



## Transracial Identity: A Profound Desire to Change the Ethnic Group, Race or Colour of the Skin

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### Abstract

**Objective:** Similar to other identity disorders, there are individuals who feel uncomfortable in their assigned race and would prefer to belong to a different ethnic group. Although the term “race” is frowned upon today, the term “transracial identity” has become established.

**Method:** A questionnaire developed by the authors was used to learn about the motives and personality traits of this group.

**Participants:** Participants were recruited through a specific internet forum. After filtering out unreliable data, the responses of 273 participants could be analyzed. With 18.5 years, the average age was very young. 11.3% were female, 3.6% male, 29.9% binary and not-binary transgender and the remainder provided various gender options.

**Results:** The feeling of belonging to the wrong ethnic group began on average at around age 11. The desired target race rarely encompassed actual races, but mostly ethnic groups (e.g., Sinti and Roma, Native American Indians, Arabs) or even countries (e.g., Colombia, Greece, Japan), and sometimes religious groups (e.g., Judaism). Asian, European/Caucasian, and Black were the most frequently mentioned targets; these were supplemented by aracial, panracial, and fictional races. The most common reasons were fascination with the culture, a feeling of deep connection, improved body image through identification, and an existing social network within the target group. Most respondents stated they would be happier if they could belong to the target race. Some even expected a therapeutic effect. In their personality profiles, in average the participants tended rather to be introverted and emotionally unstable, but exhibited greater creativity and openness to new experiences.

**Conclusions:** There are indeed people who suffer from having been born into the wrong race or ethnic group. A transition to the target group may potentially lead to greater life satisfaction. A comparison with other identity disorders reveals many parallels.

**Keywords:** Transracial Identity; Identity Disorder; Race; Ethnic Groups

### Introduction

The concept of “human races” has become problematic today. Firstly, the genetic differences between ethnic groups are small, and secondly, the term “racism” implies (usually negative) stigmatization of certain groups. Politicians and scientists now

declare that there are no human races; we are all simply Homo sapiens, and every human being has equal value; no one should be discriminated against based on their origin or appearance. An important point here is that the previously existing human “races” have already mixed extensively, for example, through slavery in

the past and through travel, working abroad, intermarriage, flight from war zones or areas of famine, or mass migrations of entire populations today, making it increasingly difficult to categorize people into distinct races. The political, sociocultural, philosophical, and ultimately ethical discussion will not be addressed here.

The terms “race,” “ethnicity,” and “culture” are not interchangeable, yet they are often used synonymously in the following text because those involved are only partly concerned with changing their race; some want to belong to a specific culture, others simply to a particular ethnic group, and still others find the appearance of members of certain religious groups fascinating. Sometimes, no specific race is mentioned, but rather geographical areas (want to look like a Scandinavian) or even individual countries (desire to have the appearance of a Korean). From this perspective, the term “transracial” is fundamentally inaccurate. However, it has become established within the community and on the internet and serves as an umbrella term encompassing various forms of identification. The authors should therefore be forgiven for using these terms inconsistently, sometimes for purely stylistic reasons.

What remains is that most people have a generalized image in their minds of what a typical Black, White, Asian, Australian, or Indigenous American looks like. The basis of the study presented here is that some people are dissatisfied with the typical characteristics of the ethnic group into which they were born and often have a very strong feeling that they would prefer to belong to a different ethnic group. For example, there are people of Caucasians (i.e. white “race”) who have a strong feeling that they should have been born Chinese and try to have typical Asian features. This may be comparable to transgender individuals who, from birth, feel they are living in a body of the “wrong” gender.

The typical image of a human ethnic group such as a native North Americans with fringed leather clothing, a feather headdress, moccasins, a bow and tomahawk, is rarely found in reality anyway (see Figure 1). There are too many subgroups within each “race” and too many variations. For example, in 1934 Eickstedt [1] distinguished three main races (Europoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid) with a total of 15 subgroups, to which he assigned approximately 80 ethnic groups, for example such as, within the Europoid group: Nordic, East European, Mediterranean, Eurafrikan, Berber, Oriental, North Indian, Alpine, Lapp, Vedda, Ainu, etc. The



**Figure 1:** White German citizen fascinated from the culture of American Indians (Photo: E. Kasten).

fact that a typical-looking Lapp usually looks completely different from a typical African Berber illustrates these differences, even though both belong to the white race.

Most of the earlier work on transracial identity focused on adoption studies in which a child of one race was raised by parents from a completely different ethnic group, such as a black-skinned child by white parents. These children often experience identity disorders because they perceive themselves as “different” from their parents [2-13].

The first major discussion of people who, outside the context of adoption, feel uncomfortable in their assigned race and attempt to align themselves with another ethnic group is due to Rachel Dolezal. In 2015, it became public that Rachel Dolezal, who for years had presented herself as a black woman—including as the leader of a local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People—had genetically white ancestors and was not grown up in an African American community. The discrepancy between her biography and her public persona was an expression of her personal identity. Dolezal was the first to use the term “transracial identity” it in public discourse in a completely new way. Her case marks a turning point where the limits of “race” as a social construct, and

the political history of racial categories collided [14]. Currently, however, adopted transracials are unhappy that the same term is used for people who want to change their racial affiliation. Both groups are struggling to find their own terms, but no decision has yet been reached.

Sülter and Kasten [15] are the authors of a groundbreaking but controversial 2021 pilot study on transracial identity. This study examined how people identify with an ethnicity other than their own and the associated life circumstances, drawing parallels to gender dysphoria and finding that those affected often suffer from mental health problems and dissatisfaction with their appearance. The research sheds light on the phenomenon of “transethnicity,” in which people identify with a non-biological ethnicity, and discusses possible links to mental health and the desire for physical change.

The most important question is: Can race—like gender—be understood as a self-determined identity? In 2017 Tuvel [16] argues that the idea of a self-chosen racial identity could be treated similarly to that of gender reassignment. However, this position has provoked considerable opposition. Dolezal reveals how rigid the term “race” is, because it is tied to discrimination, marginalization, and historical events. On the one hand, black people in the USA face discrimination, on the other hand, “Blackness” as a modern lifestyle is a fascinating culture. A transracial identity therefore offers valuable insights into the mechanisms of social categorization.

**Methods**

To find out more about the reasons behind wishing to belong to a different race, ethnicity, or skin colour, an online survey was conducted. A questionnaire was specifically developed for this purpose. In addition to the usual sociodemographic questions about gender and age, 50 specific questions were asked. These included items specifically related to transracial identification, as well as questions about personality traits, in order to identify typical correlations. In addition, some questions were asked about general body satisfaction.

