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The identity development of

mixed race individuals in Canada

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the identity development of mixed race individuals in a Western Canadian context. The case study methodology was used to guide the overall procedure and participant selection. A thematic analysis was used to analyze patterns in the data. Four individuals of mixed race parentage were interviewed and five themes emerged: (a) the influence of family, (b) the influence of childhood experiences, (c) the influence of physical appearance, (d) the influence of racism, and (e) the influence of adult experiences. The detailed explorations of the participants' experiences add to the Canadian literature on mixed race identity development, which provides several counselling implications and directions for future research.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

An analysis of mixed race identity development is important at this time, because the mixed race population is on the rise (Owen, 2001). According to the American Census Bureau (2000), almost 6.8 million people reported more than one race in the 2000 census. Similarly, Statistics Canada first changed its census form in 1996 to allow individuals to identify with more than one race, and approximately 330,000 Canadians identified as mixed race in 2001 (Khoo, 2007). These statistics reveal that a significant number of people identify as mixed race in North America. Given the increasing mixed race population, it is becoming more relevant to accurately understand their process of identity development.

Developing a mixed race identity in a monoracial framework is a unique experience. Mixed race individuals must strive to develop a healthy identity despite being largely ignored by media, psychological literature, and educational materials (Rockquemore & Laszloffy; 2005, Root, 1992, 1996). The attention they have received has often suggested that they are fragmented and inherently marginalized beings (Mengel, 2001). These systemic dynamics can lead to psychological stress, including low self-esteem and unhealthy identity formation (Sue & Sue, 2003). Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to improve the understanding of the factors that influence a mixed race identity in a western Canadian context. It is my hope that this knowledge will enhance the psychological support provided to mixed race people.

My interest in this research topic stems from my personal experiences as a mixed race individual. My mother is from Czechoslovakia, my father is from India and I was born and raised in Canada. As a child, I was unaware of terms like *interracial marriage* or *mixed race*. Once I became aware of my mixed heritage as a young adult, I became curious as to why my racial and cultural identity were so different from either my Bengali or Czech relatives, or from most of the people around me. As I started to ask questions, I found deep commonalities with other mixed race individuals regardless of their particular racial mix. Additionally, I was amazed at the range and depth of opinions I encountered in casual conversations. It seemed that everyone had an opinion about mixed race individuals.

With this diversity in opinions, I was certain that I would find an overwhelming amount of academic data on the mixed race experience. I did find a significant volume of research on American Black-and-White mixed race people and the American history of anti-miscegenation. However, I was surprised at the minute amount of information available on non-Black-and-White mixed race individuals in general and the Canadian perspective in particular. When given the opportunity to conduct my own research as a Master's student, I decided to explore the topic of non-Black-and-White mixed race individuals in a Canadian context. I hope that this information can be used to increase awareness of the unique issues that mixed race individuals face.

Consequently, the purpose of the present study is to explore the mixed race experience within its complex contemporary framework. The goal is to

investigate the factors that influence the development of a mixed race identity. The information gathered from this study will provide a Canadian contribution to theories relating to racial identity development and a post-modern analysis of race as a socially constructed category. Moreover, this study explores the experiences of mixed race individuals that are not of Black and White parentage, which is a topic that is under-represented in the mixed race literature (Mahtani, 2001). A deeper understanding of the factors that influence the mixed race identity will add to the current literature by enhancing our knowledge of the Western Canadian, non-Black-and-White mixed race individual's lived experience. Additionally, the results of the present study may help counsellors to increase their own awareness of mixed race issues by encouraging them to challenge any qualms they may consciously or unconsciously harbour about mixed race individuals. Considering the increasing mixed race population, it is important that researchers begin to focus on supportive measures to promote healthy mixed race identity development.

The language used to describe mixed race individuals has varied across time and contexts. For example, the term half caste, now considered pejorative, was often used in England to describe mixed race individuals (Ifekwunigwe, 2001). Similarly, in the United States, the term biracial is common in describing the mixed race experience (Root, 1996). These terms were not used in the present study because of their specific contextual use and are outdated. For example, the term mulatto is used in reference to individuals of Black and White parentage and the term biracial limits the ancestry to two racial backgrounds. A term for mixed

race individuals in the Canadian context does not seem to exist. It is important to note that the term Métis is used to describe individuals of European and Aboriginal descent in the Canadian context. However, the particular details of the Métis experience involve a specific post-colonial assessment, and are therefore, outside the scope of this thesis. The present study focuses on the non-Black-and-White and non-Métis mixed race experience in Canada. Accordingly, I chose to use the term mixed race, because it can include individuals of all mixed race backgrounds. The term does not limit the experience to a particular cultural background or historical framework.

The following five chapters will describe the relevant literature, the methods, results, and will discuss counselling implications of the results. In chapter two, a sociological and historical foundation for understanding the politics of mixed race identity is provided. This foundation is followed by an overview of psychological theories of identity and an analysis of a racial identity model. The chapter concludes with an analysis of psychologist Maria Root's (1996) mixed race identity development model and key presenting issues for mixed race individuals.

Chapter three consists of an overview of the qualitative research paradigm and an outline of the methodological framework. The method for selecting the participants, data collection and data analysis are explained. This chapter ends with a review of the important ethical issues that were taken into consideration before and throughout the research process.

Chapters four and five consist of the research study findings. Chapter four contains an introduction to each participant, as well as an overview of the themes that emerged from the within-case analyses. Chapter five provides rich description of the themes that emerged from the cross-case analysis of data as well as lush quotes to support those themes.

The last chapter, chapter six, consists of a general discussion about the findings and how they related to the research in the literature review. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the future implications of this research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The following literature review explores the sociological, historical, and psychological research relevant to mixed race identity development. More specifically, this literature review provides a sociological analysis of contemporary race and mixed race theory as well as an in-depth overview of the history of mixed race issues in North America. From this foundation, racial identity models and the development of mixed race identity are evaluated from a psychological perspective.

A Sociological Analysis of Race

According to Olumide (2002) race is a social construct. Consequently, the definition and significance of race varies with time, place, class, gender and so on. To view race as a social construct signifies a move away from determining an individual's character and quality by the colour of his or her skin. It suggests that race is a malleable category that is determined by the existing power hierarchy of any given context.

The contemporary idea of race as a social construct stands in direct contrast to the historical perspective, which deemed race to be biologically determined (e.g., Blumenbach, 1807). According to this historical perspective, a fixed number of races existed and each racial category was believed to consist of inherent and permanent characteristics. The biological conceptualization of race led to the persecution of visible minorities, strict rules against race *mixing* and negative beliefs about the progeny of mixed race couples. In contrast, the notion

of race as a social construct has created a foundation from which the shackles of racial discrimination can be shed (Root, 1992).

Despite the budding awareness of race as a social construct, traditional notions of race are widespread and continue to play an important role in the lives of most people. For example, the Statistics Canada (2006) and the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) census forms still ask for racial self-classification, which reflects the presence of race as an identity marker. This example suggests that, at the highest level of government, race is still believed to be a measurable category. A still further obvious example is the numerous race-based discussions related to the current president of the United States, President Barack Obama (for examples see New York Times December 3, 2008, January 3, 2009; CBC cross country check-up November 8, 2009). Many national discussions have centred on President Obama's ability to tackle both "… black grievance and white resentment" (The Associated Press, 2008, ¶ 1). Further, and pertinent to this study, both Blacks and Whites have questioned the legitimacy of Barack Obama's race because he is mixed race (Russell, 2008). These two examples reflect that even though there is academic awareness of race as a social contract, the influence of race remains pervasive at the societal as well as the individual levels.

The pervasive effect of racial categories is also reflected by, for example, the disproportionate number of visible minorities living in poverty in both Canada and the United States (Edelman & Jones, 2004; Jackson, 2001). For example, visible minorities in Toronto are two to four times more likely than white families to live below the poverty line (Davy, 2008). Similarly, in the United States

poverty rates for African Americans and Hispanics greatly exceed the national average (The National Poverty Centre, 2006). As Ross Douthat of the New York Times explains, so long as racial disparities persist, so too must racial preferences (July 9, 2009).

Racial disparities and racial preferences indicate that essentialized notions of race continue to persevere. Systemically we continue to attribute innate characteristics to culturally defined racial groups (Armstrong, 2003). Laurie Mengel (2001) best articulated this point by simply stating that although race is not real, racism most certainly is. Overall, the debate over race as a socially constructed or biologically determined notion continues. Meanwhile, mixed race individuals blur the boundaries of racial categories to create a space for themselves. Their very existence continues to challenge the contemporary race-based social constructions.

A Historical Overview of Race Mixing

It is difficult to define the term mixed race because "…its meaning alters with national boundary, position in history, class, gender, ethnicity and other factors" (Olumide, 2002, p. 1). In the United States, for example, the term mixed race is qualified by a long history of anti-miscegenation laws, which forbade the marriage between people of different races (Henriksen & Trusty, 2004). These laws were developed in the time of slavery and accordingly, they focused on the marriage between Black and White individuals. Despite these laws, numerous mixed race children were conceived within the context of antebellum America.

These children were generally the progeny of White slave owner men and the Black slave women who were owned as property (Sue & Sue, 2003).

The increasing number of mixed race individuals gave way to the creation of the one-drop rule, which determined that a person with even one drop of Black blood was considered Black (Snyder, 1889; Sue & Sue, 2003). This rule became too vague and difficult to monitor and accordingly, the one-eight rule was established (Davis, 2006). This new rule decreed that an individual who was one-eight Black was legally considered Black. To be one-eight Black, an individual needed to have at minimum one great-grandparent who was Black. Importantly, some historical evidence suggests that, regardless of the one-eight or one drop rules, an individual was considered Black if he or she had "…a sufficient amount to render that fact visible to the naked eye" (Snyder, 1889, p. 68). Overall, it can be seen that maintaining a *pure race* was an important objective and accordingly, *race mixing* was considered "…a modern crime" (Snyder, 1889, p. 64)

In Canada, anti-miscegenation laws similar to those in the United States did not come to pass. It has been argued that the smaller population of visible minorities, as well as the dissimilar slavery histories, were some the reasons for this difference (Monroy, 2004). Despite the lack of anti-miscegenation laws in Canada, anti-miscegenation sentiment existed nonetheless. This is best evidenced by the Parliamentary discussions of race mixing where references were made to mixed race individuals and miscegenation. For example, in the fifth parliament sessional papers of the Dominion of Canada (1885), on a discussion regarding organization of the state, S. Clinton Hastings, a businessman addressing

Parliament stated, “I think it would be a destruction if miscegenation were general” (p. 303). Similarly, referring to mixed race individuals, Solomon Heydenfeldt, an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, stated “It has been observed that in the crossing of races between African and the white that such as admixture has a tendency to die out” (Fifth Parliament Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada, 1885, p. 286). In the 1885 Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, Rear Admiral to the Canadian Navy John Rogers stated, “As to miscegenation …the Spaniards and Portuguese are the most mixed race in Europe, and they are, politically, behind the other races. The intermingling of different ethnological divisions is an injury.” (p. 348).

An investigation into both Canadian and American histories reveals that mixed race individuals were considered to be the product of an unnatural union. Predictably, theories emerging from this racist cultural framework suggested that mixed race individuals were doomed to be confused, isolated and detached (Stonequist, 1937). As racism and essentialized notions of race were challenged, however, contemporary researchers revealed a more supple and holistic analysis of mixed race individuals.

A Review of the Contemporary Mixed Race Experience

Changes made in legal policy over the twentieth century have influenced the lives of mixed race individuals. In 1967 the American Supreme Court decision Loving vs. Commonwealth of Virginia repealed state laws that banned interracial marriage (Spencer, 2006). This was followed by the mixed race baby boom, which tripled the number of mixed race children in the United States between

1970 and 1990 (Sue & Sue, 2003). As further validation of the mixed race experience, American census forms enabled citizens to identify more than one racial or ethnic heritage for the first time in 2000 (Davis, 2006).

Similarly, the Statistics Canada (1996) census form used an open-ended question with four write-in spaces to identify racial or ethnic origin for the first time in 1996. Prior to 1996 the racial and ethnic origin question was in check box format, forcing individuals to choose one racial or ethnic origin. Being able to choose only one racial and ethnic heritage had the effect of forcing mixed race individuals to officially reject one aspect of their identity (Davis, 2006). Offering the four write-in spaces to identify racial origin, on the other hand, enabled mixed race Canadians to officially honour and embrace their mixed race identities. The changes to both Canadian and American census forms indicates that federal legislation has moved in a direction that acknowledges and validates the existence of mixed race people. Despite these recent changes, however, many of the earlier-established beliefs regarding race and race mixing remain pervasive in day-to-day relations and therefore, continue to have an effect on the identity development of mixed race individuals.

In the early twentieth century, Reuter (1938) determined that the experience of being *othered,* or being treated badly due to ambiguous ethnicity, was unavoidably injurious to the mental health of mixed race people. Similarly, Robert Park (1950) deemed mixed race individuals to be prone to displaying neurotic personality traits because of their experiences of being marginalized. This led some to suggest that mixed race people are fragmented and marginal

beings, which in a monoracial society, implies that they are less than whole (Mengel, 2001).

The concept of marginality accurately pinpointed some aspects of the mixed race experience, but ultimately discriminated against mixed race people by pathologizing their identity (e.g. Reuter, 1938). In a circular fashion, anti-miscegenation theorists who argued that mixed race individuals were inherently pathological due to their marginalized state were themselves marginalizing mixed race individuals. In fact, this focus on pathologized marginalization often led to theories that supported anti-miscegenation opinion.

Sociologist Everett Stonequist (1961), for instance, declared that exploring anti-racist ideology was actually a reflection of psychological problems in the individual exploring the ideology. He believed that the existence of an anti-racist sentiment exposed a problem in social adjustment. Furthermore, Stonequist (1961) stated that when race mixing occurs, the *hybrid* does not rise to the level of the higher parent's stock and therefore, the strict maintenance of racial lines make the most sense. Through such reasoning, he justified race-based oppression and pathologization of mixed race individuals. Although discrimination does play a role in identity development, to suggest that mixed race individuals have an inherent flaw due to the experience of being othered is racially prejudiced. Furthermore, to concentrate solely on the negative effects of marginalization above all else oversimplifies the matter.

The everyday experiences of a mixed race individual can have an *othering* effect (Bradshaw, 1992). The othering often comes in the form of questions of

authenticity that mixed race individuals frequently receive from all sides of their heritage. For example, in the United States, if a mixed race person is half White, he or she often cannot claim his or her Whiteness without the risk of being accused of *passing*. Passing is defined as an individual's attempt to deny the existence of colour in their heritage (Daniel, 1992). That same individual's membership in a community of colour may also be questioned because of their *white half*.

Similarly, a mixed race individual's access to a minority group is often conditional and is based on strict adherence to social rules; rules that apply differently for monoracials (Mengel, 2001). For example, mixed race individuals are often expected to have a complete knowledge of a group's language, history and culture in order to be accepted. Any holes in such knowledge are taken as proof of their *impure* or *mixed* self (Mengel, 2001). In fact, it can be argued that mixed race people must actually adhere to cultural or racial stereotypes in order to gain cultural acceptance. Of course, inter-cultural differences abound and most often, monoracial individuals are not required to have the same cultural knowledge or adhere to the same stereotypical behaviour that is frequently demanded of mixed race people. Ultimately, if mixed race people cannot, or do not, adhere to these social rules, they are othered (Bailey, 2006). For these reasons, the mixed race experience may often include exclusion, voicelessness and stereotypes (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005)

Olumide (2002) suggested that mixed race individuals share the common experiences of existing in a paradoxical space and an ambiguous social location.

The ambiguous social and paradoxical spaces that mixed race people may dwell in results from occupying multiple socially constructed racial categories simultaneously versus the occupation of a single one. Overall then, mixed race individuals must either adhere to cultural stereotypes for acceptance into the monocultural framework or, they must accept the ambiguous social and paradoxical spaces. Significantly, contemporary theories of mixed race identity development have created a space in which mixed race individuals can embrace their identities within these ambiguous social and paradoxical spaces.

