

# The Mixed Experience

Identity and Self-expression in Mixed/Biracial

Individuals Living in the United States



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## Abstract

With the number of *mixed/biracial* individuals steadily increasing, questions regarding identity and identity development of said individuals are emerging. For the purpose of this research, whenever the term *mixed/biracial*, *biracial* or *mixed* is used, these terms refer to individuals with one Black and one White parent. The aim of this study is to examine the ways in which mixed/biracial individuals in the United States experience identity. While identity is something that is personal, it is influenced by many societal factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status. Davenport (2016) states that mixed/biracial individuals generally encounter identity and identity development in different ways and further, that women are generally more likely to identify as mixed/biracial versus men. Hence, the study also examined differences that men and women encounter regarding identity and identity development. This is achieved through inspection of previous research found in relevant sources as well as a survey consisting of 13 questions. The survey was uploaded on various online platforms such as *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *Reddit*. In order to receive credible and conclusive data, the survey was specifically uploaded on pages of said platforms that cater to mixed/biracial individuals living in the United States. Altogether, data was collected from 52 participants of the survey, 12 of which identify as male and 40 as female. The analysis of the survey data as well as the relevant literature revealed that mixed/biracial individuals living in the United States generally tend to self-identify based on what people close to them such as parents, other family members and friends identify them as. The study further found that men are generally more likely to be identified as Black by others than women. In addition, the study found that while the majority of respondents think that men and women face similar experiences in identifying as mixed/biracial, women's mixed/biracial appearances played an important role in acceptance of their choice of identifying as mixed/biracial.

*Keywords:* acceptance, biracial, Black, identity, identity development, men, mixed, rejection, White, women, United States

# 1 Introduction

In the United States, racial tensions and disparities are still a serious issue (Hartney et al., 2009). Some state that since the abolition of slavery, things have drastically changed for the better and that Blacks are treated as equals in society. Nevertheless, one look at the news shows, that while on paper, Blacks enjoy the same rights as Whites, reality paints a different picture. Unarmed Blacks are killed by police at alarming rates (Chaney & Robertson, 2015). In most cases, the police officers who killed the Black individual, walk away without punishment (Chaney & Robertson, 2015). Oftentimes the claim is made by police officers that “they saw an object in the hand of the Black individual they shot” or that “they feared for their life.” This showcases that the image of the Black man or even Black teenage boy as a “thug” (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016) is still imprinted in American society. Smiley and Fakunle (2016) further point out that racial discriminatory attitudes towards Blacks are systematically engraved into society as there is a “synonymy of Blackness with criminality” (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). Nevertheless, the situation is not only challenging in terms of police brutality. Statistics show that Blacks are at a disadvantage when it comes to education, the workplace and housing market (Hill, 2008). Taking one look at the present White House staff, shows the exact image of said racial disparities. An image that the current president of the United States, Donald Trump, had as his background image on Twitter in January, displays a great lack of diversity, as it shows him and members of his cabinet, all of whom are White.





Figure 1 White House Staff

Hill (2008) argues that the reason Blacks in the United States encounter inequalities and disadvantages is not solely because of racist extremists such as KKK (Ku Klux Klan) members but also those White individuals who believe themselves to be liberal but at the same time do not realize their privilege and (un-) conscious discriminatory actions. This phenomenon is described by *critical race theory* (Hill, 2008). As Hill (2008), in accordance with *critical race theory* describes, racism is engrained in the US societal system. Blacks and other “minorities” are systematically oppressed and put at a disadvantage by a system that is based on White supremacy. This system may not display obvious discrimination, instead, it caters to White privilege in subliminal ways. Neighborhood segregation for example is not based on primeval instincts – meaning settling amongst others like oneself – but rather on systematic and strategic structuring. Hill (2008) points out that certain businesses and companies that want to attract predominantly White employees end up settling in predominantly White neighborhoods. Hence, Blacks are excluded from those jobs, as they are not located in said neighborhoods.

Every year on June 12<sup>th</sup>, *Loving Day* is celebrated all throughout the world. *Loving Day* marks the day that the Loving family won the Supreme Court Case *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967. Mildred Loving, a Native American and Black mixed woman (Douignan, 2018), and Richard

Loving, a White man, fought for their right to be legally married to each other in the state of Virginia without having to face legal punishment, as interracial marriage was still prohibited in Virginia up until the court ruling of 1967. This Supreme Court ruling eventually led to 15 other States “invalidating laws against interracial marriage” (Douignan, 2018).

The mere fact that just 51 years ago, interracial marriage was still prohibited in the United States, shows how deeply rooted racism and the notion of White superiority (Hill, 2008) was/is in the United States’ society. And although the court ruling made interracial marriage legal, interracial couples and their *mixed/biracial* children faced and even nowadays still face negative sentiments by others (Barnett, 2014).

With the number of *mixed/biracial* individuals steadily increasing, questions regarding identity and identity development of said individuals are emerging. For the purpose of this research, whenever the term *mixed/biracial*, *biracial* or *mixed* is used, these terms refer to individuals with one Black and one White parent. In the United States, mixed/biracial individuals experience otherness in all aspects of life. On the one hand, they are considered “too White” to be part of the Black community, on the other hand, they are “too Black” to be part of the White community. This creates a sense of otherness and a feeling of not belonging amongst biracial individuals in the United States. In addition, there is the notion that fairer skin, and straighter, longer hair, which many biracial individuals have, are considered “better” in society. This research will look at the experiences of biracial individuals in the United States and how their experiences influence the way in which they self-identify. In addition, this study will look at the ways in which biracial individuals are represented in the United States and will then focus on possible causes including historical factors that lead to representation of said group; e.g., the *Brown Paper Bag Test*.

## 1.1 Research Question

Much of the current and previous research focus on external factors, such as complexion, and hair texture, and not on internal and individual factors when it comes to identity construction and experience of otherness in biracial individuals. In addition, much of the research does not focus on the feeling of otherness but rather on the feeling of being torn between two different cultures. Furthermore, as Rockquemore (2002) points out “gender factors remain conceptually underdeveloped” (486) in much of the research concerned with mixed/biracial identity development. Hence, this study will focus on the different attributes that influence the decision of identifying as mixed/biracial versus mono-racial. In addition, this study aims to evaluate whether there are any differences in the identity development process between men and women. Hence, the following Research Question and sub-questions emerged:

- *How do mixed/biracial individuals choose to identify and what influences their choice in doing so?*
- *What are the differences that men and women encounter in identifying?*

In order to answer the Research Question, a survey consisting of 13 multiple choice as well as text answers was given to individuals living in the United States that identify as mixed/biracial. The responses to the survey were then analyzed and compared to previous literature. Conclusions were then drawn based on emergent patterns in the responses and the comparison to previous literature.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Othering

Othering describes the process by which an individual or a group of individuals are compared to what is considered the norm in a specific context. According to Holliday, Kullman and Hyde (2016), othering is created through the concept of “them versus us”. Holliday, et al. (2016) further explain that the *Other* refers to “any group of people that are perceived different.” (p.26). Anyone who does not fit into a preconceived set of variables and attributes is therefore considered the Other. Biracial individuals who belong to two different racial groups therefore experience being the Other on a constant basis (Waldron, 2011). According to Jacobsen (2015), “Biracial and mixed children exist in a space where they are two races at once, but aren't really one or the other” (“Why I Want My Biracial Kids”, 2015). When biracial individuals are with their White families, they do not fit in as they are not “fully White”, the same goes for them when they are around their Black families. When biracial individuals do identify with one race over the other, they can encounter statements such as “You are too White to be Black” or “You are too Black to be White.” Much attention is also paid to, for example, the music a mixed/biracial individual listens to, the way he or she dresses, and the way he or she talks. Bouie (2014) points out that amongst Black kids and youth there are sometimes jokes and mockery when one of the kids/youth talks “grammatically correct” English, what in vernacular is considered “talking White.” Biracial individuals who consider themselves Black and utilize “proper English” might be marginalized by their peers and “Whiteness” is projected onto them due to their “talking White”. Another concept Bouie (2014) mentions is “acting White”. “Acting White” centers around stereotypically White attributes such as listening to Rock and Country

music. It again becomes evident how stereotypes and essentialism take away from individuals' personal identity and by focusing on generalizations, resulting in othering.