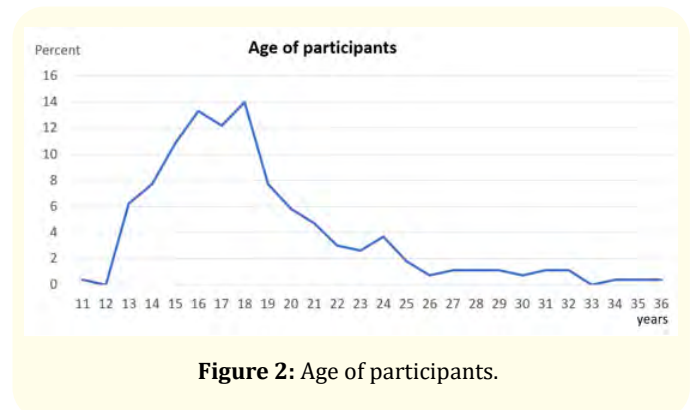
The questionnaire includes scales, some with 2 to 5 response options depending on the question, and others that are bipolar (e.g., -3 to +3). Since there are few studies on topics such as the motives behind transracial identity, specific hypotheses are lacking, and we had to allow for many open-ended responses due to the scarcity of established findings. Such open-ended responses are difficult

to analyse statistically, which is why many frequency counts are included.

The questionnaire was accessible via a special survey website (crtptpad.fr); the link was spread through different forums (e.g. Discord, Fediverse, Reddit, Tumblr) or just from an online friend in a snowball principle. It was available online from mid-August to mid-September 2025. During this period, n = 277 participants completed the questionnaire. One person was a test run and was therefore excluded; two entries were duplicates. One participant indicated “none” as target-race and stated he or she is “satisfied” with his or her origin. This reduced the total to n = 273.

**Participants**

As said above, in total, data from 273 participants were available for analysis. The average age was 18.5 years. Figure 2 shows the age distribution in percentages. This study therefore represents a young sample of adolescents and young adults.



**Figure 2:** Age of participants.

The survey asked participants where they came from. The distribution was relatively balanced: 10.1% came from rural areas, 19.3% from small towns, 26.6% from medium-sized towns, 18.6% from suburban areas, and 24.1% from large cities.

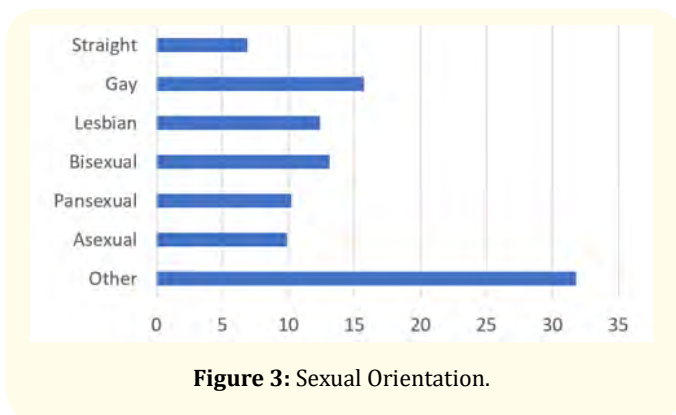
Determining gender identity proved somewhat more complicated, as most participants did not refer to their genetic sex, but rather to the gender with which they identify. Nine categories were provided (see Table 1).

It is evident that significantly more participants in this study are transgender or do not identify with a specific gender compared with the general population. Transracialism apparently also seems to correlate with a broad field of gender identity.

Gender Identity	Percent
Missing answer	0.8% (n = 2)
Cisgender women	11.3% (n = 31)
Cisgender men	3.6% (n = 10)
Transgender men	24.8% (n = 68)
Transgender women	5.1% (n = 14)
Multigender	11.3% (n = 31)
Genderfluid	8.4% (n = 23)
Nonbinary	7.3% (n = 20)
Agender	6.6% (n = 18)
Other (e.g.: genderqueer, intersexuality, girlflux, xenogender, intergender, non-human gender)	20.8% (n = 57)

**Table 1:** Gender Identity of the participants.

Several rubrics were presented for sexual orientation. 19 respondents chose “straight”, 43 “gay”, 34 “lesbian”, 36 “bisexual”, 28 “pansexual”, and 27 “asexual”. The largest group, 87 respondents, selected “other”, including, for example: Abrosexual, Aceflux, Allmond-Sexual, Aromantic, Fictosexual, Leatherromantic, Ominsexual, Queer, Sappiric, and Zoophilia. Figure 3 shows the results in percent of the answers. What is surprising here is the low number of heterosexual sexual encounters; transracial identity seems to be associated with a much broader sexual orientation than in the rest of society.



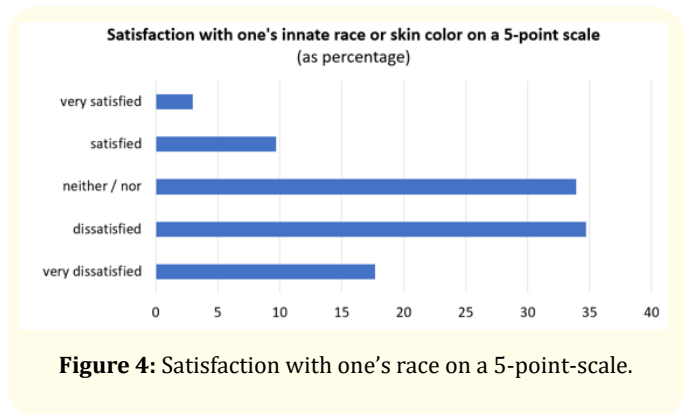
**Figure 3:** Sexual Orientation.

**Results**

**Satisfaction with one’s innate ethnicity and desired target race**

In one of the first questions regarding Transracialism, the participants were asked how satisfied they were with their

congenital racial background, the responses on a five-point scale (-2 = very dissatisfied to +2 = very satisfied) yielded a mean of -0.52, i.e., slightly skewed towards dissatisfaction. Figure 4 shows that about 52% were dissatisfied, on the other side of this scale about 13% were satisfied. A large proportion of the respondents selected the “neither/nor” option here.



**Figure 4:** Satisfaction with one’s race on a 5-point-scale.

The same result was found for the question: “How satisfied are you with your ancestral race?” Here, very satisfied were only 9.4% (n = 26), satisfied 8.0% (n = 22), neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 30.3% (n = 83), dissatisfied 32.8% (n = 90) and very dissatisfied were 19.3% (n = 53). It was not expected that a relatively large number of participants are indifferent to or even satisfied with their innate ethnicity or skin colour.

