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"That's Your Mother?!"
The Power of Experience: Reflections and Lessons in Identity

by
Adrienne Lee

Mentor: Joanne Rizzi

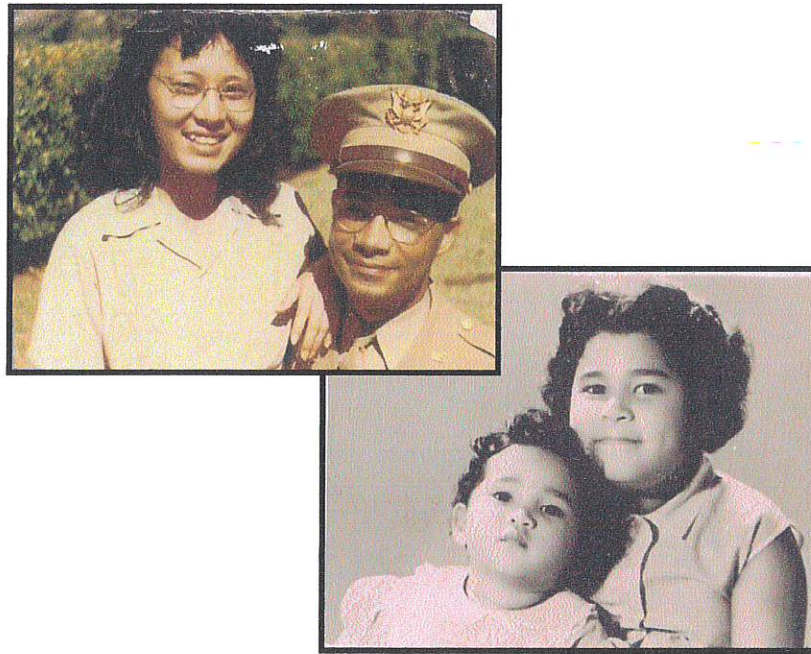
**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of
the degree of Master of Science in Education**

Bank Street College of Education

2007

“That’s Your Mother?!”

The Power of Experience: Reflections and Lessons in Identity



by
Adrienne Lee

ABSTRACT

“That’s Your Mother?!”

**The Power of Experience: Reflections and Lessons in Identity
by Adrienne Lee**

With each passing decade, the United States’ population grows more culturally diverse. In fact, by the year 2050, America’s population will no longer be dominated by any one ethnic group. The interracial baby-boom of the 1970s contributed significantly to our country’s cultural complexity, and today, these many faces of diversity make America a uniquely blended society.

In 2006, the Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, California) opened *Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa*, an art exhibition that featured the images and words of 80 individuals of mixed Asian heritage or *hapa*. The exhibition addresses the highly charged yet inevitable question often asked of mixed-race individuals: “What are you?”

Created by a hapa museum educator, this thesis project studies and documents “experience” to inform the creation of a student gallery program for the *Kip Fulbeck* exhibition. The gallery program focuses on the nature of identity and the many factors that make us who we are as individuals. This study employs both learning and human developmental theories, and incorporates the writer’s own biracial experiences and collected reflections—methods of phenomenology and heuristics—to find meaning and project solutions, which ultimately demonstrate the power of experience and its application in a learning environment.

Acknowledgments

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I would especially like to thank my mother and my sister for their continuing support of my education, my unconventional ideas, and for spending hours in front of a video camera providing oral histories. Likewise, my heartfelt thanks to Raynor, for his love and encouragement (and his printing skills). Lastly, but certainly not least, a big thank you and hugs to my mentor, Joanne Rizzi, for her complete confidence in me, for her fabulous ideas, and for hours of long-distance phone conversations throughout a cold winter 2007.

This work is dedicated to my father, Lloyd L. Lee, whose intelligence, drive for excellence, and passion for travel provided the means for an experiential education like no other.

Adrienne Lee
April 25, 2007

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Introduction

“What are you?” This is a question that nearly every multiracial person on the planet knows well and frankly hates. Though often posed sincerely, this seemingly simple question does not often result in an easy or tidy answer. Ethnicity and identity are deeply complex and personal issues and cannot be packaged neatly in casual conversation. Sometimes met with dismay, disbelief or even denial, a legitimate response to the question, “What are you?” frequently elicits further probing: “No, really, what are you?” or “How did your parents meet?” or “So, do you consider yourself Y or Z?” The multiracial person faces this question of identity, existence and self-worth on demand, time and time again. No other question draws such passionate responses or produces such a wide variety of wisecracks, insults, funny quips, enlightened verse or delicate answers. For the question itself forces multiracial people to explain themselves and to validate their existence on the spot, often to total strangers. “What are you?” presents a complicated set of issues for both asker and recipient.

Kip Fulbeck knows this question well. He is an artist/filmmaker of mixed Asian descent and has created an art project in which he poses the question, “What are you?” to people of mixed Asian heritage, or *hapa*. Once a derogatory word for a person of mixed-Hawai’ian descent and literally the Hawai’ian word for “half,” *hapa* is now used with pride by many biracial and multiracial Asians and Pacific Islanders. In *Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa*, a 2006 exhibition at the Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, California), Fulbeck captures 80 *hapa* subjects through portrait photography and

through their corresponding handwritten responses to “What are you?” Together, text and photograph allow the viewer to understand the external and internal worlds of hapa and how multiracial people define themselves in their own words. The exhibition encourages visitors to think about identity, reflect on who they are and how they define themselves, and consider the kinds of labels we automatically assign to people without permission.

“**Exploring Mixed-Race Identity**” was developed in response to a request to provide a facilitated gallery program for the hapa exhibition for students, ages 9-14. The process of developing this program included current and historic research on biracial and hapa issues, study of both learning and human development theory, careful consideration of the artworks, consultation with a number of professional museum and classroom educators, and a review of the California State Content Standards. More importantly, this project integrated extensive personal reflections, memories, observations, dialogues, intuition, and documented experiences—phenomenological and heuristics research methods—which informed the creation of the student program.

This thesis incorporates practical theory and personal reflection side-by-side and uses two distinct text formats—regular text and *italicized text*—to distinguish each type of entry. The synthesis of these two formats—academic and personal—make up this thesis, much like two ethnicities, which **together** make up who I am.

How to read this thesis:

This body of work employs text in two different formats:

- Normal text formally describes the body of research, theories, findings, and descriptions of activities conducted during this project and is generally written in the third person.
- *Italicized text reflects personal thoughts, memories, ponderings, “just thinking” kinds of ideas, stories, anecdotes, and realizations that occurred during the process of writing this thesis. Italicized text is written in the first person.*

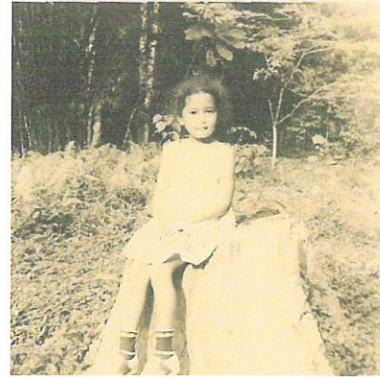
“That’s Your Mother?!”

Chapter One

I don’t recall the day when I first realized I was biracial. I’m not sure if there’s ever one specific day when ones identity snaps into place. Identity develops slowly (at least it did for me) with observations and situations, stories and friendships, places and families, hints at the unexplained, commonalities, new discoveries, shared ideals and plans for the future. This understanding is tweaked from time to time, and then in a moment, you re-think and re-examine who you are, where you’ve been, and what your place is in the world—because maybe you got it all wrong until that moment. For me, that moment came at age 15 when I was being dropped off at my house after school. Just before I got out of the car, my friend saw my mother in the front yard and gasped, “That’s your mother?!” I never knew if her remark was a question or a statement, so I use both punctuations. As my friend and her parents drove out of our driveway, I kept wondering if I had missed something. What did she see in my mother that I had not seen before? What was wrong or out of place? Was there something I needed to reconsider? I don’t think I dwelled on it much past the walk up the driveway, but from that day on, I became aware that my parents (and certainly my Mom) were somehow different from everyone else’s.

Born in San Francisco in 1925, and raised in Hawai’i among a large, lively family of grocers, pineapple farmers, and trades people, my mother is Chinese American. Nothing out of the ordinary, just “Ma” when my sister, Karen, and I are in a folksy mood, and at other times, “Mom.” The fact that she happened to be married to my (late)

father, an African American sociologist from Nebraska, was irrelevant in my family. It wasn't even an issue that deigned discussion or reference at the dinner table or during family meetings. To me, Ma was Ma and Dad was Dad. Mom taught me how to stir-fry, how to bake cookies, and how to distinguish the perennials and annuals in our garden. When I was small, she taught me to be less afraid



Cameroon, West Africa, 1960s

of addition and subtraction using a small contraption that she made herself—a tiny, paper-covered box that had in its center several rows of shiny buttons that moved back and forth along suspended lines of sewing thread—a pint-sized abacus that helped me solve my calculations. Dad taught me the difference between Phillips and flathead screwdrivers, how to drive a car safely in the snow, and what to listen for in a Mahler symphony. They both instilled in me the value of education and the meaning of honest integrity, like paying your bills on time and returning library books unmarked. They were also the two people who showed my sister and me the very large and very wide world that existed outside of the United States.

Looking Back at Racial Mixing in America

According to Dr. Gary Nash (1999), noted historian at the University of California, Los Angeles, “Two groups have never met without mingling their blood” (p. vii). Nash refers to societies throughout the ages and in all parts of the world, including those that were part of our country’s earliest history. Racial mixing in America can point back to a year as early as 1614 when Native American Pocahontas married John Rolfe, an

English tobacco planter. Their union was not the first or the last such pairing of the time. Various groups contributed to racial mingling in early American life (French fur trappers, Spanish explorers, White land-owners, African Slaves, Native American dwellers, Asian railroad workers), and each coupling created multiracial offspring who were accepted or not accepted in varying degrees. Some offspring were given recognition through distinctive categorizations of their mix (*metis* for the children of Native Americans and French; *mestizos* for the children of Native Americans and Spanish or Portuguese; *mulattos* for children of Spanish and Africans). Ironically, no specialized names were given for the mixed offspring of the dominant White Protestant population and non-Whites. "The dominant group instead defined all mixed-race people as either African or Indians. There could be no intermediate social compartments . . ." (Nash, 1999, p. 62-63). Between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, the attitude toward racial mixing became severely divided, as the issue of "race" became more pronounced. In a country that enslaved a whole culture of people, the mixing of the dominant and the enslaved could not be reconciled. "A White woman could give birth to a Black or Indian infant . . . but a Black or Indian woman could never produce a White child" (Nash, 1999, p. 64). In 1661, Maryland became the first future state to write an anti-miscegenation law banning the marriages of White female servants to Black slaves.

There was no ease of tension between the dominant and non-dominant societies after the Civil War and as the country moved toward the 20th century. Ridicule, suspicion and hate escalated, even as the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution were ratified, abolishing slavery, providing all citizens equal protection under the law,

and giving equal voting rights to all male citizens, respectively. In the post-Civil War era, free Blacks were a threat to the order of White supremacy. White supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan, founded in 1872, used terror beginning in the early 1900s to enforce a White racial order. Many Americans began to fear the large influx of non-Anglo people coming to America. Between 1880 and 1914, 2.3 million Jews immigrated to the U.S., in addition to a large number of Italian and Polish immigrants. Racial labeling, like the “one drop rule,” came into existence, classifying people as Black if they could identify one Black ancestor, or “one drop” of “Black” blood in their family history. On the West Coast, where one-quarter of the labor force was Chinese in the 1870s (Nash, 1999), the *1882 Chinese Exclusion Act* was passed to prohibit Chinese immigration, and laws banning interracial marriages with Asians were quickly put into place. Included in the growing hostility toward non-dominant cultural groups was equal resentment toward mixed offspring.

It is commonly understood today that the idea of “race” is a social construct, an idea argued and supported by a dominant culture to provide an ordered hierarchy among groups of people, thereby creating superior and inferior statuses in a given society. The notion of superior and lower classes is not a new one. Many societies in India, China, Africa, and Europe have attempted to classify their populations. However, a number of these societies distinguish people by religion, class, status, or language, not by physical attributes. As stated in the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) 2003 documentary, *Race: The Power of Illusion*, “race” is a modern idea that has no genetic basis (Adelman, Ten Things Everyone Should Know About Race, Listing #2). Excerpts explain:

As the race idea evolved, White superiority became “common sense” in America. It justified not only slavery but also the extermination of Indians, exclusion of Asian immigrants, and the taking of Mexican lands by a nation that professed a belief in democracy. (Ten Things, Listing #8)

As America pushed through the beginning of the 1900s, and despite the harsh realities of racial discrimination and the Jim Crow laws that segregated an entire population in the South, mingling between groups began to occur more frequently. Major economic and social developments enabled groups to come together on a regular basis, creating more opportunities to meet face-to-face. During the Great Depression, for example, organizers tried to integrate industrial labor plants, which inevitably provided a venue for various steelworkers and packinghouse workers to tentatively cross paths. Cities like Chicago and New York were melting pots and meeting places for the cross-cultural masses, especially for Blacks escaping the segregated South. The new art form, jazz, was a huge draw for both Black and White communities. When the Harlem Renaissance was in full swing, Black writers, poets, artists, singers and dancers met, mingled, and married artists of other backgrounds.

World War II provided significant turning points in both world history and in the social structure of the United States. *Executive Order 8802*, signed in 1941, ended racial discrimination in the workforce, although it only applied to the nation’s defense industry at the time. However, it was the first piece of legislation that paved the way for equal rights for all U.S. citizens. At the end of WWII, when faced with the reality of the Nazis’

“final solution” to exterminate an entire group of people based on ethnicity, many Americans had difficulty justifying the discrimination taking place in their own country. Members of the segregated military (Blacks, Japanese, Filipinos, Mexicans, and Native Americans) protested their discrimination during the war, and some refused to return to a country in which they themselves were not “free.”

From the late 1940s through to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the U.S. saw a slow and steady growth in social and economic justice for all Americans. The signing of *Executive Order 9981* in 1948 put an end to a segregated U.S. military. In the same year California became the first state in the country to permit interracial marriages. In 1954, the Supreme Court case of *Brown vs. Board of Education* ended discrimination in public schools. The landmark *Civil Rights Act of 1964* ended discrimination in the workforce, in government, and in public facilities; it also made illegal the Jim Crow laws of the South, segregation in schools, housing, and hiring, and finally, the *Voting Rights Act of 1965* ensured voting rights for all citizens.

In just 23 years, the non-dominant population of America managed to level the playing field for its citizens, earning every American the right to equal jobs, equal housing, and equal education under U.S. law. Though these were important first steps to social equality, some freedoms (like the freedom to marry anyone of ones choosing) still remained on the battlefield ready for their day in court. The fight for equal rights has been fought for decades, and U.S. citizens today still continue to demand social

equalities, such as the right to same-sex marriage and equal rights for U.S. immigrants. To be sure, American democracy is not perfect and remains a work in progress.

As I cover the literature on race and ethnicity, I realize that I'm able to read "historic" accounts of racial discrimination fairly calmly with academic interest. However, I notice that "history" to me is anything that happened before my parents were alive (that is, 1913) and seems like a once-removed telling of someone else's story. Events that take place during my parents' lifetime agitate me, because the events are no longer "history" but my parents' reality. Segregation and humiliation, Jim Crow's "for colored people only" is no longer a page from a book, it is my Dad's experience in America and his own reality well into his 50s. Even though my mother's family immigrated to the U.S., or more correctly, immigrated to the U.S. territory of Hawai'i before 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited any of Mom's relatives from moving to the U.S. prior to 1943 when the law was repealed. I'm disturbed again by reading about the harsh realities of segregated America, but I'm also ashamed of feeling so distant from the issue, the era, and the experience. I begin to wonder about the teaching implications. How do we impact students who feel detached from these difficult but significant events in history? How do we convey history to younger generations? How do we make history relevant to students who have no basis or reference to that place or time? If I were a student, what would I need to think about, feel, touch, hear, read, look at, experience in order to fully understand a particular moment in the past?

I never had to ride in the back of a bus. I never had to sit in a separate waiting room, eat at a separate counter, drink from a separate water fountain. I was fortunate enough to have all of the privileges and advantages of any White Anglo American, because of the life and experiences that my Dad provided for me in a diplomatic service outside of the United States. His single goal for his kids was that they not experience the same life he led as an African American in segregated America. When my family arrived to live in the States permanently just after the height of the Civil Rights Movement, I was still sheltered by a haze of international travel and fiercely protective parents.