## 2.2 Identity

Identity is influenced by many factors such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, religion and socioeconomic status (Davenport, 2016). Buchholtz and Hall (2005) argue that identity is not merely something that one "is" and that in one's behavior is portrayed as "self-classification" but rather something that is "constituted through social action, and especially through language" (20). According to Buchholtz and Hall (2005), the *emergence principle* states that by utilizing language, one's identity and its narrative are communicated to others. Thus, Buchholtz and Hall (2005) explain that identity is not an "internal psychological phenomenon" but instead "social and cultural".

When it comes to identity and othering, the social and cultural context is important to keep in mind (Goossens & Phinney, 1996). Individuals may feel as though they are the Other in one context but then be considered a fully integrated part in another context, highlighting the importance of context. Mixed/biracial individuals might be considered the Other when they are with their Black or White side of the family but feel fully integrated while they are amongst a group of other biracial individuals. Buchholtz and Hall (2005) call this phenomenon the *relationality principle*, by which identity stands in "relation to other available identity positions" (23). Much of previous work focuses on sameness and difference in terms of identity relations. However, Buchholtz and Hall (2005) argue that this notion is oversimplified and thus propose the terms *adequation* and *distinction*. The concept of *adequation* distinguishes itself from sameness by focusing on similarities and mutual understanding. In addition, *adequation*

downplays differences in an effort to focus on the similarities there are. Black and White mixed/biracial individuals, for example, may experience *adequation* with Chinese and White biracial individuals more than they do with solely Black or White individuals, the reason being that they can relate to being mixed/biracial and not fully belonging to one race or the other. Despite being from highly different backgrounds, their similarity of not being “fully White” or “fully Black” connects them. Vice versa, *distinction* focuses on differences by downplaying similarities.

The second set of concepts proposed by Buchholtz and Hall (2005), *authorization* and *illegitimization* focus on the approval or rejection of one’s identity “through structures of institutionalized power and ideology” (24). Said “structures of institutionalized power and ideology” grant monoracial members of the two racial groups the mixed/biracial individuals are made up of, a certain sense of authority. This authority is displayed as the monoracial members stand in as voice for the “entire race”, meaning they have the unofficial authority to decide what is considered an attribute of the race they are a member of, and what is not. Hence, if a mixed/biracial individual identifies as Black, his or her identity can either be approved or denied by a Black individual, and vice versa if he or she identifies as White. Because the Black or White individual is seen as a true member of the group, they “have the power” to evaluate the biracial individual’s identity and express whether they acknowledge their choice of identifying as member of the specific racial group.

### 2.3 Biracial Identity development

Identity development is a process that carries on throughout one’s entire life (Sokol, 2009). It is not something that is stagnant but rather something that changes with circumstance.

At some point in time, individuals find themselves conflicted between different parts of their identity. This is especially true when the two conflicting parts of one's identity are vastly different or even polar opposites. Biracial individuals are oftentimes seen as not belonging to neither of their parents' races, hence being considered "the Other" by society. In said scenario, they find themselves caught between two social groups, consciously and subconsciously deciding what social and cultural attributes to make their own and which ones to reject. Hud-Aleem and Countryman (2008) state that in the United States, up until the 1980s the *People of Color Racial Identity Model* (PCRIM) was applied for mixed/biracial individuals as they were supposed to "adopt the same race of the parent of color" (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008). This notion goes back to the *One Drop Rule* which came about in days of slavery and stated that any individuals that possesses even just one drop of black blood would be considered Black.

According to Hud-Aleem and Countryman (2008), Poston was the first to formulate a biracial identity development Model. Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model suggests five stages of identity development in biracial individuals: *personal identity, choice of group categorization, enmeshment/denial, appreciation, and integration*. (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008) (see Appendix 1). These stages all take place at different points throughout a mixed/biracial individual's life. Hud-Aleem and Countryman (2008) state that *personal identity* takes place in childhood where the child is unaware of its racial background. The second stage, *choice of group categorization* happens at an older age where the child is aware of its racial background. At this stage, the individual chooses one single race that he or she identifies with. Many factors such as family, friends, gender, community, geographic location and parents' marital status-living with a single Black or White mother or father – have an impact on what race biracial individuals identify with. Hud-Aleem and Countryman (2008) point out that in this stage

individuals find themselves “pressured to choose one racial or ethnic group identity over another.” At some point however, an individual may feel a sense of guilt and betrayal toward the racial group they repudiated. This third stage is considered *enmeshment and denial*. In this stage, adequation (Buchholtz & Hall 2005) occurs as the individual downplays differences in order to identify with both groups. Once an individual overcomes the *enmeshment and denial* stage, they enter the stage of *appreciation*. In this stage, even if an individual identifies more with one of their racial groups, they learn to appreciate the other group and might “explore their heritage” (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008). The final stage of *Poston’s Biracial Identity Development Model* is *integration*. In this stage, the individual acknowledges and appreciates his or her mixed/biracial identity even if he or she solely identifies with one of their racial groups.

## 2.4 Differences in Men and Women

Identity development in men and women is very different (Steensma et al., 2013). Societal expectations for men and women vary greatly, hence influencing identity development (Steensma et al., 2013). Davenport (2016) points out that biracial women generally are more likely to identify as biracial than men. Davenport (2016) further argues that the higher the educational status of the woman, the more likely she is to identify as biracial. One of the reasons that women are more likely to identify as biracial is linked to appearance, according to Davenport (2016).

The stigma around mixed/biracial women being “mysterious, intriguing racial other” (“The Role of Gender, Class”, 2016) also influences the way they shape their identity. Human beings shape their identity around the response they receive from others (Pelican et al., 2009). Hence, if biracial women receive positive feedback based on their biracial or mysterious,



ambiguous appearance (Davenport, 2016), they are more likely to identify as biracial. Davenport (2016) mentions that unlike biracial men, biracial women experience a confidence boost for their lighter skin.

Biracial men on the other side are oftentimes categorized as “men of color” (Davenport, 2016). Davenport argues that a possible reason biracial men identify as Black, is that they are seen as Black by society. Because they identify with what others project onto them, they consider themselves Black (Davenport, 2016). In addition, Davenport (2016) points out that biracial men are considered members of the in-group amongst Black men, whereas biracial women oftentimes face “hostility” and “rejection” from Black women.

## 2.5 *The One Drop Rule, the Brown Paper Bag Test and the Ruler Test and the historical remnants of colonialization*

During slavery in the United States in the 1800s, rape of the Black female slaves was common (Rockquemore, 2002). White slave owners would rape their female slaves which oftentimes resulted in mixed/biracial children being born. Because of their lighter skin and straighter hair texture, Whites considered them to be more like the “superior White race” than the darker skinned Black slaves, yet they were still considered slaves. Despite the horrible and inhumane circumstances the mixed/biracial children of slaves and slave masters faced, they experienced more privilege over the darker skinned slaves as slave owners made distinctions based on skin tone (Rockquemore, 2002). Lighter skinned slaves were allowed to work in the house as “housen\*\*\*\*\*” doing domestic chores which were less harsh than working on the fields, darker skinned slaves had to work on the fields as “fieldn\*\*\*\*\*” (Graham, 1999). Nevertheless, the biracial children of slaves and slave owners did not live good lives.