To the question “How connected do you feel towards your ancestral race?”, an average value of -0.46 was reached (from not +2 = very connected to -2 = not very connected), meaning that this value is also slightly shifted towards not feeling connected. However, 60% of them were on the “not connected” and “very not connected” side. The question of how strong the desire is to belong to the target identity was answered on a four-point scale (1 = not very strong to 4 = very strong) with a mean value of 3.4; i.e., the need is generally very high.

The average age at which individuals first express the desire to belong to a different ethnic group is 10.6 years, which is very young. Graph 5 shows the frequency distribution in percentages across adolescence. Only five people reported experiencing this desire after the age of 20, the oldest being 30 years old.

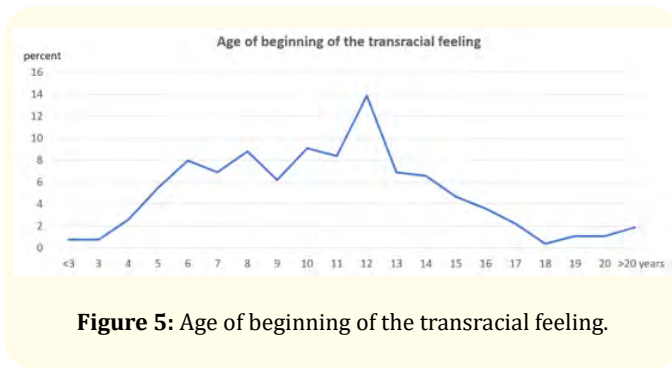


Figure 5: Age of beginning of the transracial feeling.

The item “How did you first awaken to your transracial identity?” was an open-ended question, and it is difficult to list all facets of the sometimes quite detailed answers here. For example, some respondents said that they had studied different cultures during their education and that one culture in particular had captured their interest. Others had simply discovered relevant internet forums and felt a connection. Many had travelled to these countries and suddenly felt a sense of belonging there. Still others had a circle of friends of the corresponding ethnicity and wanted to be part of that group. A typical description is quoted here as an example: “It was a gradual process of figuring out exactly what I was feeling. When I was 12, I felt dissatisfied with who I was ethnically. For a while, I came to the conclusion that I wanted to move to another country, but that didn’t satisfy my feelings. I remember looking at almanacs and reading about different cultures and countries. I also remember looking in the mirror and feeling uncomfortable with what I saw. It took until I was 15 to realize I specifically wanted to be Asian, and at first, I was nervous and wasn’t sure what to think. But after a couple of months of thinking about it, I realized that it was what I wanted. I kept it a secret for a little while longer. I also remember that before that, as a child, I never liked the shape of my eyes (for example), even though my relatives told me they were beautiful. For some reason, I just felt like something was wrong”.

Here, the term “race” (e.g., African, Caucasian, Asian, Native American) was generally not used by the participants in this way. Most often, they mentioned countries (e.g., Finnish, Colombian) or broader ethnic groups (e.g., Baltic or Slavic). In some cases, an identification with a religion was mentioned, predominantly Jewish. Some respondents listed fictional races from novels or films (e.g., “Blue Moovian” or “Valyrian”).

It was expected that most participants would identify with one specific race; however, this was not the case. 135 participants identified with one target race, 71 people identified with two different races, either simultaneously or by stating they fluctuate between the two. 22 participants even mentioned three races, and 10 participants indicated a mix of more than three different races. Another 31 reported being aracial, i.e., not belonging to any human race; this also includes 5 participants who stated they were “panracial” (e.g.: “I identify as all races, including fictional ones!”). One stated: “I honestly want to be a fictional human race but it doesn’t exist”. or: “I also have a fictional race I want to be. The fictional Galra race from Voltron”. Or: “No human race, I am an unknown alien, race is irrelevant”.

Some responses could not be categorized according to racial identity, such as “mixed,” “glitched,” “I’m ethnically fluid, which I would define as being both race and culture fluid” or “Transimmigrant. I call it emigrant, or just immigrant. I know a few radical queer people and I feel connected to the community, but I don’t know if I belong to it”. However, we kept these participants in the complete dataset, as their responses were relevant in other contexts.

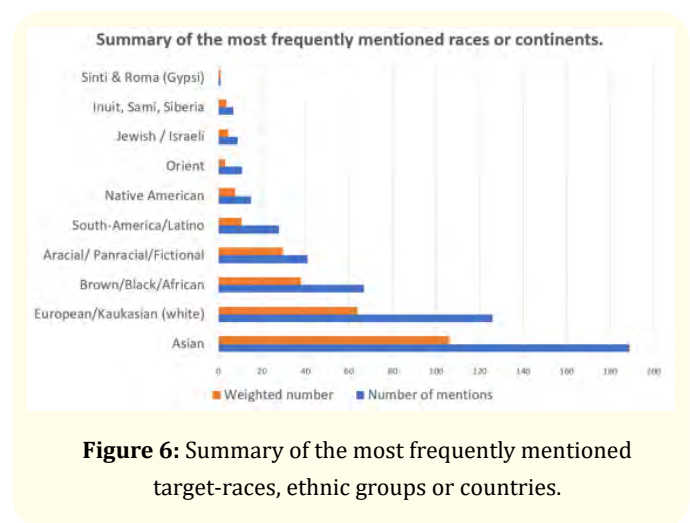
To obtain comparable data, a weighting system was used: full weight was given if a person specified only one racial identity, half weight for two, one-third for three, and so on. For example, a “Blasian” (i.e. black Asian) got 0.5 points for “black” and 0.5 points for “Asian”. Table 2 gives a first overview about the ethnical task-groups, which were chosen by the participants. Figure 6 gives a summary of the most frequently mentioned races, ethnic groups or countries.

