

MULTIRACIAL POLITICS OR THE POLITICS OF BEING MULTIRACIAL?:
RACIAL THEORY, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, AND SOCIO-POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION IN A CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

by

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Dedication

To my family, friends, mentors, and colleagues who have supported, guided, and inspired me throughout this remarkable journey. More is yet to come...

In loving memory of Ramona Elizabeth Douglass and Glenda Robinson.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the impacts of historical and contemporary racial theories, socio-political movements, and grassroots mobilization efforts of community-based organizations in transforming the politics to define multiracial identity and the “two or more races” population in the United States. Using an interdisciplinary and mixed methods research approach, I investigate the shifting and contested ways the multiracial population is defined in public and private discourses, paying particular attention to the complexities this community raises within and among monoracial identified communities. Examining the multiracial population in the U.S. has a significant and critical place in the larger trajectory of social scientific scholarship on race, gender, class, and other intersecting identities. This body of research counters the argument that multiple identity formation is inconsequential to theory, civic engagement, and socio-political participation in a contemporary society. This study urges scholars to (re)examine how race and ethnicity continues to be framed, analyzed, interrogated, and understood in ways that are restricted by historically racist/racialized moments that still linger today. These moments, I argue, are sharpened and more pronounced when centering the politics of what it means to claim a multiracial identity in America in the twenty-first century.

The theoretical model for this study was Grounded Theory. Principle data collection methods were the “insider-outsider” and case study research approaches using extensive face-to-face audio and/or photographed interviews; participant and field observations of key local, state, and national events, including U.S. Census proceedings and California Senate Judiciary hearings; and content analysis of primary and secondary documents, including media coverage and organizational archives. Data was collected between 2004 and 2009 in Los Angeles, Washington DC, Chicago, New York, and Sacramento. These cities exhibited the most heightened multiracial activity across the country in this timeframe. I also investigated exclusive, never before documented, behind the scenes initiatives to recognize the unmet needs of this emerging population through an in-depth case study of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA)—one of the oldest leading national advocacy organizations for multiracial, multiethnic, and transracially adopted individuals, families, organizations, and allies.

Chapter 1

MULTIRACIAL POLITICS OR THE POLITICS OF BEING MULTIRACIAL?: THE CHALLENGE OF RACIAL BIOLOGY AND HEGEMONORACIAL IDEOLOGY IN A CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

“Race both shapes the individual psyche and ‘colors’ relationships among individuals on the one hand, and furnishes an irreducible component of collective identities and social structures on the other.”

~ Michael Omi & Howard Winant, 1994 ~

“The topic of ‘mixed race’ can bring out the worst in people.”

~ David Parker & Miri Song, 1999 ~

“What, after all, am I? Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both?”

~ W.E.B. DuBois, 1897¹ ~

1.1 | INTRODUCTION

On Friday, September 8, 2006, the *Los Angeles Times* disclosed the uncensored statements made five months earlier by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger regarding state Assemblywoman Bonnie Garcia’s temperament. “I mean Cuban, Puerto-Rican, they are all very hot,” the governor states on a recording at a behind closed doors meeting on March 3rd. “They have the, you know, part of the black blood in them and part of the Latino blood in them that together makes it.” While some were outraged by the statements calling them “racist” and “disgusting”, many including members of the Legislative Black Caucus and Garcia herself considered them to be “usual political banter.”² Coincidentally, on the exact same day one year later, the Cherokee Nation voted overwhelmingly in a 3-to-1 vote to exclude anyone who could not provide evidence of a “drop of Cherokee blood” traceable to the 1906 Dawes rolls.³ As a result, individuals referred to as *freedmen*—free black slaves who had once found refuge on Cherokee

reservations—and primarily their Black and Native American offspring, were stripped of their Cherokee citizenships and excluded from the accompanying entitlements to group membership. All the while these state and national debacles were occurring, on the local level young Luke Do and his parents (along with hundreds of other families like the Do's) clung on for his dear life until a bone marrow match was found for Luke's much-needed transplant.⁴ During the long and arduous months of waiting, medical professionals continued to warn that due to not having enough people from either of his parents' "races" registered as blood donors, his chances of finding a match were slim.⁵ A Japanese policeman in Seattle eventually served as Luke Do's match, which lucky for him (according to doctors), his mother's White and Japanese "blood", not his dad's Vietnamese side, made this transfusion possible.⁶