In contrast to their historical counterparts (e.g., Stonequist, 1937), current researchers such as Olumide (2002), do not contend that mixed race individuals are inherently weak or damaged (Root, 1992; Parker & Song, 2001). Michael Thornton (1996) explained how explorations of mixed race identity have led to the awareness of multiple identities and a more well-rounded view of identity development on the whole. Within this more accommodating environment, mixed race individuals can negotiate ambiguous and paradoxical spaces with the intent of leaving behind the purely essentialized and pessimistic notions of mixed race identity.

Mantani (2001) contended that the current investigation of mixed race identity has opened a space in which a multifaceted form of identity can be explored. For example, medical anthropologist Jayne Ifekwunigwe (2001) argued that mixed race politics can serve to "…de-centre 'race' as a primary identity marker and to clear space for the interplay of other hierarchically positioned signifiers such as ethnicity, locality, generation, gender and social class" (p. 44).

This new focus in the study of mixed race identity has created a space for an extensive and dynamic discussion in which an exploration of pertinent issues is underway.

Mahtani and Moreno (2001) argued that in most North American contexts the term mixed race seems to conjure up an assortment of feelings. At one extreme, mixed race individuals can experience vicious harassment in the form of racist discrimination. At the other extreme, mixed race individuals are naively heralded as the future source of racial transcendence (Parker & Song, 2001). These opinions stem from a combination of the historical notions of mixed race as well as the newer, more progressive, ideas. It is important to note that it is within this context that mixed race individuals develop their identities. Consequently, as part of their identity development process, mixed race people must negotiate the historical and contemporary sociological racial ideas, as well as the details of their personal life contexts. To help shed more light on this complex identity development process, an exploration of identity development literature is required.

Identity Development

Identity can be described as "…the definitions that are created for and superimposed on the self" (Baumeister, 1997, p. 682). This definition suggests that individuals fashion some part of their identity while other parts are applied to them. Certain aspects of identity are imposed by a society that tends to judge people on a variety of external features. For example, race and its associated

stereotypical characteristics are generally superimposed on to individuals, whereas any number of unique or idiosyncratic beliefs about one is self-created.

The notions of self-imposed and superimposed components to identity are especially pertinent to mixed race individuals, because there can be a significant discrepancy between how mixed race individuals are perceived by the society and how they perceive themselves. For example, an individual who is part White and part Korean, but phenotypically appears White and was raised by a Korean parent, may have an internal, or created sense of identity in-line with the Korean heritage. However, in a race conscious country like Canada that same individual may be perceived as White. That is, a White identity may be superimposed on this person by the society. Therefore, a mixed race individual's racial identity may have a component that shifts with context. Congruently, Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) suggested that both the self-imposed and superimposed facets of one's identity depend on various aspects of context, such as familial structure, social context, age, gender, and skin colour.

The contextual factors that could impact an individual's identity are many. Studies on child development have provided a list of factors that impact identity development. Erik Erikson, among others, is foundational in the study of developmental psychology. Broadly speaking, his theories have extrapolated on Freud's psychosocial stages of development to define healthy personality characteristics and have provided a framework for achieving them (Thomas, 2005). Even though Erikson's theories do not specifically address racial identity

development, his developmental theories could be considered an essential starting point for understanding racial identity development (Katz, 1996).

According to Erik Erikson, each individual undergoes eight psychological identity crises at specific stages of his or her development. The ways in which these crises are resolved produce the foundations of an individual's personality characteristics. Importantly, Erikson explained that a radius of significant relations, or significant contextual factors, accompanies each psychological identity crisis. More specifically, he proposed that all human beings experience the psychological stages of development, yet, the environment in which a child is raised has "…a significant effect on the nature of the crises arising at each stage" and on the ability of the child to master the stage (Thomas, 2005, p. 88). From birth until early adulthood Erikson considered these significant contextual factors to be parents, family, school, neighbourhood, peer groups and partners (Thomas, 2005).

Erikson further suggested that the identity, which an individual established through his or her childhood and adolescent experiences, sets the stage for the remaining adulthood experiences. In later adulthood the significant contextual factors are an individual's partner(s) and, at the last stage of one's life, a general awareness of humankind and the lifecycle (Erikson, 1968). The purpose of this study is to investigate the significant contextual factors from birth until early adulthood as outlined by Erikson and in particular relation to the development of a mixed race identity. First, however, an exploration of racial identity

development literature will facilitate an appreciation for the elements involved in the development of a mixed race identity.

Racial Identity Development

It is important to recognize that racial identity is just one layer among many that forms our full identities (Katz, 1996). All individuals have an identity that is the product of many different aspects of their sense of self. In a race conscious society, however, racial identity development is an important part of identity development, particularly for those belonging to a minority group. For this reason, racial identity development models have been created to help psychologists, and all mental health care workers, develop a holistic awareness of the experiences faced by all individuals in a race conscious society.

Racial identity models are important tools to help mental health professionals avoid misconceptions and stereotypes in the therapeutic relationship (Sue & Sue, 2008). Numerous models have been developed to provide guidance with regards to individual races. Cross (1971, 2001) for instance, developed the Nigrescence and Negro-to-Black conversion racial identity models to provide a positive discourse of Black psychology. Sodowski, Kwan, and Pannu (1995) promoted an awareness of a healthy Asian American identity through the creation of their Asian American identity model. Similarly, Ruiz (1990) created a model that accounts for Hispanic identity development.

These race-based identity models are important for two reasons. First, they help to create an awareness of the particular issues that racial minorities, or racialized groups, face (Sue & Sue, 2003). Second, the existence of these race-

based identity models serves to reflect the continued reality of racial identification. That is, race-based identity models are still required because individuals continue to be socialized into socially constructed races.

Sue and Sue (2003) proposed the Racial and Cultural Identity Development Model (R/CID). They acknowledged that the model is "…not a comprehensive theory of personality, but rather a conceptual framework to aid therapists in understanding their culturally diverse clients" (p. 214). This caveat makes it possible to apply this single model to all minority groups while, at the same time, removing the focus on stereotypes at the individual level.

According to the R/CID model (Sue & Sue, 2003) a minority individual could go through five stages of development as they attempt to understand themselves. In the conformity stage an individual demonstrates an "…unequivocal preference for dominant cultural values over their own" (p. 215). It could be argued that an individual at this stage internalizes the racism directed at his or her culture or racial background. Internalized racism can be demonstrated through the rejection or denunciation of one's culture (Parham, 2001). At this stage, mixed race individuals may appear to be rejecting some aspect of their racial background by identifying solely with another part. A therapist working with an individual at this stage should try to avoid imparting any blame on the client for his or her internalized racism. Good clinical judgment is required to determine when the client may be ready to deal with some of the difficult feelings related to internalized racism. Overall, the goal is to help the client work through his or her feelings related to the internalized racism through "…some process of

reeducation" (Sue & Sue, 2003, p. 228).

The second stage in the R/CID model is the dissonance stage. At this stage, "…feelings of pride and shame are mixed in the individual, and a sense of conflict develops" (p. 221). Regardless of their preference, individuals belonging to a minority group may, in one form or another, receive messages that they are *different* (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Mixed race individuals at the conformity stage may attempt to deny these messages but according to the R/CID model, some of these messages will seep in. This seepage may eventually result in a move to the next stage. Mixed race clients at this stage may demonstrate preoccupations with issues regarding self, identity and self-esteem. A therapist can best help clients by guiding him or her through these particular issues as they arise. It is also important for a therapist ensure that his or her own level of cultural awareness is adequate enough to help the client with relevant cultural issues.

At the third stage, the resistance and immersion stage, "…a minority person tends to endorse minority-held views completely and to reject the dominant values of society and culture" (p.222). It may be argued that this stage is directly opposite to the conformity stage. Mixed race individuals at this stage will experience dominant feelings of anger, shame and guilt towards society as a whole and towards themselves for internalizing racist attitudes in the past. Interestingly, the emotions and actions of monoracial minorities at this stage of racial identity development could serve to *other* mixed race individuals. More specifically, monoracial individuals who are at this stage may challenge the mixed race identity. This may be the case if they perceive the mixed race identity as

threatening the existence of their monoracial and oppressed minority identity (Miller, 1992).

A therapist may encounter resistance from a mixed race client at this stage, because the client may view them as part of the oppressive and institutionalized status quo. Rapport can be established with a client at this stage, but it is likely that they will repeatedly test the therapist. To facilitate rapport, it is best for a therapist to avoid personalizing any directed anger and to be honest about his or her feelings about racism.

Introspection is the fourth stage in the R/CID model. At this stage "…self-definition becomes proactive" and the individual may start to feel uncomfortable with the rigidity of the previous stage (p. 224). Interestingly, to the untrained eye, mixed race individuals who are at this stage may act in a fashion similar to those in the conformity stage. The difference is that the individual at the introspection stage may be critical of his or her mixed race heritage, but does not possess global feelings of hatred towards it. It is important for the therapist to recognize this difference and accordingly, help the client to "…integrate and incorporate a new sense of identity" through self-exploration (p. 231).

The final stage in the R/CID model is the integrative awareness stage. At this stage "…minority persons have developed an inner sense of security" (p. 225). They can now own and appreciate specific aspects of their culture as well as those of the dominant one. For mixed race individuals, this stage encompasses a sense of security with an identity that blurs the boundaries of traditional notions of race. Therapists can help their clients at this stage by remaining aware that

racism is a powerful part of their existence and assist them with the"…implementation of strategies aimed at community and society change" (p. 232).

Although the R/CID model was not developed with mixed race individuals in mind, it may be applied to assess the development of a mixed race identity because of its general focus on minority identity development. However, in order to delve deeper into the mixed race experience, some issues particular to the development of a mixed race identity need to be explored.

Mixed Race Identity Development Model

To address the specific issues related to mixed race identity, Psychologist Maria Root (1990) proposed a mixed race identity development model. She suggested that "…in each person's life there is at least one or two significant conflicts during critical periods that move them forward" (p. 198). Further, she argued that, for mixed race individuals, at least one of these critical periods stems from the tension between the racial components within the self. The mixed race identity development model that she created consists of four strategies. Root (1990) purposefully used the term *strategies* rather than the term *stages* because she suggested that the strategies are not mutually exclusive or linear. That is, strategies may coexist and individuals, even those with healthy identities, may regularly move between them.

The first strategy that Root (1990) discussed is called "acceptance of the identity society assigns" (p. 199). As the name suggests, using this strategy, mixed race individuals identify largely with the racial category imposed on them

by the society. Further, it is common for the mixed race individual to take on the racial identity that society gives his or her family. Take the example of an individual who has a White mother and Chinese father but the family is considered Chinese in its social context. Using Roots (1990) first strategy, the individual in this example would identify as Chinese even though he or she is mixed race. Having a racial identity that matches with one's family is generally considered beneficial since the family can provide a stable and nurturing sense of affiliation. Yet, matching one's racial identity to that of the family's can also produce challenges. These challenges arise because a large portion of the mixed race individual's identity becomes based on external, or societal, factors. Consequently, others' perception of the individuals' identity may change when there is a change in an individual's context. For example, if the mixed race individual moves to another city he or she "… may be perceived differently and assigned a different racial identity in a different part of the country" (p. 199). However, the mixed race individual's identity is not likely to change and as a result, a mixed race individual using this strategy may frequently have to explain his or her chosen identity.

The second strategy Root (1990) proposed is called "identification with both racial groups" (p. 200). Using this strategy, mixed race individuals readily identify as mixed or will state both or all parts of their background when asked. On the one hand, this strategy is beneficial because mixed race individuals may feel privileged to belong to both groups. Their unique status often leads to a positive sense of individuality. On the other hand, mixed race individuals using

this strategy must have adequate coping strategies to deal with any social resistance towards their multi-racial identification. According to Root, this strategy is most commonly implemented in communities with a large number of mixed race individuals, because a certain level of acceptance of boundary blurring must already exist in order for a multiracial identity to be readily recognized.

The third strategy is "identification with a single racial group" (Root, 1990, p. 200). This strategy appears similar to the first strategy, acceptance of the identity that the society assigns, but differs in that it is "…active rather than passive" (Root, 1990, p. 200). In other words, using the third strategy, an individual chooses to identify with one of their racial groups as opposed to having a racial identity assigned to them. This strategy can be challenging if the individual feels marginalized by people in their proclaimed racial status group. Additionally, it can be difficult if there is a major disconnect between how the individual perceives him or herself and how others perceive him or her. For example, take a mixed race individual who has one parent from Norway and another from Korea. It can be trying for this person, if he or she identifies as Norwegian but is not perceived as such by others. However, if the individual has appropriate coping strategies, a holistic identity can readily be maintained.

The fourth, and final, strategy is "identification as a new racial group" (Root, 1990, p. 201). Using this strategy, a mixed race individual will identify almost entirely as mixed race. They will feel kinship with other mixed race individuals over non-mixed race individuals. This is generally a positive strategy as the individual can readily move between his or her racial identities as he or she

sees fit. The main challenge that an individual using this strategy may encounter is a lack of social recognition for his or her mixed race identity.

Roots' (1996) mixed race identity model broadens the scope of mixed race discourse. Additionally, it provides a holistic and non-hierarchal approach to understanding the mixed race experience. That being said, it does not seem to advance therapy techniques as readily as the R/CID model. It could be argued that a combination of both models would be most beneficial to the therapeutic relationship. The mixed race model could provide invaluable insight into the mixed race experience, where as the R/CID model could promote concrete therapeutic techniques. Overall, an awareness of these therapy techniques could help mental health care workers to guide mixed race individuals through any key issues they face.

Key Presenting Issues and Counselling Implications

Some early theorists suggested that mixed race individuals would unavoidably experience marginalization due to their inherently flawed biological composition (Park, 1950; Reuter, 1938; Stonequist, 1937). Many contemporary theorists, on the other hand, have suggested that although belonging can sometimes be a struggle for mixed race individuals, it is not an innate flaw but rather a systemic problem that must be challenged (Katz, 2005; Rockquemore & Laszloffy 2005; Root, 1990, 1996; Sue & Sue, 2003). Broadly speaking, contemporary mixed race theory is grounded in the notion that the current system is organized into an oppressive power hierarchy causing stress to those who are

oppressed by it. The ideal goal then is to make changes to this system such that the oppressive power hierarchy is neutralized.

Changing the system is an overarching ideal goal that will inevitably take time. In the mean time, an analysis of mixed race identity development reveals some key presenting issues relevant to therapists and all mental health care workers who work with mixed race individuals. Most notable are those of belonging, the development of identity within a monoracial framework and racial discrimination.

Belonging. Belonging is a key presenting issue for mixed race individuals. Generally speaking, mixed race individuals embody the experience of belonging to multiple racial categories simultaneously and may identify with all parts of their heritage (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). They often experience identity related distress when they encounter negative responses from external sources, which may manifest as group exclusion or accusations of passing (Root, 1992). At the most extreme level, rejection can come from immediate family members. Rejection and exclusion can also come from extended family members, friends or cultural community associations.

Medical sociologist Jill Olumide (2002) outlined several methods of exclusion, or "sanctions" (p. 119), that mixed race individuals face, such as rejection or *looks*. Looks refer to the gaze of strangers, which has the effect of "…constructing discomfort in public spaces" (Olumide, p. 123). It is through these looks that disapproval and othering are conveyed. These forms of othering or exclusion may affect the sense of belonging that a mixed race individual can

feel. Accordingly, these experiences can determine whether a mixed race individual will identify with a monoracial cultural community or move towards identifying with multiracial communities (Mengel, 2001). Many mixed race individuals who have not been able to find a space for themselves in a monoracial community have created their own multiracial communities.

Maintaining Mixed Identity. Developing a sense of identity within a negative, monocultural framework may be a challenge for mixed race individuals. An identity crisis is believed to occur when "…an individual is conceptually separate from his or her place in society" (Baumeister, p. 695). Accordingly, mixed race individuals could face an identity crisis when they become cognizant that they are conceptually separate from the monoracial norm.

Despite the potential for identity crisis, it has been demonstrated that mixed race individuals have found numerous ways to develop healthy identities (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). For example, some mixed race people choose to identify with one part of their cultural heritage as their locus of identity whereas others choose to focus on their multiraciality. Some mixed race individuals have joined, or established, multiracial networks to gain support and encouragement for their mixed race identities. Multiracial communities are based on a celebration of the fluidity of identity and the post-modern experience of embodying multiple categories simultaneously (Mengel, 2001). It is a testament to the rigidity of socially constructed race categories, however, that these individuals cannot be incorporated into the monoracial communities.