Race, Ethnic group or country	Number of mentions	Weighted number
African	6	2.50
African. American	5	3.16
Afro-Portugese	1	1.00
Alaskian	1	1.00
American	7	2.22
Arabian	3	2.00
Aracial (raceless)	31	22.74
Armenian	1	0.33
Ashkenazi	1	1.00
Asian	37	20.55

Asian, east	12	7.58
Asian, south	8	5.75
Baltic people	1	1.00
Brasilian	4	0.73
British	4	2.00
Brown / Black people	46	24.52
Celtic people	3	0.50
Canadian	1	0.33
Chinese	21	9.73
Columbian	1	0.33
Crimean Tartars	1	0.33
Dutch	2	1.00
European/Caucasian	6	3.66
Fictional (e.g. Valyrian)	2	2.00
French	4	2.33
German	16	6.78
Greek	2	1.25
Hawaiani / Jamaican	5	2.72
Hispanic	4	2.08
Hungarian	1	0.25
Icelandian	1	0.50
Indian	5	3.25
Indonesian	1	1.00
Iranian	1	0.5
Irish	3	1.17
Israeli	1	0.50
Italian	3	1.00
Japanese	74	45.70
Jewish	7	3.16
Kazasthanian	1	0.5
Korean	21	11.59
Latino	7	2.99
Maori	2	0.83
Mexican	7	2.66
Mongolian	1	0.50
American Indian	15	7.73
Nepalese	1	0.20
Non human race	3	1.00
Nordic	1	0.25
Norwegian	2	0.50

Panracial	5	3.83
Phillipines	3	1.08
Pole	2	1.00
Portugisian	1	0.50
Puerto Ricanian	2	0.47
Roma & Sinti	1	1.00
Romanian	4	2.33
Russian	26	15.04
Sahrawis	1	1.00
Scandinavian	1	0.50
Siberia, Inuit, Sami	5	2.16
Slavic	4	2.08
Slovakianian	1	0.50
Swede	1	0.17
Taiwanian	2	1.20
Thai	5	1.73
Ukrainian	1	0.33
Vietnamese	4	1.50
White (Kaukasian)	25	15.30

**Table 2:** List of the target identities of the participants in alphabetical order of the countries; the second column shows the frequency (this number is higher than the number of participants, as many had named two or more target identities.), and a weighting factor was applied to the third column in cases where multiple identities were mentioned.



**Figure 6:** Summary of the most frequently mentioned target-races, ethnic groups or countries.

Assigning which member of a particular culture chooses which other is difficult, as many indicated multiple innate races and multiple desired races. The most frequent combination, at 33.3% (n = 82), was that of white people who wish to be Asian, only 2% (n = 6) of Asians would prefer to be white. 13% (n = 32) of white people indicated Black as their desired race, only 3% (n = 7) of black-skinned participants wrote they want to have a white skin. 9.3% (n = 23) wanted to change from one white culture to another white group, and the same percentage from white to aracial or panracial. 5% of participants (n = 13) with dark skin expressed a desire for an Asian appearance. Approximately 3% (n = 7) of white people would like to be Native American, but only 2% (n = 5) of American Indians would like to be white. 3% of white people would like to be Latino, but only slightly less than 1% of Latinos would better belong to the white ethnic group. 1.2% of white people would like to belong to Arab culture, but not a single Arab indicated to prefer to be white.

25.6% (n = 70) of the participants interviewed had not yet planned any actions to achieve their goal, although this included many who wanted to be aracial or panracial, or who aspired to reach unachievable goals, e.g. intergalactic species. The rest of the people interviewed here had already taken steps to more closely resemble the appearance of the target ethnic group (see below).

**Reasons for changing one’s ethnic affiliation**

One of the most thrilling questions of this investigation asked for the cause of the wish (“Can you define why you want to be your desired race, or why you feel one to your desired race?”). We didn’t want to force anyone into a predefined mold and therefore provided an open question. Unfortunately, we didn’t anticipate that well over 200 people would participate in our survey. It’s very difficult to categorize this number of responses statistically. Table 3 attempted to group the different motivations into categories. Since some respondents provided no motivations at all or only an “I don’t know” response, while others listed many motivations, the total number does not add up to the number of participants. This list does not include all motivations; many participants wrote very long, complex texts on this topic that could not be easily summarized in a single category.

Motives	Number
No answer, I don’t know, no specific reasons	19.5% (n = 66)
Fascination of the culture, history language, tradition of the task group	15.1% (n = 51)
Identification with the task group makes me feel correct, comfortable, feels right, gives me euphoria	9.7% (n = 33)
Intensive need to belong to the desired race, feeling of a deep connection with the task group	8.6% (n = 29)
Identification with people of the task group in my surrounding	7.1% (n = 24)
Feeling not to belong to the born race, it feels wrong	6.8% (n = 23)
I would feel better in my body, or rather, I was born in the wrong body	5.0% (n = 17)
I feel dysphoria e.g. when seeing myself in the mirror or on photos	4.7% (n = 16)
Comparison with Transgender	3.2% (n = 11)
Looking more beautiful in the desired race, receive more attention	3.2% (n = 11)
It is just who I am	2.9% (n = 10)
Has something to do with my ancestry or heritage	2.7% (n = 9)
I would feel better, or rather, I do feel better, when I am in the role of the target group.	2.7% (n = 9)
The feeling that I should have been born there	2.3% (n = 8)
Identification with anime characters or people in films or novels	1.8% (n = 6)
I feel horrible with my race, feeling of shame, feeling something is missing	1.5% (n = 5)
Rebirth, previous life, reincarnation	1.5% (n = 5)
Jealousy towards people in the target group	0.9% (n = 3)
Because of racism against my born race	0.6% (n = 2)

**Table 3:** Classification of the most common motives for wanting to have a different race or to belong to a different ethnicity, according to the frequency of responses.

Because we believe that more can be learned from what people actually say than from mathematically calculated frequencies, we would like to quote some typical answers verbatim. Since this is the heart of our article, by this, we will dive deeper in the different explanations of our participants:

