, as not a mix of 'two' but of lots of things that have to do with her

social biography. In this way she 'loosens' the relationship between her

'background,' which is defined and made 'fixed' through her parentage and the

power of 'origins' in her social context, and her self-identification as a living,

breathing, changing self:

> I: And, so how do you self-identify?

E: How do I self-identify? Like if people ask me my background, I sort of explain to them, well my father was from Pakistan and my mother was second generation but I don't necessarily self-identify with Sikh culture or religion, or – or Pakistan because I don't know the languages. And, maybe most of my friends when I was growing up were from that culture, and I grew up eating the food, but, now it's been so long and having lived in so many different families that shape me, I feel so disconnected from it, but at the end of the day it's who I am. So, I mean…the longer piece of the story is all those other cultures that influenced. But, that's primarily how I identify. And then, yeah…as 'mixed.' I'm not really one or the other, but it's not really two, it's six (laughter).

I: So you would say then I guess that your background is separate from how you self-identify, like those are – they're connected, but it's not the same thing?

E: Yeah, exactly.

Throughout their narratives most of my respondents self-identified 'implicitly' as mixed race as they would talk about how they are of a 'mixed racial background,' however they would not directly and consciously claim 'mixed race' as an identifier for themselves. As introduced in chapter one, only two of my respondents, Monica and Melissa, directly and consciously claimed 'mixed race' in their narratives, even though I used the term 'mixed race' in my recruitment ad. Monica directly and consciously claimed 'mixed race' as her self-identification in order to recognize how her experiences are a result of the race discourse that circulates in the Canadian context:

> Yeah, I identify most with the term 'mixed race,' I'm not sure if that's just a…kind of a generational thing…but…I also feel I could identify as 'biracial,' and 'multi' – I feel like I could identify with anyone of those topics – or titles I guess. I don't usually say 'no race,' which I think is interesting, in and of itself. I know that in the world of 'mixed raceness' I guess (laughter), there are people who – it seems like almost divided in a way, where some people are saying people who are of mixed race are kind of 'beyond race,' or moving past the idea of race…. and I think that would be great, and important, but I personally just feel like we – as a society, we kind of define each other so much by race, that my experience is very based on these kind of social constructions of race. So to say 'mixed race' feels more accurate to me I guess. And I don't really – I've moved away from the term 'biracial' just 'cause I feel like – I mean I personally could identify as 'biracial' but I feel like some people are mixed race and they can't identify as biracial, because they're 'three' or 'four.'

Melissa also directly and consciously claimed 'mixed race' as her self-

identification. She claimed this identity as she felt it reflects her experience of

having both 'black' and 'white' influences in her life:

> I definitely identify as mixed. Um…I'm very aware that I am mixed. Like, I…I
> very – identify strongly with my black half, but I grew up in a completely white
> environment, or a white country, I guess…[but] my neighborhood itself is very
> mixed. I had a lot of influence in my African side. So…I know – I would say
> I'm very very balanced between the two. I think that's interesting as mixed
> people – I really do feel that there's a spectrum (drawing spectrum) - a spectrum
> of what side you identify with more. And I think mixed people fall along that
> spectrum. Just from my point of view. Some don't want to talk about it at all,
> and just don't think about it. But others identify more with 'white' and others
> more with 'black.' And I would say I identify right smack down the middle.
> Simply because of, I would just say, as the way I grew up, and the fact that I had
> both my parents present – both the black side and the white side.

One of my respondents, Ted, self-identified as Métis. As introduced in

chapter two, this is of interest as Métis discourse tends to be positioned as

separate and distinct from 'mixed race' discourse or other racialized discourses in

the Canadian context, as it has formed within its own specific historical context

along with the regulation of mixed race people of white and Aboriginal

background (Mawani 2002).

However, Ted's self-identification narrative also highlights how my

respondents varied in how they used the term 'mixed' in their narratives. While

'mixed' is there in my respondents' narratives, it is not necessarily 'mixed race.'

Sometimes it is racial, sometimes it is 'cultural' or 'ethnic,' other times it is a

combination of both. Ted stated of his self-identification:

> I self-identify as being Métis, and that comes with a lot of explaining most times.
> But I think the best way to describe it is Métis is an 'umbrella' term for those
> who are of mixed Aboriginal blood, and that means that as the person self-
> identifies they come from a community of people that are also Métis, or even
> treaty Indian according to governmental identification records, but also…in
> households that practice Métis values, beliefs, rituals, traditions, and also on the
> other side, who have a European background. So - that's 'mixed' in its own way.

> But…in terms of 'minority'…racial minorities and identifiable racial features, that would be what I describe myself - 'mixed' like that.

Overall, my respondents expressed a variety of narrative types in their self-identifying narratives, but these self-identifying narratives are not discrete.

In addition, how my respondents 'self-identify' may or may not be the response they use towards the questioning external gaze: they have multiple narratives as well as certain stories they tell themselves and stories they tell others. However, there is no pure separation between my respondents' 'self-identity' narratives and their 'identity-for-other narratives' – the narratives they have to deal with the racial readings and questions of others: they become blurred. Furthermore, through their 'identity-for-other' narratives, my respondents demonstrate they are aware of the 'racial gaze.'

Ali also self-identified as 'Canadian first,' but begins to blur the 'self-identity' and 'identity-for-other' narratives - the narratives my respondents have to deal with the racial readings and questions of others. When I asked Ali how she self-identified, she stated: "well, that's a difficult question…I mostly…I identify as Canadian first and foremost, but of mixed racial background, for sure." Therefore, Ali echoes the 'Canadian first, then sub-identity' narrative, highlighting how the various self-identifying narratives begin to blur.

When I asked Rachel how she self-identified, she stated she self-identifies with a singular racial category, however her 'self-identity' narrative and her 'identity-for-other' narrative begins to blur:

> I consider myself to be solely white/Caucasian, 'cause I haven't been influenced in my life, like a Chinese influence, if you would, like culture and stuff like that. But I do…so I guess in my mind I identify myself as white…but I do – when I talk to other people, I do tell them that I'm half Chinese as well."

Other respondents fully blurred their 'self-identity' and 'identity-for-other narratives. For instance, when I asked them 'how do you self-identify?' often they would state something along the lines of, "when I'm normally asked that question, I say…." For instance, James responded to my question by stating: "I guess *I usually describe myself* (my emphasis) as 'half Chinese'".

The narratives my respondents have for themselves and for others are blurred: there is no pure separation between my respondents' 'self-identity' narratives and their 'identity-for-other narratives.' Moreover, my respondents' 'identity-for-other' narratives are consciously developed, and through these narratives my research participants respond to the gaze, which works to negotiate it. I expand on this in relation to the 'horizon of responses' my respondents have devised for the questioning external gaze in the following chapter. Overall, through their 'identity-for-other' narratives, my respondents demonstrate they are aware of the 'racial gaze.' However, at the same time, my respondents wrestle with the salience of race.

The 'Curiosity Narrative'

The 'curiosity narrative' is a key narrative my respondents have to make sense of why the gaze reads them. In the interview when I asked my respondents "why do you think people ask you the 'what are you?' question" they often responded, "people are just curious." In this way, they dismiss the external gaze as simply 'curiosity' (and thus colour-neutral) through the expression of a

'curiosity narrative': through the 'curiosity narrative,' my respondents position the gaze to 'not be about race.'

The 'curiosity narrative' speaks to how race operates in the Canadian context. Through their 'identity-for-other' narratives, my respondents demonstrate they are aware of the 'racial gaze.' But because my respondents live in the Canadian context, where a liberal 'different-but-equal' colour-blindness operates as a result of official multiculturalism (Compton 2002; Mahtani 2002a; Taylor 2008b), they move away from positioning how they are being read by the gaze is about race. In turn, if everyone is 'equal,' race and racialization are positioned as insignificant to people's life experiences, and there is no perceived power relationship in the questioning interaction.

This 'curiosity narrative' foregrounds the messiness of race discourse in the Canadian context. The racial gaze seeks to fix the self and Other as white or non-white. However, the more obvious, and therefore dominant component of race discourse, official multiculturalism, tends to suppress racial structure at work (Bannerji 2000; Compton 2002; Mahtani 2002c; Taylor 2008b). How these two key and linked components of race discourse operate raise the complexity of how do people of mixed race even try to self-identify, negotiate, or situate themselves in this context.

The 'curiosity narrative' was predominant in my interview with Jess. Speaking of the questioning she is subject to she stated, "…sometimes people are just curious (laughing) and they just – their curiosity gets the best of them." Some of my respondents also discussed how they ask others the 'what are you?'

question, and position questioning as a 'mutual exchange' of curiosity, indicating

a way my respondents attempt to make sense of why the gaze reads them. In this

way, they position questioning as a 'micro interaction.' For instance, when I

asked Veronica why people ask questions of her, she states it is "just out of

interest":

> …usually - I'm pretty good at picking out what people are….like their
> backgrounds. And so…if there's somebody that I actually didn't know what
> their background was, I would definitely be interested in asking.

Similarly, when I asked Jolanda why people question her, she stated:

> I don't know, probably just curiosity. I find myself asking a lot too, like,
> sometimes its' just small talk when you're trying to get to know somebody too,
> so….For the most part it's mostly in that sense where you're like "oh, this is
> something I don't know about that person…I wonder" kind of thing.

In this sense, questioning is positioned as a 'mutual exchange,' something

everyone engages in and experiences, signaling the liberal 'different-but-equal'

colour-blindness that operates in the Canadian context.

While expressing the 'curiosity narrative,' Neil recognized others question

him because they are uncertain where to place him within the binary of white/non-

white. However he simultaneously expresses wanting to be open to curiosity:

> …maybe it's just…interest, more curiosity probably… it's kind of like an
> unknown…you can't be like 'oh, column B' it's kind of like 'column in between
> columns' it's…people's interest and 'what does that mean' – 'what does that
> mean being not in a column' and…how have I lived with that…

Neil further states that others' curiosity towards him has led people to approach

him and start conversations with him, enabling him to meet new people:

> I've had conversations with people who are…curious about me because of my
> difference. Like, so "what's your story"…"you're different – tell me about
> yourself 'cause you're different." And…so, in that way I mean…I think
> sometimes it brings up conversation…I'm not – again, not defined, so it comes
> back to that 'you're not column b, you're something in between' so it brings out
> curiosity in….I think in some cases it's just people…they don't really know how

to define me, so they're just like… "oh, I don't know about that guy because I don't get him because it's not column' b" or whatever…

Michael also expressed being open to curiosity, while pulling back from it.

He recognized the Othering element within others' curiosity, yet like Neil,

positions others' curiosity as a conversation starter:

> There's an element of Orientalism going on there, I think like the 'exotic Other' type thing…it's also like conversation stuff too. Right, like…you can only ask so many people how the weather was yesterday, you know. There's other interesting things that people can talk about, and I think that's part of it.…and there's an element of - as soon as you recognize that there's something there that you don't know about, people are curious naturally.

Sarah also spoke of others' curiosity, but positioned it as a result of their

being uncertain of where to place her within the binaries of the limited horizon of

possible narratives of racial discourse, situating her as ambivalent. Here, cracks

in the 'curiosity narrative' begin to emerge. Sarah stated:

> I mean the only reason I think people would ask me – usually when I was waitressing or something like that – they'd be like "oh, what background are you?" but it's mostly because they're curious, because they can't classify me in to a restricted category…

In this way, Sarah begins to recognize the gaze is seeking to fix the self and Other

as white and non-white (Bannerji 2000), but she chooses not to worry about it.

Sarah went on to discuss how she makes sense of what this questioning is about,

and how it has varied across her life course:

> Yeah, probably, just thinking back, and I think probably during my teenage years, I would have been a little bit more defensive about it. If someone said, you know "where are you from?" – I think I take more offense to "where are you from?" then to "what background are you?" just because I don't have an accent, you know, like it's not like – why do you assume that I grew up somewhere else? It's just – but, I think if someone asked me that when I was a teenager, then I would have said, "well, I'm Canadian, what's your problem," you know. But, now I think I know more of what people are getting at and that they're just curious….. So – but I think when people ask me now, they're not asking me as "you're not whole," they're just being - they're just curious.

In her narrative, Anne disrupted the 'different-but-equal' discourse, challenging the positioning of questioning as a 'mutual exchange.' Of the questioning she is subject to she stated:

> …I don't know why. I don't know why people would want to know. Maybe because they can't put a finger on it. I think that happens a lot too, where people are just curious. And it's not like their intention is to be racist, but it's like they want to know, well sometimes I'm like "well, I don't go and ask *you* (emphasis)."

Erin positions others' curiosity as 'well intentioned,' but that it always ends with her being told she's 'not enough.' When I asked her why people question her, she stated:

> …sometimes it's natural curiosity, but then how it gets expressed – it always ends up feeling uncomfortable in the end….I think a lot of times it's like, honest good intentioned - well intentioned – curiosity. Um…but it gets annoying (laughter). Um, so even though it's well intentioned, then a lot of sort of hang ups come out, or…or then they always end up concluding "well, you're not really South Asian" or "you're not really white."

Conclusion

The 'curiosity narrative' is a way my respondents make sense of why the gaze reads them, yet through the narrative they position how they are being read by the gaze to 'not be about race,' indicating the liberal 'different-but-equal' colour-blindness that operates in the Canadian context (Compton 2002; Mahtani 2002a; Taylor 2008b). Overall, there is no 'right' way to make sense of the gaze. However, cracks in the 'curiosity narrative' begin to emerge, when there is a recognition of racial binaries at work within the gaze.

In addition, not only are my respondents aware of the gaze, and have narratives to make sense of why the gaze reads them, they also have narratives in order to respond to the external gaze: they have devised a horizon of responses to

the external gaze. While the gaze on 'mixed race' bodies is still a social product of binary categories and multicultural forces, this does not necessarily mean that it paralyzes. Through the ambivalent space in which they are socially situated because they do not fit within binary categories, my respondents are able to negotiate the gaze. The very ambivalence they pose to the gaze allows them to negotiate it: ambivalence is not paralysis, and people of mixed race are able to engage with this space. The narratives of my respondents demonstrate that the inability of the social gaze to 'fix' them opens up the possibility of making identity through negotiating the gaze in multiple ways. This is evident through the horizon of responses my research participants have devised for the questioning external gaze.