Racial Discrimination. Discrimination based on race is another key presenting issue for mixed race individuals. The physical appearance of mixed-race individuals plays a pivotal role in how peers and friends view and respond to them (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Accordingly, mixed race individuals may experience an additional stress in instances of racial discrimination, because their internal sense-of-self may not be consistent with their external appearance upon which they are being judged and discriminated. Stated differently, mixed race individual do not always have the option of advancing their chosen identity (Okamura, 1981).

In order to determine how one should be treated, one is ascribed a racial category. For mixed race individuals, this often comes in the form of being asked *what* they are. Trying to develop an identity so that this question can be answered is often a challenge. Thus, a mixed race individual faces one level of racial discrimination if they are a visible minority and a second level of discrimination when others attempt to place them into an established monoracial category (Sue & Sue, 2003).

Ultimately then, to promote belonging and healthy identity development and to contend with discrimination, specific counselling strategies are required. The counselling implications are two fold. Root (1990) argued that therapists who work with mixed race people must recognize and challenge any racist notions they harbour. Further, Sue and Sue (2003) suggested that to sincerely assist mixed race clients with issues they may have, therapists must reflect on the following questions: (a) Why do some mixed race individuals chose to identify themselves

with a single race? (b) Are some interracial marriages considered to be more acceptable than others and if so, why? (c) Why are the children of a Black and White interracial couple generally considered Black in North American society? Once these implications are attended to, the available counselling strategies can help to ensure that the unique issues that face mixed race individuals are properly addressed.

Summary and Research Question

Mixed race individuals are often located at the margins of the dominant racial paradigm (Olumide, 2002). Some early mixed race researchers argued that a psychological dissonance unavoidably surfaces in mixed race individuals (Park, 1950; Reuter, 1938; Stonequist, 1937). These researchers delineated that the dissonance emerged if a mixed race individual did not develop a racial identity that was congruent with the racial identity of their stigmatized parent (Henriksen & Trusty, 2004). However, contemporary mixed race theorist Maria Root (1992) argued that mixed race individuals could contend with all parts of their heritage throughout their lifetime and generally maintain a positive self-concept.

To promote a healthy identity development process, racial and mixed race identity development models have been developed. The goal in using these models is to help mixed race persons choose their identity and deal with any opposition they face. Overall, psychologists can help foster a positive mixed race discourse by ensuring an awareness of their personal beliefs in this matter. In doing so, they can avoid bolstering stereotypes such as viewing mixed race people as inherently marginal or deficient.

This study seeks to add a Canadian resource to the growing body of psychological literature on mixed race identity development. More specifically, the intention is to help develop the data on non-Black-and-White mixed race persons so that individuals who belong to this burgeoning population are more accurately understood. The goal is to explore the mixed race identity of non-Black-and-White mixed race individuals and the following question guided this research: What factors influence the development of a mixed race identity? The enhanced understanding that comes from a comprehensive qualitative examination can contribute to the foundational knowledge of mixed race identity development.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Mixed race individuals are a growing segment of the population, and a group that has unique identity issues (Sue & Sue, 2003). The literature regarding non-Black-and-White mixed race individuals is sparse. Therefore, the present study aimed to add to the Canadian catalogue of mixed race literature.

The goal of this research study was to assess the identity development of non-Black-and-White mixed race individuals in Alberta, Canada. This boundary was determined by the physical location of the researcher and the university. An in-depth journey into the experiences of mixed race people could prove to be useful in providing a deeper understanding about this inadequately understood and historically marginalized position.

Research Paradigm

A constructivist paradigm was chosen for this study in order to best address the research question. A paradigm can be defined as an overarching set of beliefs that guide one's ontological, epistemological and methodological propensities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), paradigms are firmly entrenched ways of thinking, and as a result, one cannot readily move between them.

Most early Western researchers pursued knowledge under the umbrella of the positivist paradigm. The positivist paradigm assumes that reality is readily apprehendable, because it is relatively stable across time and context. Accordingly, an investigator can objectively study an individual, or group without

having any influence on the outcome, and uncover reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The constructivist paradigm, on the other hand, moves beyond this notion of a fixed reality by suggesting that reality is a matter of context and the individual within that context. At the core of the constructivist paradigm lays the idea of multiple truths or multiple realities (Hutchinson & Wilson, 1994). This paradigm assumes that many truths exist between, and also within individuals. Furthermore, the constructivist paradigm was developed out of the important realization that "…any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity" (Denzin & Lincoln 1994, p. 12). An intersection of all of these lenses reveals that each experience is unique and varies based on the location of the intersection. That is, any experience will vary based on one's race, class, gender and so on. Accordingly, the role of the researcher is to explore multifaceted truths.

According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), the role of the researcher in the constructivist paradigm is that of a *bricoleur*. The bricoleur uses any number of strategies that are available to bring together an integrated piece of work. Qualitative researcher Sharan B. Merriam (1998) suggested that a specific method of data collection or analysis does not exist in qualitative research, and accordingly, the researcher becomes the primary instrument. This notion lays the foundations for the researcher as bricoleur. Despite this relatively open technique, however, important criteria do exist for conducting good research within the constructivist paradigm.

Researchers working within the constructivist paradigm must be prepared to learn the thoughts and feelings that lead to the actions of their participants (Ellis, in press). They must be willing to gain an in-depth understanding of the whole story in order to truly appreciate the parts. Additionally, to help keep their focus on the whole story, researchers must remember that the stories they hear have beginnings, middles and ends and that each story is context-sensitive (Mishler, 1986).

To gain a comprehensive portrait of each individual story, a constructivist paradigm focuses on the ontological notion of multiple realities, and that these realities are situated in one's personal context and experience. This relativist ontology is critical in understanding the mixed race identity, because each mixed race person's experience is unique. Yet, mixed race individuals have some important commonalities in that they "… are often subject to both implicit and explicit expectations of others to justify and explain their very existence" (Song, 2003, p. 65). Therefore, mixed race individuals tend to occupy "…spaces, which are, all at once, multidimensional, shifting and contingent" (Mahtani, p. 181).

Mixed race realities are as numerous as they are diverse, and they appear to vary based on factors that are both intrinsic and extrinsic to the individual. These are the issues that situated this study of mixed race identity development within the constructivist paradigm, and subsequently, called for an interpretive analysis within a case study design.

Case Study Approach

Qualitative researchers aim to explore the complex interrelationships

among all things (Stake, 1995). Alan Peshkin (1993) argued that qualitative researchers base their research on topics that are either "…unknown, known thinly, known uncertainly or known wrongly" (p. 23). This study examines an aspect of racial identity development that has yet to be thoroughly explored. For this reason, I chose an interpretive analysis within a case study approach. The value in this methodology is the possibility of gaining a profound insight into the topic of study (Merriam, 1988).

A case study can be defined as "…an intensive and holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon or social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. 21). One of the most important issues in conducting a case study is determining the boundaries that delimit the case. When the boundaries have been outlined, a case study is the best plan for answering a research question. The reason is that the case study is a means to explore complex social units and the multiple variables associated with them (Merriam, 1998). The boundary of this research study was an assessment of the identity development of non-Black-and-White mixed race individuals in Alberta, Canada. The objective of this case study analysis was to gain deeper insight into the mixed race experience.

An important strength of any case study analysis is the potential to gain thick descriptions of the participants' experiences. Accordingly, the goal of this study was to obtain a holistic story of each participant's mixed race identity development process. Merriam (1998) argued that these in-depth stories, which are rich in detail, are only possible through the comprehensive qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. This in-depth analysis, therefore, could

provide insight into the identity development of mixed race people from the Western Canadian context and thereby contribute to the breadth of mixed race theory. Although there are risks, this type of exploratory research can provide a foundation upon which further mixed race identity issues can emerge.

A risk in the case study methodology is its inability to produce generalizable data. According to Robert Stake (1995), however, the main goal of a case study is to examine the unique characteristics of a particular case so as to know it well, not its potential generalizability. Accordingly, the purpose of the present study was to focus on the particularization of the study, and not to make grand narrative generalizations.

A challenge in this study was to avoid making over-simplified interpretations of the collected data and any attempts at generalization (Merriam, 1998). To avoid making such grand narratives, the boundaries of the case were clearly outlined, which helped to stabilize its focus. The boundaries also ensured that the study explored "… a part of the whole – a slice of life" (Merriam, 1998, p. 42). Therefore, my goal as the researcher was to focus on gaining full and rich information about the delimited case.

The target for this research was to gain a rich and detailed description of the participants' mixed race experience. Realistically, however, I had to remain cognizant of the time and financial restrictions that often limit the detailed analysis (Merriam, 1998). More specifically, I needed to remain vigilant in my interpretive work so as to create a deep, holistic story that was also manageable and accessible to a broad audience. The goal was achieved by clearly outlining the

key boundaries for this particular case study analysis right from its outset. This helped me to focus on sorting through the large volume of information gained and explore new terrain without oversimplifying or making undue generalizations.

When exploring new territory, a researcher must be sensitive to pick up on all the information present, whether obvious or subtle. This sensitivity is required throughout each step of the case study process. To achieve an appropriate level of sensitivity, Merriam (1998) argued that a case study researcher must be aware of not only the information being gathered, but also, how it guides the next step in the research process and influences one's personal bias. In this study, I strived to maintain a sensitive approach throughout the research process by keeping a study-log of my research-related thoughts, by seeking the advice of more experienced researchers and by paying close attention to the details of the interview process. On the whole, my goal was to maintain sensitivity to both the obvious and subtle details of the information gathered, as well as a tolerance for the ambiguity that was inevitable throughout the process. Additionally, as the researcher, I strived to create a space that was guided by trust and expectation to improve the chances that sharing occurred (Weber, 1986).

Participants

The participants were all adults with mixed race parentage. At the time of the interviews, they ranged in age from 24 to 30. With regards to relationship status: two participants were common law, one was in a long-term relationship and one was single. The highest level of education varied across participants. Two had undergraduate degrees and two had completed two years of undergraduate

studies but are no longer students. The length of time living in Alberta ranged from 4 to 24 years.

Procedure

Sampling and recruitment. The participants were chosen using the method of purposive sampling. According to Merriam (1998), purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, and gain insight. Therefore, "…one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most" (p. 48). Individuals who self-identified as mixed race, and were any mix other than a Black-and-White combination were selected. The diversity in parental racial background was purposefully chosen to examine the mixed race identity development of different *racial mixes*. Gender was not an explicitly analyzed aspect of this study and the balance of two men and two women was unintentional.

The participants were recruited through cultural community associations, cultural student group listservs, anti-racism group listservs and existing social networks. The associations and listservs were presented with a brochure outlining the proposed study (see Appendix A). Each participant was screened to ensure that he or she was at minimum 18 years old, currently living in Western Canada and was willing and able to discuss his or her identity in detail.

According to Merriam (1988), the case study focuses on a single unit within which there may be several examples, events or situations. To determine the number of examples (i.e., participants) to be used in this case study, I was required to determine the amount of information I would be able to obtain and

manage from each participant and balance it against the financial and time restrictions of a master's thesis. As Creswell (2007) has suggested, qualitative research generally has fewer participants because the more cases one studies, the less the depth of each case would be. Accordingly, by using purposive sampling, four individuals who could speak comprehensively of their mixed race experiences were selected. As a result, the quality of the data gathered was high, which meant that fewer participants were required.

Data generation. All potential participants were contacted by electronic mail. Those who responded and met the participation criteria were emailed an informed consent document and a description of the pre-interview activity. Participants were asked to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix B) and complete a demographics questionnaire (see Appendix C) before each interview. Each interview began with a discussion of the pre-interview activity (see Appendix E). Although the pre-interview activities were recorded, they were not transcribed. They were recorded so that they could be analyzed for themes to be used for contextual background.

Ellis (1998) suggested the use of a pre-interview activity to expand the contextual framework. The participants in this study were asked to choose from a list of activities. The list of activities included using three colours to draw a self-portrait, drawing a picture of the participant's family and drawing a space that the participant finds safe. Conducting a pre-interview activity helped to expand the contextual framework, created a rich description of the participants' experiences, and informed the interpretation of the material reported in the case study (Ellis, In

Press). The pre-interview activity also served as an icebreaker and introduction to the interview, which helped me to build rapport with the participants.

Once a sense of rapport was established, the participants were interviewed using a semi-structured format (see Appendix D). The interview questions were carefully prepared in advance but with flexibility in mind. The flexibility allowed for a conversational flow to the interview. The interview protocol was developed with two goals in mind: to translate the research objectives into measurable language and to motivate the participants to share their knowledge of mixed race identity development (Merriam, 1998).

On the whole, the goal was to become immersed in a genuine dialogue with each participant. According to researcher Sandra Weber (1986), it is through such a dialogue that the interview can become a process of mutual reflection that provides a "…deepening of experience for both the interviewer and participant" (p. 65). At the end of each interview, participants were asked to select a pseudonym to be used in place of their name.

When the first interviews were completed, each interview was transcribed verbatim from digital recordings. The data was then analyzed and the participants were contacted for a second interview. Prior to the second meeting, each participant was provided with a copy of the transcribed interviews, emergent themes, definitions of those themes and quotes from the interviews to support the themes. The participants were asked to review the documents and were invited to discuss any changes or additions they felt were important. The goal was to check-in with each participant to ensure that they agreed with my interpretations and

analyses. A second goal with regards to checking-in was to reach saturation, which is when the researcher no longer finds new information that adds to the understanding of the topic of study (Creswell, 2007). Once these discussions were complete, and the researcher was confident that saturation had been reached, the data analysis was finalized.

Data Analysis

Sharan Merriam (1998) asserted, "…analyzing qualitative data is an idiosyncratic, lonely process, the success of which depends on the investigator's sensitivity and analytical powers" (p. 38). To diminish the sense of isolation and enhance the level of sensitivity throughout the analysis process, I looked to experienced qualitative researchers for guidance. Stake (1995) stated that despite the intuitive aspects to case study approach, certain systematic protocols help to guide the thematic analysis.

The method for thematic analysis of a case study inquiry, as outlined by Braun and Clark (2006) and Bogdan and Biklen (2003), was followed for the present study. In qualitative research, analysis of the data begins with data collection (Merriam, 1988). The researcher begins to form ideas about themes as the literature is reviewed and as soon as the interviews begin. Accordingly, I wrote down my hunches and thoughts after each interview. I also wrote down any thoughts that came to mind as I transcribed the interviews. Additionally, I read each interview transcription several times to increase my familiarity with the data.

The first two steps in the formal analysis process were to separate the interviews into units of data and to assign codes to those units. A unit of data is

defined as a phrase, sentence or paragraph with a particular meaning (Merriam, 1988). To create a coding system, each transcript was read through three times while words, phrases or events that stood out were highlighted. These key words or phrases were significant with regards to the factors that influence the development of a mixed race identity, and were based on the information obtained through the review of the literature. The key words or phrases were then used to create coding categories. The coding categories provided a means for sorting the data collected (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Each coding category needed to reflect the purpose of the study and the coding categories had to be exhaustive. That is, all data had to be placed into at least one category. Braun and Clark (2006) advised that individual extracts could be coded once or as many times as relevant. Following these guidelines, all data in this study was placed into at least one category, and certain extracts were coded more than once.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982), it is expected that a great deal of information will be collected, yet discipline on part of the researcher is required to not pursue everything. In the present study, some of the interview questions generated data that were not directly related to the factors that influence mixed race identity development. These data were not cast aside but rather, used as contextual information.

Once the data were coded into categories, a within-case analysis was performed to analyze the emergent themes within each participant's interview (Creswell, 2007). The first step in conducting the within-case analysis was to sort all of the codes according to initial theme ideas by creating theme-piles. Braun

and Clark (2006) suggested that theme-piles could be a helpful visualization tool to sort each code into an overarching theme. Accordingly, each code was written on a piece of paper and laid out on the ground. I sat in front of this arrangement and began placing codes into piles according to potential themes. Once each code was placed into a theme pile, the entire data set was re-read to "…consider the validity of the individual themes in relation to the entire data set" (Braun & Clark, 2006). While I was conducting the within-case analysis, patterns and ideas began to emerge for the cross-case analysis. Once the emergent within-case themes were deemed to be satisfactory, the cross-case analysis was launched.