While on the surface each of these cases may seem a bit implausible, together they represent several poignant reminders and lingering issues in America's racial history; issues that illustrate the historical saliency of race and the lasting impact it continues to have on the social, political, and economic landscapes in contemporary society. Together these examples serve to highlight the theoretical and empirical challenges to research that social scientists must grapple with when conceptualizing the meanings of race and ethnicity, which often can stand in contrast to how these concepts are understood, experienced, and defined among everyday people and their communities and the institutions in which they engage. Although it may be true that some other groups are affected by racial essentialism and latent slippages in the discourse (Snipp 2002; Anderson 2002), I have observed that a unique phenomenon occurs specifically where

“blood” and subsequently, “blood quantum” continues to stand in as a metonym for multiracial identity, both in public and private discourses in the present day.⁷

As a result of six years of intensive on the ground research examining the local, state, and national debates concerning the multiracial population in the United States will illustrate, this blood reference (herein referred to as a “slippage”) surfaces most often when there is a quest to *define* this complex population in public debate, whereby outdated biological determinations for race comfortably *slip* into the dialogue greatly undetected. I refer to the references of blood quantum as a “slippage” specifically as it relates to categorizing multiracial identity. This slippage, I argue, appears commonplace and unquestioned in the discourse and belies on racial essentialism that seems to suggest that race—although a social construction—is biologically quantifiable for multiracial identified people. Yet, it is not quantifiable for monoracial identified people—as should be the case—but this is problematic, as it unknowingly seems to suggest that there is such thing as “pure races”. This is significant because as we witness in the Freedman case, biology—vis-à-vis blood—still restricts people from group entitlement, specifically in this case where individuals sought to be recognized as both Black *and* Native American, but were later arbitrarily denied resources to membership. However, the issues of the case get framed as strictly a matter of Black *or* Native American monoracial group identity, rather than a combination of all three. This then raises the need to understand what these slippages and definitions tell us about racial and ethnic ideologies and the critical insights centering multiracial Americans offer other groups in the United States.

For the purposes of this dissertation, multiracial is used as a fluid term to represent *the confluence of multiple socially constructed racial and ethnic identities*,

*populations, movements, and set of politics that are privately-identified and/or publicly-imposed.*⁸ Two different distinctions for the term will also be used to describe what multiracial constitutes on both the individual and collective group levels.⁹ At the individual level, multiracial describes a person who either internally self-identifies with two or more socially constructed racial or ethnic categories, and/or is a person whose identity is externally identified and imposed as such.¹⁰ The research in Chapters 2 and 3 will provide the rationale for this description, concluding that one can be defined as multiracial external to their own self-identification due to factors such as phenotype, movement across spaces and places, and the cultural competency of the external force that is imposing an identity onto them. In addition, parents, for example, are often confronted with identifying the racial and ethnic backgrounds of their multiracial children, and the degree to which they identify their child as ‘two or more’ races are predicated on a number of factors discussed in subsequent chapters.

Also included in this definition for multiracial are individuals whose past or immediate heritage comprises different racial and/or ethnic groups here and abroad (i.e., Creoles, Brazilians, South African so-called Coloureds), as well as, individuals referred to as transracial adoptees. This latter subgroup is essential to include because they clearly challenge biological notions of race and culture as it describes individuals who assume the racial identities of their adoptive parents in combination with their own socially constructed racial identity(ies). This dualism sometimes forms similar experiences to non-adopted multiracial children, and it reflects the socially constructed reality of racial identification. Finally, at the group level, I understand multiracial to reflect the confluence of many traditional monoracial communities forming together as a unified

whole,¹¹ as well as, the summation of many different identifiable subgroups of multiple races and ethnicities (i.e., *hapas*, *mestizas/os*, *mestifs*).¹²