Chapter Five: The Gaze, Ambivalence and Horizon of Responses

Introduction

A prominent theme that emerged in the everyday lives of my respondents was being asked the question 'what are you?'. I position the 'moment' of being questioned as a manifestation of the external gaze. The gaze is unable to place people of mixed race as they do not fit within dominant racial binaries: they exceed the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse, and are therefore socially situated in a space of ambivalence.

Within the literature on the 'racial gaze,' the gaze is often positioned as something that fixes and paralyzes (Fanon 1967; Hall 1990; Weate 2001). While the gaze on 'mixed race' bodies is still a social product of binary categories and multicultural forces, this does not necessarily mean it paralyzes. Through the ambivalent space in which they are socially situated, my respondents are able to negotiate the gaze. The very ambivalence they pose to the gaze allows them to negotiate it: ambivalence is not paralysis, and people of mixed race are able to engage with this space. The narratives of my respondents demonstrate that the inability of the social gaze to 'fix' them opens up the possibility of making identity through negotiating the gaze in multiple ways. This is evident through the horizon of responses my research participants have devised for the questioning external gaze. These include developing 'conscious identity-for-other narratives,' 'turning' the gaze, 'playing on' the gaze, and 'playing to' the gaze.

In this chapter I introduce and describe the various narratives my respondents have devised in order to respond to the gaze. In the first section, I

discuss the questioning my respondents are subject to, and move to a discussion of the ambivalence with which they are socially identified. I then expand on my initial discussion of the external gaze in chapter three and the literature around it, using Fanon (1967) and Weate (2001) to discuss fixedness and the external gaze. Next, I engage in a discussion of negotiation, ambivalence and the external gaze using Althusser's (1971) concept of interpellation and Butler's work on performativity (1997) and power and subjectivity (2008; 2009). Lastly, I introduce and discuss the horizon of responses my respondents expressed in their narratives, which they have devised in order to respond to the gaze, and introduce how gender complicates my respondents' responses to the gaze.

Questioning

People of mixed race are subject to questioning, which has been addressed within critical mixed race literature (Bradshaw 1992; Huang Kingsley 1994; Nakashima 1992; Root 1998; Song 2003). Many people of mixed race continuously get asked the question, or variations of the question 'what are you?'. I position 'the moment' of the 'what are you?' question as a manifestation of the external gaze.

Being questioned was a prominent theme throughout the interviews I conducted. For instance, of the 'what are you?' question Monica stated, "that's a regular question for me" and Veronica stated, "oh, you know I've gotten that question *a million* times. So, I'm just so used to it…". Demonstrating how people of mixed race are questioned in the course of their everyday lives Sarah

stated, "I think people would ask me – usually when I was waitressing or something like that, they'd be like 'oh, what background are you?'". When I asked Sarah how she felt about being subject to such questions she stated, "I just don't care (laughter), it just doesn't phase me anymore." Jennifer expressed a similar sentiment towards the questions she is asked in her everyday life, indicating how frequently she is subject to them. She stated, "I don't really react to them any more (laughter)….it's just one of those things, that you roll your eyes and you explain to people." Similar narratives were expressed across my respondents' interviews. Overall, such narratives speak to the prominence and normalization of questions in the everyday lives of people of mixed race: for them the 'questioning interaction' is an 'everyday encounter.'

Questioning demands an explanation of people of mixed race. As Song (2003) asserts, people of mixed race are often subject to the expectations of others to explain their existence through questioning. Regarding his experience of being questioned, James stated:

> …what are you?" is for me surprisingly common. Because it sounds - it's very upfront. And a little – like I don't think it's rude 'cause I'm used to it, but it can sound pretty forward and rude…. They're like "what's your background?" "are you part something?" or "what are you?".

In addition, questions work to "heighten the feel of otherness" (Root 1998: 102). Being asked "what are you?" or "where are you from?" renders the questioned as Other. Maseray expressed feeling an extreme sense of being Othered when such questions are addressed to her. She stated, "…they're trying to figure out in their own mind, what someone like me is doing there."

Power of Binaries and Ambivalent Social Location

As scholars within critical mixed race literature have discussed (Bradshaw 1992; Gilbert 2005; Nakashima 1992; Song 2003) questioning seeks to situate people of mixed race within dominant racial binaries: the questioning demand reflects the limited and binary racialized landscape. As Gilbert states:

> …the perception of others towards mixed-race people in a social encounter can be a source of discomfort and a possible crisis for those who categorize people within a rigid racialized framework. Indeed, these encounters may prompt the question "what are you?" (Gilbert 2005: 65).

Furthermore, as Song states "the politicized discourse around racial identity tends to be dual and exclusive in nature: i.e. black or white rather than black and white" (2003: 63-4). Therefore, people of mixed race occupy a socially ambivalent space as determined by dominant binary discourses (Anzaldua 1987).

The ambivalence with which they are socially identified emerged from my respondents' narratives. Monica recognized this ambivalent space is a result of crossing and challenging dominant racial binaries:

> Yeah, it's something that we can identify with together, even if it's two completely different mixes, it doesn't matter. It's the experience of being 'mixed,' of being two socially constructed categories at the same time, that seems to be – or two or more constructed categories, that seems to be the experience, the common experience, the shared experience.

When I asked Sarah why she thinks people question her, she expressed how the external gaze is uncertain how to read her and her brother:

> I think it's because they can't classify you into a specific group…"oh, well she's Asian but not really," you know? There's something – "she has…freckles" and, you know, my brother's got dark black hair and a bright red goatee. And people are like "did you dye your hair?" And he's like "why would I do that?" you know…his goatee - "did you bleach it?" and he's like "no"…and it's like 'something's not quite right with them.'

People of mixed race do not fit within dominant racial binaries: they

exceed the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse and are

therefore socially situated as ambivalent (Anzaldua 1987). The power of the

binaries which circulate in the Canadian context create an ambivalent social

location. For instance, Veronica has found most people think there are just two

categories of people, white and non-white, and both of these categories are

perceived as singular, mutually exclusive groups. She stated, "there's other

people that kind of just…think that there's white and non-white (laughing). So

that [is] kind of interesting too." Therefore, Veronica does not identify as white

or non-white: she perceives her mixture as moving her to a hybrid 'third space,'

beyond the categories in the social context (Bhabha 1990). Similarly, speaking to

the dominant mutually exclusive binaries circulating within racial discourse,

Jolanda has found:

> …people will sort of just default to identifying you as their opposite, because you
> don't look the same, so even though I am just as much white as I am black, they
> only see the one side. Just 'cause I'm – I don't look the same as them, so they
> won't think of it that way.

In her interview, Anne noted how context shapes others' understanding of

her. The homogenous racialized character of the context of her home town

imposed binary understandings on her that she did not identify with. Discussing

her childhood, Anne stated, "we were always just associated – like people would

always make Asian jokes or like Chinese jokes about us, but we were never

associated with being German or anything." Reiterating this point later in the

interview, she stated, "I don't side with either one, I think that people have sided –

like growing up in a small town, on the Chinese side…. But…I don't. I'm not

either or." Miranda similarly relayed a story about having to 'choose' growing up

which side she was on as a result of binary racial discourse in her context:

> …the kids from the Reserve came to town for high school, and so it was the first time kind of classrooms were mixed, and um, and – I happened to know the Native liaison worker that worked in our high school, and…she basically invited me to be a part of cultural events they did every Friday afternoon with all the Aboriginal students. And so all of a sudden all of the friends that I had grown up with didn't want anything to do with me because I was going to this stuff. And…the kids from the Reserve didn't want anything to do with me 'cause I didn't grow up with them. So it was really kind of – I don't know, I was probably 14 or 15 at the time, and kind of had to make a decision about which side of the fence I wanted to be on.

Jennifer has found people are frustrated because she does not align with

their notions of race. She stated, "I know a lot of the time people want me to

choose one, and just commit to something. I don't know, like 'I can't commit

because I'm a number of things,' 'well, pick one.'" Similarly, Erin stated "…I

don't fit in either, I can't just be one or the other, and being in the middle, people

just instinctively want to just peg you in a category."

In her narrative, Sarah expressed how binary racial discourse impacts

seemingly simple everyday activities, such as filling out a survey. She stated:

> The only time I run into a problem is when you fill out a survey online, and they ask you, you know 'what's your background?' and they give you like three options, and it's like 'white, black, or - you know'…so and if they don't give you an 'other' button, what do you choose? Because you're not white, you're not Asian, you're not black, really. And you can't click two, so what do you pick? (laughing).

Overall, the power of binaries creates an ambivalent social location for

people of mixed race, as they cross and challenge dominant racial binaries. This

ambivalent space renders them 'hypervisible' to the questioning external gaze

(Bradshaw 1992; Mahtani 2002a). The gaze is uncertain where to place or how to

respond to the person of mixed race, which leads to questioning.

Fixedness and the External Gaze

Race is a social construct, yet people's bodies are essential to the social construction of race. For instance, in her work, Alcoff (2006) positions race as a "visible identity," which has a substantial effect on people's lived experiences. Phenomenological approaches take into consideration how people read bodies, and those in the literature who address race using phenomenological frameworks (Alcoff 2006; Weate 2001) position how bodies are read as a fundamental cue for racialization or racial categorization, as physical attributes serve as racial markers (Rockquemore and Brunsma 2004). Therefore, people who belong to racialized groups experience an external 'racial' gaze, which seeks to fix or impose bounded categorizations of race on them, formed through dominant racial binaries: only a limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse are intelligible to the external gaze within the social landscape. The 'racial' gaze also seeks to position the racialized subject as the racialized Other (Hall 1997). Some within the literature refer to this as the 'white gaze' (Perkins 2005). Those who belong to racialized groups are in turn 'marked' with race, by the external gaze.

Within the literature on the 'racial' gaze (Fanon 1967; Hall 1990; Weate 2001) the gaze is often positioned as something that fixes and paralyzes. Weate states the gaze "leads to a questioning of bodily freedom and the paralysis of agency" (2001: 174). Furthermore, there is an assertion of power in the gaze, as the act of looking is an act of power. This is evident in the following quote from Fanon:

> …the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye. I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart (1967: 109).

Negotiation, Ambivalence and the External Gaze

Althusser's (1971) concept of interpellation can also be useful in discussions of the gaze. Althusser argues that people are called or 'hailed' into being particular subjects. The 'moment' of being 'hailed' can also be positioned as the 'moment' of the gaze. In her work *Excitable Speech* Butler (1997), following Althusser's (1971) concept of interpellation, argues people are 'hailed' into performing particular subject positions by others, and that the act of being 'hailed' or 'named,' is an act of power. My respondents are subject to this interpellation process through their 'everyday encounters' with the questioning external gaze. The gaze seeks to hail or name them within binary racial discourse in the moment of questioning, fixing them within the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse.

In *Excitable Speech*, Butler (1997) argues interpellation occurs with or without the consent of the subject who is being hailed. There is a particular power in naming which subjects are not able to negotiate. Therefore, Butler argues the gaze fixes its subjects, suggesting a lack of room for negotiation. Here, Butler (1997) disputes Althusser (1971) who argues in order to be 'called into being', the subject must recognize they are the ones being called: for Althusser (1971) the gaze is not solely an imposition of power on the subject, rather the subject potentially has some room to negotiate.

However, in her later work on performativity, Butler (2008; 2009) further develops how she theorizes power working in social interactions, and seems to

agree more with Althusser. Commenting on Foucault and notions of power and

subjectivity, she states:

> …we can never totally liberate ourselves from power (there is no space from
> which to say "no" to power) and, on the other hand, we are never completely
> determined by power. Thus, despite the impossibility of transcending power, a
> space of liberty opens up, and both determinism and radical voluntarism are
> refuted (Butler 2008).

Therefore, while there is a particular power the gaze exerts, there is room for the

subject to negotiate.

Butler (2008) also asserts in each interaction, power is never reproduced in

the same way; it never fixes in the same way. Therefore, there can potentially be

room for negotiation in that power does not impose on or fix a subject the same

way each time. Butler (2008; 2009) argues in each social interaction there is an

inconsistent reproduction of power. Using the example of gender, she states:

> The reproduction of gender is thus always a negotiation with power…there is not
> gender without this reproduction of norms that risks undoing or redoing the norm
> in unexpected ways, thus opening up the possibility of a remaking of gendered
> reality along new lines (Butler 2009: 1).

This could also potentially refer to race. While the gaze seeks to fix a limited

horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse, because the social gaze is

unable to place or 'fix' people of mixed race, this opens up the possibility for

people of mixed race to 'remake' the limited horizon of narratives.

Because people of mixed race are situated in a space of ambivalence their

narratives show how powerful the gaze is, and are revealing of dominant

discourses. However, how they respond to the gaze demonstrates an implosion of

the possibility of fixedness: of binaries sticking. For my respondents,

ambivalence is not paralysis; there is room to maneuver.

Horizon of Responses

Through the ambivalent space in which they are socially situated, my respondents are able to negotiate the gaze. The very ambivalence they pose to the gaze allows them to negotiate it: ambivalence is not paralysis, and people of mixed race are able to engage with this space. The narratives of my respondents demonstrate that the inability of the social gaze to place or 'fix' them opens up the possibility of negotiating the gaze in multiple ways. This is evident through the horizon of responses my research participants have devised for the questioning external gaze. These responses include: developing 'conscious identity-for-other narratives,' 'turning' the gaze, 'playing on' the gaze, and 'playing to' the gaze, to which I now turn.

