

ETHNIC IDENTITY FORMATION PROCESS OF INTERRACIAL INDIVIDUALS

THESIS

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By

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Dedications

This piece of work is dedicated to a special friend:

Alpha “Nana” Harper Ott

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	REVIEW OF LITERATURE	3
	Identity Formation	
	Family	
	Race/Ethnic Self-Identification	
	Assimilation	
	Minority Ethnic Self-Identification	
	Immigrant Ethnic Identity Formation	
	Discrimination	
III.	METHODOLOGY	31
	Table 1: Background Characteristics of the Sample	36
IV.	FINDINGS	37
V.	CONCLUSIONS	55
	Directions for Future Research	
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	64
	APPENDIX	67
	Interview Guide	

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the United States the numbers of interracial unions are on the rise. As recently as 1980, census data reported 1.5 million mixed marriages, which rose to 2.9 million in 2000 (Healey 2003:8). The children from these marriages are a growing group in American society (Healey 2003:8). This growing group of racially/ethnically mixed individuals has even led to the United States Census Bureau to allow respondents to select more than one self-identifying racial/ethnic category on the 2000 U. S. Census (Healey 2003:8). About 7 million Americans took advantage of this historic change and selected two or more racial/ethnic identities on the 2000 U. S. Census (Healey 2003:8). The information about the growing number of interracial marriages and individuals is slowly pushing social scientists to research the racial/ethnic self-identification process of interracial individuals.

This thesis reviewed the literature on the ethnic identity development of interracial individuals. The primary focus of this thesis is to examine how family, society, and discriminatory experiences affect the ethnic identity formation process and to investigate the degree of assimilation of interracial individuals. Keeping these variables in mind, the brief literature review includes information about identity formation, family, racial/ethnic self-identification, assimilation, minority ethnic self-identification,

immigrant ethnic identity formation, and discrimination with respect to the ethnic identity formation of interracial individuals.

In order to gain information about interracial individuals, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals of mixed race/ethnicity. The respondents ranged in age from 20 to 60 years old and were able to share historically relevant information that also affected their ethnic/racial identity. After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and analyzed by identifying common themes among the participants with regard to family, social and discriminatory experiences and degrees of assimilation.

The results of the study suggest that interracial individuals form their racial/ethnic identity through the interaction of many different areas. Family and society affected some respondents directly, yet each individual had a unique life story that allowed a racial/ethnic self-identity to emerge often times without the individual realizing it. A common theme that emerged from the data was the correlation between the ethnic/racial composition of area in which the respondents grew up and their racial/ethnic self-identity. This is an area that may be important for future research. Since the academic arena of racial/ethnic self-identify formation for interracial individuals is currently very under studied, there are also many other areas within this topic that are possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Identity Formation

The basic ideas about the identity formation process within the field of sociology emerged from the ideas of classical sociology theorists like Cooley and Mead. Cooley's looking-glass self theory examines the importance of other individuals on the identity formation process. The three major components of Cooley's theory are: "(1) we see ourselves in our imagination as we think we appear to the other person; (2) we see in our imagination the other person's judgment of our appearance; and (3) as a result of what we see in our imagination about how we are viewed by the other person, we experience some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or humiliation" (Cockerham 1992:67). The looking-glass perspective emphasizes how an individual's self-perception as a social object is strongly related to reactions from other individuals (Cockerham 1992:67).

Mead discusses the connection of an individual's self-perception to other individuals in a slightly different manner than Cooley. Mead looks more in depth at the self and how it is created. Mead examines the self as a separate object from the body that arises from social experiences "but it is more than a mere product of socially reflected self-images" (Cahill 2001:21). According to Cahill, Mead saw the self emerging from social experiences and the continuous inner conversation between an "I" and a "me"

(2001:21). The self is a reflexive process that develops in social interaction and is based on the social character of language (Gecas 1982:3). The self only emerges from social experiences. In order to have a self, individuals must also be members of a community, which maintains an attitude that controls the attitudes of all the members (Cahill 2001:22). Individuals belong to families and peer groups that serve as the community which can control their attitude. Since an individual's self is created in relation to the selves of the other members of their social group, the structure of an individual's self expresses or reflects the general behavior pattern of this social group to which they belong (Cahill 2001:25). From the process of self-development comes the "self-concept", which is an individual's concept of themselves as a "physical, social, and spiritual or moral being" (Gecas 1982:3). Both Cooley's and Mead's ideas focus on how social interaction with others is the most basic element of how the self is formed. Family is one of the most basic elements that helps to shape an individual's identity. Some identities that an individual may acquire are a racial or ethnic identity, an ethnic minority identity, or an ethnic immigrant identity. Obviously, not everyone will be able to claim these identities, but for those who do discrimination, assimilation and pluralism are indicators as to how strongly they will hold these identities.

Family

A self-identity is who individuals believe and feel they are based on other's appraisals in social situations (Weigert and Hastings 1977:1171-1172). The family is the first major social situation most individuals are a part of. The process of primary

socialization occurs in the family environment and allows an infant's fundamental sense of self to emerge (Weigert and Hastings 1977:1172). As a child grows up, their self-identity begins to form from the basic relationships, like parental support or sibling ties, within the family (Weigert and Hastings 1977:1172). The family can be equated to a social world "in which selves emerge, act, and acquire a stable sense of identity and reality" (Weigert and Hastings 1977:1172).

Within the social world of the family, individual biographies begin and are maintained by other family members (Weigert and Hastings 1977:1174). The family and its members chose to remember certain objects, events, and performances which are considered relevant to upholding each family member's identity (Weigert and Hastings 1977:1174). This archive of information retained in the family about its members is a major support for each individual's need to maintain emotional and cognitive continuity of their self-identity (Weigert and Hastings 1977:1174). For this reason, most individuals anchor their biographies within the family (Weigert and Hastings 1977:1175). Just as children experience their primary socialization within the family, which enables them to develop a self-identity, adults maintain a self-identity that includes roles within the family (Bielby and Bielby 1989:776). However adults are able to decide how committed they are to those roles (Bielby and Bielby 1989:777). In other words, the importance of family to the self-identity of an adult depends on how close or committed that adult is to their roles within the family. Even though the importance of family on an individual's self-identity may diminish as that individual grows older, the family is still of

fundamental importance to primary socialization and the initial formation of a self-identity.

Race/Ethnic Self-Identification

Part of the self-identity formed in the family is a racial/ethnic self identity. The process of forming a racial/ethnic identity may also take place in social situations outside the family. Self-concept is a social product formed by the attitudes and behaviors of others toward the individual (Porter and Washington 1979:53). Interaction with others will influence how an individual views themselves. This is also true for how an individual views themselves along race/ethnic lines. According to Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham, "Ethnicity refers to the customs, language, and social views usually associated with a particular ethnic group" (1991:368). Ethnicity is also "an identity, mode of social organization, and basis for collective action" (Shanahan 1997:421). Identification is a process in which others' beliefs, values, and standards are adapted to become one's own (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:339). The process of identification includes a wide range of personal and group identifications (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:339). The national or ethnic group we identify with is an example (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:339). According to Kinket and Verkuyten, "Social groups also provide values and norms that influence the behavior of individuals who identify with these groups" (1997:339). Mainstream society likes to organize individuals into social categories. Ethnicity is one method of social categorization (Shanahan 1997:421). Even though society likes to place individuals into racial/ethnic categories, it is ultimately up to

the individual to embrace or reject the ethnic category they were placed into. Kinket and Verkuyten suggest “A person may recognize and accept an ethnic group as self-defining, but does not have to consider this definition as personally important” (1997:339). If an individual does find their race/ethnicity to be self-defining, their racial/ethnic identity represents an important part of the self-concept (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:339). Interaction with others influences if an individual will embrace or denounce the racial/ethnic category society places them into.

A 1997 study examined the ethnic self-identification among Dutch and Turkish children age 10 to 13 in relation to their school class (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:338). The three forms of ethnic self-identification that were examined were ethnic self-definition, ethnic self-evaluation, and ethnic group introjection or how closely the children felt connected to their race/ethnicity (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:338). The researchers hypothesize the following: (1) Children of Dutch and Turkish origin would define themselves respectively as Dutch and Turkish when asked how they considered themselves in terms of their ethnic group (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:340). (2) Turkish children more often than Dutch children would refer to their ethnicity when asked to describe themselves (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:341). (3) Children of ethnic minority groups will not have a less positive ethnic self-evaluation than ethnic majority children, but a more positive one (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:341). (4) Turkish children would experience their group more strongly as an inseparable part of themselves than would the Dutch children (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:341). (5) Ethnic self-definition and in part ethnic self-evaluation will depend on class composition. (Kinket and Verkuyten

1997:342). The hypotheses were made in an attempt to gain information to answer questions in the three areas of racial/ethnic self-identification.

There were 490 children between 10 and 13 years of age who participated in the study (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:343). About 59% (291) of children were of Dutch origin, and about 41% (199) of children were of Turkish origin (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:343). The study was conducted in 35 classes in eight Dutch cities (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:343). The respondents completed a questionnaire, under their teacher's supervision, that asked question like "in terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be..."; "I often am sorry to be Turkish/Dutch," "I am glad to be Turkish/Dutch," "I feel good about being Dutch/Turkish"; and "if someone said something bad about Turkish/Dutch people, would you feel almost as if they had said something bad about you?" (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:343, 344). The children's ethnic self-description, self-evaluation, and level of introjection was measured using various recognized scales (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997: 344).

The results of the study suggest that even at 10 years old, children have developed a strong ethnic identity. Only 1% of the children misidentified themselves when asked explicitly how they considered themselves in ethnic terms (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997: 346). According to Kinket and Verkuyten, "Almost all respondents (93.6%) evaluated their ethnic group membership positively" (1997: 346). Ethnic group introjection was a higher level of identification than ethnic self-evaluation (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:338). This suggests that the children feel a strong connection to their ethnicity and are not necessarily identifying with their ethnic group to receive positive self-esteem

from being a group member. Even though most children (65%) did not refer to their ethnicity when asked to describe themselves, Turkish children were more likely to refer to their ethnicity in self-description and to indicate a positive ethnic self-evaluation in classes with a high percentage of Turkish peers (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997: 338, 346). In contrast to the Turkish children, Dutch children were less likely to refer to their ethnicity in self-description when the percentage of Dutch classmates was high (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997: 338).