Witnessed in the previous cases, the ongoing slippages in recent years even amongst some of the most highly educated practitioners raises the question on whether or not social science discourse has really advanced beyond outdated biological arguments—not just in academic circles, but in the public domain at large—in order to secure race as an indisputable fact that is socially constructed once and for all. Despite the extensive theoretical scholarship and empirical research proving the socially constructive process of racial meanings (Omi and Winant 1994, 2002; Bonilla-Silva 2001), and despite the growing literature in recent years that examines the experiences of the multiracial population, biological explanations have not completely disappeared from America's language about race, and hence, remain a lingering feature in how we define race today.

The presence and visibility of the multiracial population calls us to question how race is framed, analyzed, interrogated, and understood in order to incorporate this group identity in ways that do not minimize the unique experiences of individual that make up the collective. Furthermore, it also calls for a closer examination about how the dominant ideologies about racial construction get reproduced in ways that limit our research and understanding about the multiracial population in contemporary terms (where 'blood' is no longer evoked), and how this population plays a significant role in the larger trajectory of racial theory and social science discourse where other intersecting variables such as ethnicity, gender and class, are experienced. Moreover, the epistemologies that have served to define those who straddle multiple racial categories are embedded in historical moments that get constructed counter-intuitively to the longer trajectory of racial theory

and the advancement of empirical research on race today. Rather it urges us to reexamine the way in which race is defined in *nonfluid* way that do not always include emerging populations on the margins beyond just the multiracial population itself.

Several critical points in particular deserve mention here, as they serve as the foundation through which the aims of this project are rooted and the main research questions are framed. First, I argue that the opening cases are not to be seen as isolated incidences, but rather, part of a larger phenomenon that necessitates the need to differentiate between three important concepts. As I will discuss herein, social science scholarship fails to make an important distinction between what is loosely known as *multiracial politics* (lowercase “m”) from what I will refer to as *Multiracial politics* (with a capital “M”) and the *Politics of Being Multiracial* (herein referred to as “PBM”). These concepts refer to two distinct areas of research and forms of mobilization involving race. I use the concept, multiracial politics, to refer broadly to the discourse that describes many different racial and ethnic groups coming together around a particular cause or set of issues to further some shared agenda (Saito 1998; Kim 2000; Pulido 2006). I distinguish this from the concept, Multiracial politics, which refers to a type of affairs that involves the advocacy, civic engagement and political participation among the multiracial population (Spencer 1999; Alex-Assenoh and Hanks 2000; Daniel 2002; Williams 2006). The last concept, the Politics of Being Multiracial, is different from the first two concepts. It describes what I have observed as a set of static and evolving viewpoints, myths, and perspectives that reflect the unique experiences—positive, negative, and neutral—felt primarily by individuals that self-identify and/or are identified as multiracial in society. Together they often go unchallenged by those unfamiliar with

the complexities of multiracial identity, further framing what others think they know about this population.

It would seem evident that a population that ceases to be named or defined would be quite difficult to discern how to incorporate into a larger dialogue with groups that are more defined. To that end, it is precisely this space of not being able to define this population according to an already prescribed racial order that I argue this population exists and is a viable, emerging identity and community. It is concept multiracial scholar Reginald Daniel (2002) refers to as “liminal space.”

Because there are as many different types of multiracial identification and experience as there are multiracial backgrounds, there has been some debate as to whether multiracial-identified individuals actually form a group. Some have questioned whether the experience of liminality in and of itself can be a valid defining characteristic for group formation, particularly since it is not unique to multiracial-identified individuals.¹³

It is within this understanding of a ‘neither here nor there’ population that a multiracial identity can be defined as a group. That is, the nature of *not being able to be defined* as individuals actually creates the shared ideology of identity *to be defined* as a collective group. It is in this very liminal space that I argue in Chapters 4 and 5, creates the conditions under which it is possible to politically mobilize around shifting and contested category populations.