As part of the *Racial Integrity Act of 1924*, the *One Drop Rule* stated that any individual who has even just one drop of “Black blood” running through their veins was to be considered Black. Graham (1999) points out that even after the abolishment of slavery, the stigma around lighter skinned carried on. *The Black Elite* consisted of “higher class” Black individuals that had access to better education, social institutions and subsequently careers. One of the main factors that played into their “higher prestige in society” was the fact that they were lighter in skin tone (Graham, 1999). Thus, access to the *Black Elite* was very exclusive and the *Brown Paper Bag Test* and the *Ruler Test*, were tests that the *Black Elite* (Graham, 1999) utilized to distinguish who would gain access into prestigious organizations. Religious organizations, fraternities, educational institutions and social clubs are just a few among many other establishments that utilized these tests. As Graham (1999) points out, “good hair” (wavy or straight), “nice complexions” (light brown to near white), “sharp features” (thin nose, thin lips, sharp jaw) and hazel, green, or blue eyes”, features that are tied to Whites, were considered superior. The “Brown Paper Bag Test” was a test whereby a brown paper bag was held against the face of an individual and if the individual was as light as or lighter than the brown paper bag, he or she was granted access to the organization. Similarly, the “Ruler Test” was a test where a ruler was held against an individual’s hair and if the hair was straight like the ruler, one was allowed entrance into the organization. One important factor to keep in mind, is that despite the fact that the *Brown Paper Bag Test*, *The Ruler Test* and the *One Drop Rule* no longer are implied today, the stigma around fairer skin, straighter hair and straighter noses, is still very relevant today as they “approximate whiteness” (Rockquemore, 2002 p. 488), which, in a system based on White supremacy (Hill, 2008) are deemed desirable.

### 3 Method

This paper seeks to answer the question of how Mixed/Biracial individuals living in the United States identify and what influences their choices? It also aims to answer the question whether there are any differences in how mixed/biracial men and women choose to identify. In order to achieve this, qualitative research in form of a survey was conducted. Data on the topic was both gathered and elicited from a survey that consisted of multiple choice as well as text answer questions. Dörnyei (2007) points out that those conducting qualitative research ideally enter the research process open minded and without “preconceived notions.” (37). Because there is no hypothesis in this research, qualitative research was conducted. Page et al. (2014) point out that conducting qualitative research generally aims to determine “which features emerge as prominent from the collected material” (52) and further that qualitative research seeks to reveal “particular patterns or perspectives.” Dörnyei (2007) also argues that one of the main characteristics of qualitative research is that it is “emergent” (37). One possible benefit from conducting qualitative research as Page et al. (2014) point out, is that the number of participants does not have to be as large as for quantitative research. In addition, Page et al. (2014) argue that while quantitative research examines a large number of data, qualitative research can get a more in-depth view with “greater detail and with more concern for the context.” (52). Another benefit of qualitative research as Dörnyei (2007) points out, is that it allows ‘flexibility’ in terms of research question which may “evolve” or be “changed” over the course of the study (37). Dörnyei also point out that qualitative research is beneficial for the analysis of “a wide range of data”, including texts and imagery.

### 3.1 Materials:

Firstly, a survey was created using the survey creator tool *SurveyMonkey*. Because the free version only allows one to create 10 questions, an update was bought as the survey itself consisted of a total of 13 questions. In order to gather responses from mixed/biracial individuals living in the United States, I then joined several different Facebook groups revolving around Mixed/Biracial identity that are based out of the United States. Once I joined these groups, I asked the administrators of said groups for permission to post my survey on their page. As a result, a qualitative survey was created and uploaded on *Facebook* groups called “Mixed Nation”, “Mixed Chicks”, “Mixed by Love”, and was shared on my *Facebook* wall. The survey consisted of 13 multiple choice as well as open-ended questions and participants were asked to answer the questions anonymously. Unfortunately, there were no responses from these groups. The survey was then again uploaded to a different *Facebook* group called “Biracial/mixed ethnic haircare/hairstyles”, as well as the “Mixed Experience Forum” on *Reddit* and under a documentary called “The Other Race (Mixed Race) on *YouTube*. One of the members of the *Facebook* group mentioned above commented on the post of the survey and stated that I could also upload the survey to her *Facebook* page called “The mixed Family Community – Multiracial Families and raising Mixed Kids”, which I then did.

### 3.2 Procedure:

A survey that was posted on *Facebook* as well as *Reddit* and *YouTube* was conducted. The survey consisting of 13 multiple choice, as well as open ended questions, was uploaded to the different sites. Before taking the actual survey, respondents were asked to give their consent by agreeing to the terms, namely being 18 years or older and identifying as a Black/White mixed/biracial individual living in the United States.

## Consent Form

### Mixed/Biracial Identity Survey

#### Consent Form

Dear Participants:

You are invited to participate in this survey regarding Black/White mixed/biracial identity being conducted by Ashley Merkl at Utrecht University. I am interested in people who identify as Black/White mixed/biracial, specifically in their experiences as Black/White mixed/biracial individuals, living in the United States. Your participation along with your input is crucial, as there has not been much research into this topic. Participation will take approximately 10-15 minutes. You must be at least 18 years of age and identify as Black/White mixed/biracial living in the United States to participate in this survey.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized.

Your responses will be anonymous and there are no known risks for participation in this study. To help protect your confidentiality, the survey will not contain information that will personally identify you. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only and may be shared with Utrecht University representatives. In addition, the findings of this survey will be utilized in my Master's Thesis which will be publicly available online.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Ashley Merkl at [a.b.merkl@students.uu.nl](mailto:a.b.merkl@students.uu.nl).

Thank You!

\* 1. Do you agree to the above terms? By clicking Yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.

Yes

No

The survey was conducted anonymously, but the participants were asked to state their gender in order to answer the sub-question, whether there is a difference in the way mixed/biracial men and women choose to identify.

The survey was made up of 13 multiple choice as well as text answer questions that aimed to answer the questions of “How Mixed/Biracial individuals living in the United States identify and what influences their choices?” and the sub question “whether there is a difference in the way mixed/biracial men and women choose to identify”. What follows are the exact questions as posted in the survey:

**Question 1:** *Do you agree to the above terms? By clicking Yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.*

**Question 2:** *How do you racially identify?*

**Question 3:** *How do others identify you racially?*

**Question 4:** *What is your gender?*

**Question 5:** *What do you think are the two most important benefits of identifying as a mixed/biracial individual?*

**Question 6:** *What do you think are the two most important challenges of identifying as a mixed/biracial individual?*

**Question 7:** *If you have ever been questioned about your mixed/biracial physical features, what have people asked you and how have you responded?*

**Question 8:** *Have you ever chosen to identify as one particular race despite your mixed/biracial heritage, if so, how was your choice received by others? Were you accepted, were you rejected? If possible, please describe your experiences.*

**Question 9:** *When you chose to identify as mixed or biracial, how is your choice received by others? Are you accepted, are you rejected? Please briefly describe your experiences:*

**Question 10:** *How does your mother identify racially?*

**Question 11:** *How does your father identify racially?*

**Question 12:** *How did your parents identify you?*

**Question 13:** *Do you think it is easier for women to identify as mixed/biracial versus a single race?*

An analysis of all responses was made and emerging patterns were observed. For each question, keywords representing the patterns were then recorded with the respondent's number written down next to the keyword. Finally, an analysis on cross-question patterns was made. Any emerging patterns were tested on whether they were appeared in other questions as well. In addition, the survey looked at differences and similarities between male and female respondents. For this, each respondent's survey was analyzed individually and pattern in self-identifying and identifying by others were noted, based on gender (Question 4). Differences and patterns as well as responses that clearly answered the RQ were recorded, and conclusions were drawn based on previous literature.