'Conscious Identity-for-other Narratives'

Firstly, my research participants respond to the gaze by developing 'conscious identity-for-other narratives.' As introduced in chapter four, the narratives my respondents have for themselves and for others are blurred: there is no pure separation between my respondents' 'self-identity' narratives and the narratives they have to deal with the racial readings and questions of others, which I refer to as their 'identity-for-other' narratives, and through these narratives, my respondents demonstrate they are aware of the 'racial gaze.'

Moreover, my respondents' 'identity-for-other' narratives are consciously developed. They have them ready in order to deal with the questions of the external gaze: to ease the constant experience of being subject to the gaze in their

everyday lives. Overall, 'conscious identity-for-other narratives' are meant to

deflect and avoid others' deepening interest and being subject to further questions.

In addition, for some of my respondents, the formation of 'conscious identity-for-

other narratives' also acts as a way, through being questioned, to explore. In turn,

the moment of the questioning gaze works as a salient instance of identity

negotiation.

For instance, Veronica relayed her thought process of developing her

identity narrative of "half Chinese and half Caribbean." She explained her use of

the term "Caribbean" when people question her as opposed to using her mother's

home country of Trinidad stating:

> I use that term…because nobody knows where Trinidad is it seems…'cause it's
> such a small island, so people would always be like "where is Trinidad?" so I just
> ended saying "Caribbean" and…if people ask where in the Caribbean, then I'll
> tell them, but usually people don't… it's just *easier* (my emphasis) (laughter).

Jess described how she has crafted her narrative in order to avoid being asked

more questions, indicating how she seeks to ease the experience of the gaze.

When I asked Jess to describe her racial background, she stated:

> I'm half Chinese, half Norwegian - or half white…but usually people say "oh
> who's Chinese in your family, your mom or your dad?"…so to *avoid* (my
> emphasis) having another question, I usually just say my mom's from Hong
> Kong and my dad was born in Saskatchewan.

James echoed a similar sentiment regarding his identity narrative. He

discussed how he has shaped it over the years in order to avoid more questions.

Furthermore, he uses humour in the questioning interaction, working to ease the

experience of the gaze.

> I definitely think it's refined over the years.…like now days I'll usually say "half
> Chinese, but my mom grew [up] in Grande Prairie," to kind of answer questions
> about how Chinese I am - not very - but then, you know, I'll add some humour,

> like "back then, there was two Chinese families and they were China Town 'cause they run the restaurant and I assume the other Chinese family had a laundromat." So I'll say things like that, um, but then I'll also try and bring the other half in, you know, and be like – head that question off as well at the path, and be like "and the other half is just super white hick," been on the prairies for hundreds of years…

James further stated, "…it's not that I mind them asking questions. I think from the years I just like have a stock answer from all the things that people usually ask….So, yeah, I definitely have 'stockish' answers now." Overall, this stockpile of answers my respondents 'have ready' is meant to deflect and avoid being subject to further questions.

In turn, my respondents negotiate fixity, by using the moment of the questioning external gaze as an opportunity to explore. Rather than be fixed by the questioning external gaze, they use the moment of the gaze as an opportunity to explore their own boundaries and to develop their 'conscious identity-for-other narratives.' Therefore, the moment of the questioning gaze works as a salient instance of identity negotiation. Expressing this, Jennifer stated:

> It depends how curious people are…"I come from a mixed background" I start with that. And then I'll get into it "well, my dad's black and my mom's white" and then people kind of look at me funny, and "well, you don't look black"'….It's interesting to talk about. And I find that I talk to people, I kind of explore my boundaries…where they're pushed through so they're – depending on where other people resist or don't want to.

Of being asked questions, Ted stated:

> No, I don't mind them. No I don't – actually I like it. I mean anytime, it helps me – like I say, my markers, because my racial markers are subtle, I have to reaffirm it like I said before. And as such, when I get to speak about them, talk about them, it gives me a chance to formulate exactly who I think I am and how I perceive myself.

Neil also described why his 'conscious identity-for-other narrative' has formed, and how the moment of the questioning gaze has led him to think about his identity, working as a salient instance of identity negotiation:

> I guess as I get older the similar questions do come up but I think I have kind of – maybe kind of shortened it up a bit….I think it's like if someone asked you about a scar that you have or something like that, or like a – some sort of birth mark or something that you're just like "yeah, yeah, that's my birth mark - that's my background." But, I guess I – I streamlined it a bit, but. Again, like I think I wouldn't have maybe thought about it that much unless people would have. asked me in the first place. So, I think as people ask me I do kind of question it myself and think about it more myself….Often times I – I don't know, not thinking about it too much. It's just like this is what people have questions.

Other respondents expressed how their responses are now so automatic, they do not think about it anymore. Anne stated "I think it's an automatic response that I go to, because they want to know, like 'kay, how do you look like that,' not that I'm some bizarre looking person, but they just – people just don't know what's my background."

When she is questioned, Jolanda stated, "I just, pretty blatantly explain that…my dad's Jamaican and my mom's Dutch, and like, me and my sister were born here." Of this response, she stated:

> Yeah, I think that's more like it. It's just sort of like…filed away, and I pull out the response when I get asked. Like I don't…I don't really think about it that much anymore. Not in that context of somebody asking me anyways.

Sarah expressed she consistently uses the same identity narrative across contexts when questioned, stating, "I usually always say the same thing, it doesn't really depend on who I'm talking to or where I am." She uses the same narrative as she has found it works to ease the experience of the gaze:

> Yeah, pretty much I think, it just sticks with me over time, so if someone asks I just say "my dad's Japanese and my mom is Scottish," or sometimes I'll just say "white," because it's just *easier* (my emphasis), you know because there's a little bit of 'English' and 'Irish' mixed in there with that. Like, I don't feel like

explaining that. "My dad's Japanese," that's always the first thing, and then it's always "my mom is Caucasian/white/Scottish" something along those lines.

'Conscious Identity-for-other Narratives' and 'Turning' the Gaze

Other respondents expressed they have crafted multiple, varying identity narratives according to the context and who is asking. In turn, what narrative they give depends on how they read the person questioning them: rather than solely be fixed by the gaze and how it looks upon and reads them, my respondents also read the person questioning them and their intentions, working to 'turn' the gaze. I will expand on this 'turning' response further in the following section, and relate it to context. However, I do not position 'turning' the gaze as 'returning' the gaze, or as a 'mutual gaze.' There remains a power relationship at work in the questioning interaction. For instance, my respondents recognize the gaze wants to know about the Other part of them.

Monica described how she has multiple, varying identity narratives. She describes her 'conscious identity-for-other narrative,' stating:

> …that's exactly what I would say….I always say "my mom's from the Czech Republic, my dad's from India," and then I say "one's white and one's brown." I always give the colour of skin too, after.

Later in the interview, she stated:

> …maybe you're familiar with this, as well, but it's always a paragraph that you have to give, like you can't just say "I'm this Canadian, or I'm just" whatever. Like you can't just kind of give a brief three word answer you know, it always has to be like "well, my blah blah blah, blah blah blah," you know (laughter). And "how did that happen?" "well in 1942 blah blah blah," "do you want the short version or the long version?" I've got like eight versions, you know.

Erin also spoke of the 'multiple versions' of 'conscious identity-for-other narratives' she uses, stating:

> It's pretty rehearsed (laughter)….Yeah, [the version I gave you at the beginning of the interview] was the full version. The abridged is "oh, my father is from Pakistan, my mother is British, second generation, and I just grew up with a bunch of other families most of my life." That's the short version (laughter).

Echoing Erin and Monica, Jennifer stated she has multiple, varying identity narratives, and the version she gives "…depends which direction you want to go…if people want more of an explanation."

Following Jennifer, a number of my respondents expressed 'knowing what the questioner wants to know,' working to 'read' the intentions of those who question them. For instance, James stated his 'conscious identity-for-other narrative,' the response he has crafted to deal with the external gaze, is as a result of "…intuiting what they want to know…." expressing being able to 'read' the gaze. Monica similarly discussed how she 'reads' others. She gives certain versions of her 'conscious identity-for-other narratives' depending on how she reads the intent behind the questioning external gaze:

> …it's kind of a feeling that I go on. If I feel like it's coming from a place of genuine curiosity and sincerity, and consciousness I guess to, like an awareness of racism and Othering and other things, then I am happy to – 'cause it is a part of who I am. And it's obviously something that …I'm interested in and talk about and identify with, then I'm happy to talk about it…if I feel like it's coming from a place of – that kind of ignorance – even if they're trying to be nice. Or they don't 'mean it,' you know, they don't mean to be Othering in that sense, I have a different kind of response. And then if they're being obviously kind of racist or whatever, then I don't even… respond (laughter).

Other respondents described 'turning' the gaze, as they know people who are asking the 'what are you?' question are not looking for a response of 'mixed' or 'Canadian.' They recognize the gaze wants to know about the 'Other' part of them. Therefore, responses of 'mixed' or 'Canadian' will only be met with further questions. This also signals how 'turning' the gaze is not a 'return' of the

gaze: there remains a power relationship at work in the questioning interaction.

For instance, Sarah stated:

> …usually if I just say "oh, I'm a mixed background" people would say, "oh, well what are you?" right. So, they're curious because [you] don't really fit into the standard, you know, category of how they look at people, and so I just pretty much give them all the same answer, because I know where they're going to go with it after that.

When I asked Anne how the questioner would react if she responded with

'Canadian' to the 'what are you?' question, she stated:

> They would be like "yeah, but what's your ethnic background?" Yeah, yeah, for sure. Because that's not what they're looking for…they're not going to be like "oh, that's good enough for me," 'cause that's not usually what they're looking for. It's usually just the physical appearance, and they're like "well, what's your background?"

Jolanda similarly stated of responding with "Canadian":

> I might have at some point just to like mess with somebody, because *I knew obviously* (my emphasis) what they were trying to ask, but, um…I don't think I've ever like, like seriously answered like that, because I know that when somebody asks, that's not like….that's not really the answer that they're looking for, and I guess I mostly give them the benefit of the doubt that like, 'oh, I'll answer the question you're really trying to ask.' Because I don't think it's a rude thing to ask, they just like, don't really think about it further than whatever words are coming out of their mouth.

Moreover, many of my respondents acknowledged those questioning them

do not position them as 'Canadian', implying a sense of Otherness. As Bannerji

(2000) argues, 'Canadian' is equated with 'white' within the white/non-white

binary component of race discourse in the Canadian context. Jolanda stated she

used to respond to questions about her identity with 'Canadian':

> I guess when I was a teenager was when I sort of started doing that, to make people think about it, 'cause that was maybe the first time I really thought about it too. But, it didn't really faze anybody. It was just kind of like "oh, ha ha. No really, where are you from."

Melissa stated:

> I never get…insulted when people ask what colour I am or where I am from…the first thing I would say - "where are you from," "well I'm Canadian." "Oh, okay, but *where* are you from?" And people are hinting at the fact that… are hinting at the fact that you don't look Canadian. So they're going a little deeper and then I'm like, okay – to explain why I look different then what you look like, "my father's Black my mother's white, so I'm mixed."

Melissa also described how she 'turns' the gaze by reading the questioner through the types of questions they ask. She stated, "I think you can tell a lot about a person by the types of questions they ask you. You can kind of get a sense if that person is racist or not towards your other half." Ted similarly stated of the questions he is subject to "it's either 'what are you?' or 'where are you from?' and, you can generally tell how people are reading you based on the questions." Erin also 'reads' others by reflecting on why people feel the need to ask her questions, and positions the questioner as trying to place people who exceed the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse:

> I guess it could be a reflection on themselves if they feel discomfort in their encounter, something other than themselves. They just want to be able to put it in something familiar rather than have to create or imagine some new category that's not clearly defined and can always be changing.

'Turning' the Gaze and Context

My respondents also alter how they interact and respond to the questioner depending on their reading of how the questioner approaches them, what situation they are in, and their relationship with the questioner, indicating how 'turning' the gaze also happens in context.

My respondents further expressed they move in and out of certain identifications depending on context. In addition, my respondents 'read' the person questioning them, as they expressed an awareness of the context of the

questioner, which results in a shift of the politics of the question. For instance, if the questioner is a member of a racialized group, my respondents expressed an awareness the questioner is usually wanting to know if they are of the same racialized group, as opposed to the sense of Othering that is implied through being asked the question by a white person. Furthermore, why my respondents are approached and how they are able to negotiate is influenced by the racialized character of the context they find themselves in.

Signaling how 'turning' the gaze happens in context Melissa stated, "I think I've been asked so many times that when someone asks me, I can gauge based on who they are and where we are, what answer to give them." Ali highlighted how the 'audience' alters how she responds to the questioner, stating:

> I'll say things like, you know, depending on the audience, and that really depends on the audience, like sometimes I'll just say "Canadian"…but the vast majority of the time I'll say "I'm part Japanese, part Polish, part Norwegian" and they – you know, their eyes usually get nice and big, and they're like "oh!"

Other respondents recognized how the questioner approaches them alters how they interact with and respond to the questioner. Monica stated:

> …a lot of my thing depends on context. But I just feel like, if it seems relevant, if it seems kind of sensitive, and consciously asked, ah…then – and relevance is important. Like, "why do they need to know?"…is…something that I quickly think in the head. So if it seems that it's relevant, and I can kind of guess why they want to know…and it comes from just some kind of – like a conscious place… it doesn't bother me. And I'm generally happy to talk about it. But if it comes from a place of…kind of ignorant kind of place, or whatever, then again I feel like that's subdivided into like if they meant to…just the context of that again can be a range.

Ali similarly stated:

> If they seem like they're generally interested, I'm much more willing to explain, um…that I'm about half Japanese, about a quarter Polish, a quarter Norwegian. Um, that type of thing. Whereas if they're really confrontational, I'll say that, you know, that "I'm Canadian," like I'll be much less forthcoming about my information.

Echoing this, James stated:

> …how they approach me, you can usually tell like what kind of information they want. Like how 'deep' I should go. Or how I should specify.…but I don't think…I mean if someone really is kind of belligerent about it, I would probably snap back with a "Canadian" or something like that. But, I mean, for the most part, I would just read from them how they approach me…just tailoring my answer to what I think they want to know.