As I intend to illustrate, research conducted in the social sciences at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and the subsequent policies that coincided with this scholarship continues to have a profound impact and influence on how the multiracial population has and continues to be defined in both private and public discourse about race and ethnicity. Latent race-as-biology slippages still linger in both private and public discourse, which disproportionately impacts the multiracial population on both the individual and group

levels. Therefore, if the discrepancy in language which staunchly applies a biological meaning of race onto a multiracial identity goes unchallenged, public policy efforts to identify and recognize the needs of this population today will continue to be ignored. Through recognizing this language we can gain a better understanding why there has been consistent confusion and ambiguity as to how to define the multiracial population. No longer do we live in an era in which the fight for classification and identity are enough, because as this body of work will illustrate, the needs I speak of that impact this population are becoming and more matters of life and death that impact all communities that make up this complex set of identities.

Finally, I argue that researchers in the social sciences and the practitioners that use our work need to reexamine the ways in which racial formation theories are symptomatic of what I call *hegemonoracial ideology*. Hegemonoracial ideology exists when *race is veiled as something that is unquestionably understood as a singular entity that is studied, interrogated, experienced, and sustained; it is the privileging of 'one race' units of analysis in the social sciences; and it is where "monoracial" becomes the unmarked category by which multiple racial and ethnic identities always become measured.*¹⁴ In Chapters 4 and 5, I illustrate how this concept comes to be through marked moments I have identified from grassroots mobilization efforts in cities across the United States, led by key multiracial advocacy groups post-Census 2000. Furthermore, because of the seemingly unquestioned application of hegemonoracial dialogue and the principles that make up the Politics of Being Multiracial that I continued to observe and constantly be confronted with in the field as a researcher, behind the scenes as a national

leader, and everyday as a member of this population, that I argue contributes to the somewhat limited mainstream understanding of Multiracial politics today.

Again, this is an issue that impacts all communities, not just the multiracial population, because communities are not mutually exclusive from one another. Monoracial communities and the histories and experiences that make up their identities contribute to the experiences and politics of identifying as multiracial in America. To borrow precisely from the language of C. Matthew Snipp's (2002) in "American Indians: Clues to the Future of Other Racial Groups", I too argue that the experiences of multiracial Americans "and the efforts to define them offer a number of insights about what the future may hold for other ethnic minority groups in American society. In some instances they presage the future for these groups. In other respects, the uniqueness of" multiracial Americans "offers a counterpoint that may suggest larger or smaller degrees of complexity with respect to the determination of race, ethnicity, and group membership."¹⁵

In essence, this work is largely a project that centers multiracial experience from a multiracial standpoint, with the aim of not trying to simplify what is already complex about race, but rather, to examine race *in* its complexity. Together each argument and concept will help to build off of existing theories by providing the groundwork toward integrating multiracial identity formation into the longer trajectory of racial theories in the social sciences.¹⁶ For if we continue to ignore these distinctions, we will forever limit social construction from fully being adopted into practice, and not just in theory. As Kerry Anne Rockquemore et al. (2009) contends, "[S]cholarship on the mixed-race

population has an important and critical place in the larger social scientific understanding of the structures of race, gender, class, and human societies.”¹⁷

1.2 | RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This dissertation explores three important research questions that may help to advance current racial and ethnic scholarship on the multiracial population in the United States, and on the broader topics of theorizing racial politics, social and political mobilization and movements, and identity formation. The answers to these questions are guided by the main arguments, and further provide a framework from which this dissertation seeks to develop its’ own racial epistemology by centering the experiences of multiracial America; a critical perspective that has received scant attention to date. The main research questions are as follows: *1) How do we define the multiracial population in the United States and what do these definitions offer about racial and ethnic ideologies and the future for public policy post-2000?; 2) What critical insights can centering the experiences of multiracial Americans and the efforts to define them on the local, state, and/or national levels, publicly and privately, offer for other groups in American society?; and 3) Under what conditions is it possible to politically mobilize around this shifting and contested category and what are the unmet needs of this emerging population?* Each of the questions represents a theme and main argument this body of research is attempting to contribute to the larger discourse on