Even at the young age of 10 years old, the children in the study had a strong ethnic identity. Undoubtedly, the interaction with their respective peers had some effect on how the children view themselves along racial/ethnic lines. How strongly the children felt connected to their racial/ethnic group suggests these children have a self-identity that encompasses many of the ideas and values that are held by their respective ethnic group. This is an important idea to keep in mind when looking at an individual's complete self-identity.

Assimilation

In order to understand the ethnic identity process of ethnic and racial minorities and recent immigrants, the concept of assimilation must be clarified. Assimilation is a broad idea that generally involves an attempt to integrate or incorporate a group into the mainstream of a society (Yetman 1999:229). Assimilation is best viewed as a direction, rather than an accomplished end state (Alba 1995:327). It does not imply the obliteration of all traces of origins of a racial or ethnic group, nor require that every member of a

group assimilate to the same degree (Alba 1995:327). Instead, assimilation refers to long-term processes that have shaped social foundations for ethnic distinctions (Alba 1995:328). These processes have allowed opportunities for racial and ethnic minorities to acquire socioeconomic commodities like educational credentials and prestigious jobs, loosen the ties between ethnicity and specific economic niches, reduce cultural differences that signal ethnic membership to others and maintain ethnic solidarity, change residential patterns from central-city ethnic neighborhoods to ethnically intermixed suburbs, and encourage relatively easy social intermixing across ethnic lines (Alba 1995:328). Alba suggests, “Assimilation is perhaps the unintended, cumulative byproduct of choices made by individuals seeking to take advantage of opportunities to improve their social situations” (1995:328). According to Yetman, a homogeneous society is the objective of assimilation (1999:229). Generally, it is assumed in the racial and ethnic contact model of assimilation that the unique and distinctive characteristics of a minority group will be wiped out and that “the minority’s culture, social institutions, and identity will be replaced by those of the dominant group” (Yetman 1999:229). There are different forms assimilation can take. Three of these ideas are Anglo-conformity, Pluralism, and Separatism.

Anglo-conformity is the principal assimilationist model in the American experience (Yetman 1999:230). This model emphasizes conformity by minority groups to dominant group standards (Yetman 1999:230). Conformity comes in the form of “the desirability of maintaining English institutions, the English language, and English-oriented cultural patterns as dominant and standard in American life” (Gordon 1961:273).

This model assumes that racial and ethnic minorities should renounce their unique cultural characteristics and assume the characteristics of the dominant group (Yetman 1999:230). Anglo-conformity not only leads to a homogeneous society organized around the idealized cultural standards, social institutions, and language of the dominant group, but it also assumes the cultures of the ethnic and racial minority groups is inferior (Yetman 1999:230). It is likely that moderate Anglo-conformity has been the most prevalent ideology of assimilation goals in America throughout the nation's history (Gordon 1961:273). According to Yetman, "Many first- and second-generation Americans retain vivid and painful recollections of the ridicule of their cultural ways and the pressures for them to become 'Americanized'" (1999:230).

Slightly opposed to Anglo-conformity is the idea of pluralism, which rejects the predictability of cultural assimilation (Yetman 1999:232). Pluralism in American society refers to "a system in which groups with different cultural practices can coexist and be preserved but simultaneously embrace common values and beliefs and participate in common economic, political, and social institutions" (Yetman 1999:232). The notion of pluralism is entrenched in the assumptions of American multiculturalism, which suggests that the strength and vigor of American society is resultant from the various racial and ethnic groups that compose the American "nation of nations" (Yetman 1999:232). In the ideal pluralistic society, each racial and ethnic group is allowed to keep its unique qualities while affirming its allegiance to the larger society (Yetman 1999:232). Yetman suggests, "In the American conception of pluralism, diverse ethnic groups maintain some elements of cultural distinctiveness but accept core elements of the dominant culture and

seek participation in the mainstream economic and political institutions” (1999:232). Most genuinely “plural” societies, in addition to having cultural heterogeneity, are characterized by “mutually incompatible institutional systems - social structures, value and belief systems, and systems of action” similar to what is defined as separatism (Yetman 1999:232)

Separatism is the complete autonomy for the minority group, which encompasses a more expansive ideology than pluralism (Yetman 1999:232). Similar to pluralism, separatism implies social and cultural equality among racial and ethnic groups and not the superiority of one dominant group (Yetman 1999:237). Both pluralism and separatism support and even celebrate cultural diversity, yet separatism includes some form of geographic and social separation that pluralism does not include (Yetman 1999:237). Pluralism and separatism have rarely been encouraged by the majority group; the main promoter of each have been minority group spokespersons, who desire to maintain a separate ethnic identity and organizational structure that has led such groups to not have contact with mainstream society (Yetman 1999:237). There is also another difference between separatism and exclusion. Under separatism, the minority group chooses to separate itself culturally, socially, and physically, unlike under exclusion, the separation is dictated by the majority group (Yetman 1999:237). Under separatism the minority group permits but does not require separation of ethnic and racial groups (Yetman 1999:237). According to Yetman, “The idea of separate ethnic areas or states has been advocated by spokespersons of a number of different ethnic groups in the United States - by African Americans, American Indians, and German Americans, among

others” (1999:237). For example, religious groups such as the Amish have desired to protect their identity from the influences of mainstream society by remaining culturally, socially, and geographically separate from the rest of the society (Yetman 1999:237).

Gordon expands the ideas of Anglo-conformity, Pluralism, and Separatism to suggest there are three processes which affect the rate of assimilation (Yetman 1999:239). Gordon contends that in order to accurately assess how extensively different racial and ethnic groups have blended together, it is important to recognize that assimilation involves several related but distinct processes (Yetman 1999:239). The three most significant of the processes are cultural assimilation, structural assimilation, and marital assimilation, each of which may take place in varying degrees (Yetman 1999:239). Most discussions of assimilation are centered on cultural assimilation, or what Gordon terms behavioral assimilation or acculturation, which is the attainment of the cultural characteristics of the dominant group, including its values, beliefs, language, and behaviors (Yetman 1999:239). Structural assimilation involves social interaction among individuals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Yetman 1999:239). The two types of structural assimilation are secondary and primary (Yetman 1999:239). Secondary structural assimilation is the integration of ethnic or racial groups in settings characterized by impersonal secondary relationships like jobs, schools, political organizations, neighborhoods, and public recreation (Yetman 1999:239). While primary structural assimilation is the racial and ethnic integration of primary relationships like those found in religious communities, social clubs, formal social organizations, close friendships, and family relationships (Yetman 1999:239). The final process Gordon

refers to is marital assimilation or intermarriage between different ethnic or racial groups (Yetman 1999:239). Gordon argues that once structural assimilation has occurred other dimensions of assimilation like marital assimilation will follow (Yetman 1999:251). Marital assimilation, Gordon claims, represents the end result of the assimilation process, in which the minority group loses its ethnic identity in the mainstream society (Yetman 1999:251). These distinctions between assimilation allows us to compare and contrast the relative degree of integration or separation of different racial and ethnic groups in American society in a reasonably systematic way (Yetman 1999:239). Extensive research has been done toward developing imperial indicators to measure assimilation (Yetman 1999:239). Some of these indicators are years of schooling, income levels, occupational characteristics, segregation indices, and rates of intermarriage (Yetman 1999:239). Intermarriage is usually considered “the litmus test of assimilation” (Alba 1995:332). Even if marriage can no longer be considered a lifetime commitment, an increased rate of intermarriage still suggests that individuals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds no longer maintain social and cultural differences dramatic enough to be against a long-term union (Alba 1995:332-333). In this sense, intermarriage could test the salience and even the existence of a social boundary between ethnic categories (Alba 1995:333).

As previously mentioned, assimilation is a direction not an accomplished end state that does not require the obliteration of all traces of origins of a racial or ethnic group, nor force every member of a group to assimilate to the same degree (Alba 1995:327). For some children of recent immigrants, the idea of segmented assimilation is

embraced. Segmented assimilation is a pattern that usually the second generation of recent immigrants may fall into (Week 2002:265). The two possible patterns of segmented assimilation are (1) the individual adopts the language and behavior of the dominant culture, but still identifies with a racial or ethnic minority group that limits their full participation in society, or (2) the individual assimilates economically into the dominant society, but maintains a strong attachment to their native racial or ethnic group (Weeks 2002:265). In the case of segmented assimilation, individuals are allowed in a sense to pick and choose what parts of the dominant culture and what parts of their native culture they wish to embrace.

Minority Ethnic Self-Identification

Individuals of every ethnic group are believed to have an ethnic self-identity even though an individual's ethnic identity tends to be situational, fluid, and salient (Nagel 1999:57). How ethnic minorities go about forming their ethnic identity is perceived to be different than ethnic majorities. This is due to the idea that American Whites are believed to maintain a "symbolic ethnicity" (Nagel 1999:58). A "symbolic ethnicity" is a nostalgic allegiance to an individual's culture of the immigrant generation without incorporating those feelings of pride or love of country in everyday life (Nagel 1999:58). White Americans often identify with mainstream American values and ideals while holding the ethnic label of their ancestors' country of origin, unlike ethnic minorities, whose ethnicity is shaped from "language, religion, culture, appearance, or ancestry" (Nagel 1999:57), which are part of the ethnic minority's everyday experience. Many

members of ethnic minority groups experience more than one culture when growing up and “face the challenge of incorporating those diverse influences into their identity” (Tse 1999:121). According to Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham, “Traditionally, the cultural experience of minorities in the United States requires they become not only marginal persons but also bicultural ones capable of demonstrating competence both in the larger society and within their own ethnic community” (1991:368). According to Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham, the experience of functioning in two cultures results in dual responses or what DuBois describes as a “double-consciousness” (1991:368-369). Minorities not only maintain the values and ideas important to their cultural, but they also must learn how to function successfully in an environment that maintains White mainstream American values and ideas. This is not easy for minorities to accomplish.