About 10 years ago, when I was in Atlanta on business, I visited the King Center, the living memorial and resource center dedicated to civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The King Center offers an exhibition on the history of the Civil Rights Movement and details Dr. King's life journey. I should say that I visited the King Center twice during that trip. The first time, I was so overwhelmed by the exhibition content that I excused myself from my peer group and returned on a later date so that I could have the emotional space I needed to comprehend all that was being presented in the exhibition. Up until that point in my life, I didn't quite "get" being Black in America. Dad never spoke of it, and my life didn't reflect anything close to a typical American "Black experience." If the Jim Crow laws are still displayed at the Center in the same way as I remember them, the full breath of the laws are etched on tall, glass panels and lit from all angles. Laws that were meant to segregate, humiliate, dehumanize, and terrorize are "glorified" in these tall, glassy, monolithic, immovable structures. This is one of the first sights that confront you upon entering the Center. I remember standing frozen in front of

these panels for what seemed like a half an hour or more. I began at the top and read through all of the panels, becoming more and more dazed as I read. I was stunned and stung by the words that demonstrated some of the worse degradation that a society could inflict upon its members. I continued through the exhibition feeling raw and exposed from the photographs, historic accounts, and personal reflections. I sat for a long time putting myself in the minds of the African Americans who came before me. I left crushed, humbled, tormented, emotionally drained, physically shaken, but grateful for what I had learned and for the connections that I had made to my own ethnic identity. More importantly, I finally understood fully what drove my father to provide a life for us outside of the United States.

Loving vs. Virginia

The freedom to marry across the color lines became possible on June 12, 1967, when the U.S. Supreme Court, in the case of *Loving vs. Virginia*, struck down a Virginia State law that prohibited interracial marriage. The decision in this landmark case gave all U.S. citizens the freedom to choose and legally marry their life partners. Historically, the laws governing the institution of marriage were created by state, not Federal government, and as we have learned, many of the segregation laws were created for socio-economic reasons and to benefit the dominant White culture of America. Most anti-miscegenation laws were written to deny the rights of those of African or slave descent in marrying White Americans, because “free White” fathers legally produced “free children,” regardless of skin color. Note that there were no laws that prevented non-White citizens from intermarrying. The fear of producing “free Black” offspring drove many states,

especially Southern states, to draft and implement anti-miscegenation laws with punishments of heavy fines and jail time.

Prior to *Loving vs. Virginia*, interracial marriage was illegal in 17 states, including the State of Virginia. As stated by Judge Bazile of Caroline County, Virginia in 1965:

Almighty God created the races, white, black, yellow, Malay, and red and placed them on separate continents, and but for the interference with his arrangement there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend the races to mix. (Loving Day, 2004, Courtroom History, *Loving v. Virginia*)

As residents of Virginia, Richard and Mildred Loving, White and Black Americans respectively, were unable to legally marry in their state in 1958, so they drove to Washington, D.C. to wed and then returned to Virginia to resume their lives. However, a 1924 Virginia law made it illegal to purposely leave the state to marry and return to cohabit with one's spouse. On July 13, 1958, the Lovings were arrested in their home, five weeks after their return from Washington, were charged and convicted of breaking Virginia's anti-miscegenation laws, and received a one-year jail sentence from Judge Bazile. The judge was willing to waive the sentence only if the Lovings agreed to leave the state and not return to Virginia for 25 years. The Lovings moved to Washington, D.C. where they began their legal fight to live as man and wife in the State of Virginia.

The Lovings' arrest and sentencing fell at the brink of the Civil Rights Movement, and it took another nine years before the Loving case was heard before the U.S. Supreme Court. By that time, the Supreme Court had already put in place the *Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965*. So in 1967, it was the Lovings' turn to demand equal justice with their case in the hands of attorneys from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). On the day of the trial, Richard Loving said to his attorneys, "Tell the court that I love my wife, and it is just not fair that I can't live with her in Virginia" (Alonso, 2000, p. 45). In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court overturned the Lovings' 1958 conviction on the grounds that the Virginia law violated the couple's right to equal justice under the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment. Chief Justice Warren Burger, in his opinion, wrote,

Marriage is one of the 'basic civil rights of man,' fundamental to our very existence and survival. . . . To deny this fundamental freedom on so unsupportable a basis as the racial classifications embodied in these statutes . . . is surely to deprive all the State's citizens of liberty without due process of law. . . . Under our Constitution, the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides with the individual and cannot be infringed by the State. (Multiracial Activist, 2006, *Loving v. Virginia*, Section 2, ¶ 2)

The Court ruled unconstitutional Virginia's *Racial Integrity Act of 1924*, thereby ending restrictions to interracial marriage in the United States. All 17 states upholding marriage restrictions were ordered to strike these laws from their books. Alabama was the last state to carry out this order, and did so in 2000.

When my parents exchanged vows in 1949, interracial marriage in the United States was illegal in 29 of the 48 states (Loving Day, 2004). Of course, there were few



Dad and Mom (center) married on June 17, 1949

laws preventing non-Whites from marrying.

Also, since Hawai'i was not yet a state, state anti-miscegenation laws could not be enforced.

Somehow though, Mom and Dad weren't phased by the potential difficulties and

backlash that might occur if they married.

When they met after World War II, Mom was a student at the University of Hawai'i and Dad was conducting post-graduate research at the university. Theirs was an interesting pairing—the friendly, always-curious, elementary school teacher with the close-knit Chinese American family and the reserved, African American sociologist from the mid-West with bitter memories of segregation. With the utter disapproval of her family, Mom married, left Hawai'i with the clothes on her back, and never looked back. Dad had been accepted into a doctoral program at the Sorbonne (University of Paris, France), so they left for the U.S. mainland and were Paris-bound. What drew them together? For her, it was his intelligence, his interest in traveling to other parts of the world, and his scope of life experience. She would say, "He was so worldly. He knew so many things." Though I couldn't say for sure, I imagine that Dad was drawn to Mom's unpretentious nature, her openness, her love of education, and her spirit of adventure. Their life together spanned nearly 50 years, and Mom has had no regrets.

"Didn't you come across ANY discrimination?" I asked Mom one time. "Didn't you get stared at? Didn't anyone ever say anything to you and Dad?" Mom frowned, "No. I don't recall anything." I couldn't imagine that in 1949, on a trip from Hawai'i to California to Nebraska to Chicago to D.C. and then to New York, no one batted an eye at an African American man and a Chinese American woman together—married no less. Apparently, as Mom explained, whenever they were in the U.S., they stayed in "the North" and kept to themselves a lot. They would eat in Chinese restaurants or on the "Black side" of town where racial mixing was more tolerated. They also knew that they would always receive fair and equal treatment in any Federal building, so they would often eat in the cafeterias found in those Federal offices. Apparently, they knew how to steer clear of situations that would put them under scrutiny. They were probably always vigilant, unassuming, and wary.

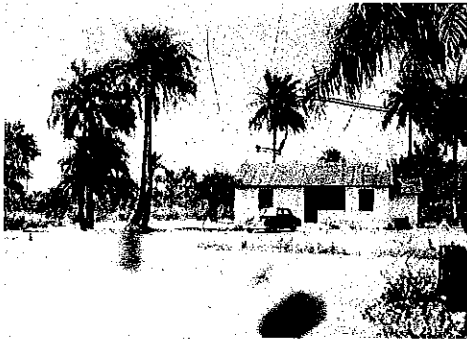


Dad's sister (left) and parents (right), Mom, and infant Karen – Omaha, 1954

As we were growing up, too, they were on guard and cautious. Toting two biracial children across the world and introducing them into countless different societies and environments couldn't have been easy. I imagine that our safety from emotional and physical trauma was just as important as our international education.

As a sociologist, Dad had the opportunity to live his dream of global travel through his many jobs with the Federal government. He helped to set up the first census

bureau of Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, and worked in several U.S. Economic offices



Home in Monrovia, Liberia, 1952

in Vietnam and West Africa. Mom often taught English at home or at the local international schools. Our family vacations took us to global destinations like Paris, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, Bangkok, and Beirut to name a few cities.

I believe the ultimate intent of our traveling centered on the fact that Dad wanted to prevent us from becoming the Americans with whom he encountered growing up in a segregated U.S. society. He saw that education was key to rising above discrimination and racial intolerance and that some of the best education was attained through encountering places, people, and societies that were different than one's own. In part, I'm sure that he wanted to escape the U.S., but he was also a smart and purpose-driven individual who saw great value to growing up and being educated outside of the States.

When Mom and Dad were living in Paris, Mom wrote a regular column for the Honolulu Advertiser. There are 24 articles in all, which Dad photocopied and bound for me many years ago. How interesting to read



Mom and Dad in Paris, 1949-50

them again. One comment seemed to sum up a Lee family theme. In her very last column before returning to the U.S., in an article dated August 1, 1950, Mom writes,

Traveling and, even more so, living in a foreign country is an education in itself—knowledge which cannot be obtained from a book. It is a job to learn to think in another language, to adjust to other customs, to tear one's self away from lifelong habits. Everything that I did all my life in Honolulu I have had to change during the past year. (Lee, 1950)

When Dad passed away in 1995, Mom reflected, "You know, I've had such an interesting life. I've seen so many parts of the world; I don't regret any of it." This could be true for my sister and me, as Dad provided a remarkable and memorable childhood for us to remember. However, I always wished that I had known Dad a little bit better than I did. I wished that he could have opened up and had been more approachable. Quiet by nature, his silence, focus and reserve often loomed large in an otherwise chatty, female household. His seriousness and my exuberance often clashed, even though in reality we had many interests in common. His demand for perfection and stellar behavior was relentless. I suspect that he demanded the same perfection of his kids that he demanded of himself in a world of harsh social realities. He was closed off to many interactions. And yet, he opened the doors in a different way, perhaps saying, don't look at me, don't look at my bitterness, enjoy the rich diversity of art, music, and literature, appreciate the diversity that we experience every day, look at what the world



Dad in Hawai'i, 1945-49

has to offer beyond your hometown and accept people—all different kinds of people—for who and what they are.

“Are you sure you’re not Spanish?”

Chapter Two

“You’re Spanish, right?” I looked up from my plate. “Uh, no, I’m not Spanish,” I said casually, as I passed a salad across a dining table. I was at a dinner party in Hartford, CT, when another guest sitting across from me decided that I was Latina like herself. “Of course, you’re Spanish,” she insisted. I smiled. “Nope. No one Spanish in my family. Sorry.” I resented the assumption, but I let it go. “No way! You’ve got to be Spanish!” she insisted. “No, really,” I said, growing tense, “No one in my family is of Hispanic or Latin descent. I’m not Latina.” Ms. Dinner Guest looked shocked, but she demured. I smiled – fake, this time. Dinner continued. About five minutes later, “Are you SURE you’re not Spanish?” I was practically speechless. I just shook my head, no. We both looked at each other long and hard, as though each of us were trying to correct the other’s thoughts through some inter-planetary, science fiction, mind-willing exercise. She soon backed off, finally deciding (I guess) that she was not sitting across from one of her own.

It wasn’t the first or the last time that I was mistaken for Latina. People naturally assume; they go with what they know, with what’s familiar. In a culturally-rich nation such as ours, it seems fair that some people would think that I’m Spanish or Puerto Rican. I’m also thought of as Jamaican, Dominican, Brazilian, or Cuban. On the West Coast, people mistake me for Hawai’ian, Fijian, Malaysian, Filipino, or Mexican. Some, but not all, assume that I’m Black.

Accounting for my identity and re-explaining my ethnicities is exhausting. I wonder if people realize how draining it is to repeatedly justify who I am; it can be debilitating and demoralizing to have to explain yourself over and over again in order to satisfy the inevitable "What are you?" Why even ask the question? It'd be great if people didn't make assumptions about who you were before they met you. How wonderful it would be to be accepted on sight, no questions asked.

I have felt relief from curious eyes only a couple of times in my life. In the mid-1990s, I attended a conference held by Multiracial Americans of Southern California (MASC). There, among other multiracial attendees, I didn't have to explain myself—not once. In an afternoon break-out session, I sat in a circle of 30-35 multiracial people. As we introduced ourselves and identified our ethnicities, I felt a giddy drop in anxiety knowing that no one in the room would raise an eyebrow, question, or even look twice when calling out my ethnic mix. There was a sense of camaraderie in the room that I have felt nowhere else, except for perhaps on a bus in Hawai'i, which is another place that brings relief from questions and stares. With a large hapa population, no one in Hawai'i needs to stare at another hapa.

The Faces of Today and Tomorrow

Forty years have passed since *Loving vs. Virginia*, and hundreds of thousands of interracial marriages have taken place in America since its legalization. According to a 2001 study by Washington, D.C.'s Population Resource Center, in the years that followed *Loving vs. Virginia*, the number of interracial couples increased from 300,000 in 1970 to

1.4 million in 1998—an increase of nearly 500%. The study also indicated that the increase in interracial marriages led to a surge in the number of interracial babies. In 1977, for instance, 60,000 babies (less than 2% of births) were born to parents of different races. By 1997, this number rose to 159,000 (5% of births) (2004, Population Resource Center, ¶ 11).

America clearly went through a “multiracial baby boom” after the Civil Rights era. Once interracial couples were “legitimized” in the eyes of the law, these unions provided first-generation biracial and multiracial children in significant numbers. The first multiracial baby boomers today are well into their 30s and producing another generation of ethnically-mixed Americans. So, how do multiracial Americans make sense of the world, and how does the world view them? In a country united (and sometimes divided) by ethnic differences, how does the biracial/multiracial individual handle the complex issues of race, ethnicity, and identity?

But wait, this all sounds familiar. Wasn't I asked the same question about biracial identity about 20 years ago—right around the same time as “Are you sure you're not Spanish?” In the 1980s, “my biracial story” appeared in a “Cosmopolitan” magazine article entitled, “The World of the Multiracial Woman,” a story that briefly highlighted the lives of four or five biracial women. It was quite a serendipitous event that had nothing whatsoever to do with my inclination to talk about race and identity. I wound up in the



Cosmo girl, 1980s

article because of a passing conversation the writer had with a friend and colleague. The writer needed a subject, and I worked upstairs. That was it. With one conversation, I wound up on the newsstands of America for a month.

Appearing in "Cosmo" was quite glamorous, I must admit. However, the article, in which I was miserably quoted out of context, was particularly embarrassing to me; I winced each time the magazine's cover peeked from the corner newsstands in Manhattan where I was working at the time. My comments were achingly naïve for an interview that I had perceived as fairly intelligent and insightful. Lessons learned for a young 20-something-year-old? Never babble to a reporter unless you expect to see every one of your afterthoughts in print. Nonetheless, the experience provided much food for thought, since I had never discussed my ethnicity/race with anyone at length, let alone with the mass media. When the issue came out, I remember feeling conspicuous among the other featured "tan" women, all of whom had a much better reason than I to be plastered across a national magazine. They were famous for heaven's sake; I was an office manager, a regular Jane Doe. Without knowing beforehand, I appeared among the children and grandchildren of major ethnic and mixed-race entertainment icons—Harry Belafonte, Eartha Kitt, and Lena Horne. I was honored and mortified at the same time. I was the only "civilian" amidst glamour and fame.

The 1980s was a time when ethnically-mixed people began to take ownership of their identities and to shun labels and biracial stereotypes. I, however, didn't yet have the verbal tools to describe myself with any kind of sophistication. I hadn't been fully

exposed to the scope of issues having to do with society, race, ethnicity, or identity. These subjects were not the focus of "my world." Also, my biracial experience was not typical of the average American and thus, could not be "simplified" or "pre-packaged" for "Cosmo." For good or ill, I still existed in the same cocoon of idealism built and sustained by my parents. I may not have been aware of race, but I was also not crippled by it.

Although experiences in my undergrad years made me much more aware of my biracial identity—I was reminded of it and asked about it all of the time—I didn't feel particularly "ethnic" in my years just after college. I was definitely less familiar with my Black side, mostly because Dad never strongly expressed his "roots." Mom embraced her ethnicity with gusto and with an openness that welcomed discovery. I didn't realize at the time how "foreign" the African American community was to me, but at the same time, I didn't harbor any negative feelings about being African American. Race was just not in my every day vocabulary. My choice of friends was based on similar interests and activities and had nothing to do with race or ethnicity. My peers treated me as equals, and my place in my predominantly White community and social life was based on trust and mutual respect, not racial identification.



Teri and me, 1979-80
College roommates and still friends.