A cross-case analysis was conducted by using a process identical to that of the within-case analysis. Glasser and Strauss (1967) stated that one should look for as many similarities and differences as possible when doing a cross-case analysis. Accordingly, theme piles were created and similarities and differences amongst all the participants were assessed (Merriam, 1988). Ultimately, tentative themes were established, but the cross-case analysis was finalized only after the participants revised the within-case themes.

After finalizing this inductive process, the findings were interpreted. I relied upon my insight, intuition and imagination to draw inferences about latent content and to draw conclusions about the meaning (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The data were then written into detailed accounts supplemented by rich descriptions and lush quotations.

Through the analysis process, I remained conscious of Mishler's (1986) warning. According to Mishler, the attempt to standardize the interview process

by transcription and methodical coding can suppress the story of the participant. Yet, in order to provide a rich description and an interpretive analysis, a thematic investigation is vital. Accordingly, I strived to empower the participants in sharing their stories to minimize any acts of story suppression. I also aimed to provide rich descriptions and meaningful interpretations through a thematic analysis of the narrative. The focus was not solely on the transcribed dialogues, but on the contextual framework as well.

Trustworthiness: An Evaluation of the Study

Ensuring trustworthiness is an important issue in a qualitative research study. A qualitative study is deemed trustworthy if it is credible, confirmable, transferable and dependable (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). To ensure that this study was credible and confirmable, each participant was given copies of the transcribed interviews, within-case analysis summaries and copies of the participant introductions. This allowed them to clarify or expand on any aspect of the interview they deemed necessary. Additionally, I consistently checked-in with the participants throughout the interview process to help foster a comfortable environment in which each participant felt safe to openly discuss his or her experiences.

Transferability, which can be defined as the extent to which the findings apply to other contexts (Brynman & Teevan, 2005), was established by ensuring that the participants were safely engaged in the interview process. In other words, it was my goal to ensure that each participant felt safe enough in the interview process such that they were actively engaged in the dialogue. Gaining thick

descriptions of the participants' accounts also ensured transferability. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), thick descriptions can be defined as detailed accounts of the fine points of a culture. These thick descriptions enhance transferability by "…testing the degree of fit between the context in which the working hypotheses were generated and the context in which they are to be next applied" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 120). Thick descriptions are vital in qualitative research because they provide a basis from which judgments about transferability are possible. In the present study, a thick description of the specific contexts of each individual participant enables the findings to be appropriately applied to other contexts. More specifically, an individual looking for counselling strategies for mixed race individuals, for example, will know that this study's focus is on non-Black-and-White mixed race individuals situated in an Albertan context and that the results ought to be extrapolated with this context in mind.

Finally, a study-log was kept throughout the entire process to help establish dependability. A study-log increases dependability by promoting the development and maintenance of complete records. It also promotes self-understanding, which according to Merriam (1998), is important in decreasing the chances of misunderstanding that stems from an unawareness of one's intellectual shortcomings. In this study, the study-log was useful in documenting the details involved in every step of the procedure, such as when and how the participants were contacted, how the decision was made to interview each participant and my general thoughts and experiences throughout the research procedure.

The Researcher

As an individual who identifies as mixed race, I had several assumptions coming into the study. First, I assumed that the mixed race experience is unique. Furthermore, I assumed that, in a North American context, the mixed race experience differs between people of Black-and-White parentage and non-Black-and-White parentage. Another important assumption I had coming into this study was my belief that people of colour experience subtle and overt racism within our current system. Additionally, I assumed that even though an individual may not always recognize that a racist act has occurred to them, it still has an effect on his or her psyche. Finally, it was my assumption that all individuals with parents from, at least, two different socially constructed racial groups will possess some characteristics of a mixed race identity, regardless of their chosen racial identity. More specifically, even if a mixed race individual identifies with one aspect of their racial background, traces of their mixed background will be present. These traces may consist of, for example, a consciousness regarding mixed race issues or a past struggle with mixed race identity issues. Overall, these assumptions were important to outline, because identifying them served to decrease their potential to intrude in the analysis process (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Ethical Considerations

The participants are protected under the strict implementation of the guidelines of the Faculties of Education, Extension, and Augustana Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. The participants were asked to give informed consent to the participation as well as to the recording and transcription

of the interviews. They were also reminded of the voluntary nature of participation.

The interviews were taped on a digital recorder for the purpose of data analysis, but all information was kept confidential. Direct quotes were used in the thesis, but all identifying information (e.g. first name, last name) was changed to protect the participants' identities. Additionally, only my supervisor, Dr. Deniz Canel Cinarbas, and I read the transcripts and had access to the transcribed interviews.

The digital recorder was stored in a filing cabinet under lock and key and will be stored for a maximum of five years. At the five-year mark the files will be deleted and the memory card will be formatted. A summary of the findings will be available for each participant once the study is complete.

Finally, through this exploratory case study, I gained a deep insight into the personal experiences of each participant. It is my hope that the participants also gained something from the experience, whether it is a new insight into the field of identity development and mixed race studies, or an increased self-awareness. As a show of appreciation, each participant was compensated for his or her time with a 20-dollar gift certificate to Café Leva.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings from the Within-Case Analyses

Participants reflected on their lives to explore the factors that influenced their mixed race identity. The individual interviews were analyzed and within-case themes were created. Within each case, five primary themes emerged regarding the factors that influence the development of a mixed race identity. These themes were *family, childhood experiences, physical appearances, racist experiences and adult experiences*. All themes contained two or three sub-themes. In the present chapter within-case themes and sub-themes are described briefly.

In this chapter, the themes are examined to provide a holistic introduction to each participant and a context for each participant's perspective. Each theme and sub-theme is discussed in more detail in chapter five as part of the cross-case analysis. The themes and sub-themes for all participants are summarized in Table 1. Unless otherwise noted, the themes and sub-themes were consistent across participants. Family, childhood experiences, physical appearance, racist experiences, and adult experiences played an important role in every participant's mixed race identity development. Romantic and non-romantic relationships played a role in the mixed race identity development for only two participants, Alina and Steven respectively, as noted in the table.

Table 1

Themes and Sub-Themes Obtained from Participant Interviews

Themes	Sub-themes
The influence of family	Immediate family
	Extended family
The influence of childhood experiences	Childhood beliefs
	School and friends
The influence of physical appearances	Phenotypic ambiguity
	Self-perceptions of physical appearance
The influence of racist experiences	Experiences with racism
	Reactions to racism
The influence of adult experiences	Cultural context
	Beliefs about self
	Romantic relationships (Alina)
	Relationships (Steven)

Ko

Ko is a 30-year-old man who was born and raised in Southern Alberta. He has been living in Edmonton for the past five years and has plans to move to the West Coast in the near future. Ko refers to himself as mixed, Asian and Canadian.

Ko's mother was born and raised in Japan and his father was born and raised in Alberta, Canada. His parents met when Ko's father was living and teaching English in Japan for a year. Ko's father decided to take some Japanese language lessons to improve his Japanese skills and took Japanese lessons from Ko's mother.

Ko's parents met with some family resistance when they decided to get married. At first, Ko's paternal grandparents were very hesitant with their son's decision. Ko's paternal grandfather fought for Canada in the Second World War, during which the Japanese were considered the enemy. Accordingly, he had some difficulty with the notion of having a Japanese daughter-in-law. Ko claimed that once his paternal grandparents got to know his mother, however, they were very happy to have her in their family.

Ko's maternal grandparents also had some difficulties accepting Ko's father as a son-in-law. Similar to Ko's paternal grandfather, his maternal grandfather had stereotypes about North Americans and was concerned about his daughter marrying a Canadian:

> My mom's dad is very conservative, traditional Japanese, you know… (my grandfather) thought (my father) was lazy, like stereotypical North American fat, lazy, you…and it took them a long time…

According to Ko, this discord led to some feelings of resentment in Ko's father. Despite these family conflicts, Ko has always felt loved by family members on both sides of his family.

In addition to his family, Ko's childhood beliefs and cultural context influenced his mixed race identity. Growing up in Southern Alberta, Ko always knew that he was mixed race: "You knew you were mixed growing up. There were barely ever any Asian people you know, in elementary school especially." He ate food that was different from that of his friends and his mother spoke Japanese at home. Similarly, Ko described how going to Japan regularly served as a reminder of his Japanese cultural heritage:

> Going to Japan like every other year was a big reminder (that I was mixed race)… we went every other year. I went every other year for the first like 14 years of my life and then I've been there sporadically since then.

Ko described how he was one of the few non-white children at his school. As a result, he was identified as the Asian kid even though he has a White father. This reference indicates that Ko's physical appearance also had an influence on how people perceived him and consequently, how he was treated.

Phenotypic ambiguity and Ko's perceptions about his physical self played an important role in the development of a mixed race identity. Even though he was labelled as the Asian kid in grade school, Ko recounted numerous occasions in which he was unidentifiable based on his physical characteristics: "Some people say that I look Asian some people say that I don't look Asian." Similarly, during his travels in Japan he was frequently deemed to be Canadian and only

occasionally considered to be Japanese. In fact, at times he was even believed to be Brazilian. Additionally, he explained that his identity could change numerous times in a single day even in Canada: "For example, like, if I go to (Chinese store name) you know, I kinda see myself as part of that (Asian-Canadian culture)…context is huge." Thus, although labelled as the Asian kid as a child, his phenotypic ambiguity produced a more versatile experience. Moreover, others' reactions to Ko's appearance and culture were sometimes rooted in racial prejudice.

The title of Asian kid was at times accompanied by teasing. Ko reflected on how he sometimes shunned his Japanese cultural heritage because of such teasing. He discussed his reaction to the mockery:

> I think (being mixed race is) over rated in a way but, I feel lucky, I guess, whereas before I didn't really feel, like, sometimes I felt unlucky…I've just become more comfortable, I've embraced my culture a little bit more. I went through a period where I shunned it, you know? And um, I wanted to be, like, normal quote unquote.

Ko believes that the teasing was due to his name. His name is a typical Japanese boys' name, but is rather uncommon in Southern Alberta. As an adult, he still experiences disparaging comments regarding his name, but he now feels that the comments reflect commenters' ignorance rather than sheer, hateful racism:

> I still get, and people still make fun of my name and I hate it… I was offended at the joke and the stupidity of it but, like, you know, what was

behind that, its just ignorance. Yeah, they just didn't know any better. This more recent response to these comments has relieved Ko of some anger towards the individuals who make the remarks. Yet, he still finds himself frustrated by the comments at times. The mockery of his name and being teased in grade school sometimes moved Ko away from his mixed background. Over the years, however, he has come to embrace it.

Ko experienced a turning point in his identity when, as a young adult in his early twenties, he went to live in Japan for a year to work and immerse himself in Japanese culture. The turning point involved an acceptance of his unique multiracial heritage, as well as an understanding that the racial prejudice he had experienced was rooted in ignorance as opposed to hate. Ko described how he was already on the path to embracing his mixed background, and how his experiences in Japan helped him reinforce this. He also noted that in addition to his travel to Japan, the multicultural roots of Canadian society created a more accepting medium for his mixed race experience. Ko mentioned that racism and prejudice remain present in Canada, but the diversity of its population inherently creates a space for people of all backgrounds.

In addition to his travels in Japan, Ko's other adult experiences have also played a role in his mixed race identity. He noted that being mixed race is becoming more common, and therefore, on some level, is not a big deal. He also commented on feeling fortunate for having a mixed race identity, which has given him a sense of individuality. Ko has been able to embrace all parts of himself

through an acceptance of his culture, and this has helped him become a contented person:

> I don't know which is the egg or the chicken you know what I mean? Like if me embracing my culture has caused me to embrace everything else or vice versa you know what I mean? So, yeah I'm trying to enjoy it… embracing that part of, like, me…trying to be better as a person and becoming happier I guess.

Ko's personal narrative provides his descriptions of the pros and cons he experienced as he embraced his mixed race identity.

Jessica

Jessica is a 27-year-old woman who was born in Saskatoon. She lived there until she was 10 years old and then moved to Edmonton with her family. She has been living in Edmonton for the last 20 years and does not have any plans to move. Jessica refers to herself as Chinese-Ukrainian, mixed and Canadian.

Jessica's mother was born and raised in Saskatchewan, Canada and is of Ukrainian decent. Her father was born and raised in Canton Province, China and moved to Canada with his mother and grandmother when he was a teenager. Jessica's father became a psychiatrist and met Jessica's mother when they were both working in a hospital in Saskatchewan. Jessica's mother was a housekeeper for the hospital at the time. They got married in Saskatchewan and later settled in Edmonton.

Jessica's parents faced some challenges when they got married. Her paternal grandmother does not speak English and Jessica's mother does not speak Cantonese, which made communication very challenging. This was a

communication barrier that existed between her mother and her father's family when her parents were first married and continues to be a challenge to this day. Overall, Jessica, her siblings and her parents get along well with her paternal grandmother. For example, Jessica and her family lived with her grandmother when they first moved to Edmonton, and Jessica was pleased with this living situation:

> When we first moved to Edmonton, we lived with my grandma, she had a house in (name of community). We lived there for the first six years and then we bought our own home in (name of community) and we've been there for the past 13 years so, um, for a while there we were all living together too, which made it a lot easier as well.

They all lived together for six years when Jessica's family moved to Edmonton and still live very close to each other.

Jessica's mother came from a blended family and struggled in her relationships with her mother, stepfather and half brothers. When Jessica's mother married Jessica's father, she became further isolated from her family. Accordingly, Jessica, her sisters and parents do not have a close relationship with Jessica's maternal grandparents. This strained relationship diminished Jessica's connections to her Ukrainian extended family. Overall, these family dynamics set the stage for Jessica's childhood experiences.

Growing up in Saskatchewan, Jessica noted that the population of her school was composed mainly of White children: "Actually when I was younger, yeah, it was all Caucasian friends because there wasn't a lot of Asian kids in my

school anyways, that I remember." Consequently, she was labelled as the Asian kid, and only realized that she was mixed race when others pointed it out. Children at school would make fun of her facial features, but in general, she felt that she was teased just as much as the other kids. As an elementary school student, Jessica felt isolated in her mixed race experience. She thought that she was the only mixed race person around. Jessica started to notice the existence of many mixed race individuals during her high school and university days. At this point in her life, her circle of friends diversified and she felt more secure with her mixed race identity.

Jessica also attended a Chinese school when she first moved to Edmonton. She commented on her sense of discomfort with the school experience. She felt that the other children had an advantage over her because their parents' spoke Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese) to them at home:

> All the kids were Chinese (at Chinese school) and I think they were maybe a couple of years younger too… it's like they almost had an advantage too and I think their parents must have talked to them more in Chinese.

Jessica did recall having some positive experiences at Chinese school, but her overall exposure was brief. After a short stay at Chinese school, Jessica and her sisters asked their father if they could stop attending. Interestingly, although she was not Chinese enough to fit into Chinese school, she was not White enough to fit into the public school, and was labelled as the Asian kid. Consequently, it seems that her perceived racial identity was contextual in nature, and was partly based on her physical appearance and phenotypic ambiguity.

Jessica noted that most people thought she looked more Asian than Caucasian. Yet, she was frequently asked to clarify her racial background. People would ask "what are you?" or "Are you half-Asian?" Jessica would often facetiously respond with another question when she is faced with such questions; she would ask them to guess her racial identity.

Jessica also faced assumptions regarding her racial identity during her travels. The racial identity she was given by others shifted with context. For example, she has been mistaken for Thai and Mexican when she was visiting these countries. She explained that she often blends in with the local population when she is travelling. When she was visiting China, however, Jessica felt out of place with regards to her physical appearance. She described how she was frequently stared at because she looked somewhat Chinese but also different:

> No, well, because they can tell that we look different so everyone was like staring like 'why do they look so weird' kinda thing. You don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing but they just know that you're obviously…that you're not pure Chinese so, yeah, and…but they're like polite, they're friendly…and you get awkward looks though for sure and plus we're like 4 inches taller than most people in China so it's kinda brutal that way so you kinda feel like (laughs)… a gigantor.