## 4 Results

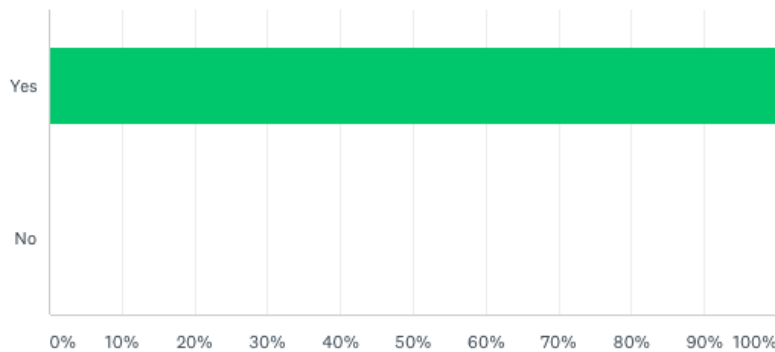
A total of 93 respondents viewed the survey that consisted of 13 questions. Said respondents all gave their consent by agreeing to the given terms, being that they were 18 years of age or older and were Black/White mixed/biracial individuals living in the United States. However, the survey was designed in a way in which respondents could skip questions they did not want to answer, hence the number of responses varied by question.

**Question 1**, as stated above asked whether individuals agreed to the terms listed.

Q1

Do you agree to the above terms? By clicking Yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.

Answered: 93 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Yes	100.00% 93
▼ No	0.00% 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>93</b>

Figure 2 Mixed/Biracial Identity Survey Question 1

**Question 2** was a multiple-choice question asking about self-identification. The question was designed in a way, which allowed respondents to choose multiple answers. Of the choices, mixed/biracial, Black, White and Other, majority of the respondents chose mixed/biracial.

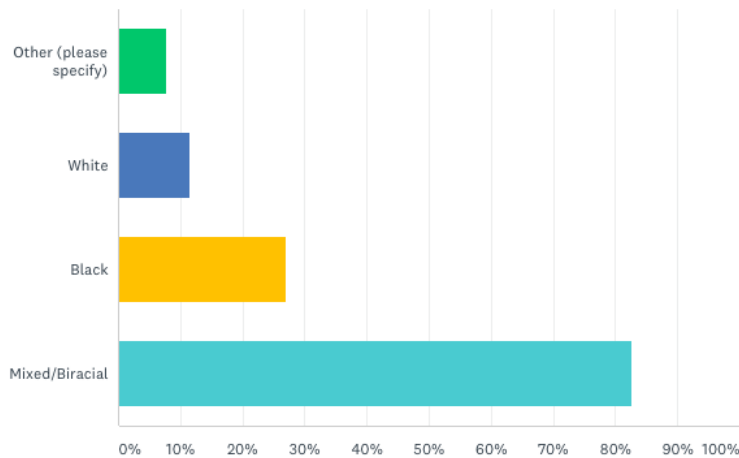


However only 43 out of 52 respondents answered that they identify as mixed/biracial, hence, some respondents identify as mono-racial. 5 out of the 9 individuals that stated that they do not identify as mixed/biracial, identified solely as Black. None of the respondents however solely identified as White. When looking at gender breakdown, of the 12 males that participated in the study, 3 identify solely as Black, and 2 of the 40 female respondents identify solely as Black. This means that 25% of the male respondents identify as mono-racial Black, whereas only 5% of the female respondents identify as mono-racial Black. 6 out of the 52 respondents identify as White, however those that identify as White do so in conjunction with Black, mixed/biracial and Other.

Q2

How do you racially identify?

Answered: 52 Skipped: 41



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Other (please specify)	Responses 7.69% 4
White	11.54% 6
Black	26.92% 14
Mixed/Biracial	82.69% 43
<b>Total Respondents: 52</b>	

Figure 3 Mixed/Biracial Identity Survey Question 2

**Question 3** asked about the ways in which respondents are identified by others, and majority of respondents (34) stated that they were identified as mixed/biracial. This question also gave the option of choosing more than one answer. 24 respondents stated that others identified them as Black. Of said respondents, 6 were male and 18 were female, which means that 50% of male respondents and 45% of female respondents were identified as Black by others. 13 respondents of which 3 identify as male and 10 as female, were identified as White by others. Another 13 respondents stated that they were identified as Other by others, majority of which were identified as Hispanic.



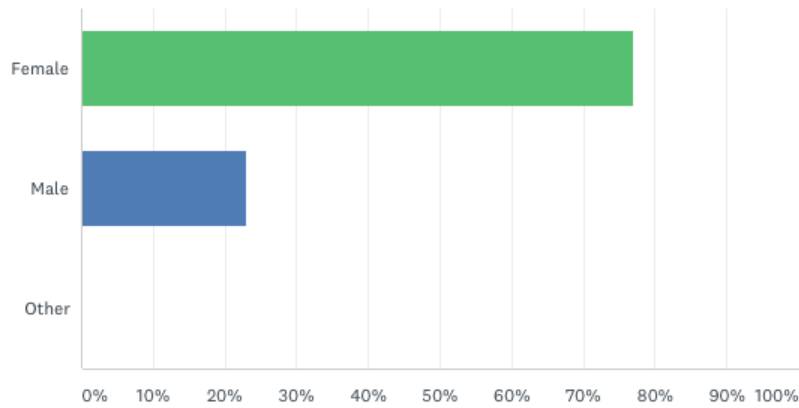
Figure 4 Mixed/Biracial Identity Survey Question 3

**Question 4** asked about gender. 40 of the 52 respondents identify as female and 12 identify as male. None identify as Other.

Q4

What is your gender?

Answered: 52 Skipped: 41



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	76.92%	40
Male	23.08%	12
Other	0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>52</b>

Figure 5 Mixed/Biracial Identity Survey Question 4

**Question 5** was a text response question revolving around benefits of identifying as “Mixed/Biracial”. Majority (21) of the respondents mentioned belonging to two different cultures as the benefit of identifying as mixed/biracial. In addition to belonging to two different groups, respondents stated that identifying as mixed/biracial does not only grant the access to two different cultures but also a sense of acknowledgment toward their parents and their heritage, hence prompting a feeling of self-awareness and acceptance. Respondents stated that by

denying one part of their heritage, they felt as though they were not true to themselves. However, by embracing their entire heritage, they felt a sense of truth toward themselves and their identity.

Another topic mentioned was a sense of feeling unique. Respondents stated that by identifying as mixed/biracial, they were allowed to identify how they wanted and were not forced to fit their identity into one racial box. Respondents further stated that society oftentimes forces them to choose one racial group, however identifying as mixed/biracial and embracing their heritage allowed them to incorporate all parts of their identity, subsequently leading them to not be stuck in one particular racial dimension.

Finally, respondents stated that identifying as mixed/biracial made them more socially aware. They explained that because they experience aspects of both racial groups, they have a unique insider view on matters that concern both groups. In addition, some respondents stated that because they themselves are not considered a social norm in any context, they can relate to and emphasize with others that are also not considered social norms.

**Question 6** referred to the challenges of identifying as mixed/biracial. The majority of respondents mentioned isolation and ignorance of others as the main challenges. Respondents stated that when they identify as mixed/biracial, they feel as though they do not fit in with any racial group. They stated that by incorporating their mixed heritage into their identity, instead of being accepted by both groups, it was as though they were seen as though they somewhat distanced themselves from each individual group, hence creating a new group with no real correlation to either racial group. Some respondents also mentioned that dating can be especially difficult as they experience isolation when attempting to date mono-racial individuals.

In addition, respondents claimed that the challenges of identifying as mixed/biracial are linked to the people surrounding them, stating that they are told that they are denying the Black or White mono-racial group by incorporating the other race and claiming mixed/biracial identity.