Furthermore, by purposefully responding with "Canadian" even though they know that is not the response the questioner is looking for, Ali and James 'play on' the gaze, a response to the gaze I will expand on in the following section.

Anne also emphasized how she reads her relationship with the questioner alters how she responds to the questioner, stating:

> …if I had just met somebody, and they're like "well what are you?" then I'm kind of offended almost, 'cause I don't just come up to you and say "what are you?" like I don't think I've ever done that to somebody, where it's like – so what right do you have that? I don't know, and maybe that's changing, like it's okay to ask people that, but I'm kind of taken aback by that. But, say I know somebody, and we've had a relationship, or it's somebody – like one of my friends.…if there's a relationship there, it's okay. Like say the people at work, when I've already established something like that with them, then it's okay because they're just curious. But when a perfect stranger or, like even a girl at work when she assumed that I was Aboriginal, it's just like "oh, that's just offensive" that you went there already, or, yeah. That you already assumed somethings about me, because – I don't know, maybe in my head I already assume things about other people, just subconsciously, but…yeah, it depends on the relationship for sure.

Overall, 'turning' the gaze happens in context as my respondents alter how they interact and respond to the questioner depending on their reading of how the questioner approaches them, what situation they are in and their relationship with the questioner.

My respondents also expressed moving in and out of certain identifications depending on context. For instance, James stated:

> I think definitely, [I] pick and choose which side is stronger depending on the situation, and what side of [me I] want to reflect. There's a lot more fluidity and deciding when you want to be what part of the other, when is convenient…

Ted has also found because of the ambivalence with which he is socially identified, he can pick and choose what image he wants to project from context to context, stating:

> …if they figure they can get a good read, they won't ask. Some do, some don't. And really, because, I think, the markers are so subtle, that it's really up to me to affirm what I want to project and what kind of image I want to project.

Neil has in turn found since he is not easily categorized and does not fit within racial binaries, it enables him to avoid being stereotyped. He stated, "I guess it makes it harder for someone to put like a stereotype on me. Like 'you're so Asian' or 'you're stereotypical white.' It's like 'no, no'…they can't really put a tag on me."

In addition, the racialized character of my respondents' context plays a role in why they are approached and how they 'turn' the gaze. Speaking to how context influences how the gaze reads those who are socially situated in a space of ambivalence, Veronica stated:

> …when I was in Hawaii, people thought I was a local (laughing). Yeah, I've gotten…I've gotten black before, I've gotten…yeah, like all over the map kind of thing. I've gotten, like East Indian before. Yeah, I think it just depends on who it is, and what they're used to.

Later in the interview, Veronica spoke to how she reads the context of the person questioning her, working to 'turn' the gaze, stating, "I think they pick what they've kind of experienced, right. What they've seen in their life – 'oh, she looks most like this person that was that."

In her narrative Monica 'turns the gaze,' in that she reads the racialized character of the context of where the questioning interaction takes place:

> …it just shifts with context. So if I'm in Alberta, and often – my first reaction that people have to me is they usually think I'm Aboriginal. When I'm in the

> States, especially in California and Texas and those areas, I'm Latina, when I'm in the Czech Republic, I'm often Roma. When I'm in India, I'm often Punjabi, like versus Bengali, 'cause they're lighter, stereotypically, you know. Bengali's will know right away that I'm not completely Bengali, so I'm probably Punjabi or something, you know, or whatever (laughter).

The racialized character of the context where the questioning interaction takes place influences how the gaze perceives those who do not fit within the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse.

Furthermore, my respondents' reading of the racialized character of the context also influences how they respond to the gaze. For instance, James stated:

> I think if I'm around people that are definitely, I would say, more Chinese than me, if that makes sense (laughter), that I would be a little bit more specific about how I identify my Chinese half, um…because if – I guess to me it wouldn't be the same. Because I don't speak Chinese, and I don't do a lot of Chinese things, so in that sense I would probably be a little more specific about my mother's background. Whereas with people that are not, or just generally don't care, I would probably be like "half Chinese," leave it at that, maybe throw in the Grande Prairie thing.

Maseray described a difference in the questioning she experienced living in Toronto, as opposed to her example of Saskatchewan, and how the racialized character of the context affects how others perceive her, and how she negotiates it:

> I also got a lot of comments when I was in Toronto, like people would ask me, you know "what are you?" 'cause I think maybe their it's more, um, you want to identify yourself as being of a particular race, or a particular ethnicity, so you can find acceptance amongst the group or something like that. So a lot of people who were, you know, African or Indian or whatever would ask me that….I did not feel as offended when the people in Toronto asked me versus the people in Saskatchewan.

When I asked her what was different about it, she stated:

> Um, I think what makes it different is 'cause they're just trying to figure out – they're trying to figure out in their own mind, what someone like me is doing there. As opposed to - as opposed to, I guess, what culture I'm from or what background I'm from. They're just trying to figure out why would someone that's not white be in Saskatchewan (laughter). So, yeah (laughing)…or "where were you adopted from?" "I'm sure you have really fascinating story" (laughter).

Veronica also 'turns the gaze' through reading how the racialized character of the context affects how others perceive her, while also working to exceed the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse:

> And then there's other people that kind of just…um, they think that there's like…white and non-white (laughing). So that was kind of interesting too. I have some – a couple friends that actually think that way, 'cause they're from a smaller town and everything, but they just don't know any better (slight laughter).

My respondents also 'turn' the gaze, reading the person questioning them, in that if the questioner is a member of a racialized group, my respondents expressed an awareness the questioner is usually wanting to know if they are of the same racialized group as opposed to a sense of Othering that is implied through being asked the question by a white person.

Melissa described a long list of groups she is identified as belonging to by others, further signaling how the context of the questioner influences how they read those who are situated in a space of ambivalence. She stated others identify her as:

> …a few times, Native Canadian, Aboriginal. Not often, but Latino a lot. People will speak to me in Spanish. Um, and people from a certain place will think that you're from the same place as them. Like, somebody who's from Colombia say, and wants to meet a fellow Colombian, and sees you and is like – just so, like gusto friendly, like "hola!" and you're like, "um, sorry!" (laughter).

Neil echoed this, stating:

> …when I talk to people they – I find that they – they can't necessarily really identify me – like some of them, like when I talk to some Mexican people they think I'm Mexican, of Mexican background. When I talk to Asian people I have an Asian background. When I talk to white people, they're just like 'I don't know what you are' (laughter). Like 'you're white, but you're something – something else other than white.' And not in a brazen way, but trying to figure out where my background is.

Later in the interview, he stated:

> …some people kind of want to see a background in me, so like – and again, it's usually like a background that they're familiar with. And, um. In some cases…they kind of go with the background that they're familiar with and kind of put that picture on me and say "you're like this."

Therefore, the politics of the question change when a member of a racialized group is the questioner. There is an awareness on the part of my respondents that the questioner is usually wanting to know if they are of the same racialized group, as opposed to the sense of Othering that is implied through being asked the question by a white person. Through this awareness, my respondents 'read' the person questioning them.

However, the gaze of the racialized questioner also seeks to place the person of mixed race within the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse: to fix their ambivalent identity. As Ali stated:

> I don't know, they feel entitled to ask those questions. And a lot of times it's not necessarily the white people who are asking those questions – like the visibly white people, but instead it's often the – people of marginalized or visible minority background who ask those questions.

When I asked James why he thinks people question him he stated:

> I don't know, *people are curious* (slow emphasis). I think well, honestly, like, I get a lot more questions from Asian women, which is I think – they just feel the need to classify me a little bit more. Um…to see if I'm part of their 'club.'

Some respondents 'turn' the gaze, in that they use the moment of being questioned to educate and challenge, reading the assumptions placed on them by the gaze. However, others also spoke of 'picking your battles' when it comes to the gaze, 'turning' the gaze through reading when it is productive to challenge others.

Maseray stated she uses the moment of the gaze, the moment of being questioned, to educate others:

> I think a lot of people when they first see me think that I'm black, completely. And I don't think, in my opinion, that it is correct to let people continue to assume that….I think it's important for people to realize that just because someone is not…Caucasian – or even if someone is Caucasian doesn't mean that there is not more than one race.

She also asserts she 'educates' for the benefits of others. Describing one instance of being questioned, she stated:

> I took that opportunity to educate them that I was not 100% black….I was kind of using it as a, you know, "here's my past," "here's my racial past," "if you ever seen anybody like me, just don't assume that they're all black too.

Monica also stated, "…it depends on the situation, but I…um, I think I generally tend to try to 'educate,' you know, I have this like 'let me explain to you' (slowly) you know (laughter)."

Melissa and Neil also described using the moment of the gaze to educate, and how that they 'make a game' out of the questions they are subject to. Melissa stated:

> I think it's funny, and in fact, when they look, you know quizzically, I'll even encourage it. I'll be like 'guess. Go ahead, guess. I'll give you three guesses, you're never going to guess. Try." And then it becomes like a fun game – "you must be this…" "nope!" and then when you tell them, they're like "ah, okay. That makes sense." So, I think it's a good thing.

Neil echoed this, describing his interaction with people guessing what he is, stating:

> …"no Italian, no Mexican, no…Japanese" - but like Japanese is very close…that's kind of like people's first guess. And then I'm like "yeah, close" or "no, you're way off" (laughter).

Later in the interview, he stated:

> …I think it's always a fun kind of thing…I do like talking about it, I do like just seeing what questions they have. It's like every so often there's a question that I'm like "wow! No one's ever asked me that," and it's like a pretty good zinger. And...I guess I…do kind of like being like "yeah, my dad's Dutch, and this is his background, this is my mom's background, this is where they met" and I kind of like go into it a bit and kind of listen to what they're interested in.

Other respondents mock the assumptions placed on them by others. For instance, Rachel stated:

> 'Cause people don't understand that people of two different ethnicities can get together, get married, have kids, or whatever, just have sex. So when people assume, it's like "ha ha, you're…very sheltered" like "well why couldn't she be my mother"….Yeah, so it's a mixture of amusement and irritation. And like "why aren't you smarter than that" kind of thing.

Similarly, when I asked James how he reacts to others' questioning, he stated:

> Mostly bemusement. Um, I think, definitely bemusement when people like – are like "oh ya, you're like half something, what are you?" Your know, it's like, okay, yeah, um, we'll go through this again.

Monica has found mocking the assumptions of others is something she has in common with other people of mixed race. She stated, "I feel like when I talk to other people who identify as mixed race, we can all laugh and talk about – or berate or whatever, about this kind of stuff as well." Maseray stated "I kind of take humour in situations like that. Like I take humour and people's ignorance."

Ja and Miranda also spoke of 'picking your battles' when it comes to the gaze, 'turning' the gaze through reading when it is productive to challenge others. Ja stated:

> I don't know, that people who just assume a lot of things, I just don't bother with them after a while. And then, just because it's like it doesn't matter what you do, they're just going to assume it anyways. And stuff, so you just pick and choose your battles (laughter).

Miranda similarly stated:

> …it's a case of kind of 'pick your battles'(laughter)…and some things really bother me and I can't bite my tongue and I just have to say things….sometimes social situations aren't the time for education (laughter)…

Overall, through 'turning' the gaze, my respondents demonstrate how the gaze does not necessarily fix. Rather than solely be fixed by the gaze and how it

looks upon and reads them, they also read the person questioning them,

responding to the gaze by 'turning' it.

'Playing On' the Gaze

     In contrast to my respondents seeking to 'educate' others, as described in

the previous section, they also expressed wanting to 'mess' with people: actively

working to complicate others' assumptions of them. Therefore, my respondents

also respond to the gaze by actively 'playing on' it, which works to remake it. By

'playing on' the gaze my respondents actively work to challenge others'

assumptions of them, exceeding the limited horizon of possible narratives

imposed on them. For instance, they at times play off of the categories given to

them, actively working to complicate the assumptions of the external gaze, and to

disrupt others' assumptions of them.

     Jolanda described why she 'plays on' the gaze, stating:

> …it gets tiring getting that question, and, um, at the end of the day it's one of
> those things…I have to deal with having to answer…for myself all the time,
> whereas a lot of people don't, and… it's really something so inconsequential, that
> sometimes it's just like why not have some fun with it. Yeah, it can get annoying
> sometimes to…I understand it, but I mean, it doesn't mean you're always going
> to get a serious answer from me if you're going to be asking it…

     My respondents also work to complicate the assumptions of the gaze in

their narratives through their response of 'Canadian' to the 'what are you?'

question. As previously introduced, my respondents are aware that 'Canadian' is

not the response that the questioner is looking for. Through this response they

work to play with and exceed the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial

discourse imposed on them. For instance, Jolanda stated of responding with

'Canadian,' "I might have at some point just to like mess with somebody, because

I knew obviously what they were trying to ask." Maseray similarly stated

"…when people ask me 'what are you?' I won't say I'm half-black, half-white,

I'll say I'm Canadian." James also stated he responds with 'Canadian' to the

'what are you?' question when he wants to "be a smart ass."

Monica and Ali also described 'playing on' the gaze with the identity

narrative of 'Canadian' outside of the Canadian context. Ali stated, "In the

United States I tend to…identify overtly as Canadian, like that's the first identity

I'll play with." Monica stated:

> When I'm in Canada, I don't ever refer to myself as 'Canadian,' actually. When I'm outside of Canada, I always refer to myself as Canadian. And I like to do that particularly because it confuses people. It depends where I am, but if I'm in…when somebody's thinking that I'm something else for example, when they think I'm from India or I'm from Spain or something, and I say Canadian, and then I get the kind of side ways turn - I just leave it at that.

Overall, the response of 'Canadian' to the 'what are you?' question works to

challenge and negotiate others' assumptions of my respondents.

My respondents also use other identity narratives to challenge and

negotiate others' assumptions of them. Such narratives play with and exceed the

binaries of the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse. Ja stated,

"I even pull out sometimes 'well I'm Dutch.' When people ask 'what are you?'