Jessica discussed how her features are often perceived as ambiguous, especially during her travels. This ambiguity has led people to make assumptions about her racial identity, which included racial stereotypes.

Jessica faced racial stereotypes and racism during her childhood. As a child Jessica received taunts from fellow classmates. She recalled being teased about her facial features, such as the size of her eyes. When asked how she felt about the teasing, she explained that it bothered her at the time but now considers it a part of her past. As an adult, she feels that she does not experience a great deal of racism. Individuals do, at times, make stereotyped comments about her mixed race background, but Jessica dismisses these comments lightly:

> A lot of people, will just make comments like "If you marry another halfer or something, you're going to have"… it's just silly comments like that that you'll hear like "it's like a mini you" or they associate just because it's the same races it's going to be the same, I don't know, person or something.

Similarly, in our race conscious world, Jessica is often asked to clarify her racial background. She commented that she does not find these types of questions offensive or unpleasant, but rather, has come to view them as flattering:

> I think it's funny (being asked where you are from)… I don't know, I guess it's, in a way, sorta a compliment because it's like people are interested to know, because we look different but at the same time they can kinda tell but they ask because they're curious so, I don't know.

In summary, Jessica's experiences with racism had some affect on her racial identity. More importantly, however, her diversity in friends and travelling experiences as an adult significantly influenced her mixed race identity.

Jessica noted that she feels less isolated in her mixed race experience as an adult. She has a lot of mixed race friends as well as friends who are in interracial relationships. Jessica has come to embrace her mixed identity, but regrets not knowing more about her Chinese cultural background. She went to China with her family and visited the place where her father was born and raised before he moved to Canada. She commented on how she found the experience moving:

> We all went (to China). It was my dad's first time since he immigrated here yeah so it was really good actually we went all over and found his old school and old apartment and stuff and it was like, yeah, so it was the same and old but different because there were like a million other things around it now so it was just like wow, pretty intense.

To deepen her connection with her Chinese roots, Jessica has future plans to live and work in China for some time. Overall, Jessica reflected a sense of contentment with her identity and her adult experience of being mixed race.

Alina

Alina is a 24-year-old woman who was born and raised in Edmonton. She has travelled a great deal, has settled down in Edmonton, and currently does not have any plans to move. Alina refers to herself as mixed, Brown-Portuguese, Indian-European and Canadian.

Both of Alina's parents are from India. Her father is of Portuguese and British descent and her mother's exact origins are unknown. According to Alina, it is possible that her mother is of British and Iranian ancestry. Overall, however, both of Alina's parents identify as Anglo-Indian. Alina discussed her definition of Anglo-Indian: "My definition of Anglo-Indian would be someone with a cultural

background of Indian and some sort of European mix…raised with a lot of European influence (such as) food, religion, English speaking etc.

Alina's parents got married in India after they were introduced through Alina's maternal uncle. Her father had already immigrated to Canada and her mother followed shortly after they were married. Alina explained that her mother faced ethnic stereotypes when she first arrived in Canada:

> When they came to Canada people would just blatantly come up to her and be like "oh, you're so ethnic, you're so this, you're so that" and I mean meaning well but she was used to being in India where she wasn't different so it was a big difference and it was the eighties right…people were so much more ignorant.

Alina's parents also faced challenges from their family members. Her paternal grandparents were teachers from an elite caste whereas her maternal grandparents were from a "blue-collar" background. Accordingly, her paternal grandparents were not happy with Alina's father's marital choice. Some family tensions still exist, but despite this strain, Alina has made some deep connections with members on both sides of the family.

Alina's extended family is composed of mixed race individuals from many different ethnic and racial backgrounds. As a result, being mixed is the norm in Alina's family, and she always felt like she belonged in her extended family. These particular family influences laid the foundations for Alina's childhood experiences.

Alina became aware of her mixed heritage at school and school-related events. She noted that her elementary school classmates were from a predominately White background, and described her associated feelings:

> They were all White. Both of the schools I went to, I only ever went to two schools… both predominantly White schools… I had a couple of friends in elementary, one was Sri Lankan, but as far as, in elementary you don't really have guy friends, all my girlfriends were White and I remember going to their birthday parties and feeling really, just awkward… I always felt out of place.

Similarly, Alina remembered the experience of having Indian food in her school lunch kits while all others were eating ham and cheese sandwiches. Meanwhile, her European roots also served to isolate her from her Indian friends: "When I hang out with my Indian friends I don't feel as Indian as them in my experiences …because of my mixed background and upbringing." She explained how these experiences served to isolate her from the mainstream society and made her aware of her mixed background.

Alina recalled classmates pointing out her mixed background when she was seven or eight years old. These experiences made her feel out of place, but eventually she started to embrace her identity. She recalled her explicit actions that demonstrated outward expressions of self-approval:

> I did embrace being different when I was 14 or 15, um, and I actually used to wear bindis all the time and I'd wear, I used to make a lot of my own clothes from sari material and stuff like that.

Alina's childhood experiences were directly influenced by other individuals' perception and interpretation of Alina's physical features. This suggests that her mixed race identity was influenced by her physical appearance.

Phenotypic ambiguity and Alina's perceptions were important influences in her identity development experiences. She stated that no one knew what her racial background was when she was a child. Consequently, several people, including individuals of Indian background, frequently asked Alina to clarify her racial identity:

> I'd say more than anything I get it from Indian people. North Indian people, they wanna know if I'm from Punjab or wherever because where we live, in (community), it's very concentrated Punjab community, very very concentrated.

Similarly, Alina often felt that she stood out because of her black curly hair and dark skin in a dominantly White context. This sometimes led to feelings of isolation, and thus, a sense of frustration with her physical appearance. She explained how this dissatisfaction was, at times, internalized: "I've, when I was younger I just wished I was, I remember wishing that I was White….more so for my hair."

Interestingly, people from different backgrounds treated Alina in a racist manner because of her Anglo-Indian background.

Some individuals of Indian descent seemed to assume that Alina was from a specific Indian cultural group, the most common being Punjabi. The assumptions regarding her racial identity have led people to treat her in a manner

typical of the given cultural group she was assumed to be a part of. For example, if she is assumed to be Punjabi, she would be expected to follow the Punjabi cultural norms. If she is perceived to violate a cultural norm, such as dating someone from a different group, some Punjabi people might show their disapproval of her. Alina discussed her experience of attending non Anglo-Indian cultural functions with her boyfriend: "I get stared at because I'm with a Black guy. It's very, it's very, very close minded…I'm not even Punjabi…or anything…why would you assume."

Alina interpreted this in two different ways. First, if she were assumed to be of one particular Indian cultural group, she would face disapproval for dating someone outside that cultural group. On the other hand, if she were not assumed to be of that particular Indian cultural group, the judgmental glances would reflect that mixed relationships continue to be viewed in a negative light. In either case, Alina described a sense of frustration with ignorance and close-minded individuals: "I would never compromise (my mixed relationship) for anything but it's like, 'why does it have to be about colour, religion…?'" These experiences influenced Alina's attitude toward herself and the world around her. They laid the foundation for her adult beliefs, as well as the contexts she seeks out as an adult.

Alina has come to embrace her mixed identity as an adult. She noted that she identifies most easily as Canadian, yet views her mixed identity as a positive element of her overall identity. Alina believes that her mixed background makes her unique. She described an appreciation for this sense of individuality. She has travelled a great deal as an adult, and her travels helped her become sensitive to

the great diversity in the world. Alina noted how these experiences helped her embrace herself completely:

> Well, yeah, I'll be completely honest, I feel really beautiful being what I am, I'm not by any means cocky but, I love my nose piercing, I love, you know, my features, I'd never, I just started embracing my body type. I'm really, I don't have any hang-ups about it.

Romantic relationships have also been an important part of Alina's adulthood experiences. She described her relationship experiences with a man of colour:

> But being with a guy who's raised around women of colour, women of different shapes and curves and everything. I swear to god, when I gained weight (my boyfriend) was like "whoohoo" (laughs).

On the whole, Alina explained how she moved passed the negative experiences such that the positive experiences helped her embrace her identity.

Steven

Steven is 24-year-old man who was born and raised in Edmonton. He currently lives in Edmonton and works in a company that he started. Steven refers to himself as mixed, Guyanese, Black-Brown-Portuguese and Canadian.

Both of Steven's parents are from Guyana. His mother is a Brown woman of Syrian descent and his father is a Black man of African-Portuguese and German descent. Steven's parents were introduced through family members and got married in Edmonton. Although they were relatively free of family resistance in Edmonton, they did face disapproval from their respective families in Guyana. Steven's maternal grandparents are Muslim and have high economic status,

whereas Steven's father is from a working class Catholic family. Accordingly, Steven mentioned that his maternal grandparents were not happy with his mother's marital choice. They wanted her to marry a Muslim man of equal status. This resulted in a great deal of tension between Steven's maternal grandparents and Steven's father. Steven's paternal grandparents and extended family also live in Guyana, and they have not had the chance to meet Steven's mother. Yet, Steven's paternal grandparents did not seem to have as much objection to the marriage. In addition to this family conflict, Steven feels that his parents faced some challenges from Canadian society for their interracial relationship.

Steven's childhood cultural context and beliefs influenced his mixed race identity. He recalled that he was surprised when his classmates came over to his house and claimed that they could not understand his parents: "I was…probably ten, eleven or so, till my friends started coming over and they would, you know, say "we can't understand your parents." Similarly, when he first started elementary school, children would make fun of his English, because he pronounced some words with the same accent as his parents.

Steven came to the realization that he was mixed race through his childhood experiences at school. He endured teasing and racial slurs from school children, and accordingly, tried to fit into several different mainstream trends throughout his school years. For example, he attempted to coif his hair as White teen boys did, only to realize that the texture of his hair would not allow it. He further explained this time in his life:

> I was… in grade seven, I used to try to dress like preps and stuff too… I didn't know I was any different…I'd say I really started to realize, really notice that I was different, probably grade nine or so.

Steven later dressed in a fashion stereotypical to Black pop-culture, eventually realizing that this identity was not a good fit for him either. These childhood experiences made him more aware of his physical appearance.

Steven explained that he frequently gets asked where he is from. His response varies with context. If he feels that the comment stems from prejudice, he simply responds that he is Canadian. On the other hand, if he senses a genuine interest, he takes the time to explain his background.

On the other hand, Steven benefited from his physical appearance at times. He is in the entertainment industry, and his appearance can be an advantage in obtaining work opportunities:

> Like I said, it's because of our colour that we got (a role in a music video) right? And um as soon as we were out there too, every agent, everyone was like "you two, you need to sign with us because you could get so much work just based on (your skin colour)". Sometimes they don't want the darker, darker skinned guys, they want complexion like our. So, just based on the way you look, they're like "you guys can get a lot of work" so, it's kinda cool.

Steven also noted that his experiences with physical ambiguity have led to changes in self-perceptions. He shifted through different identities, but eventually found that the racial stereotypes did not provide a satisfying basis for his identity:

"When I was 18, 19, I was wearing baggy-ass clothes and chains and, I feel like I fell into the 'I'm black trend' but really I'm not." Overall, Steven commented that his physical appearance had a great deal to do with the amount of racism he has experienced.

Steven's first experiences with racism started early when he was taunted with racial slurs in the playground. He did not know the exact meaning of the slurs, but he knew that they were not good words. Similarly, Steven was often followed around in stores as a teenager. He would sense that the store employee would distrust him even if he was dressed well. Likewise, he would be pulled over when driving, because the police would assume that he had stolen the car:

> It's honestly just things like that. I get pulled over lots (laughs) yeah, "oh, you fit the description of someone in the area" and then I think they just hear me talk and they're like "okay, he's not"… you know?

Steven's reactions to these acts of racism depended on the specific details of each circumstance. Sometimes he would feel angry whereas at other times he would feel frustration and pity:

> I just feel it's the last, it's their cop-out…and people don't know what that means and it sucks to be, you know, labelled like that too and I'm like "if you really were educated or you really knew, I'm not that"

Although racism angered him, Steven also recounted a sense of moving past his frustration and accepting that racism is rooted in ignorance and fear. He explained how these racist encounters, in combination with family and childhood influences, have laid the foundation for his adult experiences.

The relationships that Steven formed during adulthood have had a significant influence on his mixed race identity development. He was surprised to discover that the friends who have remained dear to him throughout the years are people of colour:

> It was weird though, as we started to get older…we kinda started to stick to more, the more cultural people. Junior high and stuff too, all the White friends and everything but the people that have really kept in touch, I have about two really close White friends…and then honestly, the rest are either Black or Brown.

He further explained that many of his best friends are also of Guyanese decent. These friendships have encouraged Steven to plan a trip to Guyana where he can further explore his roots.

As an adult, Steven has embraced his mixed identity. He noted that he loves his unique status and is happy that he does not fit into the norm. Overall, Steven has moved away from identifying solely as mixed race and sees himself more holistically, as a spiritual person. At the same time, he recognizes that he does not belong to the norm and finds a sense of satisfaction in this fact.

> It's just been a lot of growing up on my end you know? But, at the same time, like I said, I do obviously I know I'm different, I know that but to me it doesn't mean anything really anymore just because I'm different, I'm mean, I'm special… Now I absolutely embrace it. I love that I'm not, cookie-cutter.

In conclusion, each participant's experiences revealed that several main factors influenced the development of his or her mixed race identity. The influences of family, childhood experiences, physical appearance, racism and adult experiences, all combined in a unique permutation for each participant, played an important role in the mixed race identities of all four participants. These influential factors also worked collectively to influence the participants' mixed race identities.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings from the Cross-Case Analysis

Five primary themes emerged regarding the factors that influence the development of a mixed race identity. Each theme contains two sub-themes. The themes and sub-themes describe the influential factors in the participants' lives and are not meant to represent a comprehensive list for all mixed race individuals. Participants reflected on their lives thus far, and explored the factors that influenced their specific mixed race identity. Common themes were uncovered from these unique reflections. The themes that were found to influence the development of a mixed race identity were *family, childhood experiences, physical appearances, racist experiences and adult experiences*. Each theme and sub-theme is discussed at length in the present chapter.

The Influence of Family

The first theme examines the role of immediate family, that is parents and siblings, and extended family, that is grandparents and any other relevant family members, on the development of the participants' mixed race identity. Chronologically, family was the first significant influence in the participants' lives. These influences were both direct and indirect. A direct influence resulted from an interaction between a family member and a participant. On the other hand, an indirect influence resulted from decisions that a family member made for him or herself, which then affected a participant. An indirect influence could also come through a participant's knowledge of an issue that existed between his or her immediate and extended family members. For example, knowledge of a

dispute between a parent and grandparent could influence the participant's sentiment towards the grandparent and the culture they represent. The combination of direct and indirect family influences created a foundation upon which the participants built their identities.

Immediate family. The participants spoke in detail about the influence their parents and siblings had on their identity. These influences were carried out through decisions that the participants' parents or siblings made for themselves or for the participants directly. Both Jessica and Alina described how their parents' decisions to not participate in community activities influenced them. Alina described how her parents consciously made the choice to distance themselves from the community:

> There was always people trying to get them to come to these dances and these get-togethers and stuff and my parents refused and when we moved into our new house, we had Indian neighbours who would knock on the door and be like 'oh, we've been waiting for people like you to move in' and just very… my parents just refused, they didn't want my brother and I to get ethnocentric about it. They didn't want us to, they absolutely refused. Most of their friends are, I'd say, White or… all over the place actually, I can't even say that they're all White, they just very... they refused to be part of the community

Jessica described her feelings of regret regarding her father's decision to not teach his children a Chinese language:

> My dad never forced it on us, speak to us when we were young, so we

> don't know Chinese. He tried to put us in Chinese school but that didn't really work so I think you need to speak to them while they're young. So, we always bug him about that. Like, "it's your fault we don't know it" (laughs).

Another influence was demonstrated through the use of a language other than English, in the home. Both Ko and Steven talked about the effect that their parents' first languages had on their identity. Ko suggested that the use of the Japanese language at home, as well as his mother's cooking and maintenance of other Japanese traditions, played a role in his awareness of a mixed race identity. Steven explained that his parents' accents influenced his own use of the English language. He learned to pronounce certain English words with an accent similar to that of his parents, and consequently, he was made fun of by kids at school:

> (My parents) say "ask", they have a, it's called Patois, so they say "aks you a question" or something right…I would say things like that growing up and kids would make fun of me because I had this, I 'd pronounce a lot of (English) words differently but it was just what I knew from home right?