Various studies have been conducted to gain a better understanding of how a racial/ethnic identity is formed and maintained. One such study examined ethnic identity development by analyzing published autobiographical accounts of 39 Asian-Americans (Tse 1999:121). First, the study outlined a four stage process minorities use to cope with low group status. Stage one is ethnic unawareness (Tse 1999:121). In this stage ethnic minorities are unaware of their minority status, usually because of limited interaction with other ethnic groups (Tse 1999:121). As the minorities have more interaction with other ethnic groups and become aware of their minority status, ethnic minorities move into stage two, ethnic ambivalence/evasion (Tse 1999:121). Stage two usually occurs in childhood and adolescence and is typified by feelings of ambivalence toward the ethnic group (Tse 1999:121). Minorities in stage two may distance themselves from their own

ethnic group and adopt the norms and behaviors of the majority group (Tse 1999:122). In stage three, ethnic emergence, the ethnic minority realizes that joining the dominant group is not possible to the extent desired and is not an ineffective approach to achieving a better self-image (Tse 1999:122). The fourth and final stage is ethnic identity incorporation (Tse 1999:122). In this stage the ethnic minority joins their respective ethnic minority group and resolves many of their ethnic identity conflicts (Tse 1999: 122).

Asian American autobiographies, oral histories, stories in the press, and meeting transcripts that included discussion of ethnic identity issues were analyzed to determine whether they were indicative of ethnic emergence and ethnic identity incorporation based on the four-stage process outlined above (Tse 1999:123-124). The analysis of the narratives suggests that ethnic emergence, stage 3 of the process, has two substages (Tse 1999:124). There is not a definite line between the substages, but they are helpful in examining and understanding an individual's progression through the developmental stages (Tse 1999:124). Substage 1 of ethnic emergence is characterized by recognition of minority status, in which the individual no longer strives to be a member of the dominant group (Tse 1999:124). Substage 2 involves the search for alternative group membership (Tse 1999:124). This is often when the individual's ethnic culture is embraced (Tse 1999:124). The results of this study suggest that "the progression through these stages leads to greater understanding of self-identity and greater self-acceptance as a member of an ethnic minority" (Tse 1999:131). By understanding the developmental stages, social

scientists can also gain a better understanding of how individuals are affected by the stages

Another study that examines the ethnic identity process studied ethnic minority youth. Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham suggest that the stages of development for young people are very different than are those for adults (1991:366). The researchers outline three different approaches to study the ethnic development process. The first approach is an outcome-oriented perspective that usually ignores the "cultural clashes" experienced both structurally and symbolically by minority youth and their families (Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham 1991:367). The second one is a developmental approach that focuses on processes but rarely increases an examination of context or "sociocultural variables" (Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham 1991:368). The third approach is an ethnographic or empirical study, which describes or reports phenomena (Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham 1991:368). The third approach often goes around the construction of psychological mechanisms and just reports what is observed (Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham 1991:368). With the drawbacks of the three approaches in mind, the researchers consider the importance for group identification and the choice of individuals to identify with a group (Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham 1991:368).

The researchers also bring to light the importance of the ethnic development on adolescents. Even though specific social contexts and peer relations characterize adolescence, aspects of ethnicity and ethnic identity have profound implications for the ongoing experiences of minority youth (Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham 1991:368). Since the youth are also in a biologically developmental stage, the experiences they have

during adolescence affect who they become as an adult. Certain aspects of ethnicity become increasingly salient during adolescence because "this period represents the developmental stage wherein insecurity about the 'self' characterizes the normative stage of feelings and associated experiences for all adolescents, independent of their group's unique cultural experiences or social status" (Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham 1991:368).

Spencer, Swanson, and Cunningham hypothesize that: (1) social injustice has the effect of threatening both a group's or an individual's feelings of confidence and personal security and, (2) the ethnic experience for minority youths is societal inconsistency, which is the institutionalized disparity between what is said and what is actually done in or by societies (1991:369). The researchers found literature that supported their hypothesis and made recommendations on how to reconceptualize the experiences of minority youth to lead to the ultimate goal of educational and social equality. Part of the problem the researchers discovered is that repeated efforts have been made to address the barriers to identity formation encountered by minority youth, which require very different intervention strategies (Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham 1991:380). Another barrier discovered is the shortage of minority teachers, which reduces the exposure of minority students to another ethnic minority in a positive environment (Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham 1991:380). In order to have a positive ethnic self-identity, minority youth need to have positive role models who are also ethnic minorities.

Some of the researchers' recommendations include affirming the importance of social networks and support systems for minority youth, the promotion of a cultural

emphasis that encourages the group identity of White and minority youth, and incentives to teachers for developing and using more culturally sensitive techniques in the classroom (Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham 1991:380). This study had an emphasis on action research. Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham were trying to motivate societal change with their article. They conducted an intense study on the drawbacks of minority adolescent ethnic identity formation and concluded with policy recommendations to not only help ethnic minority adolescents through a difficult period but to also promote educational equality.

In another article, Duncan describes and analyzes the capacity of Black adolescents to name and resist racism (1996:134). This is an important area to look at when examining how strongly an individual will self-identify with their ethnic minority identity. Duncan looks at racism as a force that affects the black adolescents' perception of reality and as a force that constrains how the adolescents act (1996:134). Both of these perspectives of racism affect how students will do academically. Duncan hypothesizes that "race and schooling from the perspective of Black adolescents who elude conflicts in school lead to their rejection of or from school and who eschew racelessness as a strategy for academic achievement" (Duncan 1996:133-134). During adolescence, youth become increasingly aware of themselves, and this heightened awareness is one in which the inner self looks upon the external self in a self-reflective fashion (Duncan 1996:137). For Black youth, this action involves negotiation tools within a dominant White society with standards of beauty, ugliness, decency, immorality, intelligence, and stupidity that have commonsense status (Duncan 1996:137).

In order to examine these ideas, Duncan interviewed 22 young Black women and men to look at the nature and role of black consciousness in their lives, with particular interest to how this concept influenced their academic achievement (Duncan 1996:137). Duncan defines Black consciousness as "an awareness of social, political, and economic contradictions of White supremacy that compels one to take action to change and/or eliminate the modes of oppression faced by Black people" (Duncan 1996:137). In the case of the Black adolescents, action refers both to the points of view they have and to their conduct, as shown by their experiences and their desire to succeed academically despite, in some cases, their being ostracized for being "too Black" (Duncan 1996:137).

The conclusion Duncan came to after analyzing the interview data was that the issue of race construction is an important academic factor for ethnic minorities and majorities (Duncan 1996:146). Duncan also found that "Black adolescents mediate their thought and conduct with tools that have been shaped within the fundamentally White supremacist cultural context of the United States" (Duncan 1996:146). The adolescents interviewed in the study do not equate academic success with "acting White," nor was their "Black consciousness," or Black identity, a drawback to their academic success, as shown by their successful transition into college (Duncan 1996:147). The students' demonstration of their ability to succeed may enable a deeper understanding of the inconsistencies that shape life in the United States and the transformation of the institutions that sustain those inconsistencies (Duncan 1996:148). For the students in this study, they were not held back by their ethnic identity. In other words, they were able to

maintain their own cultural values and succeed in mainstream American society. This is not achieved easily nor is it achieved by all ethnic minorities.

Duncan's research seems to be the exception to the norm. Ogbu, contends that for most racial and ethnic minority students, academic success equates to "acting White" (Ogbu 1990:372). The minorities who adopt the attitudes and behaviors conducive to academic success are said to be "disloyal to the cause of their groups," and they risk isolation from their peers (Ogbu 1990:372). Most racial and ethnic minority students must choose between academic success and maintaining their minority racial or ethnic identity (Ogbu 1990:372).

Immigrant Ethnic Identity Formation

Similar to the ethnic identity situation of ethnic minorities is the immigrant ethnic identity formation. Recent immigrants are individuals who have entered the United States since 1965. These individuals leave their native country and enter the United States with the option to leave their native culture and embrace mainstream American culture or deny American culture and maintain their native culture. Even though the situation is similar, there is a fundamental difference in the identity formation process for ethnic minorities and recent immigrants. Ethnic minorities have had U.S. social forces working on and affecting their self-identity process since birth, whereas recent immigrants have only experienced those social forces since their entry into the United States.

One way to study the self-identity of recent immigrants is to examine differences between the generations. Kalmijn conducted a study in which the earnings and occupations of Caribbean American men in the 1990 census are examined to suggest generational differences within "this new black minority" (1996:911). To determine an individuals' ancestry, Kalmijn reviewed microsamples of the 1990 census and used the census questions on a person's ancestry and country of birth (Kalmijn 1996:915). Kalmijn defined Caribbean Americans as black immigrants who were born in the Caribbean or first-generation Caribbeans, American-born blacks who reported Caribbean ancestry as second- and later-generation Caribbeans, and African Americans as American-born blacks who did not report a specific ancestry (Kalmijn 1996:915).

The results of the study suggest several relationships. The first relationship found is that there continues to be important socioeconomic differences between Caribbean American blacks and African Americans (Kalmijn 1996:911). Secondly, the "black success story" is the story of the British Caribbeans (Kalmijn 1996:911). Blacks from the French- and Spanish-speaking Caribbean do worse than African Americans (Kalmijn 1996:911). The third relationship suggests that second- and later-generation Caribbean blacks generally have higher socioeconomic status than the immigrant generation (Kalmijn 1996:911). For British Caribbeans, this implies that later generations have gained even more advantages on African Americans, which is the final relationship that emerged from the study (Kalmijn 1996:911). These relationships have to do with the level of assimilation immigrants and future generations undertake.

The conclusion Kalmijn reached is that both native British Caribbeans and British Caribbean immigrants who have been in the U.S. are doing better than African American blacks (Kalmijn 1996:927). Even though these results support the stereotype of Caribbeans as a "black success story" in American society, the British advantage is bound to the occupational domain and is not to the magnitude commonly believed (Kalmijn 1996:928). This study highlights the importance of country of origin and generations in the U.S. for the immigrant ethnic identity formation.