I'm like 'I'm Dutch.' Because I am part Dutch…I can claim that." Anne also

spoke of identity narratives that she uses, that work to 'play' on the gaze. She

stated:

> …but when people are like "what are you?" I think it's kind of like – to me that's a racist comment, where I'm kind of turned off. Well, I don't really ask you what you are kind of. "I'm a girl, I'm a female, I'm 21, I'm a human being."

Furthermore, Ja described other ways through which she seeks to disrupt others' assumptions of her. In these ways, Ja 'plays on' the gaze, working to negotiate it, and further demonstrates that the gaze does not necessarily fix: through the ambivalence with which she is socially identified, others are unsure of how to place her, and this ambivalent space in turn enables her to 'play' on the gaze:

> They expect something – like I do wear a flower in my hair, but that's something I did, and not has anything to do with race. And so it's always this "ohhh, what's that racially?", "is that a tradition?", "does that mean something?" Um, I have played with that (laughing)… Depending on my mood, and how they approached it and stuff, it changes. Like sometimes I allow them to think that I'm a certain thing, and other times I don't…or else I just make fun of them by being like "yeah, this is total culture"…just because it makes me laugh (laughter).

She went on to state:

> And so when they think that I wear a flower in my hair because it's a cultural thing, or sometimes I think I'm really funny by just playing up something that's not real. But it's like a constant struggle…

Jess and Erin also described enjoying being vague about themselves when questioned, another way of 'playing on' the gaze. Jess stated, "sometimes I make funny jokes and I say "oh, I'm mixed" but that's about it. Like if someone says, "oh, what are you" I say "oh, I'm mixed" (high intonation)." While Erin stated:

> I've recently enjoyed dabbling in being really vague…I get really vague about it, and I just leave it like that, but, I don't know, sometimes you can play it up and get favours and discounts because "oh yeah, it's Polish" (laughter) ten bucks off of my sausage. Um, yeah, I actually kind of enjoy doing that, I don't know how manipulative that is, or not…(laughter).

Other respondents also discussed how they seek to challenge stereotypes by 'playing on' them, further working to 'play on' the gaze and exceed its limited horizon of possible narratives. James stated, "stereotypes are funny, so I like to play with them." Ja also stated:

…not fitting into being this black person that they think that you should be.…sometimes you're just tired of it, so you're just kind of like whatever, "yeah, I totally love hip-hop," and I totally am this whatever you think I am right now because I don't want to have to deal with you. And I'm not going to see you again. So, this is what you get (laughter).

In these ways, my respondents 'play on' the gaze. They respond to the gaze by developing narratives that actively work to challenge others' assumptions and positionings of them. They remake the gaze, exceeding the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse, playing off of the categories given to them and challenging others' assumptions of them.

'Playing To' the Gaze

My respondents also respond to the gaze by 'playing to' it. For instance, in their narratives they expressed giving the information people want to hear. Through their 'conscious identity-for-other narratives,' my respondents discussed how they craft their narratives in order to ease their experience of the gaze: to avoid being asked further questions and deflect and avoid others' deepening interest. However, some respondents also expressed crafting their narratives in a way that makes it easy for the gaze to understand, wanting to make it 'easy' for the questioner to understand, as well as using humour so that the questioner does not feel 'uncomfortable,' working to 'play to' the gaze. However 'playing to' the gaze is also a way my respondents assert themselves in the moment of being questioned. My respondents also describe 'playing to' the gaze depending on the racialized character of the context, further speaking to how negotiation is influenced by context.

Some respondents expressed responding to the questioning external gaze by giving the information people want to hear: wanting to make it 'easy' for the questioner to understand, 'playing to' the gaze. For some this is expressed in the formation of their 'conscious identity-for-other narratives.' Jess stated, "I say that I'm half Chinese because sometimes people don't know...and if I just say 'oh, I'm Canadian,' because I am Canadian, but if I say that, then I think they're just going to be a little bit more confused." Rachel similarly stated:

> …the message that I use is very simple, it's not to confuse people… that kind of thing. Um…'cause like, it's very simple, also, because I don't feel like I should have to explain myself.…So it's very simple so not to confuse people, and because it's not really something that I need to explain any further.

Melissa also 'plays to' the gaze. She states of being questioned:

> …it's not a bad thing. Oftentimes it's a good thing in fact…I've had a really positive experience with like white people: 'Oh, you're unique looking,' I get a lot – 'unique.' 'What's, what's… you're unique…' and, the shy ones don't come right out and ask, they'll just kind of…pause long enough that they want to know, but they don't want to ask, and I like to talk, so I'll volunteer the information: 'I'm mixed!' 'Oh!' and then they get it.

In addition, Melissa described using humour in her response to the gaze so the questioner does not feel 'uncomfortable.' With regard to how she responds to the questions she is subject to, she states "I'll usually throw in a joke. And then people laugh, and then they're set at ease because they don't feel bad for having asked."

> James stated of the questioning interaction:

> I just like have a stock answer from all the things that people usually ask. So, I just kind of give most of that out, so then they don't have to ask, I can just be like 'okay here's all my information that you wanted to know, and much that you might not.'

When I asked James why he feels the need to give out information about himself, he stated it is because he likes to "inform without [the questioner's] consent."

Therefore, 'playing to' the gaze is a way for James to assert himself in the

moment of being questioned.

Ja also described how the racialized character of the context comes into

'playing to' the gaze. She stated:

> I have to gage what situation I'm in….When I'm with a lot of the Caribbean
> people and stuff like that, and family, like, there is [a] conscious effort to try to
> associate more with them, and the things that they're more comfortable with. But
> when I'm not with them, it's almost trying to be able to show who I am – or
> showcase who I am, and make things comfortable for other people. If that makes
> sense. Like sometimes I feel as though I just, I know, or you have sense of what
> that person's going to be like, and so, you either have to make it comfortable for
> them, or not, kind of thing.

By making it 'comfortable for them,' Ja 'plays to' the gaze, and how she does so

is influenced by the racialized character of the context. However, she also

negotiates the context that she finds herself within, in that she 'reads' the people

in that context.

Gender Differences and 'Exotic'

Gender, in turn, complicates my research participants' responses to the

gaze. In the interviews, a difference emerged with regard to the 'everyday

encounters' of my male and female respondents. As critical race theory

recognizes "racialized identities are lived through gendered identities" (Crenshaw

1995: xxxi). My respondents' narratives 'reveal' there exists a gendered

difference between how the external gaze positions my male and female

respondents.

In particular, there exists a difference in terms of my respondents being

positioned as 'exotic,' which was much more prominent in the narratives of my

female respondents. However my female respondents also expressed multiple responses to their positioning as 'exotic'. Some fully embraced the term, some fully rejected it, while some were uncertain of how to position it, framing it as both a negative and positive thing. However, these responses enable my respondents to negotiate their positioning as 'exotic' by the external gaze.

Exoticism describes "a particular mode of aesthetic *perception*….which oscillates between the opposite poles of strangeness and familiarity" (Huggan 2001: 13). 'Exotic' is also a highly feminized term. Historically, women of mixed race have been described as 'exotic,' and the term tends to be applied more to women than men (Bradshaw 1992; Root 1992). This speaks to the value that is placed upon the attractiveness of women, and the emphasis of appearance in cultural narratives of femaleness, making their physical appearance more salient than men's (Baker 1984; Lakoff and Scherr 1984). As Bradshaw states, the "increased attention to physical appearance is expressed in such labels as *exotic, beautiful* or *fascinating*" that are placed upon women of mixed race (1992: 77).

This was also a finding from my interviews: while my female respondents had significant experiences with the term 'exotic' my male respondents did not. My male respondents also expressed it is something more applied to women. Some of my female respondents also discussed how their brothers' experiences differed from theirs. A sentiment my male respondents did express was people position them as being 'different,' connoting others read them as having a sense of 'mystique.' However this does not have the same connotations as 'exotic,' and

was not predominant in their experiences like 'exotic' was for my female respondents.

For instance, James and Neil stated 'exotic' is a term that more so gets applied to women. James stated men "… don't get the 'exoticness' as much just 'cause of…social dynamics." Similarly Neil stated, "it's something that I would maybe imagine girls being, 'exotic' - going with girls more." However, discussing his experiences with dating, Neil stated, "I think I had a few times where…maybe the attraction was because I was different.…I think in some cases they were interested in me just because I was different." This 'difference' connotes a sense of 'mystique' that surrounds men of mixed race. As James stated, "for me a mixed race guy who would be exotic would be…the tall dark and handsome kind of thing. You know, to have a mysterious quality to them."

Monica and Jennifer also discussed how their brothers' experiences differed from theirs. Echoing Neil, Jennifer stated of her brother, "he doesn't get the 'exotic' comments…. But people will say that they find him attractive because he's 'different.'" Monica stated, "my brother's rarely called 'exotic' as a man…and he looks just like me.…I don't think he'd have a, kind of emotional or experiential response to…'exotic'…". Overall, males do not have the same experiences with the term as women, indicating the feminization of 'exotic.'

Often, the term 'exotic' is perceived as a good thing, in that it is intended to mark others' physical appearance as 'attractive.' However, as Root (1992) advocates, 'exotic' needs to be unpacked for the inherent connotations that it has for people of mixed race. The term 'exotic' is double-edged in that it has both

positive and negative connotations: it is meant to imply physical attractiveness, yet it marks those who are labeled 'exotic' as different, and infers a sense of strangeness, or Otherness. As Huggan further states, the aesthetic perception of exoticism "renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery" (2001: 13).

Following Huggan's (2001) definition 'exotic' is therefore often applied to those who are not easily categorized. Thus, women of mixed race are often ascribed this term, in that they do not fit within the binaries of the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse that circulate in the social context: they are not easily placed as a result of their ambivalent social location. In addition, since 'exotic' does reference a physical attractiveness or beauty, also inherent in the term is a sense of sexual desirability. As Root (1997) argues despite its various meanings, 'exotic' always had a sexual connotation to it positioning women of mixed race as 'unusual' sexual beings. Thus, the term 'exotic' works to position the women it is ascribed to in a sexualized manner. Furthermore, as Root states, 'exotic' "often has a sexually oppressive connotation stemming from the folklore associated with multiraciality" (1992: 188).

In their narratives, my female respondents described being positioned as 'exotic' by the external gaze. For instance, Maseray stated, "I…get a lot of 'oh, you look very exotic.'" Similarly, Jess stated, "some people have said that I have an exotic look." Of the label Ja stated, "it's put on you – or it's put on me all the time, I find."

Some of my female respondents embraced the term 'exotic' as a positive thing, while others rejected it. Meanwhile, others positioned being named as 'exotic' as both positive and negative. However, these responses enable my respondents to negotiate their positioning as 'exotic' by the external gaze.

For instance, Ja fully rejected the term, stating:

It's like an 'exotic pet,' it's like…I don't like the word. People who see [me] "oh, you're very exotic" this, that or the other…they say it in a way that somehow I'm not a person….I'm this special little thing that is intriguing, and they want to investigate but the way that you want to investigate, you go to a petting zoo, and you see something that piques your interest. Or it's so different, and to me when they say "exotic," like… it's derogatory in a way.

Ja also spoke of her perception of constantly being positioned as the 'exotic Other,' signaling the sense of Othering the term renders. Therefore, the gendered gaze also complicates how my respondents make sense of why the gaze reads them, challenging the narrative about 'curiosity.' The ambivalent social location of people of mixed race, in that others are uncertain of how or where to place them, marks them as simultaneously familiar and strange: that which exoticism describes (Huggan 2001; Iijima Hall 1996; 2004; Root 1994). The term 'exotic' creates a sense of Otherness for the women of mixed race to whom it is ascribed (Huggan 2001). Ja stated:

Being obviously darker than everyone else, um, everyone else identifies me as someone more exotic. Like, the first thing they see, they don't see a, you know, a Canadian when they first talk to me…I think it's a constant struggle, because there isn't – it depends. You walk into a room full of strangers, and all they see is a brown person. And then they think that you're the exotic person, so they want to know all about your race and stuff. But when it's almost like anti-climatic when you're saying 'well, I'm Canadian.'

Ja further expressed feeling a sense of being Othered when she states, "It's like 'oh, aren't you exotic.' It's like 'ah, frick' (laughter). You don't see me…I'm not a person anymore."

Sarah, Jennifer and Monica also described the Othering connotations of the term. Sarah stated:

> It's kind of offensive in a way, just because, like for my instance, if someone called me exotic I'm like I'm born in Canada, what do you mean, I'm not an exotic – not a fruit that's been shipped in from another country.

Jennifer similarly stated:

> I think it's an offensive term. I've had this discussion with a lot of my friends…people will be like - it's back to the "where are you from?" like "you're different." And then you have to somehow figure out how you feel about that…like "I'm from here, I'm just like you, stop."

Monica also recognized the Othering inherent in the term 'exotic,' stating that she finds people say:

> …'you're so exotic, you're a mixture of the perfect' like, you know, 'Othered blend,' you know. 'You're not too dark, but your hair's dark, you've got interesting eyes.' Like these total stereotypical racist kind of comments that I get. And yeah, the exoticization, it's like – I mean it's rooted in Othering and racism too, so to me that's a problem, definitely.

Further reflecting on what 'exotic' is meant to ascribe, Monica stated:

> I wonder if mixed race people are…somehow…more acceptable. Like just a little bit more acceptable…'cause generally, the white middle class…that's the norm. And if you're 'mixed race' you're a little less of the Other, but you still have enough of the Other to be…you're somehow a little bit more acceptable, because you're half…of the 'Otherness,' so you can be exotic, but not too exotic…there's enough of the familiar that they can feel comfortable but, just a sprinkling of 'exoticness' to make it exciting.