**Question 7** asked respondents to name questions they are asked by others regarding their Mixed/Biracial appearance. The vast majority of respondents stated that they are frequently asked “what are you?”, “where are you from?” and “where are you really from?” They explained that they are asked these questions because of their appearance that people cannot fit into one precise box. The answer that most respondents give to said questions, is either about their parents’ background or that they are mixed race. Some respondents also stated that when they are asked such questions, they answer stating that the question is inappropriate. Another set of respondents stated that they will give answers that might confuse the person asking the question in hopes of irritating the person asking the question and making them uncomfortable, similarly to how they have been made feel.

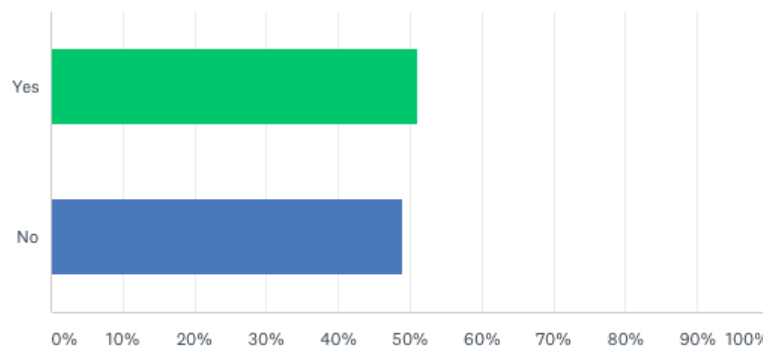
Another topic of questions, respondents have frequently been asked about, is their appearance. Many of the respondents stated that they receive many questions regarding their hair, such as “is your hair naturally like that?”, “why is your hair like that?” and “can I touch your hair?”. Besides hair related questions, respondents are asked about their skin tone and features such as nose and lips, especially when they identify as mono-racial. Some of the respondents are asked questions regarding preconceived notions and stereotypes implying that they are “too light” to be considered Black or that their nose is “too big” to be considered White. Again, respondents stated that they respond by explaining their background, and in some cases, they divert from the question if it was asked in a negative manner.

**Question 8** asked respondents whether they ever identified as mono-racial and what the reaction by others was. 26 (51%) of the respondents stated they have at some point identified mono-racially whereas 25(49%) stated that they had not. Of the 26 that have identified mono-racially, 5 were male and 21 were female. Many of those that have identified mono-racially stated that in most cases their choice was accepted. However, some stated, that it sometimes depends on the situation as well as the audience and what is convenient for them.

**Q8**

Have you ever chosen to identify as one particular race despite your mixed/biracial heritage, if so, how was your choice received by others? Were you accepted, were you rejected? If possible, please describe your experiences.

Answered: 51 Skipped: 42



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	50.98% 26
No	49.02% 25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>51</b>

[Comments \(29\)](#)

Figure 6 Mixed/Biracial Identity Survey Question 8

**Question 9** asked respondents how their choice of identifying as Mixed/Biracial is received by others. The majority of respondents stated that their choice is generally accepted, especially by family and friends whom they are closely acquainted with. They further stated that acceptance is oftentimes accompanied with curiosity and interest in parents' background. Furthermore, one respondent even stated that when they identify as mixed/biracial, "people react less strongly than when they identify as Black" (respondent #80).

Nevertheless, respondents stated that they also experience rejection when identifying as mixed/biracial. Sometimes they are told that by identifying as Mixed/Biracial, they are denying one aspect of their heritage. Another notion is that by identifying as mixed/biracial they somehow believe that they are better than others. This phenomenon mainly occurs in the Black community. Some respondents state that they believe that said phenomenon is linked to their skin tone and their hair texture. From White communities, respondents stated that they receive rejection sometimes stating that they are Black and not mixed. Some respondents stated that they believe this is linked to the so-called *One-Drop Rule*.

**Question 10** referred to how respondents' mothers racially identify. 33 (65%) of respondents' mothers identify as White, 10 (19%) of respondents' mothers identify as Black and 8 (16%) of respondents' mothers identify as Other. Of the 8 that stated their mother identifies as Other, majority stated that their mothers are mixed/biracial, one stated that they were adopted by an all-White family, another stated that her mother "does not identify as anything, she is White and that is what she is" and one other stated that her mother is Jamaican.