Another study that highlights a similar relationship examines women from India and their immigrant identity formation. Das Gupta suggests that, "This study offers a feminist analysis of the dominant sociological theories of ethnicity that restrict understandings of immigrant identity formation within the boundaries of the United States" (1997:572). In this study it is hypothesized that questions of identity are linked to what gets designated as ethnic culture and what becomes tradition by immigrant communities (Das Gupta 1997:572).

Das Gupta examines the stories of four second-generation Indian women (Das Gupta 1997:574). These cases show the change from "the authentic Indian immigrant family" of the first generation to the second-generation women's rebellion against this ideal and their attempts to reinvent their identity by going back and forth between at least two cultures (Das Gupta 1997:574). As example of a situation causing an inconsistency is as simple as dating practices. Dating as a way to find a marriage partner threatened the first generation's views on etiquette (Das Gupta 1997:584). Free and unsupervised mixing of the sexes is considered improper and promiscuous by older Indian generations

(Das Gupta 1997:584). Most immigrant parents planned to arrange their children's marriage, and found their children's initiative to find a partner to be inappropriate (Das Gupta 1997:584).

The women of the second-generation "resisted the suffocating aspects of their parents' cultural expectation and tried gaining some control over their lives - their education, their career plans, and marriage" (Das Gupta 1997:584). Das Gupta argues that the second-generation's biculturalism affected what it meant for these women to be "Indian" (1997:586). This argument suggests an alternative interpretation of the tensions the women experienced from moving between at least two cultures (Das Gupta 1997:586). Instead of seeing the inconsistency the women felt toward the cultures, Das Gupta suggests the women had confusion or cultural schizophrenia (1997:586). For these women forming their immigrant identity was not an easy task when balancing two very different cultures.

A similar study examined the psychosocial adaptation of children of immigrants from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (Rumbaut 1994:748). Rumbaut sampled children of immigrants enrolled in schools in Southern California and South Florida (Rumbaut 1994:757). The children sampled in the survey were in the eighth and ninth grades, a level at which dropout rates are still relatively low (Rumbaut 1994:757). These grades were sampled to avoid the potential bias of differential dropout rates between ethnic groups at the senior high school level (Rumbaut 1994:757). The survey gathered data on respondents' demographic characteristics such as the nativity and citizenship of the respondents and their parents, family size and structure, socioeconomic status, the

respondents' perceptions of their parents' migration motives, and ethnic self-identities (Rumbaut 1994:759). Other data the survey obtained included "language use and proficiency, hours spent daily on homework and watching television, education and occupational aspirations, perceptions and experiences of discrimination, and a range of attitudinal and other psychosocial variables, including measuring self-esteem and depression" (Rumbaut 1994:759).

The results of the study show fundamental differences in patterns of ethnic self-identification, both between and within groups from diverse national origins (Rumbaut 1994:748). The children were determined to have segmented paths to identity formation (Rumbaut 1994:748). This suggests that the children of the immigrants were not adopting mainstream American culture in a linear process but were instead picking and choosing between their native cultural values and ideals and American values and ideals to form their identity. Rumbaut suggests that, "Two-thirds of the respondents ethnically self-identified with their own or their parents' immigrant origins; the remaining one-third reported either assimilative or dissimilative identities that are not connected to those origins but to their American present" (1994:788).

Upon reviewing the results, Rumbaut noticed several patterns emerging. The first pattern is that ethnic self-identification is a gendered process (Rumbaut 1994:788). According to Rumbaut, "Girls were much more likely to choose additive or hyphenated identities, as well as a Hispanic panethnic self-label; boys were more likely to choose an unhyphenated national identity" (1994:788-789). Also, gender was a major determinant of psychological well-being outcomes, with girls being more likely to report "lower self-

esteem, higher depression, and a greater level of parent-child conflict" (Rumbaut 1994:789). The second pattern found was that acculturation strongly affects the process of identificational assimilation (Rumbaut 1994:789). In other words, being born in the United States greatly increases the tendency for an assimilative self-definition, and being foreign-born and not a U.S. citizen are associated with an ancestral or national-origin identity (Rumbaut 1994:789). Rumbaut suggests that, "In general, the hyphenated identity emerges here less as a qualitatively different mode of ethnic self-definition than as a bridge or middle position along the identificational spectrum between an American national identity and that of origin" (1994:789). The third pattern is that perceptions of discrimination affect the way children define their ethnic identities (Rumbaut 1994:789). Children who have experienced discrimination are less likely to identify as American, and those who perceive that people will discriminate against them no matter the level of education they may achieve are more likely to stay loyal to national-origin identity (Rumbaut 1994:789). The fourth pattern that emerged suggests that the use of panethnic self-identities has little to do with acculturative processes, instead location and nationality matter more (Rumbaut 1994:789). For example, youths in inner city schools where a majority of students are racial/ethnic minorities are more likely to define themselves in terms of those identities, particularly Black and Chicano, and less likely to identify ancestrally by national origin (Rumbaut 1994:789). The exact opposite effect is seen for students attending upper-middle-class private schools (Rumbaut 1994:789-790). The pattern supports a segmented-assimilation theoretical perspective (Rumbaut 1994:790). The fifth and final pattern was that children's psychosocial adaptation is shaped by the

family context (Rumbaut 1994:790). According to Rumbaut, "The likelihood of identification assimilation is moderated by parental ethnic socialization, social status, and parent-child relationships" (1994:790). Children's ethnic self-identities tend to strongly mirror their parents', especially their mother's, own ethnic self-identities (Rumbaut 1994:790). The patterns that emerged from this study show the importance of "the effects of acculturation, discrimination, location and ethnic density of schools, parental socialization and family context upon the psychosocial adaptation of children of recent immigrants to the United States" (Rumbaut 1994:748).

Discrimination as it affects Ethnic/Racial Identity Formation

Discrimination includes behaviors that exclude members of a group from certain rights, opportunities, or privileges due to prejudice ideas (Schaefer 1996:43). Discrimination can range from mild slights, like ethnic jokes, to systematic oppression or even violence (Yetman 1999:23). Rumbaut introduces the idea that perceptions of discrimination affect the way children define their ethnic identities (1994:789). Children who have experienced racial or ethnic discrimination are less likely to identify as American, and those who perceive that people will discriminate against them no matter the level of education they may achieve are more likely to stay loyal to national-origin identity (Rumbaut 1994:789). Ethnic and racial minorities are not impressed with the idea of being excluded from certain rights, opportunities, or privileges, so they would not want to embrace a racial or ethnic identity that supports the demise of their own race or

ethnicity. Instead, minorities will more than likely hold on to their native racial or ethnic identity and avoid assimilation into mainstream society.

The literature focuses a great deal on how minority and immigrant status affects an individual's racial/ethnic self-identity. The literature tends to leave out Americans who are of interracial or mixed ethnic identity. This is surprising since mixed marriages have increased from 1.5 million in 1980 to 2.9 million in 2000 (Healey 2003:8). The increase in mixed marriages is reflected in the numbers of individuals who self-identify as multiracial, the new ethnic minority group in the United States (Healey 2003:8). According to the 2000 U.S. Census, about 7 million Americans classify themselves as multiracial (Healey 2003:8). We are unable to compare these numbers to previous census data since the census recently implemented the multiracial self-identification category on the 2000 census. The ethnic identity formation process for interracial individuals is not discussed in the literature as frequently as the process is for recent immigrants to the United States. Since both groups have similar social forces working on them, the ethnic identity formation process for interracial individuals should be similar to the same process for immigrants. Like Water's study points out, often times ethnic immigrants do not fit into one of the dominant racial categories mainstream society tries to force them into (1999:6-7). Similarly to the ethnic immigrants, interracial individuals in the United States are also unable to be forced into only one racial category. Many of the same factors like family, peers, or discriminatory experiences may affect how interracial individuals chose to identify themselves ethnically and to what degree they assimilate into mainstream society.

This thesis will attempt to show the various factors that influence a mixed or interracial individual's ethnic or racial identity. The following research questions are derived from the literature.

- I. Does the family of interracial individuals encourage them to embrace one or both of their ethnicities?
- II. Has society forced interracial individuals into one particular race/ethnicity? And how? If society forced them into a racial/ethnic category, does the interracial individual also identify that race/ethnicity?
- III. Have discriminatory experiences affected how interracial individuals ethnically identify themselves?
- IV. How does the degree of assimilation impact interracial individuals?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In order to gain a more in-depth perspective on how interracial individuals form their ethnic identity, qualitative research was conducted. Qualitative research allows social scientists to go beyond the surface of ordinary ways of life to understand social processes in the context in which they occur (Esterberg 2002:2). Social scientists use qualitative research methods to understand the meaning behind social events for the individuals involved in them (Esterberg 2002:2-3). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research methods allow the investigator to extract more rich and complete data. This gives the investigator a more thorough understanding of the area under research and allows research participants to share more vivid information about their experiences. Content analysis is one area of qualitative research methods. Content analysis is “the systematic analysis of texts” (Esterberg 2002:171). Texts include any type of written material like books, magazines, letters, or interview transcripts (Esterberg 2002:171). Content analysis allows the investigator to interpret written data beyond quantitative responses. An investigator is then allowed to find common themes in the various texts analyzed. The common themes are more colorful and share more information about the real life experiences of individuals. Since qualitative information is extremely sensitive to the data obtained by the respondents in the study, the

information is not generalizable to the general public, yet it does offer new and interesting information about a specific topic. Qualitative content analysis is the type of research that should be conducted to gain an informative understanding of how interracial individuals form their ethnic identity

In the present study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 interracial individuals. The author decided on 20 individuals in an attempt to gain enough data to answer the research questions. More interviews were not conducted due to difficulty on the part of the author to locate more interracial individuals. Individuals were considered interracial if they had at least one grandparent who is a different race/ethnicity than their other grandparents. The author chose to include those individuals who reported being at least 25% of a different race/ethnicity in order to have access to more individuals and to attain a large sample. Individuals were located through friends and family of the author and snowball sampling, which is a respondent's referral to their friends or acquaintances to participate in the research (Esterburg 2002:93). The author has a large family that is very racially/ethnically diverse. The research participants originated from the author's family. After interviewing family members, the author began to interview friends who the author knew were ethnically/racially mixed. At the end of each interview, respondents were asked if they knew of anyone else who is interracial and would be willing to participate in the study they had just completed. This snowball sampling method was extremely useful because respondents knew the research was painless and some respondents enjoyed sharing their life experiences with another person. This allowed the respondents to share their positive experiences of the research with their

friends and family, who were then more willing to participate in the study. All participants were asked to give consent before being interviewed