Jolanda echoes Monica stating:

> …it can be kind of irritating, 'cause again, I feel like it creates a spectacle,…there's this, and I can't remember what – there's some piece of writing…that I read lately about…about race, and identity, and it was sort of talking about this concept that people of colour are often – there's like some sort of…'zoo effect,' like where you're constantly on display for people, and, that's exactly what it makes me think of. 'Cause, when you say 'exotic' you're talking about a parrot or something, you're not talking about a human being, so it's a really bizarre sort of thought process….I would never want to be described as 'exotic' 'cause, I – a) I think it's bull shit because I'm as Canadian as any other, like…random person walking down the street, and, um, that's kind of what I find too is that when it is used to describe somebody, especially – it's usually a mixed person, because there isn't usually a 'full' colour person…it's almost like 'oh,

they're just exotic enough to still be attractive' or something, so, yeah. So, I don't really like it as a term.

While Jess did not fully reject the term, neither did she fully embrace it.

Reflecting on how she feels about the word, she stated:

> I think it's kind of nice because it's unique…it's like a uniqueness, 'cause if someone…not that I like to be noticed, but someone has noticed me, and thought "hmm, she looks different, I wonder what she is?" kind of thing….So in a way it's good because then sometimes you get noticed, but other times, it's just like, why is it any of your business? Exotic to me is not a bad thing, but it's not a good thing."

When I asked Ali if she was familiar with the term 'exotic' she states "a little bit, you know. I don't know, I've been told I have an 'exotic look,' and that's usually used in a positive manner." I then asked Ali if she took it in a positive manner, to which she responded "it depends on who's saying it and why they're saying it" speaking to how her positioning of the term depends on context. Further reflecting on what the term is meant to ascribe, Ali stated:

> …exotic is a less pejorative term then perhaps 'different' or 'unusual.' Like, if you were called 'unusual' then you'd be like 'stopping in your tracks saying 'okay, what do you mean by that?' Whereas use the word 'exotic'…the first connotations are going to come across are things like 'okay, exotic dancer, exotic locals, exotic things' and usually it's a more positive term, although you can watch who's saying it and why they're saying it, because sometimes it's not – it's just hidden in there.

Similarly, Rachel stated:

> I think it's nice, makes you feel good. But then again, it's a different thing being called exotic, because…you are a mixture of two different things, and it's just, I don't know…I think it's – I guess it's positive and negative. Positive from a superficial level, like "oh you're calling me exotic that means I'm really pretty"…and then on the other side of like "what do you mean exotic?" like I'm not a fruit. That kind of thing. I'm a person, who cares if I'm half whatever, Chinese or something else. I mean – I don't know, to me exotic is something you use to describe a fruit, that kind of thing, like a fruit from somewhere else. But, um, yeah..,it's kind of – I don't know, it's kind of - to me it's kind of like a situational thing. Um, but, yeah there's good and bad.

In contrast, Maseray fully embraced the term, stating:

> I actually like it (laughing). To me, when someone looks exotic…I guess just the way that its been…used in movies and stuff like that….exotic seems to me almost like very…pretty or elegant looking, or unique looking, and not unique in a bad way. I always view exotic as being very good.

Yet, Maseray later stated, "I think in our society, if you are exotic looking you're considered beautiful. But…you're beautiful in a different way," suggesting a sense of the Otherness that the term renders, further indicating how the gendered gaze complicates how my respondents make sense of why the gaze reads them.

Melissa also took the term in a positive way, but with an awareness that others may not, stating:

> I've never really thought about it a lot, but if I had to, I would take it as…positive….where it's good to be exotic…because people like to be different, they like to stand out, so….You have to be careful as a mixed person how much of that stuff you let affect you and how much of it you just…you share it for what it is. But you don't think about it too too much. I think if I felt insulted by it, I would say something. So clearly I don't feel insulted by it. And the reason I don't feel insulted by it is because society accepts it. I am [part of] society, and I accept it too.

These responses to the gaze enable my female respondents to negotiate their positioning as 'exotic' by the gendered gaze. Some respondents have completely rejected their positioning as 'exotic' in order to navigate its Othering and sexualizing undertones (Huggan 2001; Root 1997). In contrast, acutely aware of their positioning as exotic, Maseray and Melissa have learned to emphasize the positive connotations of the term in order to negotiate its ascription. Other respondents positioned being named as 'exotic' as both a positive and negative, working to negotiate the gendered gaze.

Overall, more research is needed on how gender complicates the negotiations people of mixed race engage in, and I expand on this in the following chapter.

Conclusion

In conclusion, people of mixed race do not fit within dominant racial binaries: they exceed the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse, and are socially situated in a space of ambivalence. However, ambivalence is not paralysis, and people of mixed race are able to engage with this space. The narratives of my respondents demonstrate that the inability of the social gaze to 'fix' them opens up the possibility of making identity through negotiating the gaze in multiple ways. This is evident through the horizon of responses my research participants have devised for the questioning external gaze. However, gender also complicates my research participants' responses to the gaze.

In turn, how my respondents make identity has implications for theorizing agency, which I discuss in the concluding chapter.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Summary

My respondents make identity through negotiating the external gaze in multiple ways. This is evident through the horizon of responses they have for the gaze. In this thesis, I have argued this is because the uncertainty of the external gaze is a space of negotiation and possibility for people of mixed race. The gaze is unable to place people of mixed race because they do not fit within dominant racial binaries: they exceed the limited horizon of possible narratives of racial discourse, and are therefore socially situated in a space of ambivalence.

How the external gaze perceives, reads and approaches people of mixed race is influenced by two key and linked components of race discourse in the Canadian context: official multiculturalism and the binary of white/non-white categories. In turn, my respondents' self-identification narratives cannot be separated out from how they experience the external gaze (Fuss 1995). There is no pure separation between my respondents' 'self-identity' narratives and the narratives they have to deal with the racial readings and questions of others, which I refer to as their 'identity-for-other' narratives. Through their 'identity-for-other' narratives my research participants respond to the gaze, which works to negotiate it. Furthermore, through their 'identity-for-other' narratives, my respondents demonstrate they are aware of the 'racial gaze.'

However, at the same time, my respondents themselves wrestle with the salience of race, through their expression of the 'curiosity narrative.' The 'curiosity narrative' is a key narrative my respondents have to make sense of why

the gaze reads them, but through the narrative they dismiss the gaze as simply 'curiosity': they position the gaze to 'not be about race,' further signaling the liberal 'different-but-equal' colour-blindness that operates in the Canadian context (Compton 2002; Mahtani 2002a). As Taylor states "Multiculturalism increasingly places unbalanced focus on ideals of colour-blindness, ethnicity, culture, and neo-liberal ideals that favour individualism" (2008b: 7). Overall, my respondents' have self-identification narratives and the 'curiosity narrative' to make sense of why the gaze reads them, however these narratives are entwined with how they experience the external gaze.

Within the literature on the 'racial gaze,' the gaze is often positioned as something that fixes and paralyzes (Fanon 1967; Hall 1990; Weate 2001). While the gaze on 'mixed race' bodies is still a social product of binary categories and multicultural forces, this does not necessarily mean that it paralyzes. Through the ambivalent space in which they are socially situated, my respondents are able to negotiate the gaze. The very ambivalence they pose to the gaze allows them to negotiate it: ambivalence is not paralysis, and people of mixed race are able to engage with this space. The narratives of my respondents demonstrate that the inability of the social gaze to place or 'fix' them opens up the possibility of making identity through negotiating the gaze in multiple ways. This is evident through the horizon of responses my research participants have devised for the questioning external gaze. These include developing 'conscious identity-for-other narratives,' 'turning' the gaze, 'playing on' the gaze, and 'playing to' the gaze.

While my respondents negotiate the gaze in these multiple ways, they also negotiate identity, and this forces the question of agency and has implications for theorizing agency, which I will now expand upon.

Identity and Agency

I started out this project wanting to theorize agency, but I wanted to 'name' types of agency my respondents expressed in their narratives. However, I found rather than expressing 'types' of agency in their narratives, my respondents' identity negotiating process through the external gaze could help theorize agency as a whole. I would like to open up the agency conversation here, in part because it may also be important to future research endeavors, which I further discuss in the following section.

The structure/agency debate is an ongoing debate in the discipline of sociology, and centres around whether individuals can make choices freely exercising their agency, or whether they are hindered from making choices by larger social patterns and structures (Ritzer 2008). Within more contemporary literature, emphasis has been placed on how structure and agency work with and influence one another (Archer 1982; Giddens 1984). While I recognize these ongoing debates, I only engage with them in a limited and direct way, to suggest how my project might lend itself to theorizing agency in new ways.

The experiences of my respondents demonstrate how the making of identity – the process of identification itself – can be theorized as agentic: the way my respondents make identity through negotiating the external gaze blurs identity

and agency, and in a way that does not allow a clear separation of 'self' and 'structure.' This has been the problem of the agency/structure debate; actions and systems are falsely dichotomized.

Within the race and postcolonialism literature, the argument around agency tends to be positioned within a collective resistance frame. For instance, in their discussion of their concept of 'racial formation,' Omi and Winant (1986) argue marginalized groups can be actors of resistance in shaping racialization. In his later works Fanon (1968; 1970) argues that violent resistance and revolution are the only means of resistance for colonized populations, and is dismissive of individual agency.

Bhabha (1994) also discusses agency within a postcolonial framework. He speaks of the ability of marginalized groups to articulate culture in a way that is "enunciatory," which works to "subvert the rationale of the hegemonic moment and relocat[e] alternative hybrid sites of cultural negotiation" (Bhabha 1994: 255). He in turn positions Fanon's revolutionary actors as "bearers of a hybrid identity" (Bhabha 1994: 55). However, he also uses hybridity to discuss the connection between agency and identity. As discussed in chapter three, Bhabha (1990; 1994) positions hybridity not merely as a coming together of oppositions, but as creating a new 'third space' (Bonnett 1997).

Although the hybridity literature, including Bhabha's 'third space,' may be critiqued in that it has difficulty escaping the assumption of binaries, it is useful for considering 'spaces' of agency. He states "…for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third

emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'Third Space' which enables other positions to emerge" (Bhabha 1990: 211). In this way, for Bhabha (1990), the hybrid 'third space' itself enables the negotiation of positions - of identities. Overall, for Bhabha (1990) the 'third space' is a space where identity is made through negotiation, which works to blur identity and agency. Similarly, identity and agency are blurred through the negotiations my respondents engage in with the external gaze.

As introduced in chapter one, identification occurs between the self and the social: identity is a constant process of negotiation between the self and the social and they are in constant interaction (Fuss 1995). But more than this, as Anthias (1998) argues, the individual and the social operate in the same identity formation sphere; there is no separation but rather a constant negotiation. Therefore, identity is made through negotiation: there are no two forces at work. In this way, my respondents negotiate identity through the multiple responses they have for the external gaze: the process of identification itself, the act of making or constructing identity, can be theorized as agentic.

In turn, mixed race identification itself opens a new window on questions of agency. While the gaze seeks to 'fix' people of mixed race through the 'what are you?' question, it cannot. This is in contrast to those with an allegedly 'clear' difference, which the gaze can fix. While the external gaze is powerful, the gaze on mixed race bodies exposes the unspoken power of race discourse in a different way: that the gaze cannot place my respondents opens up the precariousness of race discourse itself. Through the gaze discourses are felt, but not completely.

People of mixed race are able to negotiate the gaze in multiple ways. Although

they may end up reproducing it, they also play with and remake it: their narratives

show discourses to be powerful but precarious, fragile in the space of their

experience. Therefore, agency is possible, because race discourse is precarious,

which the narratives of people of mixed race open up. Overall, the negotiations of

my respondents demonstrate the power of race discourse, yet they also

demonstrate an implosion of the possibility of racial binaries sticking. In turn, it

could be theorized that agency is possible for *all* bodies that do not 'fit,' such as

bodies that exceed the male/female binary, or bodies that do not conform to

gender norms within that binary.

I have sought to open up the discussion of how agency can be theorized

through the experiences of people of mixed race, and I would also like to

highlight it as a direction for future theorizing. I further outline directions for

future research and theorizing within mixed race scholarship below.

Directions for Future Research

In future research, it will be necessary to take further into consideration

the diversity of people of mixed race. Research on mixed race identity has tended

to focus on people with one white parent and one non-white parent, and in

particular, individuals with one white and one black parent, resulting in the

identity experiences of people of mixed race from other groups, including those

who have parents from differing racialized non-white groups, remaining largely

ignored (Gilbert 2005). As discussed in chapter two, in my recruitment I

attempted to recruit research participants with parents from differing non-white racialized groups, as I was interested in capturing a diversity of experiences, but was only successful in finding one such research participant. Perhaps with the increase in mixed race populations expected to occur in the coming years, the number of individuals with parents from differing non-white racialized groups will also increase. The experiences of these individuals are important as they would complicate the white/non-white binary that at times seems to exist within mixed race scholarship itself, and may further exceed it by challenging how 'non-white' is positioned as a singular, bounded mutually exclusive group within the binary. In turn, the negotiations these individuals engage in with the external gaze may further complicate theorizations of the gaze and identity. For instance, my respondent Veronica who was the only respondent I was able to recruit with two parents from different non-white racialized groups identified outside of the category of 'non-white,' working to further complicate the 'non-white' side of the binary.

Another direction for future research is to take an 'intersectionality' approach when researching the experiences of people of mixed race, in order to further consider how socio-economic status, gender, and sexuality impact the negotiations and experiences people of mixed race engage in. Further recognition of the diversity within mixed race experiences is needed, as racialization intersects with other social relations including socio-economic status, gender and sexuality.

As discussed in chapter two, the majority of my respondents have had access to post-secondary education, which likely limited their range of socio-economic statuses: those with access to post-secondary education tend to be of higher socio-economic status. It would be interesting to further consider the experiences and negotiations of people of mixed race from a range of socio-economic statuses, as they may "read their race" (Mahtani 2002c: 474) or read their experiences differently, in relation to their level of education.