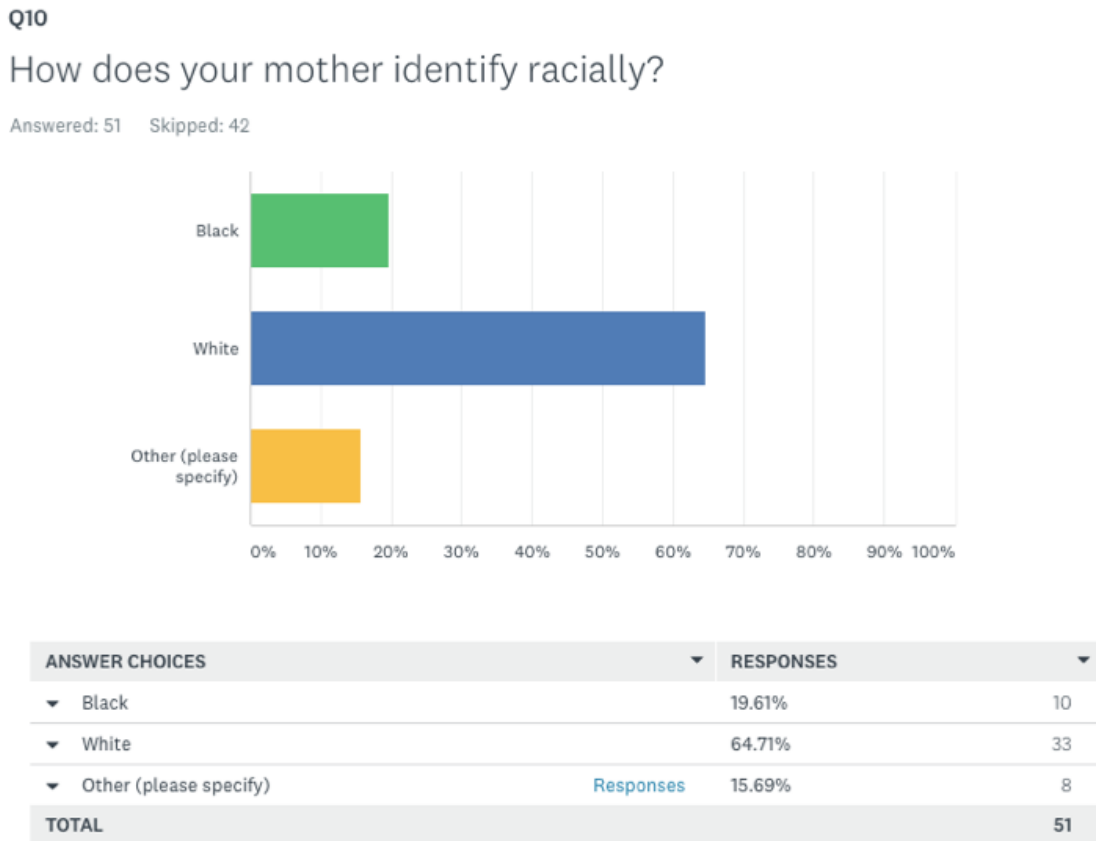


Figure 7 Mixed/Biracial Identity Survey Question 10

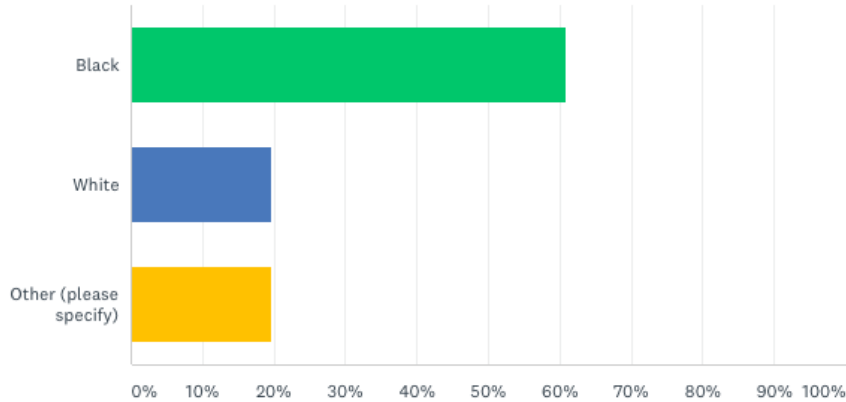
**Question 11** referred to how respondents’ fathers racially identify. 31 (61%) respondents stated that their father identifies as White, 10 (19.5%) stated that their father identifies as Black and 10 (19.5%) stated that their father identifies as Other. Of the 10 that stated that their father identifies as Other, 4 stated that their fathers were Mixed/Biracial, 1 stated that they were adopted by an all-White family, 1 stated that their father is Jamaican-Southeast Asian, but their adopted father is White, 1 stated that their father “does not identify as anything, he is Arab and that is what he is”, another stated that their father is Hispanic and 2 stated that their fathers are West Indian/Caribbean.



Q11

How does your father identify racially?

Answered: 51 Skipped: 42



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Black	60.78% 31
▼ White	19.61% 10
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 19.61% 10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>51</b>

Figure 8 Mixed/Biracial Identity Survey Question 11

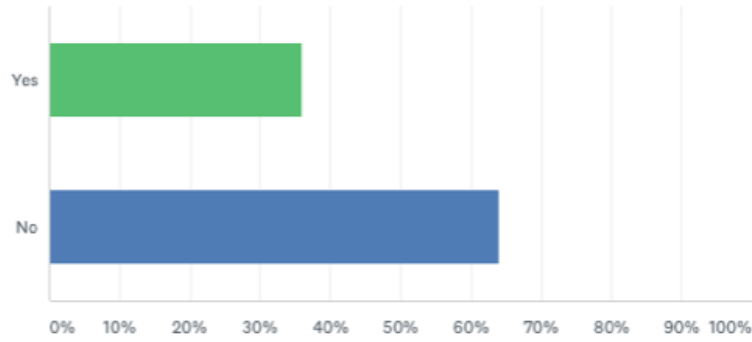
**Question 12** was a text answer question that asked respondents how they were identified by their parents. Majority of the respondents stated that their parents identified them as Mixed, Mixed-Race and Biracial. Some respondents stated that there was a difference between how each parent identified them. In some cases, the Black parent identified the respondent as Black and the White parent identified them as White. Quite a few respondents also stated that their parents never discussed race with them, hence not identifying them racially. Finally, one respondent stated that their parents identified them as “Beautiful” and another stated that their parents identified them as “their daughter”.

**Question 13** asked respondents whether they believed that it is easier for women to identify as Mixed/Biracial versus a single race. Respondents were then asked to explain their choice of answer. 32 respondents (64%) stated that they did not believe it was easier for women to identify as mixed/biracial versus a single race and 18 (36%) stated that they believed it was easier. One of the main topics for which respondents chose their answers was fetishization of mixed/biracial women. Some respondents stated that it was easier because women are more accepted than men due to fetishization and positive reception of mixed/biracial women. Others stated that because of fetishization, it is more difficult for mixed/biracial women to identify as mixed/biracial. One respondent pointed out that Mixed/Biracial men are easily categorized as Black such as President Obama, whereas mixed/biracial women are seen as mysterious, hence their mixed/biracial identity is more so embraced and accepted. The majority of the 18 respondents stated that they did not believe it was easier for women to identify as Mixed/Biracial claimed they believe that there is no difference by gender, as there are struggles in identifying as Mixed/Biracial no matter the gender. One respondent even stated that they did not know racial identity was in any way tied to gender.

Q13

Do you think it is easier for women to identify as mixed/biracial versus a single race?

Answered: 50 Skipped: 43



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	36.00% 18
No	64.00% 32
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>

[Comments \(41\)](#)

Figure 9 Mixed/Biracial Identity Survey Question 13

## 5 Analysis

In this section of the study, the results of the survey are analyzed. Firstly, responses were examined and emerging patterns were written down. Following that, the responses were then grouped together based on said patterns. Those responses that most clearly answered the RQ and the sub question were chosen and further analyzed. Finally, the results were reflected upon and evaluated, based on previous literature.

### 5.1 Otherness

One reoccurring topic throughout the study has been otherness. Many of the participants stated that they experience being ‘the Other’ on several occasions such as during family gatherings, in school and whilst dating. One respondent named “exclusion from any and all communities and the impossibility of dating like everybody else” a challenge that mixed/biracial individuals face. Another respondent stated being considered “Too Black for the White kids, and too White for the Blacks.” as a challenge of identifying as mixed/biracial and further

“My uneasiness about feeling as though I can feel fully a part of either racial community casts a negative light on much of my life. I don’t feel confident in any description of myself, thus making it hard to know what lens I’m looking through to process information.”

This participant’s statement is in line with what Jacobsen (2015) claims, namely that mixed/biracial individuals “are two races at once” whilst actually not belonging to any of the two races. Many of the participants stated they feel as though they do not fully belong to either of the races they are made up of. Respondents further stated that when they claim their biracial identity, their choice is oftentimes received negatively by others. In some instances, they are called standoffish or told that they are denying their heritage by downplaying one side by claiming both

sides. Jacobsen's (2015) claim is further confirmed by the statements of some participants explaining that they are oftentimes not considered 'not enough' of either race. One participant named "not being seen as "enough" of either to be accepted in the communities, and the crisis of identity that can arise if not kept properly sorted" as a struggle they face whilst identifying as biracial. This stands in contrast to what some of the other participants expressed, namely being 'too much' of one or the other.

Another topic that emerged in the study is the way in which language lead to acceptance or rejection of mixed/biracial individuals. One of the respondents described their experience in being considered the social Other:

"I grew up in the 80's. The most challenging thing for me was fitting in. I always felt I could never just be me. I had to make a choice. Am I white or black. Because of my parents insisting on us speaking proper English, no ebonics, my siblings and I were called names such as Uncle Tom, White Bread, Oreo, Zebra and High Yellow. We were never a part of any black or white groups. All of us were more so loners because we didn't fit in."

Bouie (2014) explains that amongst Black communities, when 'proper English' or grammatically correct English is spoken by Black individuals, they are perceived as 'talking White'. The participant's experience not only confirms Bouie's (2014) statement, it further shows how simply by choosing to deviate from preconceived stereotypes regarding language usage, mixed/biracial individuals are excluded from membership to racial groups.

Altogether it can be noted that whether it be being considered too much of one, too little of the other or just not fitting into preconceived boxes – designed by stereotypes – mixed/biracial individuals experience otherness in many different scenarios. The study found that not only do mixed/biracial individuals struggle on a personal basis with their identity, society as a whole puts

pressure on them while also isolating them, hence creating feelings of loneliness and exclusion within said individuals.

## 5.2 Identity

As Buchholtz and Hall (2005) point out, identity and identity formation is something that is heavily influenced by “social action” and “language”. Many participants stated that they receive a lot of input from others on how they should identify. Those that are darker in skin tone and have coarser hair are oftentimes told that they are Black. On the contrary, those that are lighter in skin tone and have straighter hair are told that they are White. However, the majority of respondents do not self-identify with what others identify them as, unless those others are their parents or close family and friends. According to Buchholtz and Hall (2005) said phenomenon can be described as the *emergence principle*, by which identity of mixed/biracial individuals is formed via “social action and language” of those that are close to said individuals. This means, parents or family communicate to the Mixed/Biracial individuals at some point or another that they are either Mixed/Biracial, Black, White or Black and White and the Mixed/Biracial individuals then adopt the way they are identified into the way they self-identify.