My racial categories were introduced to me in college, where my dorm-mates formed assumptions about me based primarily on my looks. I “passed” for many ethnicities; Latina, Black, or “mixed” were the most common assumptions. Oddly, ethnicity didn’t factor into my experiences as a painting major or as a violinist. Western art and classical music, White-dominated art forms, were familiar to me, and I was used to being accepted for my artistic abilities regardless of race. All that I was accustomed to—liberal, cross-cultural acceptance—had to be fortified to tackle the perceptions of a larger world.

However, race/ethnicity was a significant issue in my college social network. Whether or not I identified as Black, Chinese, or “Other,” when I hit campus nightlife for the first time, I was immediately pegged as a Black “sistah” by African Americans and instantly became fair game as a Black single woman on campus. Wow! What an immediate color assignment. Talk about the “one drop rule.” I was surprised to learn that racial identity could be “placed” upon you, regardless of your internal world, and that racial identity, for some, played a huge role in social networks. I couldn’t understand why race/ethnicity was so much of an issue—why specific ethnic “types” felt the need to acknowledge and/or associate with the same “types.” Once during rock-and-roll night, an event that drew a predominantly White crowd to the college pub, the only Black guy in the room pushed across a packed floor to have a conversation with me. Instead of feeling flattered, I was annoyed and horrified, ignorantly unaware and unsympathetic of his possible racial discomfort at the venue that night. All I knew was that someone had just struck up a conversation with me based on my ethnicity, or so it

appeared. What was that about? Sadly, I sensed a lack of connection with the Black community that presumably should have been there. The thought of pursuing an association or relationship based on race/ethnicity was beyond my comprehension; making a “connection” to any one ethnic community did not drive my social life. My racial/ethnic identity floated and adapted, never really attaching itself to any one group. If anything, my connection leaned toward White social groups, not non-dominant ethnic or mixed-race social networks. At this time, too, I became a little self-conscious about my looks, not knowing if attention was being drawn to me because of my appearance or because of my ethnicity, which always kept people guessing. In reality, I was shielded (or freed) from racial issues by a childhood filled with many diverse cultural experiences and by a focus of study that attracted liberal thought and the acceptance of individualism.

I was (and still am) a full blend of two ethnicities, wholly both Chinese American and African American (whether I feel comfortable in either skin is a different story). I’m not just one thing. None of us are. I’m a multifaceted, complex human being—both interesting and interested. I enjoy both sand and city, both symphony and samba, both Shakespeare and Shirley Temple. I tried to sum it up in Cosmo with a very innocent statement that turned out to be more dippy than pithy, “I’m not Black, I’m not Chinese, I’m just me.” This testimonial was sung back to me by dozens of friends who “discovered” me in dentist offices, libraries, and corner markets. When the laughter and teasing died down and the next issue of Cosmo was on the stands, what I wished I had said more plainly was—never mind the labels, what do we have in common?

Multiracial Identity

Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, Sigmund Freud, and Lev Vygotsky, among many other scholars, have provided well-respected theories of human development and identity formation [see Chapters 3 and 4]. Humans are complex beings whose growth to maturity is a process of physical, emotional, and psychological changes, and whose identity development includes factors such as personality traits, family, education, class, and social networks. To form one's racial/ethnic identity, however, an individual must also adopt the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of an ethnic group and develop an affinity, loyalty, and feelings of attachment to membership within that group (Hall & Turner, 2001). This becomes a challenge for multiracial and multiethnic individuals, whose "affinity, loyalty, and attachment" encompass more than one race/ethnicity.

Identity formation for biracial/multiracial people follows similar patterns for monoracial identity formation. However, ethnically-mixed youth must incorporate several other dynamics into their development, including the racial identity of their parents and family attitudes about racial/ethnic differences, their physical characteristics, the cultural knowledge of their own and other ethnicities, social/peer influence, their age, their geographic location, and their acceptance/non-acceptance by and of other ethnic groups (Hall & Turner, 2001).

Understandably, for ethnically-mixed people, establishing identity, self-understanding and the assignment of race and/or ethnicity are complicated issues. Biracials/multiracials may select one, all, or none of their groups with which to identify,

or they may live their lives between two or more worlds, moving with chameleon-like ease and adaptability between groups. They are sometimes ostracized and stigmatized by society or on the contrary, exoticized and made into a curiosity. In the “old” days, most ethnically-mixed people were misunderstood and often seen as degenerate or physically and mentally inferior beings. Growing up as a biracial or multiracial person comes with added challenges, including unwanted stares from strangers, a barrage of personal questions (“What are you?” “Where are you from?” “Where were you born?”) and immediate assumptions based on appearance rather than personal knowledge. James McBride, a biracial and author of *The Color of Water*, describes his experience as a young man:

Being mixed feels like that tingly feeling you have in your nose when you have to sneeze—you’re hanging on there waiting for it to happen, but it never does. You feel completely misunderstood by the rest of the world, which is probably how any sixteen-year-old feels, except that if you’re brown-skinned like me, the feeling lasts for the rest of your life. (McBride, 1998, p. 184)

According to Kerry Ann Rockquemore and David L. Brunisma, who define *identity* as “a validated self-understanding that places and defines the individual,” racial/ethnic identity is “the direct result of mutual identification through social interaction” (2002, p. 40). Rockquemore and Brunisma posit that identity is confirmed when one’s internal world (i.e. how you see yourself) is recognized and validated by social networks. What they suggest is that “an individual cannot have a realized identity

without others who validate that identity” (2002, p. 41). For the millions of ethnically-mixed individuals in America, however, that could mean constant battles of definitions and validations and a heavy reliance on societal judgments. In Pearl Gaskins’ book, *What Are you?: Voices of Mixed-Raced Young People*, Chester Evans, a Japanese Chinese European American confirms, “It’s not a problem within myself, it’s a problem with how people look at me” (Gaskins, 1999, p. 74).

Labeling people by appearance is a common occurrence and has been a very simplified way to classify people from all walks of life. We know, however, that this crude method of categorization has its roots in societies that support hierarchal, dominant/non-dominant social structures. Clinical psychologist, Dr. Maria Root, who has written extensively on multiracial issues, suggests that these categorizations provide only a linear view of humanity and that we should look at “multidimensional models” of society. The multidimensional model allows “an individual to have simultaneous membership and multiple, fluid identities with different groups” (Root, 1992, p. 6). This model would potentially ease the burden that multiracial people face in trying to project the “ideal” image or identity for validation.

In describing how Black/White biracial individuals understand themselves, Rockquemore and Brunsma offer four descriptive categories of identity, which in many ways illustrate the “fluid identities” suggested by Root and a number of other scholars in the field (Daniel, 1996; Root, 1996; Spiegel 2000; Thornton, 1992). The first example is the biracial individual who chooses to equally identify with both of his or her ethnic

groups. This individual has created a distinctive “in between” identity (Border Identity) by not choosing either “sides” but identifying equally with each. Someone might choose to identify with only one group (Single Identity) due to family influence, appearance, or societal opinion, and not identify at all with the other group. If the biracial individual is able to move easily between two groups (Protean Identity), you would find him or her adapting to the behavior of each group when present in that particular group; in other words, he or she would identify with whatever group he or she might be in at the moment. Root describes this “shifting” as practicing *situational race* (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002, p. 48; Root 1996), a common adaptive behavior of most biracial people. In some cases, a biracial person might not consider ethnicity or race as a significant way to describe someone (Transcendent Identity), in which case he or she uses other means, other descriptors, to define his or herself (2002, pp. 49-52).

Family and social attitudes toward race/ethnicity, as well as exposure to the various ethnic groups in question, play an important part in biracial/multiracial identity formation. Positive or negative experiences within and outside an ethnic group may act as lifetime influences in the development of a person’s identity. Cultural celebrations, foods, music, language, and history offer distinctive social patterns and common bonds within a group. When a person is accepted and supported by his or her group, a positive image is formed leading to potential stability and confidence. A lack of exposure to a particular ethnic group may not create negative feelings toward that group, but a lack of contact may alienate an individual or prevent the development of any shared connection with that ethnicity. Serious effects and/or damage occur if an ethnic group is associated

with any negative elements such as emotional or physical violence, fear or disapproval. In some cases “color-coding” may become prevalent, in which certain behaviors, negative or positive, become associated with certain groups (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002).

The clashing of internal and external worlds is a common dilemma in the lives of teenagers who often feel misunderstood by peers or adults. Biracial/multiracial teens may more acutely feel the clash of internal and external identities. *Situational race* may enable ethnically-mixed individuals to move in and out of identities, but it does not prevent unwanted assumptions imposed by curious strangers. It is often up to the individual to tackle the onslaught of questions, assumptions, biases, praise, or insults tossed from outsiders.

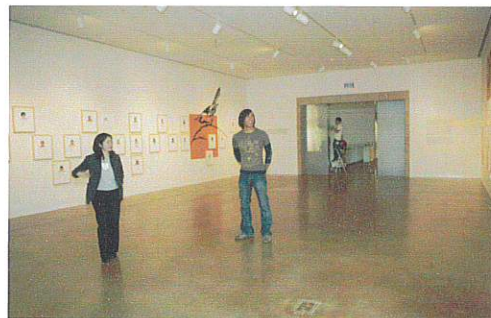
Increased public knowledge and general acceptance of ethnically-mixed people, even more so in the last 10 years, has allowed the multiracial community to become fully acknowledged and embraced by American society. The multiracial population is a full-force in America. Numerous mixed-ethnic groups, formed in the last 20 years, especially on college campuses, provide resources and a place for understanding and the sharing of multiracial issues. Organizations like Mavin, Swirl, iPride, Hapa Issues Forum, and the Association of Multiethnic Americans help to support the biracial/multiracial community, while other groups like Project Race advocate for multiracial political causes. Thanks to the work of many of these groups and to powerful voices speaking for many uncounted, multiracial citizens, the 2000 U.S. Census became the first in U.S. history to allow

individuals to select multiple races as identifiers. No longer forced to select just one race or to be counted as “Other,” multiracial citizens may now represent any and all of their ethnicities as truly recognized Americans of multiracial/multiethnic heritage.

Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa

In June 2006, an article appeared in *The Washington Post* in which Neely Tucker stated that the number of children living in interracial families quadrupled between 1970 and 2000. In this same month, *Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa* opened at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, California. With Japanese Americans having the highest rate of “marrying out” or marrying outside of their ethnic group, and with 30.7% of Japanese Americans identifying as multiracial (Le, 2006, ¶ 13), an exhibition reflecting this growing, mixed population hoped to play a vital role in speaking to the National Museum’s younger, multiethnic audiences. Indeed, the second largest sub-group in the Asian Pacific American population (after the Chinese) is hapa or people of mixed-Asian ancestry (Friedman, 2006).

The exhibition of photographs by artist, filmmaker and professor, Kip Fulbeck, featured 80 portraits of hapa. As Fulbeck describes, “Originally a derogatory label derived from the Hawaiian word for ‘half,’ hapa has since been embraced as a term of pride by many whose mixed racial heritage includes Asian or Pacific Island descent” (Fulbeck, 2006, front sleeve). Young and old,



Exhibition curator (left) and artist Fulbeck

male and female, part-Asians and some non-Asians who identified as such, answered Fulbeck's call for volunteers. "I photographed every participant similarly—unclothed from the collarbone up, and without glasses, jewelry, excess makeup, or purposeful expression. Basically, I wanted us to look like us, as close to our natural selves as possible" (2006, p. 16). [See artwork samples at the end of this Chapter.]

An intriguing element of the artwork is the inclusion of, in each framed photograph, the subject's own handwritten response to the question, "*What are you?*", the one question most commonly asked of all people of mixed heritage and the one question which often sparks the most heated reply. The photographs in the exhibition are part of a much larger project (*The Hapa Project*) created by the artist who is hapa himself and who is internationally known for his work in multiracial Asian identity. The *Hapa Project* Website notes:

Kip Fulbeck began The Hapa Project as a forum for Hapas to answer the question "What are you?" in their own words and be pictured in simple head-on portraits. Traveling throughout the country, he photographed over 1,000 people from all walks of life—from babies to adults, construction workers to rock stars, gangbangers to pro surfers, schoolteachers to porn stars, engineers to comic book artists. The project now manifests as a book, traveling photographic exhibition, and online community. (The Hapa Project, n.d.)

The exhibition, featuring the images and words of mixed-race Asian Americans, is a timely offering that speaks to today's diverse and multiethnic audiences, and is in



Installing Kip Fulbeck exhibition

fact, *about* today's audiences. The 2000 U.S. Census revealed that 2.4% of the U.S. population, or nearly seven million Americans, identified themselves as two or more races (CensusScope, 2001). The State of Hawai'i can claim to be the most

“multiracial state” with 24.1% of its population identifying as more than one race, followed by Alaska with a 5.4% multiracial population (2001). It has been said that by the year 2050, no one racial category will dominate the U.S. Census for the first time in U.S. history (Kanduri, 2002). America will soon be an evenly populated country of people of all cultural backgrounds.



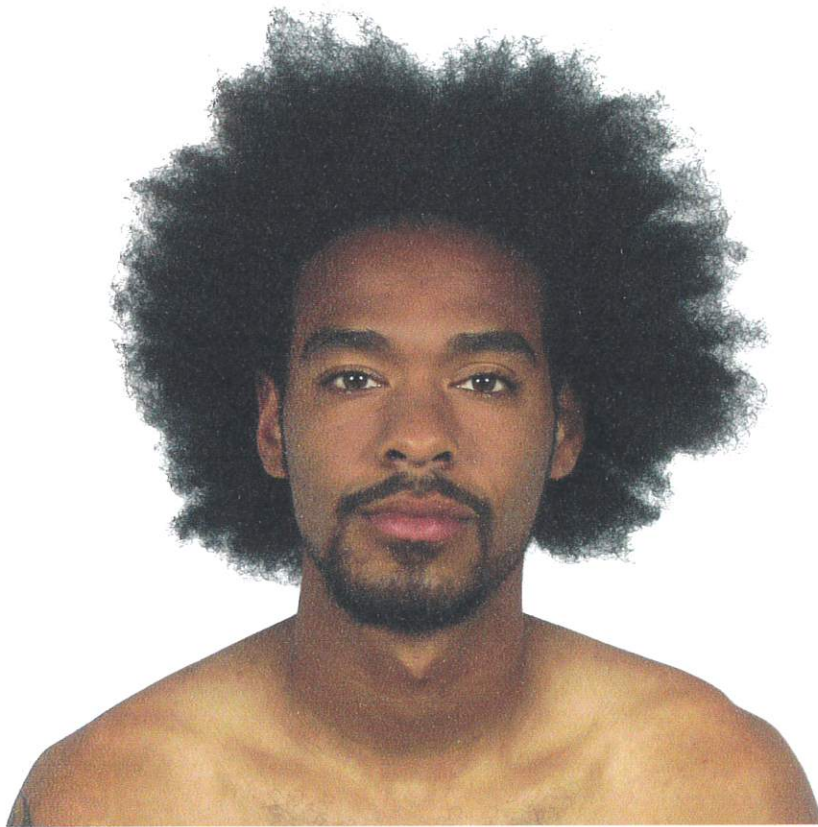
I am a person of color.
I am not half- "white".
I am not half- "Asian".
I am a whole "other".

☒ other

chinese, japanese, german, hungarian, english



chinese, malaysian, french



I am the glowing around the moon. I am the
endless summers that you don't forget. I am the
permanent that leaves a mark.

I am ME!!

dutch, indonesian, african american

“Clementine Could Run!”

Chapter Three

Boy, Clementine could run! Clementine could run faster than anyone I ever saw. She was the fastest girl on the playground and could jump hurdles and climb a rope like no one else in my grade. She was African, a native of Cameroon where I lived when I was about seven. Clementine had skin the color of deep, rich chocolate, and she always wore simple light-colored dresses that gathered at the waist and a kerchief over her hair. She fascinated me. No one ran as fast as Clementine. I see her, still, racing barefoot across the dirt to a grove of trees at the top of our hillside playground.

Learning Through Experience

When my family lived in West Africa, my sister Karen and I attended Catholic French school. Not anything like education in the United States, French parochial schools, especially those in developing countries back in the 1960s, involved a lot of discipline with little room for the development of critical thinking skills, creativity, or imagination. We faced strict order, rote memorization and recitation of lessons, mandatory catechism, and a fair amount of corporal punishment (it was back in the day, after all). There was no “drawing outside of the lines,” literally and figuratively. My joy was recess, because it offered a variety of activities and more importantly, provided a United Nations of playmates. As a matter of fact, I distinguished many of my friends not by their ethnicity



Me and Mom outside of our house,
Cameroon. 1960s

or the color of their skin, but by the flags that flew in front of their homes; Madeleine's Canadian red maple leaf waved outside of her house down the street, while the Italian green, white and red stripes flew outside of Ceci's house behind us. My school playmates were local Africans—Cameroonians of various ethnic groups—Americans, Europeans, Canadians, among others, and in school we all had one thing in common—the ability to speak French—well, sort of.