How gender influences the experiences and negotiations of people of mixed race also needs to be further considered. As discussed in chapter three, intersections between gender and mixed race remain conceptually underdeveloped in the mixed race literature (Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005). If gender is considered, it has predominantly been in relation to the experiences of women of mixed race. Men's experiences are starting to be looked at, for instance Song's (2010) recent study considers differences in the experiences between male and female siblings. In this thesis I have also sought to begin redressing this shortcoming by recruiting male respondents for the study. My findings suggest gender complicates and delimits my female respondents' responses to the gaze compared to my male respondents. Overall, it will be necessary to continue to consider how the negotiations women of mixed race engage in with the social world differs from the negotiations men of mixed race engage in, and the implications of this.

Sexuality should also be included within an intersectionality approach. One of my respondents, Jolanda, self-identified as gay. I was interested in how

her sexuality, and her potential understanding of sexuality as 'fluid' (perhaps more so than those with heterosexual identities), impacted how she thought about her racial identity, particularly since she stated in the interview that she had become more interested in issues around race and identity through her recent involvement in the queer community and queer activism in the city. However, I also thought it would be contradictory and reinforcing a heteronormative frame if I only asked her about the potential impact of sexuality on identity, as if sexuality is only something people who do not identify as heterosexual 'have.' Therefore, I did not explicitly ask her about it in the interview. However, someone whose sexuality is outside a heteronormative identification may have certain insights, as opposed to those who identify as heterosexual. Overall, it would be interesting to further consider the impact of sexuality on the experiences, identities and negotiations of people of mixed race.

In turn, using queer theory as a theoretical framework in order to research mixed race identity could also be explored. Queer theory and mixed race identity literature have many parallels: queer theory sees identities as historically and socially constructed processes that can be simultaneously fluid and contested, as opposed to fixed and stable (Butler 1990). Overall, the theoretical approach could be useful for informing a project on mixed race identity.

Other directions for future research include considering the experiences of people of mixed race in other age cohorts. For this project I focused on individuals in their twenties and early thirties. As discussed in chapter two, as my peer group, this is a population that was easily accessible to me. However, this

also meant my respondents were from a particular historical cohort: one who grew up in an officially multicultural and increasingly diverse Canada. Overall, ideas about race and mixed race in Canada have taken shape in an era of official multiculturalism. Therefore, it would also be interesting to have respondents in their forties and fifties who have come of age *over the course* of this era, from early multiculturalism to the present, and how they have negotiated and experienced their identities across their life course. The life histories of people of mixed race in this age cohort could also enable the development of an understanding of how race discourse is produced and constructed, through considering their shifting experiences and perspectives.

Lastly, it would be interesting to further consider in future research how power is working in the questioning interaction. My findings suggest the politics of the question 'what are you?' change when it is an exchange between two people who presume each other to be 'mixed,' as opposed to being questioned by a white stranger. This also seems to occur when a racialized individual asks the 'what are you?' question, in order to determine if the questioned person belongs to the same racialized group. However, I still theorize power and the external gaze working in these interactions, but perhaps in a different way. Such questions are important to consider in future research in order to continue to develop an understanding of the identity and negotiation experiences of people of mixed race.

References

Andersen, Margaret L. and Patricia Hill Collins. 1998. "Conceptualizing Race, Class, and Gender." Pp 67-87 in *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology*, edited by Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins. 3rd ed. Toronto: Wadsworth.

Alcoff, Linda Martin. 2006. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self.* New York: Oxford UP.

Alibhai-Brown, Yasmin and Anne Montague. *The Colour of Love: Mixed Race Relationships.* London: Viagro.

Althusser, Louis. 2000 [1971]. "Ideology Interpellates Individuals as Subjects." Pp. 31-8 in *Identity: A Reader.* Paul du Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman, Eds. London: SAGE publications.

Anthias, Floya. 1998. "Rethinking Social Divisions: Some Notes Towards a Theoretical Framework." *The Sociological Review* 46.3: 505-35.

Anzaldua, Gloria. 2007 [1987]. *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 3rd ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute.

Archer, Margaret S. 1982. "Morphogenesis versus Structuration: On Combining Structure and Action" *British Journal of Sociology* 33: 455-83.

Aspinall, P.J. 2003. "The Conceptualisation and Categorisation of Mixed Race/Ethnicity in Britain and North America: Identity Options and the Role of the State." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 27: 269-96.

Baker, N. 1984. *The Beauty Trap*. New York: Franklin Watts.

Bannerji, Himani. 2000. *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism,*

Nationalism, and Gender. Toronto: Canadian Scholars'.

Berthoud, Richard. 1998. "Defining Ethnic Groups." *Patterns of Prejudice* 32.2: 53-65.

Bhabha, Homi. 1990. "Interview with Homi Bhabha: The Third Space." Pp. 207-21 in *Identity, Community, Culture and Difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

-----. 2004 [1994]. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Bloor, Michael and Fiona Wood. 2006. "Interviewing." Pp. 104-08 in *Keywords in Qualitative Methods*. London: SAGE.

Blumer, Herbert. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Engelwood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Bonnett, Alastair. 1997. "Constructions of Whiteness in European and American Anti-Racism." Pp. 173-92 in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*. London: Zed.

Bornat, Joanna. 2007. "Oral History." Pp. 34-47 in *Qualitative Research Practice*, edited by Seale et al. London: SAGE.

Bradshaw, Carla K. 1992. "Beauty and the Beast: On Racial Ambiguity." Pp. 77-88 in *Racially Mixed People in America*, edited by Maria P. P. Root. London: SAGE.

Butler, Judith. 1997. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge.

-----. 2008. *Gender is Extramoral: Interview with Judith Butler*. Barcelona Metropolis. Online. 4 Dec 2010 <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/judith-

butler/articles/gender-is-extramoral/>.

-----. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* London: Routledge.

-----. 2009. "Performativity, Precarity, and Sexual Politics" *Revista de Antropologia Iberoamericana* 4.3: i-xiii.

Camper, Carol. Ed. 1994. *Miscegenation Blues: Voices of Mixed Race Women*. Toronto: Sister Vision.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi Paul. Feb 1, 2007. "Is Obama Black Enough?" *Time*.

Compton, Wade. 2002. "The Epic Moment: An Interview with Wayde Compton." *West Coast Line* 36.2: 131-45.

Crenshaw, Kimberle et al. 1995. "Introduction." Pp. xiii-xxxii in *Critical Race Theory*, edited by Kimberle Crenshaw et al. New York: The New P.

Daniel, G. Reginald. 2002. *More than Black? Multiracial Identity and the New Racial Order*. Philadelphia: Temple UP.

-----. 1992. "Passers and Pluralists: Subverting the Racial Divide." Pp. 91-107 in *Racially Mixed People in America*, edited by Maria P. P. Root. London: SAGE.

Davis, F. James. 1991. *Who is Black: One Nation's Definition.* University Park: Pennsylvania State UP.

Day, Richard J.F. 2000. *Multiculturalism and the History of Canadian Diversity.* Toronto: UP.

Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. 2000. "Introduction." Pp. 15-19 in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, edited by Richard Delgado, and Jean

Stefancic. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Temple UP.

DeRango-Adem, Adebe, and Andrea Thompson. Eds. 2010. *Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out*. Toronto: INANNA.

Douglas, J. D. Ed. 1974. *Understanding Everyday Life*. London: Routledge.

Elliot, J., and A. Fleras. 1992. "Immigration and the Canadian Ethnic Mosaic." in *Multiculturalism in Canada*, edited by A. Fleras and J. Elliott. Toronto: Nelson.

Essed, Philomena. 2002. "Everyday Racism." Pp. 202-16 in *A Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies.* Malden: Blackwell.

Fanon, Frantz. 1970. *A Dying Colonialism.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

-----. 1967. *Black Skin White Masks*. New York: Grove P.

-----. 1968. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove P.

Fuss, Diana. 1995. *Identification Papers*. New York: Routledge.

Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Berkeley: U of California P.

Gilbert, David. 2005. "Interrogating Mixed-Race: A Crisis of Ambiguity?" *Social Identities* 11.1: 55-74.

Gilroy, Paul. 1998. "Race Ends Here." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21.5: 838-47.

Goffman, Erving. 2004 [1959]. "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life." Pp. 359-68 in *Readings in Social Theory: The Classic Tradition to Post-Modernism*, edited by James Farganis. 4th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Gordon, Lewis R. 1997. *Her Majesty's Other Children: Sketches of Racism from a Neocolonial Age*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Government of Canada. 2001. "Canadian Multiculturalism: An Inclusive

   Citizenship." Online. 16 April 2011 <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/

   multiculturalism/citizenship.asp>.

Hall, Stuart. 1990. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." Pp. 222-37 in *Identity:*

   Community, Culture and Difference, edited by Jonathan Rutherford. London:

   Lawrence & Wishart.

-----. 1995. "The Question of Cultural Identity. Pp. 595-634 in *Modernity: An*

   Introduction to Modern Societies, edited by Stuart Hall et al. Cambridge:

   Polity P.

-----. 1997. "The Spectacle of the 'Other'". Pp. 223-90 in *Representation:*

   Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices, edited by Stuart Hall.

   London: SAGE

Hier, Sean P. and B. Singh Bolaria. 2006. "Introduction: Identities Without

   Guarantees." Pp. 1-10 in *Identity and Belonging: Rethinking Race and*

   Ethnicity in Canadian Society, edited by Sean P. Hier and B. Singh Bolaria.

   Toronto: Canadian Scholars'.

Hill, Lawrence. 2001. *Black Berry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in*

   Canada. Toronto: Harper.

Hirschman, Charles, Richard Alba, and Reynolds Farley. 2000. "The Meaning

   and Measurement of Race in the U.S. Census: Glimpses into the Future."

   Demography 37.3: 381-93.

Huang Kinsley, Claire. 1994. "Questions People Have Asked Me. Questions I

   have Asked Myself." Pp. 113-32 in *Miscegenation Blues: Voices of Mixed*

Race Women, edited by Carol Camper. Toronto: Sister Vision.

Huggan, Graham. 2001. *The Post-Colonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*. New

York: Routledge.

Ifekwunigwe, Jayne O. 1999. *Scattered Belongings: Cultural Paradoxes of*

"Race," Nation and Gender. New York: Routledge.

Iijima Hall, , Christine C. 1996. "2001: A Race Odyssey." Pp. 395-410 in *The*

Multiracial

Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier, edited by Maria P.P. Root.

Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Iijima Hall, Christine C. 2004. "Mixed-Race Women: One More Mountain to

Climb." *Women & Therapy* 27.1.2: 237-46.

Johnson, James Weldon. 1965 [1912]. *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured*

Man. New York: Avon.

Kerwin, C., and J. G. Ponterotto. 1995. "Biracial Identity Development: Theory

and Research." Pp. 199-217 in *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*,

edited by J.G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, and C.M. Alexander.

Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Kich, George Kitahara. 1992. "The Developmental Process of Asserting a

Biracial, Bicultural identity." Pp. 304-17 in *Racially Mixed People in America*,

edited by Maria P.P Root. London: SAGE.

Lakoff, R., and Scherr, R. 1984. *Face Value: The Politics of Beauty*. Boston:

Routledge.

Larsen, Nella. 1969 [1928]. *Passing.* New York: Arno P.

Luckman. T. Ed. 1978. *Phenomenology and Sociology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Mahtani, Minelle. 2001. "'I'm a Blonde-haired, Blue-eyed Black Girl': Mapping

Mobile Paradoxical Spaces among Multiethnic Women in Toronto, Canada."

Pp. 173-90 in *Rethinking 'Mixed Race,'* edited by David Parker and Miri

Song. London: Pluto.

-----. "Interrogating the Hyphen-Nation: Canadian Multicultural Policy and

'Mixed Race' Identities." *Social Identities*. 8.1: 67-90.

-----. 2005. "Mixed Metaphors: Positioning 'Mixed Race' Identity."

Pp. 77-93 in *Situating 'Race' and Racisms in Space, Time, and Theory*.

Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP.

----. 2002b. "Tricking the Border Guards: Performing Race." *Environment and

Planning D: Society and Space* 20: 425-440.

-----. 2002c. "What's In a Name? Exploring the Employment of 'Mixed Race' as

an Identification." *Ethnicities* 2.4: 469-90.

Mahtani, Minelle and April Moreno. 2001. "Same Difference: Towards a More

Unified Discourse in 'Mixed Race' Theory." Pp. 65-75 in *Rethinking 'Mixed

Race,'* edited by David Parker and Miri Song. London: Pluto.

Mawani, Renisa. 2009. *Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and

Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921*. Vancouver: UBC P.

-----. 2002. "In Between and Out of Place: Mixed-Race Identity, Liquor, and the

Law in British Columbia, 1850-1914." Pp. 47-69 in *Race, Space and the Law:

Unmapping a White Settler Society*. Toronto: Between the

Lines.

Mengel, Laurie M. 2001. "Triples – The Social Evolution of a Multiracial

Panethnicity: An Asian American Perspective." Pp. 99-116 in *Rethinking*

'Mixed Race,' edited by David Parker and Miri Song. London: Pluto.

Milan, Anne, Hélène Maheux and Tina Chui. "A Portrait of Couples in Mixed

Unions." *Statistics Canada*, April 20, 2010.

Mohan, Erica, and Terah T. Venzant Chambers. 2010. "Two Researchers Reflect

on Navigating Multiracial Identities in the Research Situation." *International*

Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education 23.3: 259-81.

Morris, Aldon D. 2007. "Sociology of Race and W.E.B. Du Bois: The Path Not

Taken." Pp. 503-34 in *Sociology in America: A History*, edited by Craig

Calhon. Chicago: U of Chicago P.

Mulvey, Laura. 1975. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16.3: 6-18.

Nakagawa. Anne Marie. Dir. 2005. *Between: Living in the Hyphen*. National Film

Board of Canada.

Nakashima, Cynthia L. 1992. "An Invisible Monster: The Creation and Denial of

Mixed-Race People in America." Pp. 162-78 in *Racially Mixed People in*

America, edited by Maria P. P. Root. London: SAGE.