In addition to the *emergence principle*, Buchholtz and Hall (2005) mention the *relational principle* as an important aspect of identity and the display of one’s identity. This concept basically states that identity generally is viewed in comparison to other identities, for example that of mono-racial individuals. One of the concepts Buchholtz and Hall (2005) mention as part of the *relational principle* is *adequation* and *distinction* – *distinction* being the downplaying of similarities to highlight difference, *adequation* being the downplaying of differences to focus on similarities. Respondents explained that they encounter both concepts frequently. For one,

members of both racial groups oftentimes focus on difference such as skin tone or hair texture to point out that Mixed/Biracial individuals are very different from them. On the other hand, respondents stated that they experience a sense of *adequation* when evaluating their identity. One respondent explained that one of the benefits of identifying as mixed/biracial is that it gives her “the opportunity to support others who also identify with something other than the ‘popular norm’ or what is most prevalent for the sake of fitting in”. In this scenario, the respondent chooses to downplay differences they might have with others in order to focus on their similarity of “identifying with something other than the “popular norm””.

Buchholtz and Hall’s (2005) third set of proposed concepts is *authorization* and *illegitimization*. This set of concepts focuses on approval or rejection of an individual’s identity by someone in “power”. In the case of Mixed/Biracial individuals, the person in power is a Black or White mono-racial individual. Many of the respondents stated that they almost always experience *authorization* and *illegitimization* from mono-racial individuals. This is where the notion of “too much of one” or “too little of the other” comes in. Respondents claim that they are oftentimes told they are ‘too White to be Black’ and vice versa or ‘not White/Black enough’, which can be described as members of the mono-racial group illegitimizing their choice. On the other hand, respondents stated that when choosing to identify mono-racially, mono-racial group members authorized their choices by expressing acceptance.

### 5.3 Biracial Identity Development

As Buchholtz and Hall (2005) point out, identity is not something that one is but rather something that one portrays. In addition, they claim that identity is not a fixed variable but rather a fluid and flexible one that adjusts based on situation and audience. Hence, identity

development is also not stagnant and it continues throughout the course of one's life. While this statement is true for all individuals in general, it is especially true for mixed/biracial individuals as they encounter additional aspects mono-racial individuals do not have to face.

The first identity development model that focused on biracial identity development was created by Poston in 1990 (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008). This model described that there are five different stages of Biracial identity development, *integration* – in which individuals accept their heritage – being the final stage. The vast majority of the respondents stated that identifying as mixed/biracial grants them the opportunity to be true to themselves and acknowledge their entire heritage. Since one main criteria for participating in the study was being 18 years or older, it only makes sense that majority of respondents being adults, would be in the final stage of biracial identity development, namely *integration*. Poston's 1990 model is further validated by the experiences respondents shared of their childhood and youth. Some respondents explained that while they now have accepted all parts of their racial makeup, growing up they claimed one race over the other or even denied one race whilst fully embracing the other. Surprisingly however, nearly half (25 out of 51 respondents) stated that they have never identified mono-racially. This could be due to the fact that the survey was also distributed on platforms that take a positive stance toward mixed/biracial identity.

#### 5.4 Differences in men and women

Men and women encompass society in vastly different ways in general. When adding another facet, such as mixed/biracial heritage, the experiences might differ even more. Previous research (Davenport, 2016) suggests that biracial women are generally more likely to identify as mixed/biracial. Surprisingly, the study found that the majority of respondents do not believe that



it is easier for women to identify as mixed/biracial. Many respondents stated that the struggles mixed/biracial individuals face are the same for men and women, whilst some stated that it is harder for women to identify as mixed/biracial due to societal constructs. One respondent explained: “It seems that males are automatically accepted into the black community while females have to work for it.” Other respondents stated that because of the fetishization of mixed/biracial women, it is harder for them to identify as such.

On the other hand, some respondents stated that because there is such a fascination of mixed/biracial women, it is easier for them to identify as such. One respondent answered the question as follows:

“Yes. I’ve heard men tend to identify more with their minority side, and women more with both. I think it’s because women are already minorities, so adding “black” to that makes you ten times more vulnerable to LIFE.”

This statement gives a new perspective on possible reason that some mixed/biracial women might be more likely to identify as mixed/biracial versus men. Another respondent gave a different perspective on why it might be easier for mixed/biracial women to identify as such:

“People sometimes want to identify them as mixed because they fetishize mixed women. I think guys (for example, Barack Obama, or Steph Curry) get classified as black despite obviously being mixed.”

This statement is in line with what Davenport (2016) found out in her study, namely that mixed/biracial men are oftentimes described as “men of color” and further that they are viewed as Black by society. **Question 2** in this study asked how individuals choose to self-identify. 25% (3 out of 12) of the male respondents stated that they identify as solely Black versus only 5% (2 out of 40) of female respondents who identified as solely Black. When looking at **Question 3**,

which asked about the ways in which others identify respondents, the numbers show an even clearer picture. 50% (6 out of 12) of male respondents were identified as Black by others and of that 50%, 50% (3 out of 6) choose to identify as solely Black. When it comes to women however, 45% (18 out of 42) of women have been identified as Black by others yet only 11% (2 out of 18) identify as solely Black.

Nevertheless, one respondent stated that the answer to said question is not straightforward but that it rather is situational:

“I think it depends. Based on the experiences of me and my siblings, it seems like it's easier for women to identify as mixed in white communities, but it's easier for men to identify as mixed in black communities. Guys who try to identify as mixed in white communities still deal with stereotypes of being big, scary black guys. But in the black community, some black women seem to feel threatened by mixed women, due to a lot of nasty eurocentric beauty standards, and they lash out with bullying.”

This response again highlights the role appearance plays in identifying as mixed/biracial. While the question did not ask anything regarding appearance or acceptance or rejection by the opposite sex and society as a whole, the topic of fetishization and appearance were prominent throughout the majority of responses. While there were dissensions whether fetishization of mixed/biracial women made it easier or harder for women to identify as such versus a single race, fetishization was the determining factor for the choice respondents made.

## 5.5 The One Drop Rule

The history of the United States and its remnants still have very prominent influences on the American society today. While slavery has been abolished for many years, racism and the effects

of White superiority are still visible today. Mixed/biracial individuals therefore find themselves in a compromising situation. On the one hand side, they are made up of a group that is oppressed by society, on the other hand side they are made up of another group that is the oppressor in society. This subject has been mentioned by respondents, time after time. Some mention their White privilege and state that they have to mask it or sometimes even feel embarrassed for it. Others express that when filling out job applications or official documents, they either identify as mixed/biracial or mono-racial White in hopes of standing better chances. One of the most interesting findings of the study however, is that out of the 52 respondents to the survey, only 6 identified as White and even more surprisingly, none of the 6 respondents identified as solely White, they always did so in conjunction with other racial identity labels. This stands in contrast to the 14 individuals that identify as Black, of which 5 identify as solely Black. A possible explanation for this is the *One Drop Rule* (Khanna 2010), which stems from slavery and its stated that anyone with even just one drop of Black blood was considered Black. **In Question 6**, respondents were asked to state challenges of identifying as mixed/biracial and majority of the respondents stated that they encounter ignorance by others that insist they are ne race or the other and cannot grasp the idea of them being both. One respondent explains:

“White people insisting I have to identify as black due to racist "one drop" rules used to keep people enslaved and black people insisting I have to identify as black or I'm being snobby and disrespecting my black ancestors.”