- “There’s no easy way to describe it. Being brown/black just feels right”.
  - “It’s essentially all just dysphoria/euphoria. My light skin and blue eyes and the texture of my hair have always made me uncomfortable. Any part of my skin that’s slightly darker gives me euphoria (I do have darker patches; I noticed them when I was little and was very excited). When I began presenting myself as Black, as in with drawings of myself (when I became radqueer), I got lots and lots of euphoria from that. So, I really just want to feel happy in my skin”.
  - “I feel I would be able to look at myself in the mirror if I were black. I wouldn’t hate myself as much if I weren’t one to white people at all. I feel more one to black culture and ways of speech rather than that of white people”.
  - “If you go back far enough, everyone’s from Brown/Black. We really all should be black if you think about it, every other skin colour evolved to fit the new environments those people found themselves in. I also deeply love black American culture. It’s so integral to modern culture at large and yet is so underappreciated. I’d like to participate in it without being seen as an outsider. Also, I loved how black skin looks, I so admire it. Not to mention the hair! It’s just all so beautiful and I wish I looked like naturally black girls do”.
  - “I can’t other than “it really feels like I was born wrong and no one can see it but me”. The dysphoria is only alleviated by “transitioning” however I can, being “stealth” about my actual genetics/genealogy, and by being accepted by others. When I am accepted and I can “transition” it feels like I’ve “come home”. To me there is a real mental and physical strain being seen as just “an American” (I have no desire to be seen as Irish-Prussian or either, or American-Irish-Prussian but I am not seen as either anyways. I’m just viewed as “an American”) but it lifts when I “pass” and to me? that’s all that matters. I hate feeling like I don’t belong, like I have no home, like I have no culture. Even if it’s viewed as a “pointless white to white transition” it gives me real dysphoria + dysmorphia.
- I wish I knew why I’m like this but therapy or other methods have never helped or really explained it. I guess I was just born like this? “
- “I feel a natural and deeply strong connection to my desired race because it resonates with what I actually am on the inside — and sometimes it’s beautiful — exploring the culture, learning their language, getting those race euphoria moments when you’re just like “I made it”, but sometimes, it can be painful too — thinking you’re not allowed to be transracial, thinking you’re a race traitor because you’re not your ancestral race, people leaving you because they see you as problematic, huge part of the internet hating you in the most ugly way, and more. It wasn’t my choice to feel disconnected with my ancestral race, nor was it a choice to be rooted in dysphoria”.
  - “When partaking in Thai or Chinese holidays or events I feel included, and like it’s what I’m meant to do, I feel comfortable being perceived as Asian. I feel as though I was born in the wrong body for a multitude of reasons but when I embrace what I feel should be my culture I feel comfortable, even just for a moment”.
  - “Growing up, I had friends that were my desired race. I grew up participating in their cultures, being treated like family by their family. I felt dysphoria in myself because I didn’t look on the outside how I pictured myself in my mind. This really upset me. I feel one to my desired race because I’ve always known I was born in the wrong body, that my desired race is what’s right. I love the cultures of my desired race and it is much more than simply admiration”.
  - “For me it’s like my transgender identity, it’s something that I just know, like it’s part of me. I do feel like I’m Russian, I relate to the culture and whenever I see pictures of Russia it feels like home, even if I wasn’t born there. I never felt that way with American culture, and I never really felt at home in America”.
  - “Ever since I was a kid and learned about Japan, I just felt so amazed and I started looking into it. Reading the history, the traditional culture, and the modern one too. It is just too beautiful to me. I even had a phase where I would literally do anything to look Japanese. I told my mom that I wished that there were surgeries that let you change your race. That was before I learned about ctdr/transrace. I was literally SO SAD

that I wasn't Japanese. I don't think I have a specific reason as to why I feel one to Japan or America or even Italy, It's something I don't think I can explain with words. Think of trans people. While not all of them, some of them don't have definite as to why".

- "I have no explanation. I'm also a transgender male, and I can compare the two trans identities easily (at least for me and my experience). I have no reason for being transgender, either. It just is. I feel dysphoria from being AFAB and non-asian, and I feel euphoria from becoming male and becoming Japanese".
- "It's hard to explain. I'm also transgender, and it's a very similar feeling to that. Whenever someone thinks I'm Asian or I immerse myself in the culture, I feel the same wave of euphoria as I do when someone thinks I'm a man or I dress masculine and pass. It's pretty difficult to put into words. I just know because of how true to myself I feel when I look asian, and how disgusting it feels when someone calls me white. Words can lie, but those feelings don't".
- "I just feel in the bottom of my heart that I'm Japanese, is like when you're a trans person and you see cis people of your trans gender, is the same, you feel one to them, wants to be them and wish to be like them someday because that's how are you on the inside"
- "There are many reasons, I will try to list out the main ones here. One reason is because of beauty standards - I never truly felt to the beauty standards of my ancestral race and social media introduced me to my desired race's standards. My desired race is also often fetishized / idolised currently which can be a reason for why I wish to be my desired race. I cannot currently logically explain why I feel, however it might be due to my beliefs in reincarnation. Additionally, I wish to be my desired race due to its history. That does not mean that I am dismissing my ancestral race's history, in fact, I am very proud of it".
- "Māori: past life. Great past life. Best life in my opinion and I died way too soon, torn away from my family when I was just getting started having children of my own".
- "I feel euphoria at being perceived as my trans ethnicities and dysphoria at being perceived as not them. I also hold religious beliefs about past lives and fiction kin, and still feel

one to some ethnicities I had in different past lives, and being a DID system I may appear differently than how the body looks within headspace. So, for some of us (including me) that means being a different ethnicity than the body".

- "Though, for being trans Japanese in specific, I have always felt a connection to Japan and its people, not only that, but the language, the culture, and more. It felt more me than anything ever has regarding my ethnicity and race, like it was meant to be. My mother would always say "maybe in a previous life our family was Asian or located in Asia," and I fully agree with that statement".

A manageable number of responses were given to the question "Describe any physical modifications you have made or wish to make in order to transition". It should be noted that these are predominantly wishes, as the surveyed group is young and has little money, for example, for cosmetic surgery. The simplest procedures mentioned were the use of special makeup (5%, n = 13). Changing hair colour was also considered relatively easy (17.6%, n = 48), either bleaching or dyeing it black, depending on the desired ethnicity. 25 (9.2%) of the respondents also stated that they wanted to change the texture of their hair (straighter or curlier). Six people indicated that they wear or want to wear a wig. Regarding skin colour, 50 respondents (18.3%) wanted darker skin, for example, through sun tanning, tanning creams, or taking Monobenzon (Hydrochinonmonobenzylether). 33 respondents (12.1%) desired lighter skin through bleaching, depigmentation, or monobenzone. There were a particularly large number of wishes regarding the eyes, such as changing the shape of the eyes (especially to achieve an Asian eyelid fold) in 31 cases (11.3%), changing eye colour (n = 6, 2%), and using coloured contact lenses (n = 16, 6%). Another 16 participants (6%) wanted plastic surgery on their eyes, primarily to obtain an Asian eyelid fold. The desire for actual cosmetic or plastic surgery also came up (facial surgery n = 17, 6.2%, eyelid surgery n = 18 (6.6%), rhinoplasty n = 18 (6.6%), lip fillers n = 3, 1%). 13 respondents (5%) aimed for a complete change of body shape. One person wanted to apply for an official change of the first name to match the desired identity better.

Unsurprisingly, 100% of respondents answered the question "Does imitating the look of your preferred race make you happier?" with a clear "yes". For the item "Do you feel that your

transitional plans are affected by societal norms surrounding race or transracialism in any way?" answered 85% (n = 229) with "yes" and 15% (n = 44) with "no".