Interview questions focused on four major areas. The first section of questions gained background knowledge about the participants' year of birth, area they grew up in, any other languages they speak, and education level of themselves and their parents. Questions about the respondent's and their parents' income level and occupation were asked in an attempt to gauge degree of assimilation. The second area focused on questions about familial experiences, including questions about ethnicities of parents and grandparents and if parents or grandparents ever encouraged the individual to embrace a certain ethnic identity over another. The questions in the second section were designed to answer the first research question regarding the family's influence to the ethnic identity process. The third section concerned social experiences individuals may have had in which members of society or societal institutions (i.e. school, church, etc.) try to force them into a certain category. This section included questions asking if the interracial individual had ever been stereotyped into a racial category or if they had been treated differently because of their ethnicity. The intent of this section was to answer the second and third research questions regarding American society's desire to force all individuals into one constructed racial category and to determine if discriminatory experiences affect ethnic identity formation. The final section included questions that asked respondents how they viewed themselves in race/ethnic terms. In this section, respondents were also asked to share any advantages or disadvantages of being of mixed race and to speculate on how society would be if there were more interracial individuals. This section's design

was to gain an understanding as to how the respondent views themselves in terms of race/ethnicity, to offer the respondent an opportunity to share anything else they felt was relevant, and to conclude the interview.

After the interviews were completed, the author transcribed them. The transcribed interviews were then analyzed by identifying common themes among the participants with regard to family, social and discriminatory experiences and degrees of assimilation. In order to look for common themes, the author first looked for the same kinds of events that occurred over and over for the respondents (Esterberg 2002: 168). First, the author looked for common themes that answered the research questions. Then the author looked at common themes that may not have answered research questions but were useful data. After a few patterns were identified, each case was compared against the patterns that emerged (Esterberg 2002:168). Once again, the patterns that answered research questions were examined first. Even though every case did not share all the emerging patterns as strongly, many of the cases gave very colorful data that supported the patterns.

Some of the emerging patterns that resulted from the data did not answer specific research questions. The patterns instead resulted in data that the author had not anticipated obtaining. A pilot study showed that some unexpected variables that may emerge in this study include gender and age (Esquivel 2002). The literature suggests that gender is an important factor for immigrant ethnic identity formation (Rumbaut 1994:788). If the literature on immigrant ethnic identity formation is also correct for interracial individual's ethnic identity formation, gender should emerge as a variable in

the ethnic identity process. Also the author realizes that the ethnic current is changing in the United States, and interracial marriages are becoming more common (Parrillo 1996:184). Since mixed marriages were outlawed in many states prior to Virginia versus Loving in 1967, the age of the interracial individual may also emerge as a variable (Aldridge 1978:356). The main purpose of the study is to gain an understanding as to what factors are important for interracial individuals' ethnic identity formation process. The term interracial is used to describe people of mixed racial/ethnic backgrounds. In Table 1, background characteristics of the sample are presented.

Table 1: Background Characteristics of the Sample

Respondent	Age	Racial/Ethnic make up of area raised in	Racial/Ethnic Self-identification	Mother's Race/Ethnicity	Father's Race/Ethnicity
Belinda	20	Predominantly Hispanic	Mexican	Mexican	White
Marie	21	Predominantly Hispanic	Mexican	Mexican	Mexican & Japanese
Ann	22	Predominantly White	Mixed	African American	White
Terr	22	Racially/Ethnically Mixed	Mixed	Dutch	African American
Bryan	24	Predominantly White	Mexican	Polish	Mexican
Roxy	24	Predominantly Hispanic	Mexican	German & Mexican	African American & Mexican
Chris	26	Predominantly Hispanic	Puerto Rican	Puerto Rican	Brazilian & White
Phil	26	Predominantly White	Mexican	Polish	Mexican
Mike	26	Predominantly White	Mixed	Mexican	White
Shelly	26	Racially/Ethnically Mixed	Mixed	Dutch	African American
Don	29	Predominantly White	Mixed	Polish	Mexican
Anthony	30	Racially/Ethnically Mixed	Mixed	Korean	African American
Cara	30	Predominantly White	Mixed	Mexican	White
Rebecca	33	Predominantly White	Mixed	Polish	Mexican
Margie	37	Predominantly White and Hispanic	Mexican	Mexican	German, English & Native American
David	39	Predominantly White and Hispanic	White	Mexican	White
Maggie	40	Predominantly Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	White
Mark	51	Predominantly Hispanic	Mixed	Mexican, Mexican Indian, & Japanese	German
Vicky	55	Predominantly White and Hispanic	Mexican	German	Mexican
Diane	60	Predominantly White and Hispanic	Mexican	German	Mexican

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Family Influences

All names used in this study are pseudonyms. When describing the respondents, the author used the ethnic descriptors that the respondents used when reporting their race/ethnicity with the exception of Table 1, which describes respondents by their national origin. Since categories of race and ethnicity are socially constructed, there is not always universal agreement on which category an individual believes they are in and what category society places that individual in. Each participant in the study had a unique situation that helped them to form their ethnic identity. There were several factors that were significant for a majority of the participants. For most of the participants, their parents and other family members did not make their ethnicity a priority. Rebecca, a 33 year-old Polish and Hispanic female who self-identifies as mixed, shares her experiences growing up in an interethnic family.

"My parents didn't really encourage us to be one or the other or both ethnicities. We just were kids growing up."

Rebecca's family did not make race/ethnicity a priority when raising her or her other brothers. This is similar to Margie, a 37 year old German, English, Native American, and

Mexican female who self-identifies as Mexican who also shared how her family handled race/ethnicity.

“My parents and grandparents never encouraged me to be one race or another. This was never an issue, nor did it ever come up in discussion.”

Another respondent, Cara, a 30 year old Mexican and White female who self-identifies as mixed, shared a similar experience growing up in a racially/ethnically mixed family.

“Even though I spent more time with my mom than my dad’s parents growing up, my family never made race an issue or a priority. I guess our family was more concerned with our health and education.”

This trend also occurred in the family of another respondent, Maggie, a 40 year old Spanish and White female who self-identifies as Spanish, also had parents who did not make race/ethnicity a priority.

“My family never forced or encouraged us to embrace one ethnicity over another. My entire family seems to have a worldly perspective and encouraged as much travel to other countries and to learn about as many other cultures as possible.”

These are just a few responses of the twelve research participants who reported that their parents never really discussed their ethnicity or encouraged the mixed child to embrace one or both of their ethnicities.

The remaining eight respondents had a remarkably different experience within the family. Even though their parents did not formally sit down with them and officially discuss their ethnicity, they were not allowed the option to choose to embrace an ethnicity of their choice or both of their ethnicities. As Roxy, a 24 year-old, African-American, Mexican, German female who self-identifies as Mexican reported,

“Choosing an ethnicity wasn't really an option. I was raised Mexican and didn't know any different until I got older and started asking questions. When I was

growing up I knew I was a little different than the other Mexican kids, but I never realized it was because I was mixed."

In Roxy's situation, both of her parents were half Mexican, so they raised her to be the ethnicity that they had in common. As in Roxy's situation, many of the respondents in this group did not know they were mixed until they got older and began asking questions.

Marie a 21 year-old Mexican and Japanese female who self-identifies as Mexican stated,

"My family really didn't push race on me or my brother and sister. We were just raised like Mexicans. Our ethnicity never was brought up. My parents just practiced more Mexican traditions."

Other respondents reported that they spent a majority of time with one parent who also encouraged them to embrace that parent's ethnicity. An example of this situation is Belinda, a 20 year-old Hispanic and White female who self-identifies as Hispanic who reports,

"Yes, my parents encouraged me to be Hispanic, well mostly my mom especially since I spent more time with her. I guess it was just the ethnicity she knew the most about, so she raised us all as Hispanics."

One respondent, who spent a majority of time with his Hispanic mother, was strongly encouraged to be the ethnicity of his White father. David, a 39 year-old White and Hispanic male who self-identifies as White, reported that,

"My mom experienced a lot of racism when she grew up. She grew up right before the civil rights movement started to gain serious support, so she raised me to be White so I wouldn't have to be discriminated against."

This was a very unique situation to this study.

For most of the respondents in this study, family was not reported as a direct factor for how they formed their ethnic self-identity. Those respondents who reported

that their family did not encourage them to embrace one race over another or both races suggested that their families took a more neutral stand toward race and ethnicity which may have indirectly affected how the individuals ethnically self-identify. For the respondents who reported their family strongly encouraged them to embrace a specific race/ethnicity, the family had a more active role on the interracial individual's ethnic self-identity process. In this case, the families raised the interracial individuals to be of only one ethnicity/race and did not allow the interracial individuals to form their own racial/ethnic self-identity. For most of the respondents in this study, family played a strong factor in the formation of their racial/ethnic self-identity either directly or indirectly.

Societal Influences

Societal factors were strongly reported even though those forces did not affect how the interracial individual identifies. An example of this was reported by Margie a 37 year-old Hispanic, German, English, and Native American female who self-identifies as Mexican who shared an experience of when The State of Texas needed more ethnic employees because Affirmative Action was in place at that time.

“I was forced one time on an application to pick a Hispanic ethnic label. I was filling out the application after the job had been offered to me because the state needed more ethnic employees. This is when affirmative action was still in place. At any rate, it was really an interesting situation since I didn't have a Hispanic surname at the time, but since I see myself as Hispanic it didn't really bother me.”

Margie was not the only respondent who shared experiences with individuals and institutions in society. Shelly and Terri, two other respondents, who are sisters, reported an incident that occurred when they registered for school. Terri described the incident as,

“When my mom registered me for school, the school officials said I was considered African American because the school reported ethnicity based on the child’s father and my dad is African American. It didn’t really bother me much. I guess I was too young to care.”