It was typical for families overseas to immerse their children in the local language through local schools. I spoke English at home, and in school I spoke French; it was, and still is, the only language I ever formally learned to read and write. Even though I learned French fairly quickly through total immersion, there were often things in school that I didn't understand and conversations I couldn't follow. In those cases, I watched and studied my teachers and classmates, carefully repeating, imitating, and following whatever needed to be said or done. In an environment where words often had no value, one developed meaning-making in other ways. What I was beginning to acquire and nurture was a keen sense of observation and anticipation—skills, on which I still rely. I made meaning out of experiences, not words or objects.

When not in school, my life was about exploring the environments around my home and my neighborhood; these settings were my constructivist classrooms, in which I discovered new things, indulged my curiosities, and constructed my own sense of the world. From grocery shopping with Mom to accompanying Dad on assigned field trips to outer villages, there were many things to learn from the life that surrounded me.

I enjoyed investigating the different plant life that grew in our yard. There was a kind of grass that folded its fronds instantly when you touched it, and I could lie on the lawn for hours poking at new vegetation. Blossoming hibiscus plants grew tall and leafy, compared to unencumbered, vertically ambitious snake plants. How could there be so many seeds in a papaya when there was only one seed in a mango? I had so many questions. The earth under my feet was heavy with iron, so Dad told me, and stained everything—walls, cars, and cats—a deep orangey red. When it rained, it rained hard, and I spent a lot of time in my Dad’s rain boots under an oversized umbrella building intricate networks of dams in the red, muddy gushes of water that ran down the road in front of our house. And then there was the “wildlife.” Many small creatures traipsed outside and/or through our house—millipedes, mosquitoes, spiders, geckos, frogs, beetles, poisonous snakes—but they were all carefully watched, and all behaviors were noted. It was always best to distinguish the creatures that were safe, the creatures that could kill you, and the creatures that would only put you in bed with a fever.

It was from this magical yard that I gained a sense of who I was in a very foreign place. I explored many things and I had many friends, but I knew that my life was very different from say, the Cameroonian boys who drove cattle to market past my house. Like Clementine, whose identity and natural force sprang from the grass beneath her feet, they too seemed confident and deeply “connected” to the earth. Their sense of place and purpose felt grounded and sure, like the African soil on which they walked. I, on the other hand, was a visitor on that soil, a young mental note-taker who watched everything with interest from a grassy patch. I took in many lessons from my outdoor “classroom.”

The service staff at our home was an endless source of conversation and camaraderie. They were often our friends, our babysitters, and sometimes our teachers. Our driver, Jacques, and I would always shoot the breeze, eat sugar cane together in the



Me and Jacques,
Abijan, Ivory Coast, 1960s

cool shade of the cement garage, and occasionally, he would teach me a few words in his native language, one of many ethnic languages in West Africa. I never spoke to Mohammed, our “security guy,” because he kept to himself a lot. Mohammed was an enigma to me. He wore very long robes and always had a head-wrap of some kind. He would arrive in the late afternoon and guarded our house through the night with bow and arrow. When Mohammed first worked for us, I noticed that he would often role out and kneel on a small piece of carpet and then bow many times to one of the walls in our carport. I observed Mohammed from a distance for many days until I had exhausted all reasonable explanations for his behavior. I finally asked Mom about Mohammed’s routine, and this is how I learned about Islam, the location of Mecca and the prayer life of Muslims.

Even side trips to other countries provided rich opportunities to learn from circumstance and observation. I learned to count in German, because Mom had to tell the bus driver in Frankfurt how old my sister and I were each time we boarded a bus. I just learned different sounds for the numbers I already knew in French. I noticed the nature of water displacement while dipping myself into the large, clay barrels that collected rainwater in Saigon. Aerodynamics for tots included studying the movement of

wing flaps on each of the airplanes we rode in—and there were many. Snow, I noticed, existed in colder, higher elevations, like in the Syrian mountains of Baalbek (now in present-day Lebanon), but not in the very hot, lower-level city of Beirut.



Syria, 1962

A lot can be learned by just watching and listening, making comparisons, making discoveries, taking mental notes, experimenting, and making accurate deductions from the events in your life. As they say, experience is a great teacher.

Experience can be used strategically and effectively as a tool and a guide. The study of experience is called phenomenology. Literally, phenomenology is the study of “phenomena” or the appearance of things, according to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, and can be a powerful device when searching for solutions or exploring an issue or topic of interest. “Phenomenology studies conscious experience . . . from the subjective or first person point of view” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online, 2003, Section 1). The importance of conscious experiences is that “we experience them, we live through them or perform them” (Section 3), and we are aware of the experiences as we move through them. We describe, we reflect on, we interpret, and we analyze our experiences, and the conclusions that we come to inform our thinking, solve problems, or resolve unanswered questions. Championed by philosophers of the early 20th century—Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre—phenomenology examines various types of experiences, including perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and

actions, and it addresses the meaning that these things have in our experience.

“Phenomena are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26), but it is important to note that it is the *experience* of the object or phenomena and not the object itself that is the essence of phenomenological study.

Phenomenological research methods 1) focus on the appearance of things, 2) examine a subject from all angles/sides/perspectives, 3) use intuition and reflection on conscious experiences, 4) vividly describe experiences rather than analyze them, 5) provide questions that give direction for acquiring meaning, 6) employ memory and history during research, 7) integrate the object/subject and the experience of the object/subject, and 8) use personal thinking, intuition, reflection, and judgment as primary evidence for research (Moustakas, 1994).

Another process that is important to the study of human experience is heuristics. Rooted in the Greek word, *heuriskein*, meaning to discover or to find, heuristics “refers to a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. . . . Heuristic processes incorporate creative self-processes and self-discoveries” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). One would use heuristics methods to understand and to find meaning in human experiences or to discover solutions to problems through self-inquiry, interactions, and explorations. More specifically, heuristics incorporates personal accountings of experiences from such sources as 1) in-person dialogues with others, 2) personal notation of one’s own perceptions and judgments, 3) one’s own immersion in a

subject/topic, 4) written journals of thoughts and reflections, 5) artwork, stories, and other personal documentation that note or describe an experience or discovery (Moustakas, 1994, p. 18-19). "In heuristics, the focus is exclusively and continually aimed at understanding the human experience" (1994, p. 19).

The methods of phenomenology and heuristics offer compelling ways to study a problem or situation and a means to discover solutions through personal observation, reflection, and intuition. Answers are revealed as the problem or situation is considered, talked about, reflected on, written about, observed, and experienced. One uses and synthesizes memories and associations, observations and conversations, personal thoughts and judgments, and returns again to reflect on all that has been experienced. One might say that instead of looking to outside theories and solutions to resolve a problem or to answer a question, both phenomenology and heuristics focus on searching for answers through inward, thoughtful reflection. As educators or as students looking for meaning, phenomenology and heuristics present instinctual and down-to-earth methods of understanding an issue through personal discovery.

Teaching through Experience

I was presented with an interesting challenge in the summer of 2006. I was asked to develop a facilitated gallery experience for students, Grades 3-8, for the Kip Fulbeck exhibition. It was a fascinating assignment, as my work at the Museum didn't involve gallery teaching, and I had little experience in facilitating group discussions with students. I did, however, value non-traditional learning, had solid grounding in

developing age-appropriate learning materials, and above all, with direct life experiences as a hapa, I was familiar with the subject and the issues expressed in the exhibition. I was also willing to immerse myself in the project and discover for myself what I needed to know in order to form student discussions and activities. How would I go about developing gallery activities around this topic and around this exhibition? How would I engage students in the difficult and complex topic of identity? How did I, myself, feel about being hapa, and what would I want to convey about being biracial? What meaning did Kip Fulbeck's photographs provide young people regarding identity? Though I didn't have an array of pre-developed resources from which to draw ideas, on instinct I began to rely on my own past and present experiences to help me develop the activities and discussions I wanted to have with students.

A number of activities took place prior to developing age-appropriate materials for the exhibition. Information was gathered about the artist and about current and historic issues of ethnically-mixed people. Literature concerning child development and non-traditional learning environments were studied and reviewed. The California State Content Standards were explored to determine appropriate subjects and learning content for classroom application. A series of student observations took place—upper elementary and middle school students were observed as they engaged in museum tours and activities. Observations of gallery teaching were conducted at local-area museums, and a number of gallery teachers were interviewed for guidance, personal thoughts, and anecdotes regarding gallery teaching and facilitated student discussions.

Many hours were spent studying the images in the exhibition, narrowing the field of photographs that would best address the subject of identity and produce the most interesting student discussions. A series of 10 photographs (subsequently narrowed to six), were selected from throughout the galleries and included people of many different mixes, young and old. The photographed subjects' responses to "What are you?" varied from the innocent, "I am a person," to the defiant, "Shouldn't you be asking my name first?" and from the factual, "I am 100% Black, 100% Japanese," to the descriptive, "I am a family man/people person."

In some cases, a photograph was selected to purposely entice discussion about obvious stereotype, as in a burly, long-haired male subject with tattoos who could have been labeled as a tough character, but who was in fact the "family man/people person." For additional layers of discussion, an effort was also made to find subjects displayed near each other whose comments provided good fuel for conversation. The proximity of the two photographs enabled a comparative study of images and responses, and offered a broader understanding of identity by using common denominators of human traits and feelings. Questions such as "What do these two comments have in common?" and "How do these two people describe themselves?" produced discussions about basic human commonalities and acknowledged universal themes. Example:

Photo #1: "I am a person" (blond-haired girl around 5 years old)

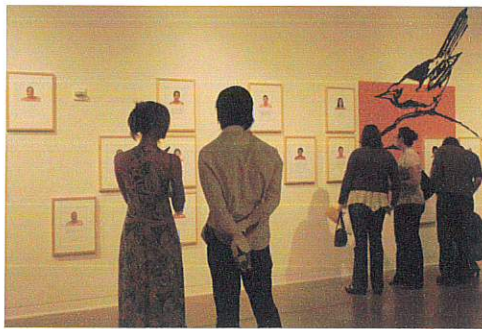
Photo #2: "I am 100% Black, 100% Japanese." (male, perhaps in his 20s)

Question: "What do these two comments have in common?"

Sample discussion to be drawn from the group: “Both of these subjects describe themselves as whole people. They don’t describe themselves in halves or in parts. They’re just people.”

Frequent walkthroughs of the gallery activities provided logistical preparation: How many students would fit in certain areas of the galleries? Which areas would be the best places to start and finish the sessions? Would students sit or stand? How far did voices travel in the galleries? What possible distractions would be problematic? Were the images more easily viewed by one person or would a group be OK?

When I first started planning, I used to sit in the galleries for a long time just getting used to the images and accompanying text of the people in the photographs. I studied many of the photos for content and imagery. I carried Kip Fulbeck’s book



Kip Fulbeck exhibition

through the galleries, matching page to photo, sticking Post-its on pages as I moved from photo to photo. Soon the book fluttered with hanging Post-its. Subject responses were many and varied; they were funny and somber, moralistic and irreverent, philosophical and nutty, long-winded and curt. The variations were endless. But what did the exhibition of photographs say to me? What did the artist intend? What would students get out of an hour and a half in these galleries? What experiences did I want them to take away and remember? I began keeping a journal, noting thoughts and ideas, personal recollections,

reflections, questions that I might pose to students, and questions that I asked myself in this process of learning and discovery. [See Appendix G for sample journal entries.]

I thought a lot about my own life experiences. Each time I visited the galleries, I'd have another memory, another thought. Slowly, different talking points began to emerge. I was surrounded by 80 responses to the question, "What are you?" and each photo made me think of the moments when I, too, looked into the mirror and saw a lightly tanned face with slightly almond-shaped eyes staring back at me, looking not quite Black, not quite Chinese.

"Is that your naturally curly hair or is that a perm?" The question often came from an elderly woman in a public restroom. "You don't look Chinese!" "Wow, what an exotic combination." Exotic? What's exotic? "Exotic" people are associated with musicals like the "King and I" and "South Pacific." Exotic people adorn print ads for airlines to the Far East. Exotic never played Emily in Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," which we did in high school, and exotic never played Laurie in "Oklahoma," which we did in college; they may now, but they didn't then when I was in school. Do you see "exotic" in commercials for paper towels or pick-up trucks? I never wanted to play Laurie in Oklahoma, but what if I did? Could I change people's perceptions? It didn't seem to matter how I perceived myself, people would still see me as unusual and exotic—an ethnically ambiguous, brown Disney character, as Kip Fulbeck refers to himself in his 2003 film short, "Lilo & Me."

What were the most important issues to convey to young people about hapa and identity formation? In many ways, my experiences were atypical of biracial kids who grew up in America. I thought about Mom's family and Dad's bitterness. I thought of the many flags waving in front of my friends' homes overseas. I thought of the faces of my African playmates and of Clementine racing across Cameroon's red surface. I thought of French in French. I thought of my uncomfortable transition to American school and my completely different penmanship. "Is that your mother?" I thought of Chinese food and Southern BBQ, Thanksgiving with turkey and a side of stir-fry, disco funk and classical music, Chinese New Year and black-eyed peas.

I could never speak for all hapa, but I could certainly lead a discussion about what it's like to be "different," about diversity, about similarities and differences, about perceptions and misconceptions, about knowing who you are and liking who you are, and about the judgments we make about people before we meet them. Aren't some of these universal thoughts? Doesn't a lot of this have to do with just good manners? Museum education colleagues, classroom teacher friends, and other hapa were very helpful. I met some of them in the exhibition and had lengthy, candid discussions about race, ethnicity, gallery teaching and classroom management.

I had the pleasure of meeting Kip Fulbeck one weekend and had a casual hapa-to-hapa chat about his work. I felt that there were many stories to tell between us—different stories, but the same stories. Before Kip and I met, I watched a video interview in which Kip reflected on his life, his work, the Hapa Project, and the exhibition. The

interview offered a number of insights to his artwork and gave me an understanding of what I needed to convey to students from the artist's point of view. "I think identity is a conscious ongoing process. . . . I wanted people to be able to say who they were in their own words . . . and have a place where we [hapa] could actually celebrate our differences" (Fulbeck, 2006). Kip concludes, "You don't have a right to tell someone they're not black enough. . . . You don't have that right. . . . When you self-identify, that's your choice, and that's the great thing" (2006).

Learning Beyond the Classroom

John Dewey (1938) expressed in *Experience and Education* that "Education . . . must be based upon experience—which is always the actual life-experience of some individual" (p. 89). Dewey offers a powerful challenge for classroom teachers as well as museum educators, for a museum setting often presents a fresh and new location for many unique and non-traditional learning "experiences" for youth and adults. It is within exhibition spaces where much of museum learning takes place, through guided observations, facilitated discussions, and group learning activities. Gone are classroom restraints and formalities, which are associated with traditional learning. "The teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities" (Dewey, 1938, p. 59).

In exploring how to provide memorable museum learning experiences for classroom students, a number of scholars have considered the conditions for experiential learning (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990; Bruner, 1996; Dewey, 1938; Falk &

Dierking, 2000, 2002; Hein, 1998; Vygotsky, 1962). Rooted in constructivism, theories that focus on the experiences of the learner, and that see learning as an active process, flourish in a museum setting. Because a museum is not a classroom, students are able to learn in a stimulating, “free-choice learning” environment where exploration and experiences are valued and encouraged. The idea of free-choice learning, in which an individual’s learning is self-directed and voluntary, has been posited by scholars, John Falk and Dr. Lynn Dierking. Falk and Dierking argue that this kind of learning—driven by choice and the desire to learn—usually takes place outside of school or the work place (2002).

A museum can be a place where students develop “wonderful ideas,” as described by Eleanor Duckworth. “Wonderful ideas do not spring out of nothing. They build on a foundation of other ideas” (1996, p. 6). Duckworth emphasizes that one must provide 1) a setting that suggests wonderful ideas and 2) be willing to accept children’s ideas (1996).