On the question "How do you feel your circumstances of life would differ if you were to be accepted as your desired race?" most participants see positive consequences (see Table 4).

Anticipated consequences of becoming one's desired ethnic group	No. of answers
No answer	9.3% (n = 34)
Don't know, unsure	2.5% (n = 9)
Assumption is that things will get worse if one belongs to the desired ethnic group	1.6% (n = 6)
Fear of racism regarding the desired ethnicity	3.0% (n = 11)
No change, no benefits	7.9% (n = 29)
Happier, more positive, more euphoric in the desired ethnicity	25.8% (n = 94)
Better mental health, higher self-confidence, less stress, less anxiety, less depression, less suicidality, less self-harm	13.7% (n = 50)
To be myself, better self-image, true personality, more inner peace, feeling to be complete	10.7% (n = 39)
Feeling more comfortable (less uncomfortable)	7.9% (n = 29)
More social relationships, a better social life, a better connection to the desired culture, better integration, better acceptance by others	7.1% (n = 26)
Less discrimination than against my previous race, less racism towards me	3.0% (n = 11)
Higher quality of life, better job opportunities	2.5% (n = 9)
Feeling freer	1.9% (n = 7)
Feeling more attractive	0.1% (n = 3)
Other answers	2.5% (n = 7)

**Table 4:** Anticipated consequences of becoming a member of the desired group, listed from negative to the most named positive consequences. Since multiple motives were often given, the total adds up to more than the number of participants.

The following quote summarizes several of the most frequently mentioned positive aspects: "I think I would be a lot happier. It would be cool to not feel like I'm living a lie. It would also be nice not to think about how I have this secret that would make everyone I know hate me. It'd be fun to participate in culture".

Interestingly, some of those affected desire to belong to a culture that they know will likely bring them disadvantages: "Realistically, it would probably be worse. I understand that life as an, especially in America, during the period I grew up in it was incredibly difficult to exist with any kind of brown skin. While I understand this, it does not negate my desire to be Arab. I would feel far more authentic and myself if my appearance were to match my internal sense of self".

It is exciting that many report that they would be less depressed, less suicidal, and less likely to self-harm if they could belong to the ethnic group, they focus their thoughts on. Fulfilling the transracial identity may even have therapeutic effects: "I would want to harm myself less. A lot of my self-harming urges come from not feeling real due to not feeling one to what I see in the mirror, and a lot of my suicidal urges come from the fact I feel like I'll never get to be who I feel I am".

**Personality profile and mental disorders**

We investigated whether there were any common personality traits among the study participants. Given the sample size, this is a risky undertaking, as everyone has their own unique character. This was carried out using the Big Five personality traits (extraversion/introversion, emotional stability/instability, conscientiousness, openness, and agreeableness). On a scale from -2 (absolutely disagree) to +2 (absolutely agree), the question "I see myself as someone who is reserved and introverted" received a mean score of 0.96, indicating that the participants tend to be introverted and reserved. The question "I see myself as someone who is outgoing and sociable" yielded a mean score of -0.31, placing it at the negative part of the scale, meaning that the participants are not very extraverted. The question "I see myself as someone who gets nervous easily" received a score of 1.12, indicating that the participants are rather emotionally unstable. The item "I see myself as someone who is relaxed and handles stress well" achieved a mean score of -0.73, placing it in the negative range, i.e. as emotional instable. The question "I see myself as someone who has a tendency to be lazy" scored positively at 0.69, suggesting a

degree of laziness. On the other hand, “thorough to work” received a positive score of 0.50, which balances out the previous result for the personality dimension “conscientiousness”. The item “I see myself as someone who is generally trusting” achieved 0.03, i.e. in the neither/nor-area. People in the group of Transracials got a high score of 1.35 to “openness for new experiences” with the question “I see myself as someone who has an active imagination”. Compatibility was investigated with the question “I see myself as someone who tends to find faults in others”. With a score of 0.45 the result lies slightly in the positive area. In summary, this group exhibits increased introversion, a certain emotional instability, but also high creativity, i.e. openness to new experiences (see Figure 7).

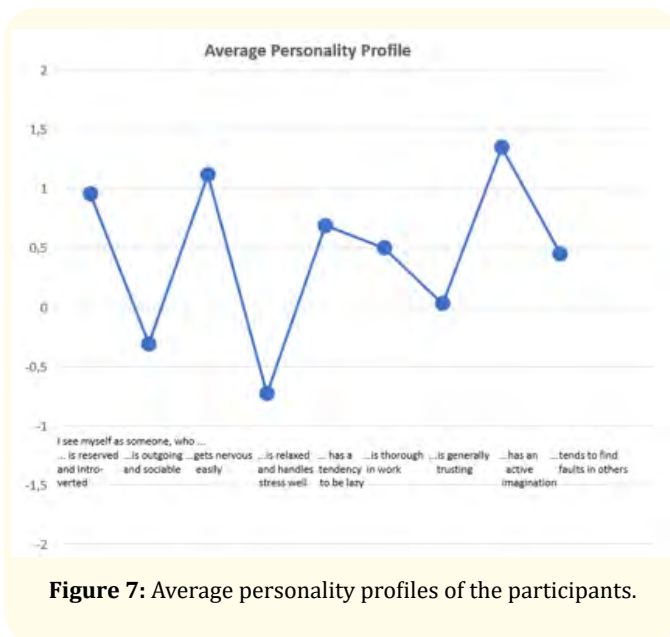


Figure 7: Average personality profiles of the participants.

When asked whether someone experiences dysphoria due to the unfulfilled need related to transracial identity, 90% answered “yes,” meaning only 10% answered “no”. On a five-point scale (0 = barely to 4 = very severe), a score of 2.53 was achieved with regard to the severity of the dysphoria. This means that not belonging to the ethnic group triggers quite strong feelings of sadness. When asked how often they experience sadness, only 1.2% responded with “rarely,” 8.5% with “rarely often,” 23.6% with “somewhat often,” 36.2% with “often,” and 30.5% with “daily”. This also underscores that the lack of belonging to the target group may indeed cause a dysphoric mood.

Regarding mental health issues, participants were asked if they had ever suffered from a real depressive episode. Almost three-quarters (72.3%, n = 198) answered yes, while 27.7% (n = 76) answered no. However, this question was somewhat vaguely worded, as almost everyone has experienced depression at some point in their lives, for example, due to heartbreak, failing an exam, or the death of a pet. Therefore, the high number is not surprising. More interesting is how many participants who answered yes to this question see that their depression is affected by the transracial identity. Here, 62.1% answered “yes”. The question: “Do you feel that your symptoms are lessened when you are perceived as your desired race?” was answered from 76.2% (n = 151) with “yes” and 23.7% (n = 47) with “no”. This could be further evidence that fulfilling a transracial identity can indeed have a positive therapeutic effect.