Navarro, Mireya. March 31, 2008. "Who Are We? New Dialogue on Mixed

Race." *The New York Times*.

Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant. 1986. *Racial Formation in the United States:*

From the 1960s to the 1980s. New York: Routledge.

Owusu-Bempah, Kwame. 2006. "Confronting Racism in the Therapist's Office."

Pp. 313-35 in *Mixed Messages: Multiracial Identities in the "Color Blind"*

Era, edited by David L. Brunsma. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Park, R. E. 1928. "Human Migration and the Marginal Man." *American Journal of Sociology* 33: 881-893.

Parker, David. 2004. "Mixed Race." Pp.107-128 in *Social Identities: Multidisciplinary Approaches.* New York: Routledge.

Parker, David, and Miri Song. 2001. "Introduction: Rethinking 'Mixed Race.'" Pp. 1-22 in *Rethinking 'Mixed Race'*, edited by David Parker and Miri Song. London: Pluto.

Perkins, Maureen. 2005. "Thoroughly Modern Mulatta: Rethinking "Old World" Stereotypes in a "New World" Setting." *Biography* 28.1: 104-16.

Poston, W. C. 1990. "The Biracial Identity Model: A Needed Addition." *Journal of Counseling & Development* 69.2:152-55.

Rapley, Tim. 2007 [2004]. "Interviews." Pp. 15-33 in *Qualitative Research Practice*, edited by Clive Seale et al. London: SAGE.

Ritzer, George. 1998. *Classical Sociological Theory.* 5th ed. Toronto: McGraw-Hill.

Rockquemore, Kerry Ann. 2002. "Negotiating the Color Line: The Gendered Process of Racial Identity Construction among Black/White Biracial Women." *Gender and Society* 16.4: 485-503.

Rockquemore, Kerry Ann, and David L. Brunsma, 2002 [2008]. *Beyond Black: Biracial Identity in America*. 2nd ed. Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield

-----. 2004. "Negotiating Racial Identity: Biracial Women and Interactional Validation." *Women & Therapy* 27.1.2: 85-102.

Rockquemore, Kerry Ann, and Tracey Laszloffy. 2005. *Raising Biracial Children*. Toronto: AltaMira.

Root, Maria P.P. 1996a. "A Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People." Pp. 3-14 in *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier,* edited by Maria P.P. Root. London: SAGE.

-----. 1992. "Back to the Drawing Board: Methodological Issues in Research on Multiracial People." Pp. 181-89 in *Racially Mixed People in America*. London: SAGE.

-----. 2004. "From Exotic to a Dime a Dozen." *Biracial Women in Therapy* 27.1/2: 19-31.

-----. 1997. "Mixed-Race Women." Pp. 157-72 in *Race/Sex: Their Sameness, Difference, and Interplay*, edited by Naomi Zack. New York: Routledge.

-----. 1998. "Resolving "Other" Status: Identity Development of Biracial Individuals." Pp. 100-12 in *Readings in Ethnic Psychology*, edited by Pamela Balls Organista et al. New York: Routledge.

-----. 1996b. "The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as a Significant Frontier in Race Relations." Pp. xiii-xxviii in *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier,* edited by Maria P.P. Root. London: SAGE.

Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene S. Rubin. 2005. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Saldana, Johnny. 2009. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Samuels, Gina Miranda. 2009. "Using the Extended Case Method to Explore

Identity in a Multiracial Context." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*

32.9: 1599-1618.

Sollors, Werner. 2002. "Ethnicity and Race." Pp. 97-104 in *A Companion to*

Racial and Ethnic Studies, edited by David T. Goldberg and J. Soloms.

Malden: Blackwell.

Song, Miri. 2003. *Choosing Ethnic Identity*. Cambridge: Polity.

-----. 2010. Is there 'a' mixed race group in Britain? The diversity of multiracial

identification and experience. *Critical Social Policy*. 30: 337-58.

Song, Miri, and David Parker. 1995. "Commonality, Difference and the Dynamics

of Disclosure in In-Depth Interviewing. *Sociology* 29.2: 241-56.

Spickard, Paul. 2001. "The Subject is Mixed Race: The Boom in Biracial

Biography." Pp. 76-98 in *Rethinking 'Mixed Race'*, edited by David Parker and

Miri Song. London: Pluto.

Sprague, Joey. 2005. "Qualitative Shifts: Feminist Strategies in Field Research

and Interviewing." Pp. 119-63 in *Feminist Methodologies for Critical*

Researchers: Bridging Differences. Oxford: AltaMira.

St. Louis, Brett. 2005. "Racialization in the 'Zone of Ambiguity'". Pp. 29-50 in

Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice, edited by Karim Murji and John

Solomos. New York: Oxford UP.

Statistics Canada. 2008. *Canada's Ethnocultural Mosaic, 2006 Census*.

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/analysis/ethnicorigin/pdf/97-562-

XIE2006001.pdf>.

-----. 2001. "Community Profiles: Edmonton." Online. 5 March 2010.

-----. 2006. "Community Profiles: Edmonton." Online. 5 March 2010.

Stoler, Ann Laura. 1997. "Racial Histories and their Regimes of Truth." *Political Power and Social Theory*. 11: 183-206.

Stonequist, E. V. 1937. *The Marginal Man*. New York: Scribner & Sons.

Streeter, Caroline A. 1996. "Ambiguous Bodies: Locating Black/White Women in Cultural Representations." Pp. 305-20 in *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*, edited by Maria P.P. Root. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Taylor, Leanne. 2008a. "Looking North: Exploring Multiracial experiences in Canada context." Pp. 83-91 in *Biracial and Multiracial College Students: Theory, research, and Best Practices in Students Affairs*, edited by K.A. Renn and P. Shang. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

----. 2008b. *Re-imagining Mixed Race: Explorations of Multiracial Discourse in Canada*. York University: Unpublished Dissertation.

Taylor, Leanne, Carl E. James, and Roger Saul. 2007. "Who Belongs? Exploring Race and Racialization in Canada." Pp. 151-78 in *Race, Racialization, and Antiracism in Canada and Beyond*, edited by Genevieve Fuji Johnson and Randy Enomoto. Toronto: U of Toronto P.

Taylor, Gary and Steve Spencer. 2004. "Introduction." Pp. 1-34 in *Social Identities: Multidisciplinary Approaches*, edited by Gary Taylor and Steve Spencer. New York: Routledge.

Thakur, Shnati. Dir. 1994. *Domino.* National Film Board of Canada.

Thornton, Michael C. 1996. "Hidden Agendas, Identity Theories, and Multiracial

People." Pp. 101-120 in *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*, edited by Maria P.P. Root. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Tizard and Phoenix. 1993. *Black, White, or Mixed Race? Race and Racism in the Lives of Young People of Mixed Parentage*. New York: Routledge.

Waters, Mary C. 1990. *Ethnic Options*. Oxford: U of California P.

Watts, Jacqueline. 2006. "'The Outsider Within': Dilemmas of qualitative feminist research within a culture of resistance." *Qualitative Research* 6: 385-402.

Weate, Jeremy. 2001. "Fanon, Merleau-Ponty and the Difference of Phenomenology." Pp. 169-83 in *Race*, edited by Robert Bernasconi. Malden: Blackwell.

Weisman, Jan R. 1996. "An 'Other' Way of Life: The Empowerment of Alterity in the Interracial Individual." Pp. 152-64 in *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*, edited by Maria P.P. Root. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Widdershoven, Guy A. M. 1993. "The Story of Life: Hermeneutic Perspectives on the Relationship between Narrative and Life History." In *The Narrative Study of Lives*, edited by B. Williams. New York: Routledge.

Winant, Howard. 2007. "The Dark Side of the Force: One Hundred Years of the Sociology of Race." Pp. 535-71 in *Sociology in America: A History*, edited by Craig Calhon. Chicago: U of Chicago P.

Appendix A: Consent Form

Negotiating the Self: Exploring Mixed Race Identity
Jillian Paragg, M.A. Student, Department of Sociology University of Alberta

LETTER OF CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You have been invited to participate in an interview for my research project on mixed race identity. This project is being completed for my Master's thesis in the Department of Sociology at the University of Alberta under the supervision of Dr. Sara Dorow, Associate Professor Department of Sociology. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research project, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Dorow at 780-492-4301 or sdorow@ualberta.ca. The research findings may also be submitted for publication in journal articles and conference presentations.

The purpose of the project is to explore a whole range of perspectives and experiences, and the multiple ways that 'mixed race' can be understood.

The interview will have a semi-structured format, and I estimate that it will take one hour. With your consent, the interview will be tape-recorded and transcribed. If you do not wish to have the interview recorded, I will be taking notes.

All information from this interview will be kept confidential, and your anonymity protected. The audio recording and transcript of the interview will be stored as password protected files on my computer, and will not be seen in their original form by anyone but me. Any notes taken by me during the interview will be stored in a locked drawer at my residence, and will not be seen in their original form by anyone but me. All participants will be given pseudonyms for the purposes of data analysis and communication of results, if they wish to remain anonymous. If you so choose, you will be supplied with a copy of your interview transcript to review for accuracy and completeness, and if you would like to clarify or expand upon parts of the transcript, you are welcome to do so.

Your participation is voluntary; you have the right to opt out of answering any questions asked of you in the interview, and you can end the interview at any time. You have the right not to participate and to withdraw at any time without penalty. Furthermore, if you wish to have the transcripts of your interview removed from the project, you have the right to do so up until February 1, 2011.

If you have questions or concerns about the interview or the research project as a whole, please do not hesitate to ask me at the time of the interview, or contact me later at 780-244-4031 or paragg@ualberta.ca.

Consent

By signing below, I indicate that I have read and understood the above information, and that I consent to participate in this research project:

Name of Participant	Signature of Participant	Date

Signature of Researcher	Date

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Supplies Checklist:
Digital recorder   Extra batteries   Note paper   Pens
x2
Consent forms x2   Census form   Interview guide

Interview Process & Questions[5]:
Can I get you a coffee or tea?
Go over consent form, give copy
Would you like me to provide you with a copy of the transcript?

Describe project:
Overall, I am interested in hearing about your perspectives and experiences, and
will be asking you questions regarding these. The purpose of the project is to
explore a whole range of perspectives and experiences, and the multiple ways that
'mixed race' can be
understood.

Would you like the interview to be anonymous, and if so, is there a particular
pseudonym you would like to use?
What is your age and occupation?
Is it okay if I start the recorder? – start recorder/GarageBand
Do you have any questions?

1. What brought you to the study - to respond and agree to participate? What
interested you in the project?

2. What is your "racial"[6] background?
Probe: How would you identify or describe your parents?

3. Would you describe yourself as being of a "mixed racial background?"

4. How do you self-identify?[7]
*Probe: With a singular racial category, with multiple racial categories, with no
racial categories, as biracial/multiracial/mixed or other ways or is it how you
described your racial background in question 2, or as Canadian?*

- Why do you identify this way?
  - o Is there a difference between your 'background' and how you self-
    identify?

---

[5] Questions more of a way of framing the discussion, the conversation will flow how it wants
to.

[6] People might not want to use the language of 'race' but rather nationality, culture or ethnicity.

[7] Explore the nuances of these categories for them; give these questions lots of room to breathe.

- Do you think of yourself as 'mixed race' or 'mixed'?
  - Do you identify using these terms or other mixed race identities such as biracial or multiracial?
- How do you feel about terms such as biracial/multiracial?

- Has how you identify changed at different times in your life?
- Does how you identify vary according to the circumstance or situation?
  Probe: Privately identify in one way, but identify in another way publicly

5. Do others think of you/see you as "mixed" or "mixed race."
  - If participants has two non-white parents, get thoughts on whether the default of someone who is 'mixed with' white

6. How do you find people racialize you?
Probe: Assumptions that you belong to a racial category or questions about what racial category you belong to.

- Has this changed at different times in your life?
- Has this affected how you self-identify?
  - Why/when/how?

7. Do you find that people try to categorize you in a certain way? Do you find that people have certain expectations of how you identify?
Probe: Do you get asked questions such as "what are you?" or "where are you from?"

- Do people try to impose categories on you?
  - Does this vary according to the circumstance or situation?

8. What is your reaction to people's expectations and categorizations?

9. Are there other experiences that have affected how you self-identify?
Probe: Experiences with racism or family pressures

- Do you think that growing up in Canada has affected how you self-identify?
- Do you think growing up in Canada has made a difference in how people receive you or perceive you?
  - What about as a result of the context of Canadian multiculturalism (notion that you need to 'belong' to a culture)
  - Do you identify as 'Canadian'?
  - What difference do you see between race, ethnicity and culture?

10. What do you think of the census categories? (use census form as talking tool)
  - What happens when you go to fill out the census?
  - What do you think of the term visible minority?

11. Are you aware of any stereotypes that exist around people of mixed race?
Probe: Confused about racial identity, physically attractive appearance, exotic connotations

- Have you been subject to any such stereotypes?
    - Why/when/how?
- What do you think makes someone 'exotic'?

12. Do you think that your 'mixedness' has affected your experiences with dating in any way? What about friendships?

Bring up towards end of interview, if have not been brought up:
13. What do you think about how mixed race celebrities portray themselves or have been portrayed? (American context)
- What do you think of people who decide to identify with a singular category, even though they are of a mixed racial background? What about those who identify as mixed even though they look like they are of a singular category?

14. Do you find that the word 'exotic' is used to describe people of mixed race? How do you feel about the word 'exotic'?
Probe: Issues around 'body image'
- Do you consider this a gendered term? Is there a male equivalent (such as mystique?)

15. Do you get asked the question, or some version of the question, "what are you?" How do you feel about such questions being asked of you?
- Do you consciously form your response to such questions?

16. Is there anything else you would like to add?

17. Do you know anyone who may also be interested in participating in this project – in particular male participants. Could you forward my recruitment ad on to them? I can email it to you again.

Thank you for your time