The development of intelligence is a matter of having wonderful ideas. In other words, it is a creative affair. When children are afforded the occasions to be intellectually creative—by being offered matter to be concerned about intellectually and by having their ideas accepted—then not only do they learn about the world, but as a happy side effect their general intellectual ability is stimulated as well. (Duckworth, 1996, pp. 12-13)

Much has been written about how visitors learn in museums and what influences their learning and discovery. Falk and Dierking proposed an educational framework for museums called the Contextual Model of Learning. The Contextual Model suggests that there are eight key factors involved in museum learning experiences, all of which fall into three “contexts”: *Personal Context*—1) motivation and expectations, 2) prior knowledge and interests, 3) choice and control; *Sociocultural Context*—4) group mediation and 5) facilitated mediation; and *Physical Context*—6) advanced organizers and orientation, 7) design, and 8) reinforced events outside of the museum (Falk & Dierking, 2000). What Falk and Dierking stress is that visitors come to museums with their own tastes, interests, learning habits, motivations and prior knowledge about a subject. Once in a museum, factors such as group interactions and staff mediation, climate, orientation, and physical spaces influence a visitor’s learning experience. Finally, they indicate that since memories are often strongly tied to places, especially where senses and curiosities have been piqued, it is important to reinforce the learning experiences that took place once visitors leave the museum (2000). It is in the museum educator’s best interest to understand the many ways in which people learn inside a museum setting, in order to maximize the learning opportunities that can take place in this environment.

A key element in experiential learning and the creation of one’s own sense of meaning is the theory of intrinsically-motivated learning, or *flow* theory, as proposed by Dr. Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi. The characteristics of flow suggest that people can be engaged in an activity primarily for the rewards of the experience alone and not for any outside incentive or compensation. These are important characteristics that can help

inform learning in museums. Most traditional classrooms offer extrinsic motivations for learning—teacher praise, parental expectations, a grade, a diploma, an avoidance of punishment or expulsion. In this climate, knowledge is rarely enjoyed or acquired for its own sake. “Learning is intrinsically-motivated when it is spontaneous . . . [when] the information [is] interesting and important in its own right” (Csikszentmihalyi & Hermanson, 1995, p. 68).

Those observed in flow have been artists, musicians, surgeons, and athletes who do not have any other motivations for learning or accomplishing a goal except for self-reward. Those in flow often lose track of time and find themselves completely immersed in their activities. Some general characteristics that produce flow are: 1) clear goals of activities, 2) activities that provide immediate and unambiguous feedback, 3) accountability for one's actions, 4) activities appropriate to one's ability, 5) increased challenges as skills increase, 6) an absence of self-consciousness, fear, or anxiety, and 7) a lack of fatigue or awareness of time passing by. “Flow involves the person's entire being and full capacity,” and leads to personal growth “because in order to sustain the flow state, skills must increase along with the increased challenges” (Csikszentmihalyi & Hermannson, 1995, p. 70).

Visitors come to a museum with a variety of predisposed thoughts, interests, and experiences, but museums have a unique capability to create flow through carefully and thoughtfully planned multi-sensory experiences. Csikszentmihalyi and Hermannson suggest a three-step visitor involvement that would aid in intrinsically-motivated

learning in museums: 1) appeal to visitor curiosity and interest through stimuli that attract attention or appeal to personal interest, i.e., sounds, colors, kinetic displays, and familiar subjects, 2) provide opportunities for sensory, intellectual and emotional interaction, and 3) offer some sort of challenge through actions and activities that involve a gradual increase of skill. Though there are many factors that affect learning in museums, Csikszentmihalyi and Hermannson posit that if museum activities are intrinsically rewarding, visitors will maintain a flow experience thereby fostering deep and complex personal growth (1995).

A museum education staff must synthesis learning theory and practice to form meaningful experiences for young museum visitors. The staff at the Tsongas Industrial History Center in Lowell, Massachusetts, suggests a number of practical steps to museum learning experiences: 1) emphasize activities that immediately surprise and that are welcoming, fun, challenging and interesting, 2) offer activities that appeal to the senses—activities that involve the hands and the mind, 3) be sure to provide an experience that connects with the students' prior knowledge or experience and then extends this knowledge so that they are able to think about a subject differently after their visit, 4) offer activities that provide a social learning experience—give students the opportunity to explain, demonstrate, decide, or talk about what they experience—and 5) provide a follow-up activity that is completed back in the classroom (O'Connell, 2003).

The wonderful thing about learning in museums is that learning doesn't happen from behind a desk. Learning in a museum is much more participatory and less

dictatorial in the traditional sense. When conditions are right, a museum is a stimulating, multi-sensory environment that stirs curiosity and imagination, and encourages a visitor to know more—learn more. Even better, learning happens at your own pace; it isn't forced, required, or even timed. Dewey's educational theories revealed to me the intimate relationship between learning and experience, and his theories spoke to how I learned when I lived overseas. I was thrilled to discover Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory, which exposed so much about my internal world as a visual and performing artist. Vygotsky, Gardner, Falk, and Dierking provided me with new ways of engaging different learners. Of these scholars, however, Dewey and Csikszentmihalyi influenced me the most when thinking about education, because for me, it's all about experience—what we see, hear, touch, feel, smell, see, move to, think about, write about, remember—and about how deeply we engage in that experience. But, can "experience" be offered up on a plate? How do I replicate the experience of say, my "flow" hours of practicing the violin, when time flies by and I'm completely immersed? How do I foster an "experience" in the hapa exhibition that will be remembered two, five, fifteen years from now? How do I tap into the root of intrinsic learning?

Developmental Milestones, Ages 9-14

In the previous chapter, identity was discussed in the context of biracial identity formation. There were many factors that contributed to the development of a stable, well-rounded view of one's self as an ethnically-mixed person. However, in looking at the age group for whom the hapa exhibition activities were created, ages 9 through 14, significantly, it is in this same age range that every child/adolescent matures and begins

to form his/her own identity as an individual. Identity formation is universal. Therefore, the hapa exhibition activities would help *any* student in this age group explore identity as a universal theme, while also examining the more complex struggle for identity as a hapa. “Who am I?” is not just a question for ethnically-mixed youth but for *all* youth regardless of background and ethnicity. Students at this age are posing this question to themselves as a natural step in their human development, so the gallery program offers an opportunity for students to explore these important and personal issues more fully and in a stimulating environment.

Common human developmental factors were used to inform the age-appropriate activities developed for the hapa exhibition. Along with learning theory, understanding the processes of human physical, cognitive, and social/emotional growth is key to meeting the overall needs of youth as they search for knowledge about the world around them and their place in society.

Several scholars have offered theories of human development. Developmental biologist, Jean Piaget, is best known for his “Stages of Cognitive Development for Children.” He insisted that children were incapable of thinking like an adult. He theorized, through recorded observations, that the process of human development went through a series of four stages from infancy to adolescences (Sensory Motor, Pre-Operational, Concrete Operational, and Formal Operational), and individuals had to proceed through these stages to become fully-realized adults.

The chart below highlights Piaget's "Stages of Development," the last two Stages of which match the age range of the students visiting the hapa exhibition. Having worked through the Sensory Motor (ages 0-2) and Pre-Operational (ages 2-7) Stages, young people are now moving toward clear-cut, adult-like thought processes. They are past the phases where they are self-involved and unable to think in a concrete fashion. In Piaget's Concrete Operational Stage (ages 7-11), students are able to process more than one command at a time and think logically about objects and events. As they proceed to the Formal Operational Stage (ages 11+), students are able to think abstractly and systematically, very much like an adult.

Piaget's "Stages of Development of Children"

Sensory Motor Ages 0-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflexive behaviors and activities are the focus of attention - Can differentiate between self and object - Recognizes the self as an agent of action (e.g. shakes rattle to make noise) - Does not yet understand that an object exists even when not in view
Pre-Operational Ages 2-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learns to use language and can represent objects by images and words, but does not think abstractly - Needs concrete physical situations for comprehension - Thinking is egocentric - Is able to classify objects by a single feature (e.g. groups all red blocks together) - Perceptions dominate judgment
Concrete Operational Ages 7-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can think logically about objects and events - Is able to understand that objects stay the same, even if something is changed or made to look different - Is able to process more than one problem at a time, and is able to think abstractly - Becomes less egocentric
Formal Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is able to think abstractly and systematically and use

Ages 11+	deductive reasoning and hypotheses to solve a problem, similar to an adult - Able to use planning to think ahead
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(Atherton, 2005; Child Development Institute, 2006; Lin, 2002)

Psychoanalyst Erick Erickson, famous for his theories of identity formation, offers his psychosocial stages of human development known as the “Eight Stages of Man.” As a student of Freud who believed that human development was biologically determined and that personalities were formed by age 5, Erickson was the first to frame human development in a social context. Erickson argues that human development occurs through a series of “crises” or “conflicts” that happen throughout different stages of life. He theorized that there are eight conflicts that individuals must go through to achieve adulthood, and each conflict must be “resolved” in order to tackle the next conflict, or next stage of life.

Referencing Stages Four and Five below, Erickson believed that children, ages 6-12, undergo a conflict of “industry versus inferiority.” In the fourth Stage, children’s main goal is to master the tasks demanded of them in school, including following rules, getting along with peers, and handling homework. Competence in school becomes the resolution to the “crisis.” If the child does not learn how to manage these demands, he or she feels insecure, incompetent, defeated, and inferior.

Stage Five, “identity versus role confusion,” presents an important crisis for young people, ages 12-18, and is a crisis that has life-long effects. According to Erickson, it is in this stage that adolescents establish a sense of who they are as

individuals, as well as who they are within the context of their social group (Cole & Cole, 2001). Adolescence is a time of physical and personal upheaval, experimentation, and heavy peer involvement. Adolescents question adults and question themselves as they move to adulthood. Erikson believed that this stage was the last stage of childhood and the stage in life in which one discovers one's true self (2001). Those who do not resolve the crisis of identity may become confused about who they are and what they want to do as they progress through life.

Erikson's Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development, or the "Eight Stages of Man"

<i>Stage 1</i>	Oral-Sensory (from 0-1 year):	trust vs. mistrust = feeding/trust/hope
<i>Stage 2</i>	Muscular-Anal (1-3 years):	autonomy vs. doubt = toilet training/self-control
<i>Stage 3</i>	Locomotor (3-6 years):	initiative vs. inadequacy = independence
<i>Stage 4</i>	Latency (6-12 years):	industry vs. inferiority = school/competence
<i>Stage 5</i>	Adolescence (12-18 years):	identity vs. confusion = fidelity/relationships
<i>Stage 6</i>	Young Adulthood (18-40 years):	intimacy vs. isolation = love/relationships
<i>Stage 7</i>	Middle Adulthood (40-65 years):	generativity vs. stagnation = parenting/care
<i>Stage 8</i>	Maturity (65 years until death):	integrity vs. despair = acceptance of one's life

(Cole & Cole, 2001)

There are many ways to engage students in a museum learning experience, and it is important to note the developmental characteristics of the young people for which a gallery program is planned, in this case, 9- to 14-year-olds in roughly third to eighth grade. It is also helpful to create a gallery program that meets key state or national content standards in order to enhance learning milestones in the classroom. By carefully considering student learning styles and developmental stages—honing in on how and why students learn at specific ages—a program can be developed that

enhances their experiences and encourages their interest and eagerness to participate in active learning in a museum environment.

SUMMARY -- Physical/Cognitive/Socio-Emotional Stages of Youth, Ages 9 to 14

	Physical	Cognitive	Socio-Emotional
Ages 7 to 11	Rate of growth slows down; can handle multiple commands; better motor skills and balance; brain functions faster; increased muscle strength	Cooperative learning very important; arrive at concrete operational stage (Piaget); enjoy working in groups; able to follow social rules of right and wrong; increased memory and language skills; enjoys collecting things; more willing to learn from adults and teachers	Identifies strongly with gender-specific groups; friends become very important; need to be accepted by peers; has feelings of self-doubt; less dependent on parents and begins to test parental limits; able to understand another's point of view; diminished ego; can understand and express empathy; engages in social comparisons; industry vs. inferiority (Erickson)
Ages 10 to 14	Significant growth spurts; girls reach close to their adult weight and height; boys are still growing; puberty begins; sexual maturation is moving ahead	Have advanced logic and reasoning skills; can think hypothetically; can use deductive reasoning; decision-making skills improve; enters formal operational stage (Piaget); can be self-absorbed	Peer groups are very important; erratic emotions; can seem confused; feelings of invincibility; enjoys risk-taking; becomes interested in the opposite sex; experimentation with different identities, roles, and personalities; explores and begins to understand own identity; identity vs. confusion (Erickson)

(Berger, 2006; Cole & Cole, 2006)

The following conclusions can be derived after considering all of the significant developmental characteristics of the expected audience:

- 1) **Activity should involve plenty of social interactions** that appeal to both peer-focused school-age children and adolescents.
- 2) **Activity should follow a set of rules and be self-regulating to some degree** to appeal to school-age children who enjoy following direction and for adolescents who need to exercise free-choice and some independence.
- 3) **Activity should incorporate a variety of learning styles, with emphasis on writing and language skills** to aid school-age children's growing language development and to allow both age groups to fine-tune both verbal and writing skills.
- 4) **Activity should incorporate movement and discovery to some degree** to maintain interest in both age groups that are very active by nature and to elevate "boredom" from static lecture-style presentations.
- 5) **Activity should be developed to include small working groups** because during this stage, both age groups heavily depend on peer group bonding and social interactions.
- 6) **Activity should invite thoughtful opinion, comparison, and reflection** to respond to both age groups' developing awareness of themselves and others.
- 7) **Activity should address key state or national content standards** to provide students with a content-rich learning experience that coincides with student achievement standards in the classroom.

“Now, Put Down Your Cards and Tell Me What You Want To Say”

Chapter Four

For a time when I was out of work, I spent many weeks auditing a speech-teacher friend's college-level classes where students learned the art of public speaking. Future lawyers of America? Maybe. Mostly, these were college freshman running through the drills of public speaking as a required course at a local community college. Extemporaneous, impromptu, persuasive speeches—I heard them all.

In class after class, a nervous young thing with note cards in hand would stand and deliver a shaky, um-filled narrative. By the end of three minutes, note card and student were usually pretty wrung out. One day, however, after the speech of a particularly nerve-wracked student who seemed overly dependent on his notes, my teacher friend calmly said to him, “OK, now put your cards down and tell me what you want to say.” Everyone, including the student, looked around the room for an explanation. “You know what you want to say,” said my friend, “You’ve written it down and have read your cards many times. Am I right? Now, just put your cards down and tell me what’s on your mind.” In a split second, pressure and angst dissipated, and the shaky student seemed much relieved, if not bewildered. A breath of calm fell over the room. With a bit of hesitation, the student put his cards aside and began to speak to the class in an uncertain then more controlled voice. The renewed speech was delivered smoothly and successfully, without the tension or hiccups that plagued the original performance.

I don't enjoy public speaking, so prior to my own student facilitations, my thoughts often returned to that young student and the teaching strategies my friend employed during his speech classes. We all get nervous during public speaking and scribble notes of some kind on a notepad or index card. We often fret about performance and delivery. What I took away from "tell me what you want to say" was that notes and cards can hamper the delivery of a presentation and would certainly get in the way of a two-way conversation. In most cases, if you've studied the subject and have created pre-written notes, you're already well-prepared to deliver whatever it is you have to say. When I put "my cards down" about the hapa exhibition, I realized that I already knew the topic well, and I would likely connect better with my audience without my notes. Free from card-crutch and mental barriers, conversation would be alive and spontaneous, and attention would be fully focused on the present—a must for any kind of guided conversation with students. In the words of one of my mentors in this project, "Girl, you know what you're talking about, just speak from your heart."

"Exploring Mixed-Raced Identity" – a Facilitated Gallery Program

The facilitated gallery program and museum pre-/post-visit materials, **Exploring Mixed-Race Identity**, were meant to engage students in exploring the hapa or biracial/multiracial experience and the meaning of identity. [See Appendices A-F and H for full lesson plan, activities, assessment, pre-/post-visit materials, and exhibition information. See Appendix A for gallery lesson only.] The activities were created for students groups of 30, Grades 3-8, and the one and a half hour activity would take place in the 2,500-square-foot museum exhibition space. Aside from general gallery

restrictions, no other parameters were given. The program was also developed to cover the English/Language Arts, History, and Visual Arts Content Standards for the State of California. It is also applicable to the Health Education framework.

The activities were tested a few weeks prior to conducting the program with students. **Exploring Mixed-Race Identity** was presented to a group of 25 museum docents, and videotaped for future docent trainings. The test run and the available video footage provided an opportunity to fine-tune aspects of the activities and improve the flow of discussion materials.