This is unlike Shelly who still remembers how upset she got.

“After I got registered for school and was forced to be considered Black, I saw another mixed child registering for school, who had an African American Mother and a White father. The officials said that she was considered African American because the school reported ethnicity by the race of the mother. I still remember how angry I was, but I was too young to say anything about it. Racially it didn’t bother me. I just didn’t like the inconsistency.”

For Shelly, this may have been one of her first experiences with the inconsistency of societal institutions classifications of race/ethnicity. Perhaps that is why she vividly remembers how upset she got at such a young age.

Chris, a 26 year-old Puerto Rican, Brazilian, and White male who self-identifies as Puerto Rican, actually enjoys surprising people after they have mentally placed him in the incorrect ethnic group.

“It’s interesting because usually when I interact with other people, especially Latin people, they assume I am White American but when I start to speak Spanish they’re like wow, what’s going on. I notice the difference in how they treat me immediately. When I first interact with them, I’ll speak to them in English, and they treat me a certain way. Then I might switch to Spanish, I do that sometimes on purpose just to see their reaction, and their reaction completely changes.”

Often times people who first meet Chris try to put him in a White ethnic category, but he likes to surprise people by speaking Spanish and challenging their ethnic placement of

him. The incorrect assumption of Chris' ethnicity by most people does not bother him. Instead he really enjoys surprising people. For many of the other respondents, society often places them into a racial category based on their last name. These respondents unanimously say that it does not bother them. These respondents either self-identify with the ethnicity society places them into or they self-identify as mixed and are not bothered by the common mistake many people in society make in regards to their ethnicity.

Bryan, a 24 year old male who self-identifies as Mexican, shares his experiences of people automatically assuming he is Mexican when in fact he is Polish and Mexican.

“When I first meet people, they usually don't ask me what ethnicity I am. Usually they just see me and assume I'm Mexican. If they know my last name, then they don't even think about the possibility that I may be mixed. It really doesn't bother me, since I see myself as Mexican.”

For Bryan, his race/ethnicity is not an issue. When people misclassify his race/ethnicity he is not concerned with the error. Instead he is used to the mistake and rarely corrects people who make this mistake. Bryan's experiences with individuals in society misclassifying his race/ethnicity is not traumatic or scary. This is not the case for Vicky, a 55 year old German and Mexican female who self-identifies as Mexican, who shared a scary experience she had as a small child.

“When I was like 3 years old, I was waiting outside a store with my dad while my mom did her shopping inside with my older sister. I was very blonde and fair with green eyes as a child, and my dad was very Mexican and very dark. While my dad and I were waiting, these two German ladies walked by and grabbed me and said I was lost. I was scared and didn't know why these ladies were holding me away from my dad. I managed to wiggle my way out of their grip and I ran and hugged my dad's leg, and the two women were looking at him like what's going on here. My dad then told the ladies that I was his daughter and that I wasn't lost. It was a very scary experience for me, but it didn't really affect how I see myself ethnicity.”

Even though Vicky's experience was a very scary childhood memory it did not affect how she saw herself racially/ethnically. Her family was more influential in how she formed her ethnic/racial self-identity than were her societal experiences.

For the respondents in this study societal experiences were shared but were not reported as an important factor on how the respondents formed their ethnic/racial identity. Most of the respondents shared experiences with being placed in an ethnic/racial category they did not feel they belonged to. This suggests that when the shared societal experiences occurred, the interracial individuals of this study had already begun to develop their ethnic/racial self-identity. Even though societal institutions or individuals continued to interact with the respondents in this study, the institutions and individuals reportedly did not affect the ethnic identity formation process. None of the respondents reported societal influences directly affecting their ethnic self-identification process. For those who reported distinct societal experiences, those experiences must have impacted the individual strongly for them to carry the memories for so many years.

Discriminatory Influences

Discriminatory experiences overall did not affect how the respondents of this study ethnically self-identify. When separating the respondents according to age, the older respondents tended to have more discriminatory experiences that affected their ethnic self-identity, but overall discriminatory experiences were not an important factor. Thirteen of the respondents reported that they had never noticed a situation in which they

had been discriminated against. Many respondents have a similar outlook on their childhood as Don a 29 year-old Polish and Mexican male who self-identifies as mixed who reported,

“I was called names as a kid, but who wasn’t. It didn’t really affect how I saw myself ethnically. I just figured it was something that all kids went through.”

Don never felt as though he was treated differently due to his ethnicity. Instead Don felt as though the teasing he endured as a child was something all children no matter there ethnicity went through. Another interesting situation that led to lack of discrimination was when individuals in society could not racially/ethnically classify the interracial individual. Mark, a 51 year-old German, Mexican, Mexican Indian and Japanese male who self-identifies as mixed, reported on a lack of discrimination.

“Everyone kind of kept in their racial group. The blacks had the power sign and the dapped, knuckle knocking, and the Latinos had the ‘L’ to greet each other. When they would greet me, they were never quite sure how they should be greeting me. And I had friends who were in the KKK, who considered me their friend too. I don’t think anybody really knew. You know, I get cards from them wishing you a ‘White’ Christmas. I had a friend who’s relative was like one of the grand dragons, and he was always telling me I should come visit him sometime and he’d take me to the meetings.”

In this study, Mark was the only one how had such a unique experience. Other respondents simply report no discrimination. Like Phil, a 26 year old Polish Mexican male who self-identifies as Mexican reported,

“I never really felt as though I was being discriminated against, but I also didn’t go around looking for it.”

Thirteen of the twenty respondents shared a similar reaction when questioned about any discriminatory experiences.

The remaining seven respondents shared individual discriminatory experiences. The experiences shared by the respondents ranged from being called racial/ethnic slurs by kids in the neighborhood to discrimination for self-identifying with an ethnic minority group. Bryan, a 24 year-old Polish and Mexican male who self-identifies as Mexican reported being called racial/ethnic slurs as a child.

“Some kids use to call me Bean Pole, as in Beaner and Pollack.”

Bryan now self-identifies as Mexican. Even though this experience is only minor childhood experience for Bryan, it may be a factor influencing Bryan’s racial/ethnic self-identification. During his interview, Bryan reported that the children who called him “Bean Pole” were predominantly White children. Since he was called names by White children, Bryan may have chosen to not identify with that racial/ethnic group and instead identify with racial/ethnic group that was more accepting.

Diane, a 60 year-old German and Mexican female who self-identifies as Mexican, and Vicky, a 55 year-old German and Mexican female who also self-identifies as Mexican, both shared experiences in which they were discriminated against because they self-identified with being Mexican in a time and place when Mexicans were heavily discriminated against. Both Diane and Vicky, who are sisters, were raised by their family to be Mexican and society continually placed them in the Mexican ethnic category, so they both suggested that their ethnic self-identity was formed before they experienced discrimination. Diane recalls,

“I was discriminated against because everyone saw me as Mexican in a German controlled town in the 1950’s. They didn’t discriminate against me because I was mixed though.”

This is similar to Vicky's response to growing up with a Mexican self-identity

“As I got older, I was discriminated because of having a Mexican last name, but it was just a sign of the times. All Mexicans were discriminated against at that time. It had nothing to do with being mixed.”

For Diane and Vicky, their ethnic/racial self-identity had been established before they experienced discrimination, so the experiences did not affect how they viewed themselves racially/ethnically.

Two respondents had very unique discriminatory situations in this study. Ann, a 22 year-old African American and White female who self-identifies as mixed, was adopted by a White family. She experienced reverse discrimination when she was not allowed to receive scholarships for African Americans because her parents are White. Ann reports that,

“I was discriminated against because my adopted parents are White, so I was not allowed to receive scholarships for African Americans. It really upset me, but it didn't affect how I see myself.”

By the time Ann had this experience, she was confident about her ethnic/racial identity, so the experience did not affect her ethnic identity formation, yet it was a disturbing discriminatory experience.

Another unique situation in this study was that of David, a 39 year-old White and Hispanic male who self-identifies as White, who was raised to embrace a White ethnic identity because of the discrimination his Hispanic mother endured while she was growing up. Even though David reported never experiencing discrimination, the

experiences of his mother affected how he was raised and how he racially/ethnically self-identifies.

“My mom kind of kept her ethnicity like a secret when I was growing up. She always wanted me to do well in school, but at the same time she sort of like pushed me to be more White.”

David’s experience was a unique situation in this study. Even though he personally did not suffer any discriminatory experiences, the negative experiences his mother had affected how she encouraged her child to racially/ethnically self-identify.

For the majority of respondents in this study, no discrimination was reportedly experienced. Those who shared a discriminatory experience reported that it did not affect how they viewed their race/ethnicity. Discrimination was not a direct factor for the ethnic identity formation of the respondents. In this study, the older respondents who reported discriminatory experiences suggested those experiences were only a “sign of the times.” This is a reflection of the current overall push in the general American society to be more accepting of other races/ethnicities and to be more multi-cultural. The discriminatory or non-discriminatory experiences were reported by respondents to not have a direct affect on their ethnic self-identification. These experiences could have indirectly affected how the respondents view their and others’ ethnicity/race. Discriminatory or non-discriminatory experiences at an early age may have influenced how the interracial individuals formed their ethnic identity without the individual realizing the impact of the experiences.

Degree of Assimilation

All of the respondents reported that they felt they fit in with mainstream society very well with the exception of Cara a 30 year-old White and Mexican female who self-identifies as mixed, who reported,

“I live in Alaska, I forget what mainstream is sometimes ”

Cara’s geographical separation from the contiguous United States may affect her level of assimilation. For the rest of the respondents in this study, geographical separation was not an issue

All respondents, when asked questions about their and or their parents’ socioeconomic status, ranged from somewhat assimilated to very assimilated and fit into the wide range of middle class America. Those who were only some what assimilated, had a high school education or some college, worked in low level occupations, earned less than \$30,000 per year, or had parents with similar characteristics. The respondents who are considered assimilated have some college or a Bachelor’s degree, work in middle management positions, earn between \$30,000 and \$50,000 per year, or have parents with similar characteristics. Those respondents who are considered very assimilated has at least a Bachelor’s degree, work in upper management or own their own business, earn more than \$50,000 per year, or have parents with similar characteristics.