Another respondent mentioned the *One Drop Rule* as a challenge of identifying as mixed/biracial:

“Probably noticing that most white people, while knowing that I’m half white, will see me as “other.” Same goes for black people, but less so. I guess that’s just the “one drop

rule” remnants of slavery being passed down; I will always be viewed more black than white. Genetically speaking that isn’t true because of all the rape that happened with slavery but I also have Native American genealogy which make up a good chunk of my genetics as well.”

These responses – especially the last one – show how deeply rooted racial issues still are in American society. Despite being made up of equally, if not more ‘White genealogy’, individuals are still told that they are Black. Hence, they are not allowed to identify as whatever they feel comfortable with, be it mixed/biracial, White or even Black, instead they are forced to identify as Black despite their mixed heritage.

## 6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine *How do mixed/biracial individuals choose to identify and what influences their choice in doing so? and What are the differences that men and women encounter in identifying?* The analysis of the survey results and the relevant literature, presented the following conclusions.

The study found that the majority of respondents self-identify as mixed/biracial. Respondents stated that the aspect of self-identifying as mixed/biracial they appreciate the most, is being able to acknowledge both of their races whilst also not being forced to fit into one racial box. Altogether it can be said that mixed/biracial individuals' choice of self-identifying is influenced by the way in which others – especially parents and close family – identify them. While not all respondents self-identify according to what society identifies them as, majority of respondents identified with what individuals in their close proximity/circle identified them as. Respondents also explained that the way in which their choice of self-identifying is perceived by others varies based on context. In some instances, respondents' choice of self-identifying mono-racially is accepted by Black and White mono-racial individuals, while in others, their choice is rejected. Some respondents expressed that when choosing to self-identify as mixed/biracial, they are told that they are Black based on notions such as the *One Drop Rule*. What is interesting to note, is that While 6 of the respondents identify as White in addition to other racial identities, however none of those 6 respondents solely identifies as White. In contrast, 14 respondents identify as Black in addition to other racial identities, 5 of those respondents identify solely as Black. This precisely shows just how deeply engrained the *One Drop Rule* is in the United States society even today, subsequently influencing the way in which mixed/biracial individuals self-identify.

The study also revealed that respondents identify differently based on context. When they are with family, they sometimes chose to identify based on what side of the family they are with. This is due to the fact that sometimes when they claim their mixed/biracial identity, their choice is rejected by their family members stating that they are denying that side of the family's race. Hence, in their presence, respondents identify based on acceptance or rejection of the mono-racial family members. Furthermore, the study found that parents, when separated, would identify the child based on what their own race is. In addition, respondents stated that they choose to identify as mixed/biracial when it comes to job applications as they believe that it gives them an advantage in the job application process. This notion goes back to *Critical Race Theory* as described by Hill (2008), again reflecting systematic racism via White superiority.

When it comes to men versus women, the study found that the main differences men and women encounter is based on appearances. When asked, whether they believed it is easier for women to identify as mixed/biracial versus men, the majority of respondents stated that they do not believe it is easier for women to identify as mixed/biracial. However, the question asked to state the reason why individuals selected the option they did and further inspection of these comments revealed that the reason they selected their answer was mainly based on appearance and fetishization of mixed/biracial women. On the one hand, individuals stated that it is easier for women to identify as mixed/biracial because the fetishization of mixed/biracial women may result in more acceptance by others. On the other hand, respondents expressed that fetishization of mixed/biracial women itself is negative, hence identifying as mixed/biracial may prove to be more difficult for women. Nevertheless, the responses laid bare, how crucial appearance and feedback thereof is to the process of self-identifying in mixed/biracial women.

Biracial men on the other hand are oftentimes identified as Black (Davenport, 2016). The study revealed that 50% of male respondents have been identified as Black by others. Of the 5 respondents that identify as solely Black, 3 identify as male and 2 identify as female. When breaking these numbers down more, a pattern becomes noticeable. Of the 52 respondents to the survey, 12 identify as male and 40 as female. Looking back at the individuals that solely identify as Black, 3 of 12 are male and 2 of 40 are female. This means, that 25% of the male respondents self-identify solely as Black, whereas only 5% of women identify as solely Black. These numbers show the correlation between identifying by others and self-identifying in mixed/biracial men. The conclusion that can be drawn is that because men are more likely than women to be identified as Black (Davenport, 2016), men in turn are more likely to self-identify as Black.

## 7 Limitations and Further Research

### 7.1 Limitations

There are a few limitations to this research. For one, the time period in which this research was conducted, did not allow for lengthy/extensive gathering of data. Initially, I did not receive any responses, however, eventually I was able to gather 52 responses. Of the 52 respondents, only 12 identify as male and 40 identify as female. In the analysis of the results, I found significant differences in male versus female responses, and had there been more male respondents, this could have had more of an impact on the overall results.

One main issue is that the sample for this study is extremely limited as it only consisted of Black/White mixed/biracial individuals living in the United States. I contacted *SurveyMonkey* and asked whether responses could be bought, however due to the fact that the sample was so specific, purchasing responses was not an option. Hence, I had to rely on the data gathered from various websites such as *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *Reddit*. One possible limitation with the *Facebook* group and the *Reddit* group is that they are groups that generally share positive attitudes toward mixed/biracial identity. Nevertheless, in order to combat ‘too one sided’ responses, the survey was also uploaded as a comment under a *YouTube* documentary about mixed/biracial identity that also received negative feedback. I personally was insulted by two users that decided to post insulting comments under the comment of my survey.

Another limitation to this research is my personal background. Because I am a mixed/biracial woman myself, my personal experience may have led to unconscious biases on my part. As Dörnyei (2007) points out, researchers are supposed to enter research without any biases or “preconceived notions.” (37). While I made every effort to avoid jumping to



conclusions or letting my own personal experiences cloud my judgement, as previously stated, my unconscious biases may have presented a limitation to this research.

## 7.2 Further Research

One interesting concept that emerged is the term “Black with White mom” whilst there is no mention of “Black with White dad”. This leaves many questions open such as whether mixed/biracial identity is assumed when the father is White, and whether Blackness is assumed once the father is Black. It also leaves the question open why there is no such term as “White with Black dad” or any of the other variants including a mono-racial descriptor of the child alongside the opposite mono-racial descriptor of either parent. Hence, further research into this phenomenon should be conducted. Further research may explain the role parents’ race in correlation to gender plays, in regard to self-identity of the mixed/biracial child plays. Investigating this matter could also reveal whether parents’ marital status influences the way in which mixed/biracial individuals choose to identify, and if so, what implications parents’ marital status may have on the self-identifying process. In addition, due to a small sample size, I was unable to draw conclusions on the impact the race of the same sex parent had on self-identifying in the respondents. Further research could assess in what ways the race of the same sex parent has on the child’s identity development.

Finally, socioeconomic factors were not taken into consideration in this study. Due to time constraint and a highly specific sample, I was unable to take socioeconomic factors such as age, income status, and location of residence into consideration. Socioeconomic factors can have a huge impact on the way in which race and racial identity is perceived by others and lived out by individuals. Further research should focus on the way in which socioeconomic factors such as

parents' marital status, family income, urban or rural location and education play into effect in shaping the way in which mixed/biracial individuals identify and how their choice is perceived. Studying said socioeconomic factors might clearly demonstrate just how much of an effect these factors and everything attached to them may have. Finally, socioeconomic factors were not taken into consideration. Due to time constraint and a highly specific sample, I was unable to take socioeconomic factors such as age, income status, and location of residence into consideration. Socioeconomic factors can have a huge impact on the way in which race and racial identity is perceived by others and lived out by individuals. Further research should focus on the way in which socioeconomic factors such as parents' marital status, family income, urban or rural location and education play into effect in shaping the way in which mixed/biracial individuals identify and how their choice is perceived.

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