Exploring Mixed-Race Identity provides two “big ideas” for students to think about: 1) What constitutes “identity,” especially for biracial/multiracial people? 2) Do assumptions and stereotypes influence our opinions of people? The facilitated gallery talks and activities have three objectives that point back to the big ideas: Students 1) learn the origin and definition of the word, “hapa,” and understand its meaning in the context of multiracial communities, 2) learn the definition of “stereotype” and “assumption,” and 3) understand the value of self-identity, as well as appreciate the unique characteristics that help us define who we are.

Pre-visit activities provide a means to consider the many factors that influence our identity and make us who we are as individuals. Post-visit materials synthesize all previous learning experiences, and examine the outside and internal perceptions of self [Appendix F].

The gallery activities offer students the opportunity to explore the exhibition in groups on their own and to work together to find meaning in the words and images presented in the Kip Fulbeck photographs. Relying on theories of cognitive development proposed by Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, and supported by Falk & Dierking's sociocultural contextual learning theories, the gallery activities were designed to foster group discussions and debates, group responsibility and decision-making, and personal reflection. Vygotsky studied and supported cognitive growth through social interactions, and suggested that cooperative dialogues and guided participation known as "scaffolding" were keys to stimulating cognitive growth in youth (Berk & Winsler, 1995). For younger students, adult facilitation would steer the dialogue and adjust the discussion as students mastered the understanding of the materials or ideas. The facilitator would scaffold the conversation by encouraging joint problem solving, social exchanges of ideas, and thoughtful responses to student questions.

In addition to learning through group dynamics, thought was given to Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which proposes that people perceive the world in at least seven different ways or "intelligences." Those ways are: *Linguistic*—the ability to use words and language; *Logical-Mathematical*—the capacity for inductive and deductive thinking and reasoning, as well as the use of numbers and the recognition of abstract patterns; *Spatial*—the ability to visualize objects and spatial dimensions, and create internal images and pictures; *Body-Kinesthetic*—the ability to control physical motion; *Interpersonal*—the capacity for person-to-person communications and relationships; *Intrapersonal*—the spiritual, inner states of being, self-reflection, and

awareness (Russell, 1999). Because traditional classroom activities heavily emphasize Linguistic and Logical-Mathematical learning skills in students, Gardner stressed the importance of introducing the other intelligences into activities so that learning would appeal to students with different learning styles.

The hapa gallery program provides a breadth of challenges that address many of Gardner's proposed learning styles; they foster cooperative learning and communication, self-reflection, movement throughout the galleries, analytical reasoning, an opportunities to use verbal and spatial skills within the activities.

Exploring Mixed-Race Identity unfolds as follows:

Step 1)

After a brief introduction to Kip Fulbeck, the Hapa Project, and the exhibition of photographs, the activity is explained, and the students are divided into six small groups of up to five students. Each student receives a hand-out [Appendix B].



Small group activity sampled by docents

Each small group receives a single laminated photograph of **one** of the images in the gallery **without** the subject's handwritten response to the question, "*What are you?*" [Appendices C1-C6]. (The backs of the

laminated photos are numbered #1 through #6.) Working in their small groups, students are asked to respond candidly to the their photograph and describe/draw/explain the person that they see in their hand-outs. Students may

work alone or consult as a group to complete these first impressions. Their remarks will be discussed later when the larger group reconvenes.

Step 2)

Once completed, the students are told that each group has a photograph (#1-6)

that can be found in the gallery. They are

instructed to find the corresponding image

[Appendices D1-D6], and as a small group,

learn more about the person in the

photograph by studying the image and

reading and discussing their subject's response to the question "What are you?"

(This search and response activity should take no more than 15-20 minutes.)

Students are asked to respond to the following questions in their handouts: a)

What was this person's response to the question, "What are you?" b) What do you

think about his/her response? c) If you could meet this person, what else would

you like to know about him/her? What would you ask? The back of the handout

provides a follow-up question that can be answered at home or on the return bus

ride to school.



Docents "find image in the galleries"
during test run of activity

Step 3)

Once time is called, students reconvene as a large group. In the order of the

numbered photographs, each small group is asked to locate and reveal to the large

group their hapa image in the gallery and share their responses to the questions on their handouts. Small group with Photo #1 goes first, Photo #2 goes next, and so forth.

Step 4)

With each photograph, student groups are asked to say how their hapa subject responded to the question, “What are you?” and share their feelings about the response. During this discussion, their initial reaction to the photograph (conducted prior to finding the image in the gallery) is explored along with their current reflections. Guided questions scaffold students’ understanding about the nature of identity, their feelings and biases about race and ethnicity and also help students value the point of view of the photographed individuals. Using questions on the student hand-out, open discussions can be nurtured about how people identify themselves and how identities are both created and also placed upon us.



Guided discussions with docents during test run

Subject’s handwritten text as they appeared with each photograph:

Photo #1 – “I am a family man/people person”

Photo #2 – “I am goddess. I am woman. Confident. Arrogant.”

Photo #3 – “I am 100% Black and 100% Japanese.”

Photo #4 – “I am a person.”

Photo #5 – “What am I? Shouldn’t you be asking my name first.”

Photo #6 – “What am I? I am exactly the same as every other person in [the year] 2500.”

Sample discussion questions:

- “What are your impressions of the person in this photograph?”
- “Did you make any assumptions about this person? What were they?”
- “Did this person’s tattoos influence your judgment about him?”
- “Has your opinion changed now that you know a little more about the person?”
- “In what ways could you approach someone about their ethnicity?”
- “What does she mean by ‘shouldn’t you be asking my name first?’”
- “Were you ever offended by a question that someone asked you?”
- “What kinds of things make us who we are?”

Step 5)

Because all of the images were chosen for specific reasons and are in close proximity in the galleries, Photos #1 and #2 can be discussed separately and then can be compared and discussed together, as can Photos #3 and #4, and Photos #5 and #6.

The following are themes and sample questions to be asked when comparing the photographs. Discussion themes grow in complexity:

Themes in Photos #1 and #2: These two individuals do not described or define themselves by ethnicity but by character, personal traits, personality, and their place in society.

Paired questions: How do these two people describe themselves? How are these two responses alike? How do these two people define who they are? What kinds of traits and characteristics define us? How would you describe yourself without using your ethnicity?

Themes in Photos #3 and #4: These two subjects refer to themselves as “whole” people, not “part of,” “half of,” or a mix of something but as whole and *complete* individuals.

Paired questions: How do these two people describe themselves? How are these two responses alike? What commonalities do we have as people? What kinds of traits, habits, and styles do all people have in common?

Themes in Photos #5 and #6: These two people have very specific and provocative things to say about the question “What are you?” Both reflect the question back to the asker, and at the same time, make powerful statements about being “different” and about the multiracial population of today and tomorrow.

Paired questions: How do these two people describe themselves? How are these two responses alike? Has anyone ever asked you, “What are you?” How would you feel about that question? How does her response come across? Does she have a right to be angry? Why? Why not? How

many people do you know who are ethnically-mixed? Are ethnically-mixed people different or the same as you? Do you think everyone will look the same in the year 2500?

Step 6)

Once all small groups have been heard and all discussions have been completed, students are encouraged to complete their hand-outs by answering the question, "Now that you've explored how other people define themselves, how about YOU? How do YOU define yourself?"

Post-visit assessment [Appendix E] evaluates what students have learned during their visit to the exhibition and permits a post-visit reflection on the question "What are you?" and the elements of identity.

Discovery and Discussion

I was expecting a ninth grade class of 23, with students around 14 years old. So I found it suspiciously quiet as I walked down the hall to the museum lobby to greet these visiting students. Generally, you hear 23 students before you see them. As it turned out, a number of students had other field trips and a pep rally on that same day, so a total of nine students were my first class in the hapa exhibition. I wasn't particularly nervous as I recall, just anxious to know how the students would respond to the activities. As I led the group to the gallery, I began to mentally shift my discussion points to gear for older

students rather than an elementary-age group and for an intimate discussion rather than a large group dynamic.

A few weeks prior to the actual gallery program, I had led the docents in a test run of the student activities in a classroom set-up (instead of in the galleries), and they had responded wonderfully to the whole program. I felt that the opening directions needed to be tightened up a bit (i.e. be clearer), but otherwise, the docents followed the program and were eager learners—curious, lively, and reflective. As a matter of fact, they stayed an extra 20 minutes after the session to ask additional questions and discuss in more detail what my experience was like as a hapa growing up all over the world. They seemed particularly curious, and I think impressed, with Mom and Dad’s story and the adversity that Dad must have faced in achieving all that he had.

What I remember the most during the docent presentation was the “flow-like” state that came over me during the discussion portion of the program. Time literally stood still, as suggested by Csikszentmihaly’s flow theory. I found that I was completely engaged with the conversations that took place for each photograph, and I became completely uninhibited and “zoned into” what I was doing. In the state of flow, one needs immediate feedback and increasing challenge to sustain the experience. I received both, because my discussion questions became more complex as I went along, and it constantly required



Fully-engaged in discussions with docents

my raising the level of engagement with the docents. Another interesting insight was that I felt a certain confidence in my delivery and a real command of the audience in the room. I was keenly in tune with my ability to guide conversations in certain directions and to lead the docents to note specific references and challenges. I felt enormously empowered, but I was aware that I was presenting to an adult audience. I wondered how much “classroom maintenance” or “distractions” would be involved with a large group of middle school students. I also considered general classroom teachers, their positive or negative influence on a captive audience of young minds, and their challenge of engaging the attention of up to 40 students in a truly meaningful learning experience.

The overall student response was very positive. The assessment questions that were given to the class a few weeks after the visit showed that the students achieved a good understanding of the meaning of “hapa” and the many ways, in which we self-identify [Appendix E].

Student #1: “Hapa means that...a person is part Asian or many different races.”

Student #2: “I learned that people aren’t just one race or culture.”

Student #3: “I learned that people define themselves differently.”

Because there were only nine students, the activities were conducted in pairs. As young students just beginning the 9th grade, the class was still fairly shy, and students lacked the hardcore cockiness of older teens. Perhaps the small size of their group contributed to their overall timid-ness, and most still had the eager-to-please nature of

younger students. The group seemed to enjoy working on their own, and of course, there were some pairs that worked diligently and others that fell to distraction.

Not surprisingly, the true meat of the activity occurred in the reporting of the small groups and in the large group conversations that ensued. Students were able to speak out, ask questions, wonder about things, reflect on their own experiences, and make comparisons. This lively exchange fostered critical thinking skills and passionate knowledge-seeking—the true essence of learning. By discussing the photo subjects' responses, students were able to remold their thinking about either the person or the statement. For instance, an active debate occurred when discussing the photo of the tattooed gentleman ("I'm a family man/people person"). The docents had much to discuss about this photograph, too.

Why do you think he's a tough guy? Can a man with tattoos be a family man and a people person? What does a family man look like? What is the meaning of stereotype? Have these tattoos biased your opinions? Does anyone here have a tattoo? In each group, students and docents, these questions hung heavy, like watermelons on trees.

The response "Shouldn't you be asking my name first?" also drew a heated reaction from the students, as it did also with the docents. The woman's written "tone of voice" sparked much dialogue about the possible reasons for her seemingly antagonistic response.

I volleyed questions in both docent and student groups as best I could, even remaining perfectly calm when one docent felt that the woman's response was particularly rude. I was clearly torn between immediately defending the woman's response and trying to engage that docent in a deeper understanding of why she presented such a stinging response to "What are you?" I asked: Her response seems to draw some strong feelings from all of you; why is that? Oh, you think she's being defensive? Why do you think she's being defensive? What do you think has made her so angry? For the docents, I openly shared how I felt about responding to "What are you?" for so many years, and engaged them in a role-play to understand the woman's point of view. With the students, I tried to scaffold some reasons why she may have responded in that manner. What does the question, "What are you?" mean to you? Is it a polite question? Have you asked this question before? How would you feel if a stranger came up to you and asked you that question? Would you feel obligated to answer? Would you feel put on the spot? Does she seem angry? Does she have a right to be angry? Do people have the right to respond to questions in any way they want to? What would you have said next if this response was aimed at you? I think both docents and students reflected long and hard and were challenged to understand the subject's internal world.

Ideally, I hoped that these passionate gallery discussions would enlighten and broaden people's awareness, sensitivity and perceptions about not only the hapa experience, but well—the human experience. Somehow, I felt as though I was trying to lead students down those muddy roads of Cameroon, and helping them to be curious about the world and about how other people think and feel.

Surprisingly, docents and students responded differently when considering the similarity of responses in Photos #3 and #4 (“I am 100% Black, 100% Japanese” and “I am a person.”). The docents could not see the connection, and even with several minutes of silence, the docents, who are typically very vocal, were unable to come up with any insights. On the contrary, the students raised their hands right away and could immediately see that these two subjects described themselves as whole people. This may be attributed to the fact that the students were very quickly learning to pair answers, make connections and understand universal themes. In this case, the important lesson understood was that individuals can be made up of many different parts, but still be one person—one whole—one multifaceted but complete human being. The docents may have been taking too narrow a view of these two responses.

When asked if any student had ever been asked the question “What are you?” nearly half of the students raised their hands. This was a reflection of the multiethnic neighborhood to which this class and school belonged, but in the larger picture, it also speaks volumes about our nation’s current diverse population. This gallery program may be conducted very differently in the year 2050.

Another generation of Americans has been born to answer the same question that has been circulating society for decades and maybe centuries, “What are you?” Will we ever change? Hopefully. Biracial and multiethnic young people today have many more “sisters and brothers” in the field. It’s practically “cool” to be mixed, and the 2000 U.S.

Census has helped to "legitimize" the multiracial population that has existed in silence for centuries.

At the end of the gallery discussions, when we finished Photo #6 and had contemplated the multiracial population in America in the year 2500, I was able to talk to the students in a more relaxed fashion. I shared a bit of my own experiences in growing up in other countries and about what my challenges were in forming my own identity. I sensed that the students had a good sampling of how people self-identified and how looks and assumptions influenced our judgments about people. One young lady, asked about weekend hours, because she intended to return with her family.

Student assessment showed that each student was on target with what they learned at the museum, but I believe I may have learned more than they did that morning. I discovered that I'm able to sustain an engaging and constructive conversation with a class of students. I discovered that I listen well, and enjoy probing and "scaffolding" students to new and higher levels of thinking. I learned that I'm organized and thorough but can "go with the flow" when things go off track. I learned that the most challenging and rewarding part of teaching is providing students the ability to grasp information on their own and to motivate them to keep on learning. In the words of my violin professor in college, Dr. Joseph Wincenc, "I'll never teach you how to play; I'll teach you how to practice." Under his tutelage, I have been able to break down and decipher enormously difficult pieces of music in order to practice and learn those pieces, and later perform them. As educators, we are all inspiring others to learn difficult pieces, to break things

down, to understand the issues from a larger perspective, and to perform with integrity and confidence.

“I Don’t Go Into Any House That Has Monkeys!”

Chapter Five

Mom shouted from the kitchen, “I don’t go into any house that has monkeys!”

My Mom hates animals. All animals in general, I think. I don’t know where it comes from, but what could her life have been like living in Africa—the original Animal Planet?

She told me a story once about how in Liberia a peddler came to the door and asked her if she wanted to buy some bamboo. She said sure and stepped away for a few minutes. When she returned to the door, there stood the peddler with a baboon in his arms. I just about died laughing. You just can’t make up stories like that, and they’re all part of my family’s colorful life from overseas—a rich and vibrant storehouse of experiences from which to draw life lessons.



Mom at home in Liberia, 1954

The Power of Experience

When I first began thinking of thesis topics, I was interested in either studying the kinds of life experiences that influence educators and their teaching, or studying the power of experience in general. I had planned on examining other educators’ experiences and documenting their most significant memories. The idea came to me after witnessing the emotional impact that a professional development workshop, which I was leading, had on a group of educators. For a variety of reasons pertaining to their time at the Museum and the topic of diversity and social justice, the outcome of their weekend was emotional and significant. Teachers wept as they described the connections that they

had made during their three days and the meaning that those experiences had produced. At that moment, I became singularly intrigued by the impact and power of experience, especially in a learning environment.

What a surprise to have been the subject of my own study. Instead of documenting the experiences of others, I assessed my own life and work, and more specifically, examined the experiences that shaped who I am as a biracial individual. The timing of the hapa exhibition played a huge role in how I came to this thesis project, but in hindsight, there was no better way to discover the power and application of experience except through a personal, real-life situation that heavily depended on study and self-reflection to achieve an end. Did I have to be hapa to create this gallery program? No, but the experience of being hapa enriched and informed the process, and developing "experience" as a tool was a valuable resource.