When respondents reported about their level of assimilation, most of them reported they felt very connected with mainstream society. Belinda, a 20 year old Hispanic and White female who self-identifies as Hispanic stated,

"I think I fit right in because I think American society is filled with many cultures and mixed cultures "

Belinda's statement was a reflection of the multicultural ideas that are currently popular in mainstream American society. Her statement in itself is a good indicator of Belinda's assimilation. The ideas she finds important can also be placed into the context of important ideas for mainstream America. Another respondent, Roxy, a 24 year old African American, German, Mexican female who self-identifies as Mexican, reported how strongly she felt she fit into mainstream American culture.

"I feel like I fit into mainstream society well. I guess I've never thought about it. I just want to achieve the American dream (laughs). You know, the two point five kids, the white picket fence around the house in the suburbs with the dog in the back of the SUV."

Roxy's ideas about the "American dream" reflect her level of assimilation. Roxy is using legitimate means to attain goals that she finds are important. Those goals are also very similar to many other mainstream Americans.

There was not a specific trend reported among the respondents in this study with regard to degree of assimilation other than all of the respondents were assimilated to some degree, and all respondents reported being assimilated into mainstream society. Since most of the interracial individuals in this study have experienced multiculturalism, they are also more acceptant of other mainstream American beliefs and values. Multiculturalism is currently a popular part of mainstream American culture.

Additional Findings

This study did not have any trends that resulted from gender unlike the pilot study (Esquivel 2002), yet this study did have a slight trend among the age of respondents. With the exception of Mark, the six oldest respondents reported having only one self-identifying race/ethnicity. Table 1 shows the break down of respondents' age and racial/ethnic self-identification. Of the fourteen younger respondents, eight reported a mixed racial/ethnic self-identity. This left the remaining six younger respondents to report a racial/ethnic self-identity to only one ethnic group. The acceptance of interracial marriages and individuals has increased as the numbers of these unions and individuals has also increased (Healey 2003:8). The older respondents may have adopted a single ethnic/racial identity due to the lack of acceptance of interracial marriages. The increase in acceptance of mixed marriages gives interracial individuals the opportunity to form an ethnic self-identity of their choosing.

Another variable that emerged from this study was the correlation between the predominant race/ethnicity of the area the individual grew up in and the racial ethnic self-identity of the respondent. Table 1 displays the predominant racial/ethnic composition of the area in which the respondents grew up in and the self-identifying race/ethnicity of the respondents. Twelve of the respondents racially/ethnically identify with the predominant race/ethnicity of the area they grew up in. Even respondents like Margie, Vicky, and Diane who grew up in a Mexican and White town, lived in predominantly Mexican neighborhoods and self-identify as Mexican. Margie describes the area she grew in as,

“Our town was Mexican and White, but I grew up in a predominantly Mexican neighborhood.”

Growing up in a neighborhood that has one predominant race/ethnicity does not allow for many other cultures' ideas to permeate the environment, so it limits individuals who grow up in those neighborhoods to identify with the predominant ethnicity in that neighborhood. Another example is Terri and Shelly, who grew up in a very racially/ethnically diverse town and now self-identify as racially/ethnically mixed. Terry described the racial/ethnic make up of the area she grew up in as,

“We had everything that crawled. The population was very mixed because of the Army base. My street alone was mixed. Down the street were two black couple with children, their neighbors were White, next door to them was a Japanese women and White husband, my family, German and Irish across the street, and Polish on the other side of the street. It was very blended.”

Terry's sister, Shelly, also described the town where the two girls grew up.

“Our town is right next to an Army base. Since it's near the Army base there is a high percentage of interracial marriages compared to other small towns.”

Growing up in such a racially/ethnically diverse town must have had some effect on why both Terry and Shelly self-identify as racially/ethnically mixed.

Another interesting trend that emerged from the data was that most of the respondents, when asked how they thought society would be if there were more interracial individuals, suggested that people would get along better along racial and ethnic terms. A couple of respondents felt that a society with more interracial individuals would find another way to discriminate against certain people. Overall, most of the respondents had a positive outlook toward their racial/ethnic make-up and self-identification. Rebecca, a 33 year old Polish Mexican female who self-identifies as

mixed, shared her sentiment about how society would change if there were more interracial individuals.

"I think society would be more accepting of one another and would feel compelled to help humanity if there were more interracial people. Perhaps the people that work in the city and live in the suburbs would want to help disadvantaged youth in the city if they felt they had a link."

Rebecca's positive outlook on the positive effects on society if there were more interracial individuals was also shared by other respondents. Chris, a 26 year old Puerto Rican, Brazilian, and White male who self-identifies as Puerto Rican also feels that more racial/ethnic mixing would help people in American society to get along better.

"I think it would be great (if there were more interracial people). I think there would be more of an understanding. Because if they're mixing, they're getting to know each other. They're getting to understand each other's culture. The whole mixing is breaking down those barriers, so if you see more people mixing then others say well, that person is mixing so there's nothing wrong with it. So then people are breaking down these barriers well it's not so bad. You have to understand where they're coming from, what their culture is about, you know there is more to it than just mixing."

Chris believes that if races/ethnicities are mixing it equates to individuals learning more about other races/ethnicities and breaking down ethnic barriers. Another respondent shared a similar view. When asked how society would be different with more interracial individuals, Mark, a 51 year old Mexican, Mexican Indian, Japanese, German male who self-identifies as mixed reported society would improve due to the fact that racial/ethnic groups would not be so easily formed.

"I think we'd get along better because it would be hard to form gangs or groups that celebrate your ethnic purity because you really couldn't do that. Like I can't join an all Japanese group or an all Mexican group, or I can't join the KKK. I wouldn't quite fit in there. My last name would fit, but they'd say there's something about that guy over there (Laughs)."

Mark, Chris, and Rebecca had very positive ideas about a society with more interracial individuals. These three respondents and others felt an American society with more interracial people would break down racial/ethnic barriers.

A couple of respondents gave a more negative reaction to how society would adjust to having more interracial people. Some respondents suggested that society would find another way to discriminate against certain groups if there were more interracial individuals who broke the barriers of discrimination based on race/ethnicity. Bryan, a 24 year old Polish Mexican male who self-identifies as Mexican, shared this opinion during his interview.

“Even if there were more mixed people, people would just find some other way to segregate themselves because people are always looking for some other person to identify with.”

Bryan was not alone. Roxy, a 24 year old African American, German, Mexican female who self-identifies as Mexican, also reported a similar view.

"I think people would get along better along racial and ethnic lines if there were more interracial people, but we'd probably find a different way to discriminate against each other."

Bryan and Roxy were among the minority who shared this view in the study. Not many respondents had a negative reaction toward a society with more interracial people

The age of respondents and predominant race/ethnicity of the area the individual grew up in with regard to the racial ethnic self-identity of the respondent were not expected to be important factors by the author. After conducting the study, these two factors resulted in being more significant than some of the expected factors. Both age

and voluntary segregation of neighborhoods are issues that relate to the racial/ethnic history of the United States. Most of the older respondents reported discriminatory experiences that were due to the negative racial/ethnic sentiment of the era. Segregation of neighborhoods was also a result of the negative racial/ethnic sentiment. The voluntary segregation that continued after the civil rights movement was due to the residual tendencies from the pre-civil rights era.

The overall general feeling of respondents when asked about how society would be with more interracial individuals was positive. The respondents in this study were confident that racial/ethnic barriers would be broken down with more mixed unions. The respondents were also very comfortable with their ethnic identity and felt that more mixed people would benefit society.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The main idea in the classical theories suggested by Cooley and Mead is that the self emerges from social experiences. The respondents in the present study belong to families and peer groups that serve as the community which controls their attitude. Since an individual's self is created in relation to the selves of the other members of their social group, the structure of an individual's self expresses or reflects the general behavior pattern of this social group to which they belong (Cahill 2001:25). From the process of self-development comes the "self-concept", which is an individual's concept of themselves as a "physical, social, and spiritual or moral being" (Gecas 1982:3). Respondents in the present study did not directly report how they formed their self through the theories presented by Cooley and Mead. Instead, most respondents shared how their family was instrumental in their self-identity. Both Cooley's and Mead's ideas focus on how social interaction with others is the most basic element of how the self is formed. Family is one of the most basic elements that helps to shape an individual's identity.

As previously mentioned, a majority of respondents' reported that families did not make race/ethnicity a major issue. The parents of most the respondents were more concerned with raising good healthy children rather than encouraging their children to

embrace one or both racial/ethnic identities. How the parents of the respondents in this study raised their children supports research on primary socialization. Weigert and Hastings suggest that the process of primary socialization occurs in the family environment and allows an infant's fundamental self to emerge (1977:1172). As a child gets older, their self-identity is formed from the basic relationships within the family (Weigert and Hastings 1977:1172). The respondents of this study were primarily socialized by parents who were not concerned with formally delineating race/ethnicity.

Even though the respondents of this study showed signs of strong primary socialization in the family, they did not seem to have completed the four stage process of ethnic identity formation that Tse suggested occurs to ethnic minorities (1999:121-122). The respondents in this study did not show signs of completing the process of ethnic unawareness, ambivalence toward their ethnic group, ethnic emergence, or ethnic identity incorporation (Tse 1999:121-122). Instead the participants seemed to have developed a strong self-identity that did not rely so much on race/ethnicity. Overall, the respondents in the present study did not seem to follow the same ethnic identity formation process of ethnic minorities or recent immigrants in the United States. Tse's research consisted of analyzing published autobiographical accounts of 39 Asian-Americans (1999:121). In the present study, the author analyzed in-depth interviews. The different forms of data analyzed may explain the different results of the two studies. Das Gupta's study on Indian women who experienced confusion when trying to balance two different cultures was not represented in the interracial ethnic identity formation study (1997:586). Also,

Rumbaut's findings about children of recent immigrants were not reflected in the interracial ethnic identity formation study.