Unfortunately, it remains unclear what is the cause and what is the effect. The depression may be a consequence of the unfulfilled desire to belong to a different ethnic group; however, it is also conceivable that people with long-standing depression hope that their emotional problems will be resolved if they belong to a different race.

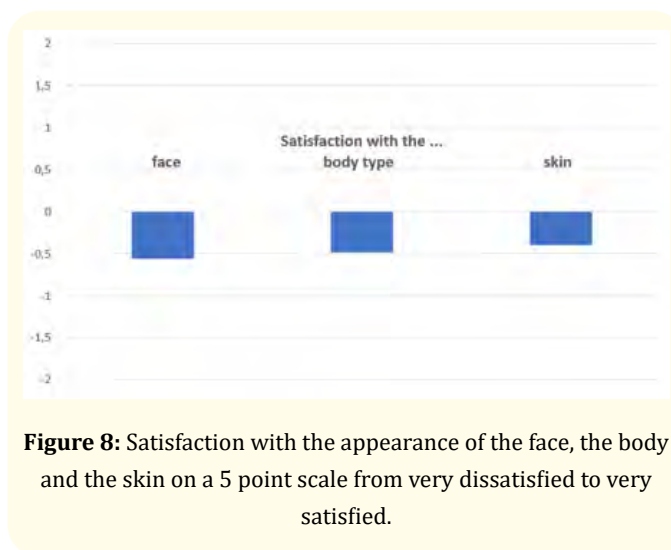
When asked whether they suffered from other mental disorders, several participants answered with a very honest “yes”. The analysis of the illnesses was problematic because many of these often listed a large number of different diagnoses (some up to 7 different diagnosis); this means that the number of mentions exaggerates the actual number of participants with mental disorders. In this group with a mental illness 24% confessed to suffer from Autism (most Autism Spectrum Disorder), 14% from Attentional Deficit Disorders, 11% from Dissociative Disorders, 9% from Anxiety Disorders (including Social Anxiety), 7% from Borderline Personality Disorder, additional 7% from other Personality Disorders (e.g. Narcistic, Histrionic, Dependent Personality Disorder), 7% from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and 21% from other mental problems (e.g. Eating Disorders, Gender Dysphoria, Schizophrenia, Bipolar Affective Disorder, Depersonalisation/Derealisation, Maladaptive Daydream Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder).

Besides Gender Dysphoria, Body Integrity Dysphoria (BID, formerly named Body Integrity Identity Disorder, BIID) is one of

the few existing identity disorders. Affected individuals feel they have an extra limb and desire its surgical removal; most often it is a leg that they do not perceive as belonging to their body and try to get an amputation. Interestingly, five participants (2%) in our study reported suffering from BID (i.e. BIID). An estimate of the frequency of BID in the general population ranges between 0.02% and 0.005% [17].

For the question “Do you feel your mental disorders or neurodivergences affect your transracial identity in any way?” 37.4% answered with “no” and 62.6% with “yes”.

The final part of the survey focused on body satisfaction. Three categories were assessed: face, body shape, and skin condition. The data were again collected on a five-point scale between -2 (very dissatisfied) and +2 (very satisfied). Interestingly, all three areas fell into the negative range, meaning that, on average, the participants in this study were rather dissatisfied with their appearance. Figure 8 presents the data.



**Figure 8:** Satisfaction with the appearance of the face, the body and the skin on a 5 point scale from very dissatisfied to very satisfied.

**Statistics**

Due to the large number of qualitative text responses and the comparatively small amount of quantitative data in this study, relatively little statistical analysis could be performed. We conducted a Spearman correlation between personality dimensions and body satisfaction on the one hand, and dissatisfaction with one’s assigned race and the strength of the desire to belong to a target race on the other. The correlations can be found in Table 5.

	How strong do you feel towards your ancestral race	How strong is your wish to be accepted as your desired race
I see myself as someone who is reserved and introverted	R = 0.07 (n.s.)	R = -0.09 (n.s.)
I see myself as someone who is outgoing and sociable	R = 0.02 (n.s.)	R = 0.06 (n.s.)
I see myself as someone who gets nervous easily	R = 0.01 (n.s.)	R = 0.04 (n.s.)
I see myself as someone who is generally trusting	R = 0.07 (n.s.)	R = 0.04 (n.s.)
I see myself as someone who has a tendency to be lazy	R = 0.04 (n.s.)	R = -0.03 (n.s.)
I see myself as someone who is relaxed and handles stress well	R = 0.10 (p = 0.051)	R = -0.001 (n.s.)
I see myself as someone who has an active imagination	R = 0.05 (n.s.)	R = 0.00 (n.s.)
I see myself as someone who tends to find faults in others	R = 0.07 (n.s.)	R = 0.00 (n.s.)
I see myself as someone who is thorough in their work	R = 0.07 (n.s.)	R = 0.14 (p = 0.048)
How would you describe your current satisfaction with your face?	R = 0.15 (p = 0.006)	R = -0.16 (p = 0.02)
How would you describe your current satisfaction with your body type?	R = 0.14 (p = 0.02)	R = -0.02 (n.s.)
How would you describe your current satisfaction with your skin?	R = 0.17 (p = 0.002)	R = -0.18 (p = 0.02)

**Table 5:** Spearman’s R correlations between questions about personality traits and satisfaction with one’s own appearance on the one hand, and the strength of satisfaction with ancestral race and the strength of the desire to belong to another ethnic group on the other.

Overall, the correlations are rather weak. There is a slight trend between emotional stability and attachment to one's assigned race. The significant correlation between diligence and the strength of the desire to become one's target race is likely coincidental. The most significant correlations are probably between physical appearance and the strength of the desire to belong to the target race. The more dissatisfied one is with one's appearance, the stronger the urge to switch to a different ethnic group.

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to learn more about people who are unhappy with their own genetic origins and therefore want to change their race, ethnicity, or skin color. The study is extremely interesting, especially since some of the results were unexpected.

Data from 273 participants were available for analysis; the average age was an extremely young 18.5 years. This could be because the survey was conducted via an internet forum where predominantly young people gather. It is also possible that transracial identity is a concept invented by young people. It cannot be ruled out that some people simply come to terms with their origins and skin color as they get older and never even consider changing them.