Discovering the disciplines of phenomenology and heuristics were key to my process, because their intuitive research methods use the rich resources of mind and memory. For someone who relies on experience as a learning tool, phenomenology and heuristics present practical explanations for a natural, life-long process of discovery and problem-solving, and we know that learning and the synthesis of knowledge does not always take place in a classroom. We need only look at the work of Dewey, Hein, Csikszentmihalyi, Falk and Dierking to understand that learning is most powerful when it involves experience, free-choice, and intrinsically-motivated conditions.

*Innumerable experiences inform and educate us. What shaped **Exploring Mixed-Race Identity** was a rich combination of daily journaling, research and study of learning theory and child development theory, observing gallery educators in action, watching students interact in the galleries and in public, and conversations with teacher colleagues. I also spent many hours getting to know Kip Fulbeck's previous work and reviewing the hapa photographs in the galleries. Memory played an important role, too. I spent a lot of time reflecting back to my own childhood and young adult years, remembering stories, remembering what it was like to confront my own biracial identity, talking through memories with my family, taking their oral histories, looking through dozens of slides and photographs, and understanding how I felt about my biracial self today.*



Between the Ivory Coast and France

By the time I put the gallery program together, I knew what I wanted to convey to students, and I knew how I wanted the activities and discussions to unfold. My thoughts and experiences—and their meaning—gave me voice, aided my ability to solve the task at hand, and created a framework on which to build a gallery program.

Dewey writes about an “organic connection between education and personal experience” (1938, p. 25), not just any experience but *quality* experience, “the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” (p. 28). As museum educators, how do we provide *quality* experiences that resonate with youth

and adults? How do we create experiences that enhance deeper connections to the world around us, linking us with universal understandings? Where and how do life-changing museum experiences happen?

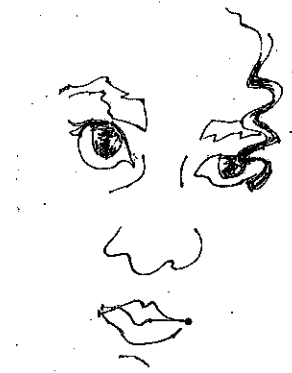
By providing non-traditional learning environments outside of the classroom along with well-designed programs for students, museums encourage “experience” and pathways to life-long learning. However, it is hard to say what triggers meaning for any one individual or what events provide lasting impressions. Did the students who participated in **Exploring Mixed-Race Identity** have a meaningful and/or transformative experience? Did any of the activities or conversations provide new understanding? Did they leave the museum with a different perspective than they had when they arrived? The interactions with Kip Fulbeck’s photographs may become significant to students as they face the challenges of their own identity formation throughout the next several years, and the heated discussions about mixed-race identity may strongly resonate as they, as 57-year-olds, confront the widely multicultural United States of 2050.

The U.S. has struggled with the concept of “race” for centuries, and that struggle has produced some of the worst episodes in our nation’s history, but it has also pushed our country to create some of the strongest legislation on behalf of civil rights. In the ever-changing ethnic tapestry of America’s population, the blending of cultures is inevitable. Hopefully one day soon, “ethnic blends” will be fully understood and accepted in America, and mixed-race identity will no longer need to be discussed, argued or explained. Ethnically-mixed people have rights, too, according to Maria Root. In her

Bill of Rights for Racially-Mixed People, Root states that racially-mixed people have the right to not justify their existence in this world; the right to not be responsible for people's discomfort with their physical ambiguity; and the right to identify themselves differently than strangers expect them to identify (Root, 1996). [See Appendix I for complete *Bill of Rights for Racially-Mixed People*.]

"I hate the obsessions people have with what they see as different or exotic," says 19-year-old Stefanie Liang who is German Chinese American. "What's beautiful about us is that we embody harmony and we transcend racism in many ways" (Gaskins, p. 235). By the year 2050, it would be a welcome relief to many members of the American population if the question "What are you?" were no longer necessary.

Each time I look in the mirror, I'm reminded of my hybrid mix. My eyes fold at the corners, but not like "real" Asian Americans. My hair falls in black curls like generations of African Americans, but it's not at all "nappy." I tan well in the summer, then fade dramatically in winter. Still, I'm comfortable with the person behind the almond eyes and black curls that are now graying. I'm OK with the ambiguity that I project. It's not a perfect world. People will continue to ask, "What are you?", and I'll respond as always.



Self-portrait, 1990s

The thing is, I enjoy individual differences and the variety that humanity offers. I'm a product of idealistic parents who insisted on creating a life that defied the norm, who demanded fair and equal treatment in a color-conscious world, who wanted a broader education for their children, and who provided that education outside of the United States. My identity has been shaped by factors many Americans have not experienced; it has allowed me to have a wide-ranging and accepting view of "difference." At the same time other Americans have had experiences that I could never imagine and probably would have enjoyed.

"There is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education" (Dewey, 1938, p. 20). I hope that the students who came to the hapa exhibition took away valuable lessons on the day they visited. I certainly learned a lot from the experience.

CROSS

*My old man's a white old man
And my old mother's black.
If ever I cursed my white old man
I take my curses back.
If ever I cursed my black old mother
And wished she were in hell,
I'm sorry for that evil wish
And now I wish her well
My old man died in a fine big house.
My ma died in a shack.
I wonder were I'm going to die,
Being neither white nor black?*

Langston Hughes

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Exploring Mixed-Race Identity

A facilitated gallery program conducted for the museum exhibition,
Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa

[Also see Chapter Four, p. 62, for added lesson description.]

Grades: Upper Elementary (3-5), Middle School (6-8)

Time: 1.5 hours

Subjects: English/Language Arts, History, Health, (Visual Arts extension)

Students will:

1. Learn the origin and definition of the word, **hapa**, and understand its meaning in the context of multiracial communities.
2. Learn the definitions of **stereotype** and **assumption** and how attitudes and perceptions influence our judgments.
3. Learn the value of self-identity and appreciate the unique characteristics that help us define who we are.

Materials:

- Student hand-out/worksheet, “What are you?” [Appendix B]
- Laminated reproductions of six hapa images without accompanying text [Appendices C1-C6]
- Clipboard and pencils

Exploring Mixed-Race Identity consists of three segments, 1) an individual reflection, 2) a gallery exploration, and 3) a session of information sharing/group discussion.

To start

Introduce the artist, the nature of his work, and the subject of the exhibition. Explain the origin and the meaning of the word, **hapa**. (5 minutes)

Step 1

Divide students into six small groups of up to 5-6 students each and distribute student hand-outs [Appendix B]. Present each group with a numbered laminated photo of one of the hapa images in the gallery [Appendices C1-C6]. Direct the students to study the photo and candidly respond to the first direction in their handouts (“Describe this person.”). Students may respond individually or work as a group. (Their responses will be discussed later in the program.) (5 minutes)

Step 2

Students are informed that the photograph they have been working with can be found in the galleries. In their small groups, students are asked to find the full hapa image [Appendices D1-D6] and conduct further reflection as they respond to the remaining questions on their hand-out (“What was this person’s response to the question, ‘*What are you?*’ What do you think about his/her response? If you could meet this person, what else would you like to know about him/her? What would you ask?”) (15 minutes)

Step 3

Reconvene as a large group and call on each small group to share their findings about the individual hapa images. Have students:

- reflect on initial thoughts and **assumptions** about their subject
- discuss biases and **stereotypes** that may have formed before or after conducting their gallery search and viewing their subject’s response
- think of “I wonder” questions
- role play and consider the hapa subject’s point of view
- think about the question, “What are you?”
- compare images between small groups and use both images to form more complex questions and discussions (photos #1 and #2, photos #3 and #4, etc.)
- find similarities and differences among the hapa response text
- discuss the qualities and attributes that define who we are
- share how they would define themselves. Note the similarities and differences within the class. Students may opt to reflect on their own using the graphic organizer on the reverse side of their hand-outs. (1 hour)

Sample discussion questions for single photo images:

What are your impressions of the person in this photograph? Did you make any **assumptions** about this person? Like what? Did this person’s appearance influence your judgment about him/her? How did you feel about his/her response? Has your opinion changed now that you have heard a little more from him/her? Why do we **stereotype** people? What happens when we use **stereotypes**? Are you the person inside that people see on the outside? In what ways can a person be approached about his/her ethnicity? What does she mean by “Shouldn’t you be asking my name first?” Were you ever offended by a question that someone asked you? What kinds of things make us who we are?

Sample discussion questions for photo comparisons:

How do these two people describe themselves? How are these two responses alike/different? What words or descriptors did they use to define themselves? What kinds of traits and characteristics define who we are? How would you describe yourself *without* using your ethnicity? What commonalities do we have as people, that is, what kinds of traits, habits, and styles do all people have in common? Has anyone ever asked you, “What are you?” How do you feel about that question? How does her response come across? What gives you the impression that she’s angry? Does she have a right to be angry? Why/why not? What would you say to her next? Do you know anyone who

is ethnically-mixed? Is he/she different than you or the same you? Have you ever been afraid of someone who didn't look like you? Why/why not? Do you think everyone will look the same in the year 2500?

Assessment:

- What did you learn from your trip to the *Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa* exhibition?
- What is the meaning of the word, "hapa?"
- In what ways do we as individuals define ourselves?
- How do you define/describe yourself?
- After exploring the exhibition, how do you feel about the question, "What are you?"
- What did you like most about your trip to the Japanese American National Museum?

Lesson extension (for Visual Arts):

Explore Kip Fulbeck's hapa photographs through the portraiture of other visual artists.

Students will:

1. Learn the reasons why we create portraits
2. Learn the many different ways in which artists "describe" their subjects using different media.

Suggested painters/other media: Mary Cassatt, Frida Kahlo, Pablo Picasso, Rembrandt van Rijn, Faith Ringgold, John Singer Sargent, Andy Warhol

Suggested photographers: Dorothea Lange, Annie Leibovitz, Lorna Simpson, Carrie Mae Weems, William Wegman

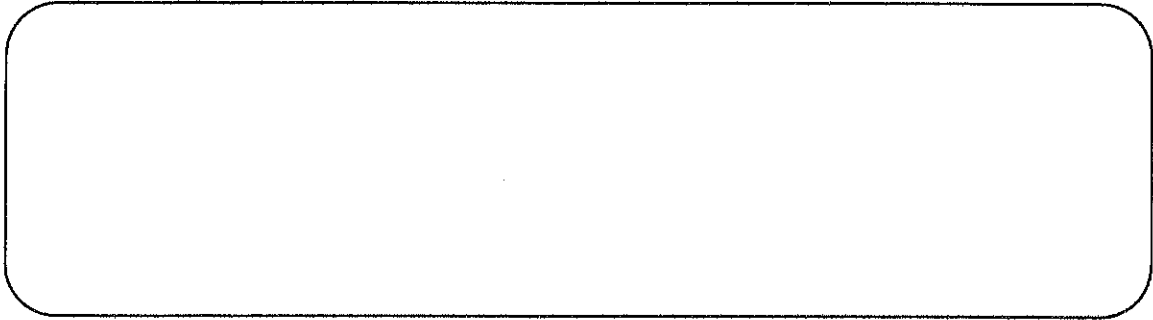
Sample discussion questions:

What is a portrait? What kinds of different portraits are there? Where do we see them? Why do we create portraits? In what ways do we use a person's likeness or image? Can you define a person through his/her portrait? Can we know a person through his/her portrait? Can an artist contribute elements to an image that help describe that person? Like what? What kinds of things in this portrait help you to learn a little bit more about the subject? How does the artist medium (paint, collage, watercolor, sculpture, photography) influence how we see the subject? Describe Kip Fulbeck's photographs. Describe this [other artist's] portrait. Why do you think Kip Fulbeck photographed his subjects in this manner? Why did he include their answers to the question "What are you?" Why in their own handwriting?

“What are you?”

STEP #1: Describe the person in your photograph.

(2 minutes)



STEP #2: Together with your partners, find this photograph in the exhibition and answer the questions below. (15 minutes)

1. What was this person's response to the question, “*What are you?*”

2. What do you think about his/her response?

3. If you could meet this person, what else would you like to know about him/her? What would you ask?

















I AM A FAMILY MAN / PEOPLE PERSON

guamanian, filipino



I am Goddess
I am woman -
Confident • Arrogant



I am
100% Black
and 100%
Japanese

african american. japanese



japanese, swedish, norwegian, irish, german, english



I AM A FAMILY MAN / PEOPLE PERSON

guamanian, filipino



What am I? Shouldn't you be
asking my name first?

chinese, african-american



What am I?

I am exactly the same
as every other person in 2500●

japanese, french, chinese, irish, swedish, sioux

Thanks for visiting the Japanese American National Museum!



Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa

1. What did you learn from your trip to the *Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa* exhibition?
2. What is the meaning of the word, “hapa?”
3. In what ways do we as individuals define ourselves?
4. How do you define/describe yourself?
5. After exploring the exhibition, how do you feel about the question, “What are you?”
6. What did you like most about your trip to the Japanese American National Museum?

Thanks for visiting the
Japanese American National Museum!



Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa

1. What did you learn from your trip to the Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa exhibition?
I learned that people define themselves differently.
2. What is the meaning of the word, "hapa?"
hapa means that you are asian mixed with something else
3. In what ways do we as individuals define ourselves?
Well, most of us say all the different things we are mixed with, but that's not how you fully define yourself.
4. How do you define/describe yourself?
I describe myself as a brown skinned individual.
I'm 5'2-5'3 and 14 yrs. old.
5. After exploring the exhibition, how do you feel about the question, "What are you?"
I feel that when I'm asked that question I don't have to tell them exactly what am I
6. What did you like most about your trip to the Japanese American National Museum?
I liked observing all the pictures of different people

Thanks for visiting the
Japanese American National Museum!



1. What did you learn from your trip to the Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa exhibition?

I learned that ~~people~~ people aren't just 1 race or culture.

2. What is the meaning of the word, "hapa?"

Hapa means Biracial.

3. In what ways do we as individuals define ourselves?

We as individuals define ourselves as people. some people define themselves by personality & race.

4. How do you define/describe yourself?

I define myself by a ~~st~~ guatemalan daughter, sister, and niece. who loves her family.

5. After exploring the exhibition, how do you feel about the question, "What are you?"

After the exhibition I feel that "What are you?" question has a lot of different answers.

6. What did you like most about your trip to the Japanese American National Museum?

What I liked most was the pictures.

**Thanks for visiting the
Japanese American National Museum!**



Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa

1. What did you learn from your trip to the *Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa* exhibition?
I learned that you shouldn't tell someone where you from or what are you, instead you should get to know them by their cultures, and their ways
2. What is the meaning of the word, "hapa?"
Hapa means part Asian
3. In what ways do we as individuals define ourselves?
We define ourselves by our race, cultures, and by our ways of living
4. How do you define/describe yourself?
I describe my as a young mexican boy who doesn't care what people think of me
5. After exploring the exhibition, how do you feel about the question, "What are you?"
I feel that they should get to know me before asking me that
6. What did you like most about your trip to the Japanese American National Museum?
I liked all those pictures at the end and how all the kids and adults expressed themselves in those pictures

5

**Thanks for visiting the
Japanese American National Museum!**



Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa

1. What did you learn from your trip to the *Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa* exhibition?
I learned that hapa means different kinds of race
2. What is the meaning of the word, "hapa?"
It means different kinds of race
Biracial
3. In what ways do we as individuals define ourselves?
human beings, and our race.
4. How do you define/describe yourself?
I am a mexican human that likes music and the color purple
5. After exploring the exhibition, how do you feel about the question, "What are you?"
I feel that only we can define ourselves and there are many ways to answer that question
6. What did you like most about your trip to the Japanese American National Museum?
I liked most that it was surprising what the people's answers were.

Thanks for visiting the
Japanese American National Museum!

11-13-06
Pd 6



Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa

1. What did you learn from your trip to the Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa exhibition? I learned that people look different than what they are.
2. What is the meaning of the word, "hapa?"
Being biracial / many cultures
3. In what ways do we as individuals define ourselves?
As a human being, and people.
4. How do you define/describe yourself?
I am someone that likes to laugh and draw!! and a proud Mexican.
5. After exploring the exhibition, how do you feel about the question, "What are you?"
I felt that not many people think the same ~~as who~~ when they answer the question.
6. What did you like most about your trip to the Japanese American National Museum?
That everytime you see a picture you see ~~something~~ them they're not what they seem, its surprising.

Thanks for visiting the
Japanese American National Museum!



Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa

1. What did you learn from your trip to the Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa exhibition?
I learned that there are alot of people that describe themselves differently than others. I also ~~learn~~ learned that there are alot of people that look like they are only one or two races but they are more.
2. What is the meaning of the word, "hapa?"
Hapa means that if a person is part asian or many different races.
3. In what ways do we as individuals define ourselves?
We ~~also~~ define ourselves as smart, tall, heavy and many other ways I think.
4. How do you define/describe yourself?
I define myself as a smart young man.
I am 75% mexican
and
25% USA
5. After exploring the exhibition, how do you feel about the question, "What are you?"
I feel that there is more meaning to that question that I thought.
6. What did you like most about your trip to the Japanese American National Museum?
I liked that there was alot of different pictures and the exhibition wasn't boring.

Thanks for visiting the
Japanese American National Museum!



Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa

1. What did you learn from your trip to the Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa exhibition?
That most people are mixed with lots of cultures, that no one knows of.
2. What is the meaning of the word, "hapa?"
Biracial
3. In what ways do we as individuals define ourselves?
In many ways. Judge are personalities are backgrounds, we always describe ourselves in our family.
4. How do you define/describe yourself?
Nice, caring, smart, ~~the~~ Beautiful, intelligent,
5. After exploring the exhibition, how do you feel about the question, "What are you?"
I am ~~a~~ not Black, I am not Ethiopian, I am not Belizean I am other IV
6. What did you like most about your trip to the Japanese American National Museum?
Looking at the different people and their cultures and responses.



Pre-visit and Post-visit Activities -- Grades 3-8

Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa exhibition

The following classroom activities were developed to complement your school group's visit to the exhibition, *Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa*. During your visit to the museum, your students will explore the artist's powerful and intimate expressions of beauty and identity, and engage in facilitated discussions and activities that address identity and the various ways in which people define themselves. These pre-visit and post-visit activities were designed to 1) help prepare your students to explore issues of identity prior to their visit to the museum, and 2) upon return to the classroom, provide a means of tying together ideas and topics discussed during the visit.

On-site and classroom activities satisfy California Content Standards for English/Language Arts, History, Visuals, and addresses the State Framework for Health Education: Individual Growth and Development.

Exhibition Notes

Originally a derogatory label derived from the Hawai'ian word for "half," the word **hapa** has been embraced as a term of pride by many whose mixed-race heritage includes Asian or Pacific Rim ancestry. Kip Fulbeck's work seeks to address in words and images the one question that hapa are frequently asked: "*What are you?*" Hapa—who now number in the millions—offer a complex perspective on identity in contemporary America. (For additional exhibition information, see <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/kipfulbeck/home>.)

Key Facts

- The 2000 U.S. Census was the first to allow respondents to select more than one race on the questionnaire. Approximately 2.4 % of the U.S. population (or over 6.8 million Americans) identified themselves as being two or more races.
- Hawaii has the largest multiracial population in the country at 24.1%, followed by Alaska at 5.4%.
- Statistically, Asian Americans have the highest rates of intermarriage, with Japanese Americans having the highest proportion of multiethnic or multiracial combinations (over 30%).



- Interracial marriage became legal in 1967 as a result of a landmark civil rights case, *Loving vs State of Virginia*, in which the U.S. Supreme Court declared Virginia's anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional. In its decision, the court wrote, "*Under our Constitution, the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides with the individual and cannot be infringed by the State.*" The decision ended all race-based legal restriction on marriage in the United States.
- Census data indicate that interracial marriages among all Americans rose by more than 800% between 1960 and 1990.
- By the year 2050, no one race will have a clear majority in America's population for the first time in U.S. History.

Useful Vocabulary

Hapa	(slang) Of mixed racial heritage with partial roots in Asian and/or Pacific Islander ancestry or a person of such ancestry. Derived from "hapa haole," a Hawai'ian derogatory term meaning "half Hawai'ian, half White."
Multiracial	Individual or group whose ancestors are not of a single race.
Multiethnic	Individual or group whose ancestors are of a different culture, but may be of the same racial group.
Stereotype	A mental image of a group based on opinion without regard to individual differences.
Assumption	Conclusions based on limited knowledge of the facts or made without proof.
Prejudice	A judgment or opinion, often unfavorable, formed without adequate reasons.
Discrimination	Treating people in a less favorable way because they are members of a particular group.
Miscegenation	A mixture of races; <i>especially</i> marriage or cohabitation between a White person and a member of another race

Online Resources

Kip Fulbeck's Website www.seaweedproductions.com/hapa/default.htm offers additional information on the artist and the Hapa Project.

Hapa Issues Forum www.hif.org/about_hif/index.html is dedicated to enriching the lives of Asian/Pacific Islanders of mixed heritage and developing communities that value diversity.



Loving Day www.lovingday.org/index.html offers information about this 1967 landmark civil rights case. Learn more about the campaign to celebrate the legalization of interracial marriage.

Mavin Foundation www.mavinfoundation.org addresses the unique issues facing multiracial people. This foundation has received the President's "Points of Light" award and the "Heroes of Health Care" award.

iPride www.ipride.org is a nonprofit, organization interested in the well-being and development of children and adults who are of more than one racial or ethnic heritage or who have been transracially adopted.

Swirl www.swirlinc.org aims to unite the mixed community by providing support to mixed families, mixed individuals, transracial adoptees, and inter-racial/cultural couples.

Association of Multi-Ethnic Americans (AMEA) www.ameasite.org seeks to educate and advocate on behalf of multiethnic individuals and families by collaborating with others to eradicate all forms of discrimination. They have been working in the community since 1988.

Multiracial Americans of Southern California (MASC) www.mascsite.org caters to the needs of multiracial people, people involved in interracial relationships, and transracial adoptees in Southern California.



Pre-visit Activity: “Who Am I?”

Objective: Students will discover what makes them unique and will also consider which of their characteristics are key factors in creating their own identity.

Duration: 40 minutes

Materials: “Who Am I?” handout (attached). Photocopy as needed.

Directions: ► Allow students 10-15 minutes to complete the “Who Am I?” handout. Students are to complete the various category ovals that ask who they are, where they come from, and what factors contribute to their individual traits and personalities.

► Upon completion of all categories, instruct students to connect each category to the “my name is” oval by drawing a line from each category to the middle, linking the ovals to their name.

► In the remaining time (25-30 minutes), engage students in a discussion about identity by noting all of the distinct and defining characteristics that mark their individuality.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the purpose of connecting the categories to the center oval?
2. Do all of your responses together provide a good description of who you are?
What other qualities or factors define who you are?
3. What is the meaning of identity?
4. Who or what determines your identity?
5. Is your identity constant or does it change?



“WHO AM I?”

What people don't know about me...

My physical features are...

How I like to spend my free time...

I excel in these subjects/activities...

My name is ...

My family heritage is...

Issues that matter to me...

When I'm an adult, I hope to.....



Post-visit Activity: “The Inside Me / The Outside Me”

Objective: Students will learn that outward appearances do not immediately identify or describe who we are as individuals.

Duration: 1 hour

Materials: “Inside/Outside” handout (attached). Photocopy as needed.

Cardboard photo frames or empty 35 mm slide sleeves (purchase from any local art or framing stores or use cut-out template provided)

- Directions:**
- ▶ Divide students into pairs. Distribute one handout per student and one photo frame per student pair.
 - ▶ On Side A of handout, ask students to draw or describe their partner’s outside features, taking turns using the photo frame. (Read aloud the instructions on the handout.) Allow 10 minutes to complete Side A. (Call time per turn, 5 minutes for each student.)
 - ▶ Next ask students to complete Side B of the handout, allowing 15-20 minutes for completion. Students are to “interview” each other and learn something they would not have known about each other at first glance.
 - ▶ In the remaining time (30-35 minutes), ask pairs of students to share the results of their activities. Begin by asking students to describe the outside characteristics of his/her partner. Engage the class in confirming or adding to student observations. Next ask the same students to share what he/she discovered about the partner during the brief “interview.”

Discussion Questions:

Have students reflect about their trip to the *Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa* exhibition at the National Museum.

1. Did you discover anything new about your classmate that you didn’t know before? Did anything surprise you?
2. What is the definition of the word, “assumption?” What kind of “assumptions” do we make about people based on outward appearances?
3. What kinds of things can we discover about a person through conversation that we can’t know just by looking at them?
4. What has this exercise taught you?



Does the OUTSIDE you describe the INSIDE you?

- Pretend that you're taking a photograph. Use your eye like a camera lens.
- Looking through your photo frame, create a portrait of your partner. Describe your partner from the outside (in words or pictures).
- What do you see?

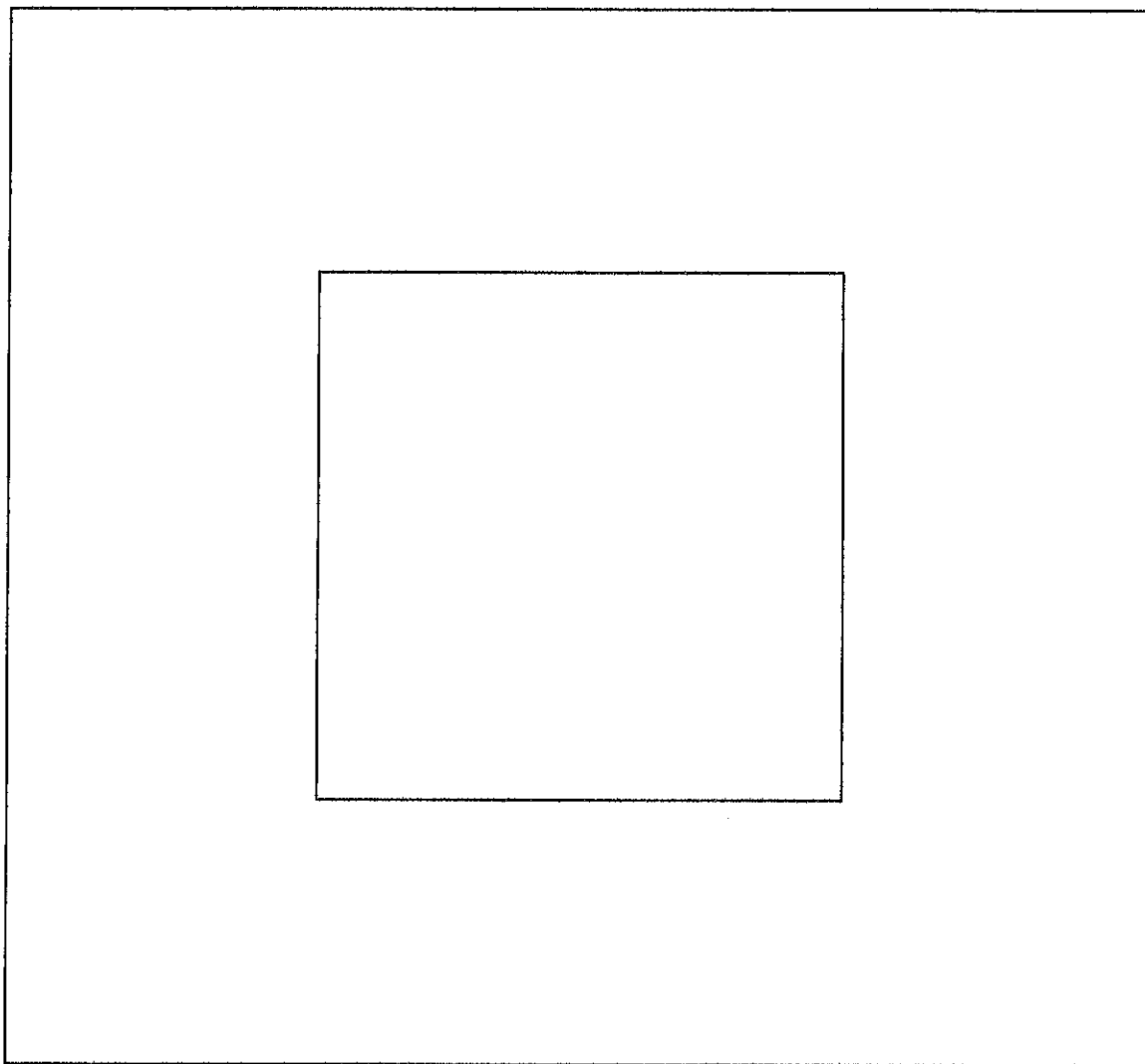
The OUTSIDE you.....



Post-Visit Activity -- “The Inside Me / The Outside Me”

Photo Frame Template

► Using thick paper or cardstock, cut frame with an outer edge approximately 6” x 6” with an opening of about 2 ½” in the center.



✗. wanted to note - take on gallery talk.
he said "it's easy, it's like music.
there's a beginning, a middle, &
an end. It's like a story."
Write about something I'm really
interested in and then think
about what was fun and exciting
about it. try to duplicate that
feeling & that thought process in
explaining something that really
excited me.

Such great points/ideas.

8/30 Presented the activities to the
doctors yesterday. great
achievement! Glad they liked it.

Enjoyed:

- ① interacting
- ② bringing up ideas
- ③ asking questions
- ④ controlling flow of conversation
- ⑤ personnel fit to subject matter

Didn't enjoy:

- ① worrying about time
- ② feeling unprepared or nervous
- ③ confusing over directions

9/7 Spoke to _____ today.
Great guy. Good insights.
"work with the unexpected."

- be prepared to deviate
- know the beginning / middle / end
+ make sure you're about on time
when you hit those markers
- every group is different —
no 2 are alike
- don't worry if they don't get it;
sometimes they don't

9/12 Pre/post visit materials complete
• instructions + info
plus — "Who Am I?"
— "Inside/Outside"
activities.

Sent to Joanne + having
his look over.
Also sent to Harriet.

- Flipping through phenomenology book.

kip fulbeck

part asian • 100% hapa

june 8 – october 29, 2006

Exhibition
Family Programs



JAPANESE AMERICAN
NATIONAL MUSEUM

kip fulbeck
part asian, 100% hapa

june 8 – october 29, 2006

kip fulbeck: part asian, 100% hapa
is a unique exhibition of portraits by artist
Kip Fulbeck that offers an engaging
perspective on the changing face of America.

The exhibition is made possible, in part, by the support of
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I am... I can be...

Saturday, September 9
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Rabbits, Roosters, Monkeys, Oh My!*

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Workshop with Kip Fulbeck. \$25 members;
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kip fulbeck

part asian • 100% hapa

june 8 – october 29, 2006

Exhibition
Public Programs



JAPANESE AMERICAN
NATIONAL MUSEUM

kip fulbeck
part asian, 100% hapa

june 8 – october 29, 2006

kip fulbeck: part asian, 100% hapa is a unique exhibition of portraits by artist Kip Fulbeck that offers an engaging perspective on the changing face of America.

The exhibition is made possible, in part, by the support of Marko O. Gordon & Hugh Coleman, The James Irvine Foundation, Michael & Karan Okamura-Schnecker, and the Wells Fargo Foundation.

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Exhibition Related
Public Programs

Saturday, June 10, 2:00 PM

Books & Conversations with Kip Fulbeck

Saturday, June 10, 7:00–10:00 PM FREE

Party on the Plaza: Celebrating the Opening of
kip fulbeck: part asian, 100% hapa

Wednesday, July 12 & 26 and

August 9 & 23, 7:30 PM

REEL Hapa

Thursday, August 17, 7:30 PM

Hapa Comedy Showcase

Sunday, September 17, 2:00 PM

About Face: Artists Discuss Portraiture and Identity

Saturday, October 7, 2:00 PM

Chasing Daybreak

A Film About Mixed Race in America

Unless otherwise noted, all programs are FREE with
admission to *kip fulbeck: part asian, 100% hapa*.
Advanced reservations recommended to 213.625.0414.

Visit www.janm.org for a complete listing of calendar
of events.

Public Programs are supported, in part, by the
Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles.
The Opening Party is generously supported by
Marko O. Gordon and Hugh Coleman.

Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People – by Maria P.P. Root

I have the right

not to justify my existence in this world
not to keep the races separate within me
not to be responsible for people's discomfort with my physical ambiguity
not to justify my ethnic legitimacy

I have the right

to identify myself differently than strangers expect me to identify
to identify myself differently than how my parents identify me
to identify myself differently than my brothers and sisters
to identify myself differently in different situations

I have the right

to create a vocabulary to communicate about being multiracial
to change my identify over my lifetime—and more than once
to have loyalties and identify with more than one group of people
to freely choose whom I befriend and love

From the 1996 book, *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders As The New Frontier*.
Sage Publications.