All four participants provided in-depth descriptions of the roles their immediate families had on their identity. Immediate family was the first influence in each participant's life and helped establish the foundation upon which participants viewed the world around them. Each discussion of immediate family seemed to inevitably shift, at some point, to a discussion of extended family members.

Extended family. All four participants shared stories regarding members of their extended family. Grandparents were most often referred to, but cousins, uncles and aunts were also mentioned. The relationship between extended family members and the participants facilitated the participants' sense of cultural belonging. Jessica discussed the role her paternal grandmother played in her life at length. Jessica and her immediate family lived with her paternal grandmother for several years, yet Jessica and her grandmother did not speak the same language. She discussed her feelings regarding this verbal disconnect with her grandmother:

> (Language difference) is definitely a barrier like it's kinda like one of those comfortable silences I guess, you know what I mean? Because (my grandma & I) just sit and watch TV but she can kinda understand (English) but we hang out but it's not , it's just always going to be awkward because dad has to translate, you know what I mean…It would be easier to even, my grandma speaks a little bit of English, to get by but to have a conversation, no, sometimes I'm like "Oh, I just want to go and live in China and immerse myself for a bit" and hopefully be able to learn it but we'll see.

Alina also noted the important role that extended family members played in her life. The mixed identity of both paternal and maternal family members reverts back several generations in her family. Accordingly, her Anglo-Indian roots created a safe space in which she could explore and embrace her mixed race

identity. She described how her unique mixed identity blended readily with her family's mixed descent:

> Well, if you look at my family picture, we all went for my cousin's wedding in India last February. And if you look at the big family picture, it's like "what is even going on here" (laughs). Everybody is a completely different colour. I have cousins that are half-Malaysian and Thai, I have cousins that are half-African, I have like everything. None of us are full Indian really, not, I wouldn't say a single one of us. My two cousins that I'm really close to, they're half Sikh, half Anglo-Indian, I guess you could say but they're not, not a single one of us is full anything. We're all mixed.

On the other hand, three of the four participants shared their awareness of family tensions, and thus, revealed an indirect influence of extended family members. In particular, they described the within-family resistance that their parents endured because of their interracial relationships. For example, both Ko and Steven elaborated on their knowledge of their grandparents' dissatisfaction with their parents' marital choices. Ko discussed the differences between his paternal and maternal grandparents' reactions:

> They weren't really racist, like they were conservative, you know but I think when they hooked up my (paternal) grandparents here were actually pretty good because they love my mom and stuff but then in Japan tough, like my grandfather, my mom's dad, my mom's dad is very conservative, traditional Japanese.

Similarly, Steven recounted his knowledge of family tensions that existed between his parents and grandparents:

> I know (my parents) definitely faced a lot of (difficulties for getting married). My dad's side isn't as… the parents and stuff were a lot more poor and stuff so I don't think they even know my mom too well. They've just kinda seen pictures and know of her but my mom's side definitely, they're all here so, they've definitely gotten to know dad and… there was a lot of tension there.

This quote suggests that Steven was not ignorant to the family tensions, which existed between Steven's parents and grandparents. Although Steven did not live in the same country as his grandparents, the issues that developed between extended family members affected him nonetheless.

Each participant indicated that immediate and extended family continues to play an imperative role in their lives. The families' ability to influence each participant came from their normalization or segregation of the mixed race experience. This influence created a foundation from which the identity of each participant grew. Once each participant started going to school, however, school experiences and school friends took on an important role in their mixed race identities.

The Influence of Childhood Experiences

This theme explores the impact of grade school, school friends and childhood beliefs on the development of a mixed race identity. The two sub-themes in this section are: childhood beliefs and school and school friends.

Family was the greatest influence on the participants' identities until they started attending school. Once the participants started going to school, however, they were exposed to children from different racial and cultural backgrounds. This diversity brought with it an exposure to opinions that were unlike anything they had experienced. A new awareness emerged from these experiences, which contributed to the participants' childhood beliefs.

School and school friends. All four participants discussed the role that school and school friends played in the development of a mixed race identity. They all noted that most of their peers were white. Consequently, they became cognizant that they were *different*, or not white. A sense of being different was also made obvious when schoolmates pointed it out.

Both Alina and Steven recounted how they became aware of themselves as different in grade school. Steven noted that schoolmates often called attention to his differences. Alina, on the other hand, recalled developing an implicit awareness of being different through differences such as having Indian food in her lunch rather than having sandwiches. She described how this created a sense of isolation from the other children in grade school: "All my girlfriends were White and I remember going to their birthday parties and feeling really, just awkward… I always felt out of place."

Ko also noted that he felt as though he was the only mixed race individual in grade school. He explained how the teasing that he endured from schoolmates led to feelings of bitterness and internalized frustration: "As a kid yeah because, you know, you're insecure about stuff and these jokes about your culture makes

you, and that… made me resent my culture sometimes."

Steven made special reference to his teenage years and the impact they had on his identity development. Other children generally called out his differences during his early school days. During his teenage years, however, Steven started to gain an implicit sense of being different through his friendships and even his romantic relationships. Steven recounted a turning point for him marked by an early relationship:

> I think (dating) was really started to change me…when I started to date …when I had a real serious girlfriend I would go to …white people functions or something and it was completely different. The food, the conversation, everything was just completely different.

Experiences in school and with school friends had an impact on each participant's self-awareness. As differences were overtly pointed out or became implicitly understood, participants refined their personal beliefs regarding their mixed race identities.

Childhood beliefs. This sub-theme explores the awareness of differences and similarities between self and others throughout the participants' childhoods. All four participants discussed their childhood beliefs about themselves and their relations to others. Alina noted a progression in her beliefs about skin colour. As a young child, she thought that skin colour was a random physical feature and didn't associate it with race:

> I think I was about 7 or 8 when I started to notice. When I was younger, I had no idea. When I was 3 or 4, my best friend was a White girl from

> across the street - no idea. I just thought that people had babies and they could come out any colour.

After she began attending school, however, Alina began to feel uncomfortable, because differences in skin colour were pointed out and essentialized. Finally, as an older adolescent and young adult, Alina embraced her dark skin and mixed race identity.

Ko and Jessica both noted a similar progression in their beliefs. This progression began with the belief that they were the only mixed race individuals outside of their families. Ko's childhood beliefs about being the only mixed race child were based on his seclusion from other people of colour. More specifically, in his majority White elementary school, Ko was known as the Asian kid because of his maternal Japanese ancestry. Similarly, Jessica also felt isolated as an elementary school student, because she believed she was the only mixed race person around:

> When I look back to when I was younger, unless it was just because it was (city), I don't know… but it felt like I was the only mixed race person then but it's like so common now so how does that even make sense really.

Steven discussed a sense of isolation he experiences as a mixed race individual. Accordingly, he commented on his attempt to align his beliefs and personal style with the dominant white majority and socially constructed images of youths he saw on television as a teenager. He had several different styles through those years, because he was unable to match his identity with one group completely. Steven recounted how this mismatch led to an identity crisis:

> Especially things like my hair and stuff too. I actually will never forget this. I used to part my hair down the middle and I had an afro and, I'd part it down the middle, slick it down because, guys had bowl cuts or whatever and I was like "why doesn't my hair do that"…it was a huge identity crisis for me.

In summary, all four participants noted that their experiences at school and interactions with schoolmates influenced their mixed race identity. Their sense of isolation seemed to be related to a lack of exposure to other mixed race individuals and mixed race information. These influences were partially based on the physical appearances of each participant. Participants reflected on being treated differently because their different physical features.

The Influence of Physical Appearances

This theme explores the role of physical appearance in the development of a mixed race identity. The two sub-themes are: phenotypic ambiguity and self-perceptions of physical appearance. Physical appearance plays a significant role in the social construction of racial categories. In fact, the construction of race originally stemmed from superficial appearances such as skin colour, texture of hair and facial features (Davis, 2006; Park, 1950). All four participants had some experiences with phenotypic ambiguity, and this, in turn, had an impact on their perceptions of their physical selves.

Phenotypic ambiguity. This sub-theme explores how, in some form or another, the participants have been incorrectly perceived as members of a certain racial or cultural category based on their physical appearance. Within socially

constructed racial frameworks, the participants were often viewed as phenotypically ambiguous. Phenotypic ambiguity can be defined as a physical appearance that does not readily demarcate a clear belonging to a socially constructed racial category (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Alina discussed her experiences with phenotypic ambiguity as a child: "When I was in elementary no one knew what I was…Indian people assume we're Punjabi or whatever right, just because."

As a consequence of this ambiguity, the participants' assigned racial identities changed based on the contextual factors. For instance, both Jessica and Ko explained how their assumed racial identities shifted depending on the country they were visiting. Jessica described her travelling experiences: "When I'm travelling… they'll be like 'are you Mexican? Are you Thai?' it's just like 'are you local people?' It's just, it's weird. You just kinda adapt to… I don't know."

Ko also experienced a phenotypic ambiguity when travelling. He described a situation in which he was travelling through a Japanese town that was a tourist destination for Latin Americans. Ko explained that in this town he was mistaken for Brazilian because of his phenotypic ambiguity:

> (In Japan) I was Canadian. I was Japanese sometimes…one guy (laughs) I was walking in this Japanese town and this one guy comes and starts speaking… Spanish to me. And he thought that I was from South America. He thought I was from Brazil.

If the contextual factors did not provide an answer, the participants were often asked who they were to clarify the ambiguity. All four participants indicated

that they experience some frustration regarding this question. Jessica described the common experience of being asked about her cultural and racial background to clarify her ambiguous racial identity:

> Or else people will just know…well, they're like "are you half-Asian?" and I'll be like "yes" or else, if they just say like "what are you?" then I'll be like "what do you think I am?" and then they'll say all the common things, you know?

Ultimately, all four participants noted that they felt most comfortable identifying as Canadian when asked to clarify their ambiguous racial identity. Steven noted that questions about his racial identity do not bother him as much when he can respond with the answer *Canadian*. Similarly, Alina stated that she would deflect the question about where she is from by identifying as Canadian:

> There were tons of (people) that would come in and they'd be like "oh, where are you from?" and I'd be like "Canada" and they'd be like "oh, where is your mom from though?" and I'd be like "my mom lives in Canada." I'd just would be difficulty about it.

All of the participants had similar overarching experiences because of their phenotypic ambiguity. They were mistakenly identified on numerous occasions because their physical appearance did not clearly match any socially constructed racial categories. These lifetime experiences with phenotypic ambiguity shaped the participants' self-perception of their physical appearance.

Self-perception of physical appearance. This sub-theme explores how the physical mismatch with any one racial group often led to a specific awareness of

one's physical appearance. The participants had experiences that led them to focus on either a specific physical feature, or their physical appearance as a whole. For instance, Steven's phenotypic ambiguity led him to focus on his physical features as a teenager. He recalled a sense of disconnect between how he saw himself and his actual physical features:

> I was just like "why am I *so* different" like "what's wrong with my hair?" But, I never really saw it as a problem, it was more like "okay, I'm gonna make mine look like that" but it, I was just so dumb that I didn't realize that "no, you're hair doesn't do that."

Alina and Jessica also recognized an awareness of themselves as different, and they both commented on being part of a visible minority. Jessica thought that she looked like a mixed race person. Alina, on the other hand, thought that she looked like she was incongruous with her environment. She described her feelings about looking different than the majority of individuals around her: "I was curvy, I was dark skinned, I had long curly hair, like, it was very, I was very out of place."

Ko's physical self-perception was rooted in a consciousness of being mixed race. He was unsure as to whether he belongs to a visible minority, and therefore, focused more on the fact that his assumed physical identity was context-based. He discussed an awareness of shifts in his physical identity based on the context: "For example, if I got to (Chinese store name) you know, I kinda see myself as part of that (Asian-Canadian culture)…context is huge."

In summary, the participants had specific beliefs regarding their physical appearance, which was rooted in an awareness of their phenotypic ambiguity. The experiences they had with phenotypic ambiguity forced some awareness upon each participant about his or her mixed race background. The awareness often began as a sense of being different from the norm but ended with the knowledge that their identity shifts with context. This understanding, as well as personal experiences, led to an awareness of racism and its roots in superficial features and stereotypes.

The Influence of Racism

This theme explores the influence of racist experiences on the development of a mixed race identity. The two sub-themes are: experiences with racism and reactions to racism. In this study, race is understood to be a social construct. Even though race is a social construct, the experience of racism is very real and can be a harmful and upsetting occurrence.

Experiences with racism. This sub-theme explores in detail the experiences each participant had with racism. All four participants explained that they had experienced racism at some point in their lives. The frequency and intensity of the racist experiences, however, differed with each participant. Jessica noted that she faced racism at a young age. She commented on the racism she experienced in grade school:

> Oh yeah, definitely when I was younger because there wasn't many Asian kids, yeah I would get made fun of a lot for like whatever, small eyes and stuff like that and little comments like that

Similarly, Ko and Steven both endured racist acts from other children. Ko noted that although the jokes he endured were rooted in ignorance rather than hateful racism, they served as a reminder that he was of a mixed background, and that he was different. Steven indicated that the feeling of being different started in elementary school. He recalled his naiveté regarding racism in his early school days:

> I remember when I was in grade one or two or something. It was either me or my brother, our stories clash now (laughs) but someone basically called one of us nigger in the playground and I had no idea what that meant.

Alina noted that she experienced a sense of being different from the white majority at a young age. Likewise, she often felt a judgmental attitude from some Indo-Canadians, who frequently assumed that she was Punjabi. Alina also stated that she encountered racism while she was travelling abroad:

> I think it's really frustrating that people have these set ideas. I remember telling a Brown girl in Australia that… "my boyfriend's Black" and she was like 'oh my god! How do your parents feel about it?' and I'm like 'fine. It's not a problem." It's just, it's so backwards and it's such an old thing …there's so many mixed kids now why do even need to talk about it, unless it's a point of interest, if it's, if you're genuinely interested but, I think, if you just wanna know just for the sake of it, I hate that.

All four participants experienced some form of racism in their lives. This racism came in many different forms, and accordingly, the reactions to racism were equally diverse.

Reactions to racism. Racism can be experienced in a myriad of forms. Similarly, an individual's reaction to racism could depend on numerous factors, such as age, time, place, context, and so on. All four participants commented on some form of racism they endured at some point in their lives, yet they each described different feelings, behaviours and thoughts regarding those experiences. Overall, each participant found ways to deal with the racism that he or she encountered. Jessica reflected on her reactions to racism as a child: "I think I would just be like 'okay whatever' you know, it makes you sad for the moment but then you just kinda get used to it I guess." Ko's reaction to racism was, at times, internalized. He recalled a time when he had a strong dislike for his name because of all the teasing he endured as a result of it: "Before, I kinda hated my name and stuff because people would make fun of it and, you know, get it wrong all the time."

All four participants noted that they also encountered subtle forms of racism. They explained that the experience of subtle racism was almost always frustrating, even if it was not malicious. For example, Alina recounted the experience of a man attempting to flirt with her by questioning her about her *exotic* appearance. She explained that she did not feel good about the exoticization of her physique even though it was not intentional. She suggested that she can judge such comments as racist or benign depending on some intangible factor:

> I deal with (being asked *where are you from*) but I can honestly say, there's a certain way that people ask it that I really… just… it feels really,

it's almost obnoxious. Something about it, yeah, it's just really frustrating.

Likewise, both Ko and Steven described feelings of anger towards the ignorance and racism that they encountered. Ko noted that people still make fun of his name at times, which continues to make him angry. He stated that he feels this mockery comes from ignorance rather than hateful racism, but it is frustrating nonetheless. Similarly, Steven commented on the myriad of racist experiences he had encountered. He believes that racism stems from deep-rooted ignorance. Despite this belief, however, racist occurrences can still be too much to endure:

> I worked at (restaurant), same thing, I'd be dressed nice, dress shirt, and I have lots of tattoos now but I never did before and the looks I would get from people…I honestly quit because of it.