Unlike like the present study, Rumbaut also suggested that ethnic self-identification is a gendered process affected by being foreign born or not and by discriminatory experiences (1994:788-789). For the respondents in the present study, gender did not play a factor in their ethnic identity formation. The sample of interracial individuals represented a wide range of middle class America that are not a vulnerable to stereotypical gender behavior. Recent immigrants may represent more stereotypic gender roles and thus their ethnic identity formation is affected by their gender.

Rumbaut also mentions that location and parents' ideas may affect ethnic self-identification, which were ideas represented in the interracial ethnic identity study (1994:789-790). The participants of the present study reported how strongly their family's influence or lack of influence directed their ethnic identity formation process. The ideas of the parents were directly influential to the interracial individuals' ethnic identity formation which supports Rumbaut's finding. One of the additional findings in the present study suggests that the ethnic/racial environment in which an interracial child is raised may have some affect on the ethnic identity that child grows to maintain. Rumbaut's study suggested that the location of schools affected the ethnic identity formation process (1997:748). The present study went beyond the location of schools to examine the ethnic/racial composition of the neighborhood the interracial individual grew up in comparison to the ethnic identity the individual came to identify with. The present study suggests that the ethnic/racial composition of the interracial individual's childhood

neighborhood is an important factor on their ethnic identity formation. This is very similar to Rumbaut's finding about the location of schools in relation to the ethnic identity formation process.

The parents of interracial individuals in the present study were very acceptant of multiculturalism. This is reflected by the statements of many of the respondents and is in line with Tse's study which suggests many members of ethnic minority groups experience more than one culture when growing up (1999:121). The acceptance of multiculturalism is especially true for the parents' of the younger respondents. The younger respondents were more likely to have a mixed racial/ethnic identity than were the older respondents in the study. Part of the change from the view point of the parent's of the older respondents and younger respondents is due to the racial/ethnic history of the United States.

In 1967 the Supreme Court declared interracial marriages to be legal and valid unions (Monahan 1976:225). Previous to 1967, interracial individuals were around, but rarely discussed. In America's history certain states had laws as to how much African American heredity made an individual African American (Burma 1946:18). Some variations of the laws said individuals of "one thirty-second, one sixty-fourth, or any discernible amount" were considered African American (Burma 1946:18). These laws were enacted to prevent African American blood from "infusing" with White blood (Burma 1946:18). Some individuals were considered legally African American but had so much White blood that they looked White and often times socially "passed" as White (Burma 1946:18). The notion of "passing" is now an antiquated idea. Presently, the

general social sentiment is acceptance of interracial couples and individuals. Even the 2000 U.S. Census for the first time allowed people to mark one or more racial categories (Jones and Smith 2001:1). Interracial Americans are now legally able to claim more than one racial or ethnic category, which makes it easier to raise a child in a multicultural environment and allow them to ethnically/racially self-identify as mixed.

The change of the racial/ethnic sentiment of the United States also affected how society treats interracial individuals. In general, society is more accepting of individuals who identify as racially/ethnically mixed. As previously mentioned, the United States 2000 Census now allows interracial individuals to identify with one or more races (Jones and Smith 2001:1). The census is a physical representation of how society likes to organize individuals into categories like race/ethnicity categories (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:339). Kinket and Verkuyten also propose that an individual may recognize and accept an ethnic/racial group as self-defining, but they do not have to consider that definition personally important (1997:339). The results of the present study support this idea. Most of the participants, especially the younger respondents, did not find their ethnic identity to be anything more than a label. This is also similar to the idea of a “symbolic ethnicity,” which is the nostalgic allegiance to an individual’s culture of the immigrant generation without incorporating those feeling of pride of love of country in everyday life (Nagel 1999:58). Most of the respondents in the present study reported they were assimilated into mainstream society and only maintained their ethnic label for categorization purposes.

The census is also a sign of the social times, and suggests that society is changing to be more accepting of multiculturalism. An example of this that emerged from the research of the present study is the lack of discriminatory experiences in the younger respondents. Most of the discriminatory experiences that were shared during the interviews were from older respondents who grew up before or during the civil rights movement. The lack of discriminatory experiences on the affect of the ethnic/racial self-identification formation process did not resemble the findings of Rumbaut's study which suggested children of recent immigrants who have experienced discrimination will more than likely not identify with the dominant group (1994:789). The absence of discriminatory experiences suggests that more interracial individuals will be able to have a mixed identity in which no ethnic group will ostracize them because of their racial/ethnic identity.

The respondents in this study who did report discriminatory experiences also shared that those experiences did not affect their racial/ethnic identity formation. This supports Kinket and Verkuyten's findings on Dutch and Turkish children (1997:346). The results of their study suggest that at even 10 years old, children have developed a strong ethnic identity when only 1% of the children in their study ethnically misidentified themselves (Kinket and Verkuyten 1997:346). Most of the respondents of the interracial ethnic identity study also had a strong ethnic identity, even if they did not make it relevant in very social situation.

Another possibility as to why few respondents reported discriminatory experiences may be due to their ethnic unawareness or stage one of the four stage process

minorities use to cope with low group status as outline by Tse (1999:121). In this stage ethnic minorities are unaware of their minority status (Tse 1999:121). Perhaps, after some of the younger respondents get older and begin to think about their life, they will be able to acknowledge some discriminatory experiences that may have affected their ethnic/racial self identity.

The data in the present study suggests that the degree of assimilation of interracial individuals is at a normal rate. The respondents seemed to follow an assimilation path similar to the Anglo-conformity model. The Anglo-conformity model emphasizes conformity by minority groups to dominant group standards (Yetmen 1999:230). For the interracial individuals in this study, their parents may have shared dominant American ideals which they in turn passed down to there children. Even those respondents who were raised to be only one ethnicity/race shared very Anglo-conformist ideas. Since data was not collected on people who are not interracial, it is difficult to compare how interracial individuals may assimilate differently. Overall, the respondents in this study represented the wide variety of socioeconomic levels in middle class America.

Overall the present study found some very useful information to the developing field of research on interracial individuals' ethnic identity formation. The data found suggests that there are many circumstances and experiences that affect the ethnic identity formation process. Even the historical sentiment toward minority groups previous and during the civil rights movement can affect how an interracial individual who did not live during that time period forms their ethnic identity. The present study demonstrated how interracial individuals' ethnic identity formation process may be similar in some ways to

ethnic minorities or recent immigrants in the United States. Yet, the ethnic identity formation process for interracial individuals is a very distinct procedure with some very unique situations. Many of the respondents in the present study reported factors like family, society, and discriminatory experiences did not affect their ethnic self-identity. Through the experiences shared during the interviews, these factors often times indirectly affected the respondents in some way. This shows the complexity of the ethnic self-identification process. Many times individuals do not realize what factors are affecting their ethnic self-identification formation.

Directions for future Research

The topic of racial/ethnic identity formation of interracial individuals is a very new topic to the field of research. There are many different areas that need to be researched in this area. For instances, in order to gain a better understanding about the degree of assimilation of interracial individuals, research should be conducted to compare the rate of assimilation for interracial and non-interracial individuals. The rate of assimilation is not the only characteristic that can be compared using this research design. Other characteristics like race/ethnicity of closest friends or spouse should be research using a method that compares interracial and non-interracial individuals in order to gain a better understanding about the differences and similarities of interracial and non-interracial individuals.

Another area that needs more research is the ethnic identity formation for specific racial combinations. Perhaps the ethnic identity formation for an African American and

White individual is different than the ethnic identity formation of an African American and Mexican individual. The United States racial/ethnic history may allow for some differences between individuals who are mixed with a minority racial/ethnic group and White and those interracial individuals who are mixed with two or more minority racial/ethnic groups. These and many other areas concerning the identity formation of interracial individuals still need to be researched.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

Introduction to the study and interview: I am interested in which ethnicity multi/interracial individuals identify with. I have four main groups of questions regarding your childhood, family, social, and experiences.

I. Background

- A. In what year were you born? Historically, do you recall what was going on during that time period?
- B. Where did you grow up?
- C. Describe the ethnic/racial makeup of the area you grew up?
- D. Do you speak any other languages? If so, how did you learn them?
- E. What is your level of education?
- F. What are your parents' levels of education?
- G. What is your annual income?
- H. What is your parent's annual income?
- I. What is your occupation?
- J. What are your parents' occupations?

II. Familial Experiences

- A. What are the races/ethnicities of your parents? Where did your parents grow up?

- B. Which parent spent more time with you?
- C. Which grandparents (maternal or paternal) spent more time with you?
- D. Did your parents or grandparents encourage you to be one race/ethnicity over another?
 If yes > how did that make you feel?
 If no > did they encourage you to embrace both races/ethnicities?
- E. Growing up, what's your fondest memory?

III. Social Experiences

- A. How do you identify yourself in terms of your race/ethnicity?
- B. When your parents registered you for school, do you remember what ethnicity/race the school considered you?
- C. What was the predominant race/ethnicity of your school?
- D. In school, what were the races/ethnicities of your closest friends?
- E. Where you ever treated differently because of your ethnicity?
 If yes > please describe how.
- F. Did you grow up going to church?
 If yes > what was the predominant ethnic/racial group of the church you attended while growing up?
- G. Do you currently go to church?
 If yes > what was the predominant ethnic/racial group of the church you attended?
- H. Are you married?
 If yes > what race/ethnicity is your spouse?
 If no > what racial/ethnic group do you usually date?
- I. Do you have children? If so, what race/ethnicity would you place your children in?

VITA

Rita Esquivel was born in Harlingen, Texas on October 4, 1978. She is the only child born to “Dottie” and “Pete” Esquivel. Before completing high school at San Marcos High School, San Marcos, Texas in 1997 she began attending Southwest Texas State University through the early admission program. In July of 1997, she began working at San Marcos Truck Stop where she continued to work as she completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology. As an undergraduate student, she became a member of Phi Eta Sigma Freshman Honor Society, Golden Key National Honor Society, and Alpha Kappa Delta Honor Society. She graduated Magna cum Laude in 2000. In January, 2001 she entered the Graduated School of Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas. In September of 2002, she began working in the Sociology Department at Southwest Texas State University as a Teaching Assistant while completing her graduate studies.

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