As this body of research will illustrate, these questions are among the many complex questions that must be answered in the 21st century due to the inevitable challenges the answers to these question pose on the longstanding methodologies and racial data collection employed by social science research; the various concerns of

federally protected civil rights groups post-2000; the infinitely growing presence this population has garnered in recent years and its subsequent impact on local, state, and federal institutions; and the steadily rising demand among a sizeable number of members in this community over the past four decades in particular, to be recognized and addressed in current and future policy efforts. Far less is known about the difficulties in policy implementation that this community has faced with regard to local, state, and national politics. This has the potential of undermining a set unique problems and needs presently experienced by multiracial individuals and interracial families that require specific attention, such as educational and healthcare discrimination (Root 1996; Kenney and Kenney 1999; Dalmage 2000), hate crimes (Daniel 2001; Brooks 2002), and racial classification issues (Parker and Song 2002; Dalmage 2000).

1.3 | METHODS

The research presented in this dissertation was derived through a variety of interdisciplinary, mixed methodologies and approaches to data collection. I implemented Grounded Theory as the principle method, using the “insider-outsider” and case study approaches as my dominant means to collect research.¹⁸ In each of the subsequent chapters, I also describe the specific data collection method employed for that particular analysis as it applies to research presented in that chapter (i.e., case studies, interviews, participant observations, archives, etc.). Overall, the data was compiled through extensive face-to-face interviews, participant and field observations, content analysis (qualitative and quantitative), and archival research collected primarily in the cities of Los Angeles, Washington DC, Chicago, and Sacramento between 2004 and 2009.

Grounded Theory

As postulated by Corbin and Strauss (1990), the three major tenets of applying the method of Grounded Theory—concepts, categories, and propositions—were used in this dissertation to develop its’ theoretical framework. This method insists that theory evolves as the data is collected, rather than being prescribed from some preconceived notion or hypothesis of what should and will be observed. *Concepts* are instead viewed as the basic units of analysis, eventually connected through some incident, event, or phenomena, and then labeled accordingly. When grouped together, these concepts create *categories*, from which comparisons can be made under headings. They regard categories being “higher in level and more abstract than the concepts they represent. Categories are the “cornerstones” of developing theory. They provide the means by which the theory can be integrated.”¹⁹ The last element, *propositions*, represents the relationship between concepts and categories, which is the closest to the term “hypothesis” (Glaser and Strauss 1967). However, the difference between propositions and hypotheses is that propositions are understood as conceptual relationships, whereas hypotheses are understood as measured relationships. Because Grounded Theory is based upon conceptual frameworks and categories that develop as the data evolves, theory is not generated *a priori* and then tested as a hypothesis would require. Theory is therefore,

... inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory should stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.²⁰

Therefore, in this dissertation I allowed the concepts, categories, and propositions to evolve, including the final research questions, as I gathered as much data as I could

about the multiracial population in the United States. There was no prescribed hypothesis that limited the type of information I collected, or methods I employed. In the fall of 2003 and spring of 2004, I enrolled in two advanced qualitative research methods courses, followed by two advanced quantitative research courses the following academic year. Together, these courses (among other methods I trained in later), and the research projects I conducted for each of them, served as the beginning of my conceptual framework, abstract categories, and propositions I have since created as the basis of my theory on multiracial identity.

Insider-Outsider Approach

My work represents multiple subjectivities—something Alison Griffith (1998) refers to as “epistemological privilege”—by *looking in* as a researcher and observer, *looking out* as an advocate and leader, and *looking within* as a multiracial identified person. This approach involves one who recognizes the situational relationship and context from which one studies a group and/or phenomena. In one ethnographic study which examined the effects her race/ethnicity, gender, and class had on observations made in two rural towns, Nancy Naples (1996) concludes that we are never really fully inside, nor outside, of communities, but rather, part of a dynamic process of “ongoing everyday interactions which are themselves influenced by shifting relationships” that are not fixed or static.²¹ Naples adds that this can develop “The more one is like the participants in terms of culture, gender, race, socio-economic class and so on, the more it is assumed that access will be granted, meanings shared, and validity of findings assured”; “When interviewing ‘away from home’, the mutually perceived homogeneity can create a sense of community which can enhance trust and openness throughout the research

process”, and the outsider status can become “an asset with regard to eliciting fuller explanations”.²²