These reflections reveal that the experiences of subtle and overt racism impacted each participant's sense of self. More specifically, racism played a role in the development of each participant's adult belief systems, as well as the social and cultural contexts they actively seek out. In combination, the factors of family, childhood experiences, physical appearance and racism played a role in each participant's adult experiences.

The Influence of Adult Experiences

This theme explores the impact of adult cultural context, as well as adult personal beliefs on the development of a mixed race identity. The two sub-themes are: cultural context and beliefs about self.

Cultural context. This sub-theme explores the role that cultural context plays in the participants' adult lives. The cultural context in adulthood can differ

from the cultural context in childhood, because in adulthood the participants can, to some degree, actively choose their cultural contexts. All four participants described how a change in cultural context helped bring about a sense of peace regarding their mixed race identities. Ko commented how living in Japan helped him embrace his culture, and, in turn, become more comfortable with his mixed race identity. Similarly, Alina described how travelling helped her recognize that each worldview has its limitations, and accordingly, she was readily able to embrace her mixed self:

> Yeah, since turning 21…also, I think, is getting over the fact that I felt that I needed a boyfriend, it was just embracing being on my own and travelling a lot more. I went to Spain, I went to India, I went to Oman, I went to Australia, Jamaica. I went to a lot of different places and was like "wow there's so much more beyond what people think there is"…yeah that's when I say, when I started travelling, that's when I really embraced (my mixed identity).

Steven also talked about travelling, but in the future tense. He noted that he has not travelled a great deal, but looks forward to immersing himself in Guyanese culture: "We're planning a trip now because there's so many, it's funny some of my best friends now are Guyanese, or their parents are from there. We're all planning a trip down, back there."

Context was an important factor for Jessica as well. She commented on two important contextual shifts. The first shift took place when she moved to Edmonton from another city. She had more contact with certain extended family

members, and she enjoyed greater population diversity in Edmonton than in her previous city of residence. The second important cultural shift occurred when Jessica transitioned from high school to University. She described the importance of this change in cultural context:

> Coming (to Edmonton) it was a lot of everything really. A lot more Asian people for sure but… through high school and University life there has been, yeah, all types of Asian people and even Jamaican or yeah, it's been a blend now as I've grown older.

Overall, these shifts in cultural context played a role in the participants' adult belief systems, including their beliefs about themselves.

Belief about self. This sub-theme explores the effect of personal beliefs on the development and maintenance of a mixed identity. All the participants commented on feeling happy with being mixed race, but also finding that it was no longer the most vital aspect of their identity. Ko noted that when he was younger he felt some resentment towards his mixed background. He also described, however, how his mixed identity is no longer the focus of his identity, but rather, a part of himself he is comfortable with. He further discussed his current frame of mind with regards to being mixed race: "I try to enjoy it, you know? What mixed culture, what my mixed background has to offer me, you know what I mean?" Both Steven and Alina also described a sense of happiness and peace with their identities. Like Ko, Steven noted a sense of growth in his belief about himself. He described how his mixed identity is no longer a central

aspect of his identity, but rather one aspect among many. He commented on his current views of himself:

> It's just been a lot of growing up on my end you know? But um, at the same time, like I said, I do obviously I know I'm different, I know that but to me it doesn't mean anything really anymore just because I'm different, I'm mean, I'm special…I'm so comfortable in my own skin now that I' just, I see myself as a person, more than anything, I see myself as a spiritual person. I don't necessarily see colour any more.

Akin to Ko and Steven, Alina mentioned a sense of ease with being mixed race and focused on the satisfaction she feels about being a mixed race individual:

> I enjoy being different. No one really forgets my face, which is a good thing... I do say that that being a bit unique, especially in what we do…being a bit different helps me, it does give me a bit of an edge.

These types of positive remarks reflected the participants' sense of comfort with their adult mixed race identities. Further, all four participants made reference to the growing number of mixed race individuals throughout the world. Jessica discussed her feelings about this greater awareness, acceptance and presence of mixed race people:

> As an adult now, I know that I'm definitely not the only (mixed race person) now, it's way more common. I've a lot of friends who were in biracial relationships and they're having biracial kids.

All of the participants described, at length, the peace they feel with their mixed race identities. They noted that there was a process involved in developing this

sense of satisfaction, and in the end, they have been able to merge their mixed identities into a holistic self-concept.

As adults, each participant has been able to take a more active role in determining the countries they visit, the cities they live in and the people they associate with. These choices are a culmination of the influences from their family members, childhood experiences, physical appearance and racist encounters. These choices also influence the beliefs each participant has about his or her self and, in turn, continues to play a role in their mixed race identities.

In conclusion, the participants had simple identities during childhood that were mainly influenced by their families. Once they started to attend grade school, their identities were affected by their unique childhood experiences. These childhood experiences were directly influenced by each participant's physical appearance. Each participant's particular physical appearance, in addition to his or her specific social context, influenced the probability of experiencing racism. In combination, these factors served to affect the participants' adult beliefs about themselves, and shaped their mixed race identities.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that influence the development of a mixed race identity. The participants shared their stories, and the key factors that played a role in their mixed race identity development process were identified. Even though each participant had a unique experience, themes were discovered across participants' narratives. The findings suggested that there are five factors that influence the development of a mixed race identity in a Canadian context. Three of the five factors could be placed into a loose chronology. In chronological order they are: family, childhood experiences and adult experiences. The other two factors, physical appearance and racism, influence the mixed race identity development process throughout a mixed race individual's lifetime.

Family was the first factor that influenced the mixed race identity of an individual. A unique combination of both immediate and extended family members comprised the influential family unit. The second influence came from grade school experiences. More specifically, the school context and classmates play a role in mixed race individuals' identity development once they are old enough to attend school. The last influence in this chronology was adult experiences. The influences of both the family and childhood experiences set the stage for adult experiences. As an adult, an individual's specific cultural contexts and his or her personal belief system reinforce a mixed identity. In addition to these three chronological factors, physical appearance also plays an important role

in the development of a mixed race identity. Physical appearance includes superficial features such as skin colour, hair colour and texture, eye colour and shape and so on. Significantly, physical appearance was not an independent step in the chronology, but rather, was an important side factor that was influential in conjunction with childhood experiences. Finally, the combination of one's childhood context and one's physical appearance set the stage for encountering racism, which was another important factor in the mixed race identity development process.

These five factors played an important role in shaping the identity of the participants. Interestingly, the two factors of physical appearance and racism interacted with the three chronological stages in different ways. In the first chronological stage, the influence of family, physical appearance and racism did not play an obvious role in the mixed race identities of the participants. The immediate family members generally viewed the participants' physical appearance in a positive light. Additionally, the participants were not cognizant of the presence of racism at this stage.

In the second chronological stage, the influence of childhood experiences, physical appearance became pertinent, especially if the participant's physical appearance differed significantly from the dominant majority. Essentially, the participants whose physical features differed the most compared to the majority experienced greater racism. Racism initially had a negative effect on the participants' emotional psyche, but this effect shifted by age.

In the final chronological stage, adult experiences, physical appearance

and racism continued to play a role in the participants' mixed race identities. The participants' previous life experiences, however, shaped the ways in which they perceived their physical self and their means for coping with racism. More specifically, the more participants experienced racism, the more conscious they became of it. As they became more conscious of racism, the participants were better able to contend with it. Overall, as the participants got older they became more at peace with their physical selves.

All four participants talked about the importance of mixed race identity and how it had played an important role in shaping their identities on the whole. Each participant identified as mixed race and readily spoke of his or her mixed race experiences. Interestingly, however, the mixed race identity was no longer a central factor in the participants' overall identities as adults. All four participants listed several labels for their racial and cultural identities, but ultimately, they each most easily aligned themselves with the label of Canadian. It is unclear whether this shift in the centrality of the mixed race identity is a product of the Canadian cultural landscape, or if it is a stage in the mixed race identity development of all mixed race individuals.

Research on the factors that influence the development of a mixed race identity in a Canadian context is limited. On the other hand, American literature with a Black-and-White mixed race focus abounds. Accordingly, the following section includes a discussion of the findings from this study in relation to the current Canadian and American literature.

All four participants in this study illustrated that their families played a significant role in the development of their mixed race identity. Influential family members included parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. The weight of each family member varied across participants. According to Rockquemore & Laszloffy (2005) "…the way that parents define themselves racially and understand their own identity plays a key role in how they raise their children" (p. 66). The participants' parents were not interviewed for the present study, so the details of their racial identification are not known. Nevertheless, some information can be inferred from the participants' discussions of their parents.

The participants described the role that their parents played in the development of their mixed race identities through the use of both obvious and subtle cultural signifiers (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Obvious cultural signifiers were, for example, language use and the consumption of cultural foods. Examples of subtle cultural signifiers were participation in cultural community activities and following various culture-specific traditions. The depth and breadth to which each participant discussed the details of their family's racial and cultural identification suggest that the beliefs and actions of their parents had a major effect on the participants' racial self-classification.

Families can play a central role in the identity development of their children. The particular issues found in each individual family context determine whether the family influence is positive or negative. Jill Olumide (2002) argued that family has provided some of the worst insults to the idea of race mixing. For

example, it is often the parents who are opposed to the idea of their children marrying interracially and they stand firm against interracial marriages and mixed race children. Interestingly, the participants in the present study reflected the opposite view with regards to their parents. All four participants described supportive family environments in which their mixed identities could flourish.

The difference in findings could be based on the participants' definitions of family (Olumide, 2002). More specifically, the participants in the present study differentiated between their immediate and extended families. Immediate family members were considered to be supportive of the participants' mixed race identities. On the other hand, some of the extended family members were not considered to be supportive. Given that the participants' parents had consciously chosen to marry interracially, it is not surprising that they were supportive of their children's mixed race identities. Conversely, some of the extended family members objected to the interracial marriage of the participants' parents. Therefore, it is not surprising that the extended family members were not considered to be supportive of the participants' mixed race identities. Overall then, the participants' definition of family was synonymous with immediate family and their immediate families were very supportive. For this reason, it is not surprising that the results of this study are incongruent with Olumide's (2002) statement. Had the participants' definition of family included extended family members, a largely positive family influence may not have been presented.

The category of childhood experiences followed that of family in the chronology of factors that influence the development of a mixed race identity.

Erikson also emphasized childhood experiences in his development theory and mentioned neighbourhood, school, and peer groups as important aspects of childhood experiences (Thomas, 2005). In line with Erikson's theory, childhood experiences also included school and peer groups in the present study.

Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) further discussed the effect of school on children's identity development and argued that "…while the primary and overt function of schools is to teach academic skills and context, their secondary function is to teach children about themselves, and how to interact effectively with other people" (p. 89). The results from this study reflected the importance of this secondary function. All four participants recalled early elementary school experiences in which their *differences* were pointed out. Most of these types of comments came from their peers.

It has been found that peer groups are important networks through which notions of identity and self-esteem are negotiated (Erikson, 1968, Tarrant, 2002). Further, "…if peers and friends reject or criticize a child's racial identity, the child is more likely to reject or modify this self-definition and strive to develop an identity that will garner social approval" (Rockquemore & Lazsloffy, 2005, p. 102). The results of the present study also demonstrated that the participants experienced some form of rejection from their peers. The negative and positive messages that mixed race individuals received from their school contexts and from their classmates appear to have moulded the way in which they view themselves and the world around them. The nature of the messages that mixed

race children receive from their surroundings may also be dependent on their physical appearance.

In the current study, physical appearance was not considered to be a chronological step in the development of a mixed race identity. Rather, it served as a crucial factor that accompanies each chronological step. Physical appearance was fundamental in shaping numerous social relations throughout participants' lives.

Phenotypic ambiguity was an important facet of the participants' physical appearance. The participants discussed the experience of having an identity ascribed to them based on their social context. When an identity could not be defined, they were asked where they are from. According to Gillem and Thompson (2004), "…people who do not fit into a clearly defined racial category threaten the psychological and sociological foundations of the 'we' and 'they' mentality that determines so much of an individual's social, economic and political experiences…" (p. 2). This provides an explanation for the propensity to arbitrarily ascribe racial categories when the answer is not immediately visible.

This process of identity ascription or clarification does not occur without consequences. Teresa Kay Williams (1996) suggested, "…the social-psychological underpinnings of this question assume the foreignness and non-belonging of phenotypically ambiguous individuals" (p. 203). All four participants displayed evidence of non-belonging. They each described at least one experience in which their racial or cultural identity was incorrectly assumed based on the surrounding context. Further, each participant was very accustomed

to the request to clarify his or her racial or cultural identity. Yet, the experience of non-belonging also had positive consequences. The experience impelled the participants into self-exploration, which in turn, helped them to gain a sense of belonging as adults. The process of self-exploration also shaped their self-perceptions.

Through experiences of non-belonging and self-exploration each participant developed a self-perception. Gaining a sense of self is not unique to mixed race individuals. Nonetheless, there were important commonalities in the self-perception of the mixed race participants. Most distinctively, they were required to develop a sense of self-perception in social contexts in which their claims were either accepted as meaningful and validated, directly challenged, or rejected outright (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005, p. 122). In this study, the particular details of each participant's experience played a role in shaping his or her self-perceptions.

All four participants were required to develop a sense of self-perception under conditions in which their chosen identity was not always accepted. Accordingly, it is important that mixed race individuals develop coping strategies that can be used when their identities are challenged. These strategies can help them defend against the specific forms of negation and rejection that mixed race people face. Additionally, coping strategies are also helpful in teaching individuals how to protect themselves against racist experiences.

The participants in the present study started to experience racism when they entered grade school. Their particular grade school context, in combination

with their physically appearance, set the stage for racist experiences. In other words, each participant became conscious of specific acts of racism mainly after he or she started attending school. According to Sue (2001), the deliberate and oblique acts of discrimination can be very harmful to the mental and physical health of minorities. In the present study, the frequency of racist encounters ranged from sporadic to frequent, but all the participants described at least one encounter with overt racism.

When the participants in this study experienced racism, they're reactions varied. Each reaction was unique for each participant as well as for each particular situation. At times, reactions were consistent with those of an individual in the first stage, the conformity stage, of Sue and Sue's (2003) racial and cultural identity development model. In these circumstances, acts of racism were justified with reasoning based on the dominant paradigm. Such a reaction involved denying that an action was racist, or suggesting benign intent on behalf of the perpetrator. At other times, however, the reactions were congruent with those of an individual in the final stage, the integrative awareness stage, of the Sue and Sue (2003) model. In these instances, racism was readily understood as a part of the current social system, and although the experiences were deemed negative, they no longer shook the foundations of the participants' identities. The participants demonstrated that their overall reactions to racism changed over the course of their life experiences and as their mixed race identity became more established.

This diversity in reactions to racism also lends credence to Maria Root's (1990) mixed race identity model. In this model Root suggested that mixed race individuals could move between stages depending on the particulars of the context. For example, in some instances, a participant identified with only one of his or her parental racial identities, thereby used the *identification with a single racial group* strategy. In other occasions the same participant self-identified as mixed race, and in so doing, used the *identification with both racial groups* strategy.

This varying use of strategies is dependent on numerous contextual factors. In the present study, age appeared to be one of the contextual factors. The participants used different strategies as children than they did as adults. For example, as a young teenager, one of the participants temporarily identified with his White father's culture. This enabled him to feel more aligned with the dominant white majority and to negate the racism he encountered. Later, as an older teen and young adult, this participant embraced his mixed race identity and challenged racism more directly. Overall, it seemed as though the participants tried to avoid racism by blending in with the dominant majority as children, whereas they often challenged racism more directly as adults.

Adult experiences were the last factor in the loose chronology of mixed race identity development. This factor seemed to be a culmination of all of the preceding factors. Each participant played an active role in the selection of the adult friends and partners, as well as their cultural contexts. These selections were based on their experiences with school, friends, physical appearance and racism.

Overall, the preceding factors in the development of a mixed race identity influenced the beliefs that the participants held at adulthood.