A first surprise was the gender assignment. Just under 15% of participants identified as either natal women (ciswomen) or natal men (cismen); the majority (85%) showed deviations from these categories. According to the global Ipsos survey, on average, about 1% of adults worldwide identify as transgender, 1% as non-binary/gender non-conforming/gender-fluid, and about 1% as "other/different from male/female". In the same survey, around 9% of adults in the 30 countries studied said they identified as LGBT+. Among younger generations, the percentages are significantly higher—about 4% in the Ipsos study indicated that they see themselves as something other than male or female. According to a study by the Williams Institute, approximately 1.0% of all people aged 13 and older identify as transgender or non-binary. Among adults (18+), the figure is about 0.8%. Another survey by the Pew Research Center found that about 1.6% of the adult US population said their sex differs from the sex assigned to them at birth (i.e., they are transgender or nonbinary). The percentages are significantly higher among those under 30: According to Pew, about 5% of this age group identify as transgender or nonbinary; within

this group, about 2% identify as trans men or trans women, and 3% as nonbinary. Furthermore, the Williams Institute reports that about 11% of LGBTQ adults (ages 18–60) identify as nonbinary. In a Brazilian study with a representative sample, 0.69% identified as transgender, and 1.19% said they were non-binary. For some countries, such as a survey from Switzerland, it was reported that 6% of respondents identified as transgender, non-binary, gender-fluid, or other than male/female. Accordingly, estimates for many countries suggest that less than 1% to 2% of the total population is transgender or non-binary [18-22]. However, among our participants, around 85% did not identify as cisgender men or cisgender women, but rather as other gender. If one views transraciality as an identity issue, then these data indicate that the difficulty in achieving one's own identity is not only related to race but also to gender.

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, the term "race" is now considered obsolete or even viewed negatively when applied to humans (consistent with this, many participants stated that they wanted to be aracial or panracial). This is primarily due to societal reasons; on the other hand, the term "race" is still used for animals. We have nevertheless retained the term "Transracial Identity" because it has become established. Surprisingly, most people involved in this study are not concerned with belonging to a specific human race; far more often, they mention ethnic groups or even countries to which they wish to belong. Equally interesting is the fact that a sense of belonging to ethnic groups exists even when one assumes they are more likely to face social discrimination. However, conceivable is that precisely these groups that can exert a fascination. Asian cultures were mentioned as the most frequent destination, with Japan being extremely frequent. The Caucasian type, i.e., white people, only reached second place. Dark-skinned people occupy the third place in popularity. While few Asians want to be white, much more white people aiming to look Asian. The number of black people who want to be white is significantly smaller than a large number of white people who aspire to dark skin.

The motives that were stated, correspond well with what those affected by other identity disorders also say (e.g. Transgender and Body Integrity Dysphoria), primarily arguments such as: Intensive need to belong to the desired race, feeling of a deep connection with the task group; feeling not to belong to the born race, it feels

wrong; I would feel better in my body, or rather, I was born in the wrong body; I feel dysphoria e.g. when seeing myself in the mirror or on photos. Transgender people also report similar motives for their gender change. They describe transition as a necessary step to reduce gender dysphoria and to live in a way that is congruent with their experienced gender [23]. Transgender-Individuals often pursue social or medical transition because living in their assigned sex at birth causes profound distress and incongruence with their affirmed gender identity [24]. Transition is frequently described by participants as enabling authenticity, reducing suffering, and improving mental health and overall functioning [25].

Body Integrity Dysphoria (BID, formerly also BIID) is another identity disorder, which is listed in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). Here, too, one finds very similar expressions to those of Transracial Identity. In 2012 Blom, *et al.* [26] described how many affected individuals feel that the body part they wish to have amputated does not belong to their experienced self—it feels “foreign”. This desire usually begins in childhood or early adolescence. For many, the main reason is the desire to feel “complete”—that is, the feeling that only with a disability will they be in harmony with their internal self-image. In 2020 Saetta, *et al.* [27] report that individuals with BID can see and feel their “healthy limbs”—but still do not perceive them as part of themselves. Kasten [28,29] describes how many affected individuals feel their own bodies are “not completely right”. This comparison suggests that transracial identity may also be a genuine identity disorder. However, brain-organic correlates are also found in transgender and BID; it is questionable whether this is also conceivable in the case of a transgender identity? On the other hand, for example Cattien [30] is against to treat gender and race analogously.

Regarding personality profiles, there are generally only slight deviations. On average, introversion is slightly elevated, while emotional stability is low. This is not surprising, as this is a group of adolescents; such deviations are almost normal during puberty and gradually diminish with age. It is therefore likely not a problem of transracial identity, but rather a general phenomenon of this age. On the other hand, it is conceivable that this particular group of adolescents seeks stability in a new identity and hopes that their problems will lessen if they change their ethnicity. This may explain the low number of older adults in this study, as most grown-up people have already found their place in life. This is probably also related to the very high number of reported cases of depression.

While the general population reports a percentage between 3% and 10% of depression, in our study, around three-quarters reported experiencing depression. Here, too, identification with members of another race may provide stability and even have therapeutic effects.

One question we don’t want to avoid, even if it gives this article a somewhat unscientific feel, is reincarnation, which was raised by several participants. Around 200,000 people die every day in this world, and more than 300,000 are born. So, if there is a heaven, the angels have much more to do than they did 1,000 years ago. Perhaps they have an overload of work and mistakes happen? Someone who was meant to be born a woman is accidentally placed in a man’s body, and a soul meant to be born a dark-skinned African arrives in this world as a white European. Unfortunately, this is a question we cannot answer.

The question remains whether transracial identity is a temporary phase, or whether the participants in this study truly suffer long-term consequences and later actually invest money to more closely resemble the appearance of their desired demographic. This would require a long-term study.

In conclusion, it can certainly be said that changing one’s appearance as one grows into the desired culture helps many affected individuals. The prevalence of depression appears to be particularly high in this group, and transracial identity, with the imitation of the desired ethnicity, helps many to put their dysphoria aside and evidently has therapeutic effects.

### Acknowledgements

We thank all participants in this study who took great care in completing this questionnaire, often with very lengthy texts. Unfortunately, it is not possible to quote all comments verbatim here, but they have been included in the data analysis. In particular, I would like to thank Maki and Yuki for the great help in recruiting participants. This study would not have been possible without their help. However, both have declined co-authorship and prefer to remain in the background. Yuki can be reached at [research@transid.org](mailto:research@transid.org) for similar (transid) studies.

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