The influence of adult beliefs on the development of a mixed race identity was not in complete congruence with Erikson's developmental theory. Erikson suggested that intimate relationships represent the early years of adulthood (Erikson, 1968; Thomas 2005). According to Erikson, intimate relationships are the centre of identity development during early and middle adult years. This was the case for some participants but not all. Even though intimate relationships were central to the mixed race identity development of some participants, the topic of intimate relationships did not seem pertinent for other participants, as they did not mention intimate relationships. This does not suggest that Erikson's developmental theory is not in congruence with mixed race identity development. Rather, further investigation into the details of each participant's adult lives would be required to determine the relation between mixed race identity development and Erikson's developmental theory.

In contrast to intimate relationships, all participants emphasized the influence of personal beliefs. To cultivate their personal belief systems, the participants all described a desire to further explore their unique heritages at various points in their adult lives. In support of this notion, Jill Olumide (2002) argued that after going through a period of denigrating their mixed race identity, mixed race individuals demonstrate a desire to explore and reclaim it. In the present study, all participants had begun the process of exploring their heritages.

Interestingly, however, not all participants discussed an earlier sense of denigration towards parts of their ancestry.

According to Root (1990), some mixed race individuals will try to reject their racial history due to internalized racism, but "…the attempts are likely to be very short-lived due to powerful reminders of both sides of their racial heritage" (p. 193). One can speculate that some combination of temperament, cultural context and family influence lead some mixed race individuals to temporarily reject their heritage. In the present study, three of the four participants expressed periods of rejection. For example, one participant attempted to identify with the white culture by styling his hair like his White classmates in junior high school. Similarly, another participant straightened her curly hair regularly as an attempt to fit into the white culture. Further investigation into this issue would be necessary to understand which mixed race individuals would be more likely to experience such periods of rejection.

In summary, most of the results from the present study were harmonious with the findings from previous literature. In the present study, the influential factors of mixed race identity development were in line with Erik Erikson's (1968) chronology of significant relations from childhood to late adolescents. There was some discord between the results of the present study and the significant relations in adulthood as outlined by Erikson. Further investigation is required to understand the dissonance between Erikson's radius of significant relations in the adult years and the findings of the present study.

Findings from the present study also provided support for the stages of racial identity development as outlined by Sue and Sue (2003). Similarly, all four participants made use of mixed race identity development strategies, such as *identification with a single racial group* strategy and the *identification with both racial groups* (Roots, 1990). These strategies, in combination with the stages from Sue and Sue's (2003) racial identity development model, provide important counselling and educational implications for mental health practitioners and educators.

Implications for Counselling and Education

Mixed race people face unique challenges within the current monoracial framework. For this reason, culturally competent psychologists need to be sensitive to both minority identity development and mixed race identity development (Gillem & Thompson, 2004). The results from the present study support the current, mainly American, literature on mixed race identity development. The results also provide some additional insights into the Albertan mixed race experience, which may be useful for anyone working in the field of mental health. The results from this study provide particular insight for therapists working with mixed race clients and for educators working with mixed race students.

The results from the present study revealed that school played an important role in the development of a mixed race identity. Accordingly, schools can play a role in fostering insight into the mixed race experience, which can then help to reduce racism in general. In fact, it is imperative that all Canadian children

are introduced to pertinent issues around race and mixed race. This will not eliminate all forms of racism, but it will provide a basis from which mixed race children can further establish their identities. Moreover, the inclusion of mixed race studies in the education curriculum can help to clarify the finer nuances involved in racial and cultural politics, in a multicultural country like Canada.

The significant role that school played in the participants' racial identity development also demonstrates that an important function of schools is to promote anti-racist ideology. Even though schools cannot be the sole agents of social change, "…they can play a significant role in the formation of citizenry that would have the collective strength to make profound transformations" (Glass & Wallace, 1996, p. 347). Therefore, simply teaching children that racism is wrong is insufficient to challenge the dominant racial paradigm. Rather, "…educators need to be critically suspicious of the discursive practices central to racism: all categorizations of social groups, assumptions about natural divisions between people, and assignments of traits based on origins in group differences" (Glass & Wallace, 1996, p. 353). This consciously critical position can offer a foundation from which students may learn that diversity can be validated but not essentialized. These systemic changes can help improve the social awareness regarding mixed race issues. In addition to these institutional changes, other therapeutic techniques may also be required to help mixed race individuals explore their own particular identity development processes.

The results of the present study reveal that knowledge of Maria Root's (1996) Mixed Race Bill of Rights is an important tool for therapists working with

mixed race individuals. Root has divided the twelve rights into three categories of affirmations: resistance, revolution and change (Root, 1996; Sue & Sue, 2003). Under the affirmation of resistance, the first four rights are: I have the right not to justify my existence in this world, not to keep the races separate within me, not to be responsible for people's discomfort with my physical ambiguity and not to justify my ethnic legitimacy (Root, 1996). The results from the present study indicated that the participants felt they were challenged on these rights at various times in their lives. For example, they all described instances in which at least one of these rights was not respected. Accordingly, these affirmations are important encouragement for mixed race people to refuse being marginalized.

Under the affirmation of revolution, the next four rights include: 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, and to identify differently in different situations (Root, 1996). The participants in this study reflected issues directly related to the rights in this affirmation. Especially pertinent was identifying differently than one's siblings as well as the right to shift identities with context. Interestingly, Root (1996) described this revolution as a "quiet revolution" because mixed race individuals are often not accustomed to verbalizing its challenges (p. 10). Correspondingly, issues related to these rights were addressed indirectly in the present study. That is, the participants did not speak of these rights actively but rather, their presence was evidenced through the discussion of other related topics. Since these four rights are related to a quiet revolution, counsellors could

be taught to look for signs that their clients are actively or passively struggling with the four rights of this affirmation.

The final four rights, under the affirmation of change, are: I have the right to create a vocabulary to communicate about being multiracial, to change my identity over my lifetime and more than once, to have loyalties and identify with more than one group of people, and to freely choose whom I befriend and love (Root, 1996). These four points acknowledge the fact that social connection is important because "…our social fates are intertwined and depend on one another" (Sue & Sue, 2003, p. 374). The first two affirmations aim to support the personal journey of mixed race identity development. The last affirmation lays the groundwork for building and maintaining psychologically sound social networks.

Overall, the Multiracial Bill of Rights may be used to promote healthy mixed race identity development and to clarify counsellor preconceptions regarding mixed race individuals. The Bill of Rights can help validate the experiences and choices of mixed race individuals. For example, in the present study, the findings suggested that the participants felt they were isolated in their mixed race experience. Thus, the Multiracial Bill of Rights can shed a positive light on the mixed race experience, which is especially important for mixed race individuals living in isolation from other mixed race people.

The Multiracial Bill of Rights can also be instructive for counsellors working with mixed race people. It sheds light on the monoracial framework and systemic issues that come with it. Overall, it is essential that therapists working with mixed race people have a thorough understanding of the complex issues in

which this bill of rights is grounded. Once the Mixed Race Bill of Rights is understood, the particulars of each individual experience can be properly addressed.

On the whole, the results from this study can be used in counselling by informing mental health workers of the five factors that influence the development of a mixed race identity. Each factor can be a starting point in a counselling relationship. That is, therapists can look to the influences of family, childhood experiences, physical appearance, racism, and adult experiences as foundational topics from which therapy can take place. These counselling implications, in combination with educational reforms, can enhance counselling techniques on the individual level and help to improve social awareness of mixed race issues on the societal level.

Future Research Directions

This exploratory investigation into the factors that influence the development of a mixed race identity has provided insight into new directions for research. Further research on the adult experiences of mixed race identity development would provide a deeper insight into the maintenance and transformations of the mixed race identity development throughout adulthood. Additionally, this could offer more information about the experience of mixed race families, such as the identity development of mixed race individuals' children.

In addition to further analysis on the mixed race family structure, a deeper investigation into the psychological effects of racism on the mixed race psyche is

important. This study explored the effects of racism on the development of a mixed race identity. The experiences of racism discussed in this study, however, were mostly based on overt and blatant acts of racism. Accordingly, it is important to further investigate the way micro-assaults, or the subtle acts of discrimination, affect mixed race people (Sue, 2001).

Finally, each individual identity is composed of various components. More specifically, individuals' identities consist of numerous intersecting identities. These intersecting identities combine to create unique personal identities. An exploration of the intersections of a mixed race identity, such as gender, sexual orientation and class, would provide a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Canadian mixed race individuals. An in-depth exploration that seeks to address identity components and their interactions would be required to understand mixed race individuals' overall identities. The investigation into how these identity components intersect would be best conducted using qualitative research. Each unique combination of intersecting identity components would be difficult to categorize into the clearly demarcated categories often required in quantitative analysis.

Overall, this study has provided some insight into the factors that influence the development of a mixed race identity in a Canadian context. From this point, further research into the family lives and family structures of mixed race people would help to outline the positive characteristics required for healthy mixed race identity development. Additionally, an investigation into the subtle acts of racism that mixed race people face could be helpful in delineating further

mechanisms for support and coping. Finally, the mixed race status is only a part of one's identity. Accordingly, a holistic exploration into the intersecting factors of a mixed race individual's identity could provide a deeper understanding of how the parts of identity interact to create the whole.

Conclusions

Mixed race identity development is an important topic for the burgeoning Canadian mixed race population. A detailed analysis of the mixed race experience in Canada has not yet been conducted and this study aims to provide a preliminary exploration of this experience in Alberta. This study was conducted using the case study methodology. Four participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format to explore each participant's unique mixed race identity development process. The technique of thematic analysis was used to discover the factors that influenced the development of a mixed race identity. Through the thematic analysis of each interview, an initial insight into the lived experiences of mixed race individuals was obtained. These analyses produced a loose chronological outline of mixed race identity development. An individual's family is the first influence on a mixed race identity. Once mixed race children begin attending grade school, their particular school context and their classmates influence them. These experiences are mediated by a mixed race person's physical appearance. The combination of childhood experiences and physical appearance leads to certain racist experiences, which is the fourth factor to influence a mixed race identity. Finally, these aforementioned factors set the stage for adult experiences, which is the final factor to influence a mixed race identity.

It is important to note that this loose chronology did not encompass the entirety of the mixed race identity development process. Rather, it provided initial insights into the Canadian mixed race experience as discussed and reflected upon by each participant. It is my hope that, with these narratives, insight has been gained into understanding the mixed race identity development process.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Handout

Study about
Mixed Race Identity Development

According to statistics Canada, over 350,000 Canadian's self-identified as "mixed" in the 2001 census (www.statscan.gov.ca; Khoo; 2007). Unfortunately, monoraciality is considered the norm and mixed race individuals are often forced to negotiate their multi-racial identity within this monoracial context (Sue & Sue, 2003). Monica Das is doing a study to learn about the experiences of mixed race individuals. Monica is a student at the University of Alberta and is working with Dr. Deniz Canel-Cinarbas. The information gathered from this topic will be valuable in revealing some of the experiences of mixed race individuals in Canada and the factors that play a role in the development of a mixed race identity. Overall, the information gained in this study will help service providers and other professionals better understand the experiences of mixed race individuals living in Canada.

Monica wants to talk to individuals who identify as mixed race. If you agree to be in the study, you will talk to Monica about your experiences about being a mixed race person in Canada. There will be a maximum of three meetings and each one will take about one hour. It will be at a time that works best for you and all information will be kept confidential.

If you would like to be part of this study, please call Monica at (780) 952-9719 or email her at md2@ualberta.ca and let her know you are interested in participating.

Appendix B: Information Letter to Participants and Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Faculty of Education
Department of Educational Psychology

Influential Factors in the Mixed Race Identity Development

Research Coordinator: Monica Das (Master's Student)

Information &Consent Form

Please take a few moments to read the consent form. It should give you an understanding of the research project and what your participation will involve. If you have any questions or would like more details on the research study, please feel free to contact me, Monica Das, the research coordinator.

Purpose:

My name is Monica Das and I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta. I am conducting a research study that explores mixed race identity development. According to statistics Canada, over 350,000 Canadian's self-identified as "mixed" in the 2001 census (www.statscan.gov.ca; Khoo; 2007). Unfortunately, monoraciality is considered the norm and mixed race individuals are often obliged to negotiate their multi-racial identity within this monoracial context (Sue & Sue, 2003). The information gathered from this topic will be valuable in revealing some of the experiences of mixed race individuals in Canada and the factors that play a role in the development of a mixed race identity. This information is important to validating the lived reality of a population that is on the rise. Overall, the information gained in this study will help service providers and other professionals better understand the experiences of mixed race individuals living in Canada.

Participation:

Participants will receive a $20 gift certificate as a show of appreciation for their time. The research participants for this project will be individuals who identify as mixed race. The participation will entail a pre-interview activity, a one to two hour interview and a follow-up interview (up to 1 hour). The interviews are designed to determine the factors that serve to shape a mixed race identity.

Participation in this research project is voluntary, which means that you can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you chose to withdraw from the study and would also like the data collected to be destroyed you must inform me of this request before the interviews have been completed. You are free to withdraw at any time but after the interviews have been completed, the data gathered will already be incorporated into the study's findings and thus, cannot be removed.

During the interviews, some of the questions may touch on issues that may, understandably, bring to light some difficult or distressing emotions. In such a case, please feel free to contact Counselling Services on the University of Alberta campus (Phone: (780) 492-5205) or the City of Edmonton's Counselling Services (Phone: (780) 496-4777). They can help provide support with any distressing emotions.

Confidentiality:

If you choose to participate in the study, the interview will be taped on a digital recorder for the purpose of data analysis but all information will remain confidential. More specifically, direct quotes will be used in the thesis but all identifying information will be changed (e.g. first name, last name) to protect the participant's identity. Additionally, only the research coordinator and her supervisor, Dr. Deniz Canel-Cinarbas will read the findings and have access to the transcribed interviews. The digital recorder will be stored in a filing cabinet under lock and key and will be stored for a maximum of five years. At the five-year mark the files will be deleted and the memory card will be formatted. A summary of the findings will be available for you once the study is complete.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding your participation in this research project and agree to participate. You are free to withdraw from this study at any point without penalty. If you have any other questions now or at any other time during the study, please feel free to contact Monica Das by phone at (780) 952 – 9719 or by email at md2@ualberta.ca.

I consent to participate in the research study as outlined above:

_____
Name of Participant

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____
Signature of Principal Researcher Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492 – 3751.

Appendix C: Demographics Form

Demographic Questions Protocol

Birth Place	
Date of Birth	
Age	
Sex	
Gender	
What city do you currently live in?	
How long have you been living in that city?	
Relationship Status (single, common law, married etc)	
What is the highest level of education you have completed?	
Number and Age of Siblings	
What is your current occupation	

Appendix D: Interview Guide

1. Can you tell me about your pre-interview activity drawing? What did it feel like to do this activity? What did you dislike most about it? What did you like most about it?
2. Where were your parents born? What is your mother's cultural/racial background? What is your father's cultural/racial background? How did your parents meet? As far as you know, did they face any challenges because of their interracial relationship?
3. What does it mean to you to have parents who are either from different countries, different cultures or are a different colour?
4. Do you have any siblings? Do they look like you? If yes or no: has this had an impact of your identification as mixed race?
5. Where were you born? Where did you grow up?
6. What was the racial and cultural make up of your friends growing up?
7. When did you first notice that you were mixed race? How did your mixed race identity change throughout the years? Did you notice any specific stages or shifts? If yes, what were some of the reasons for these shifts?
8. What does being mixed race mean to you now?
9. Was there a specific community that you belonged to as a child/adolescent? Cultural community could mean any group with specific shared values, characteristics or traditions (e.g.: extended family, non-profit organization, network of friends from same cultural background, community association). If yes, how did this community affect your identity? Do you currently belong to such a community?
10. Have you ever been asked where you are from?
    a. What do you say?
    b. How do you feel about that question?
11. Have you ever experienced discrimination due to your racial background? If yes can you tell me a little bit more about the experience (ex. when and where it happened and what specifically happened). Once it happened, how did you react? How did you feel about the experience? How did it affect your identity?
12. Have you ever had to fill out a form (e.g.: census) in which they asked for your ethnic or racial identification? If yes, what did you put? How do you feel about this?
13. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?
14. Is there a pseudonym you would like me to use?

Appendix E: Pre-Interview Activity Form

Please choose from **one** of the following activities:

1. Draw a diagram of your family
2. Use 3 colours to make a drawing of yourself
3. Draw a space that is safe for you