One of the main critiques to this approach is that the weakness(es) and/or strength(s) of being an insider or outsider become the strength and weakness of the other. For example, ethnic minorities who “study their own” have sometimes been viewed as having bias due to the perceived easier access to the population of study. Merriam et al. (2001) argues that this critique against the insider-outsider phenomenon is too simplistic. In their study, which involved six different researchers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds familiar with the groups of study assigned, they offer a three-tier model to frame the insider-outsider debate to include: positionality, power, and representation.²³ *Positionality* raises the point that even among supposed “insider” status, great variation still exists because groups are not monolithic. *Power* is something the researcher must always be cognizant of as all power-relations can create inequalities that must be negotiated in the research process. Finally, *representation* involves the researcher’s relationship to the participants and the reality being observed. They warn, “Every researcher struggles with representing the ‘truth’ of their findings as well as allowing the ‘voices’ of their participants to be heard. Some of the assumptions underlying earlier, more static understandings of insider/outsider statuses were based on positivist notions of reality”.²⁴

This has been one of the most challenging aspects of my research because I always have to be conscious about what is to be shared as a researcher, but not shared as a leader and advocate of sensitive topic matter. To deal with these issues I decided early on that much like other sociologists and social scientists, it was best for me to be upfront

about my subjectivity, rather than ignore the obvious. In addition, all scholars face the challenge of not being able to be completely objective when conducting research, because we all ultimately impact our work through the differences we each bring to our research, whether it is our races, our genders, our ages, and so forth. Instead of viewing my different positions as adversely affecting my research, I take each position as a benefit to fully explore the complexities that another researcher might be limited from looking in from one particular angle. Finally, with regard to the prominent positions I held, it is important to note that I did not run for any positions as a means to gain access to the multiracial population. I have been involved with multiracial organizing since I was a middle school student, so I was already involved long before the beginning of my PhD program.

To date, no scholar has been able to write from the perspective and position I share as both an insider and outsider to what has been considered the “Multiracial Movement.”²⁵ This includes my appointment as a national member on the Decennial Census Advisory Committee since 2006; my affiliation as a national leader in the multiracial movement through the Association of MultiEthnic Americans and other key leadership positions; my role as a multidisciplinary social scientist and data user in American and ethnic studies, sociology, and political science; and my personal insight as a multiracial identified African American and Korean woman. As only the fifth president in AMEA’s existence, and the first to occupy a researching occupation, I provide a nuanced look into an organization that is worthy of serious attention and consideration about the relationship multiracial identity, racial politics, and social and political movements has with local, state, and federal activities in the United States. As I have

stated that some scholars have mentioned AMEA from the perspective of an outside observer (Farley 2002; Perlmann and Waters 2002; Williams 2006), the result is that these scholars often miss the finer details not necessarily known to ask, sometimes leaving their facts, figures, and analysis with preventable errors.²⁶ Part of the reason is because of their lack of access to these groups due to the reality of insularity and gatekeeping. These limited analyses merely describe what is only available to them from the outside, aside from a few candid interviews, leaving little room to uncover the nuances those details can tell us about multiracial organizing in the U.S. from the perspective of multiracial population and people who together represent diverse racial and ethnic combinations.

Case Study

The case study method was applied to provide focus to the concepts that began to develop as a result of applying Grounded Theory. I focused primarily on the interethnic dynamics and projects of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA), a national (501)(c)(3) non-profit public service organization headquartered in Los Angeles, California, and its constituent affiliate organization chapters located throughout the country. AMEA has been serving the nation's multiracial/multiethnic individuals, interracial families, transracial adoptees, and allies since 1988, and continues to have a growing presence in the socio-political arena. The case study method was an appropriate method to apply to AMEA because where Grounded Theory method helps to give a birds-eye view of the multiracial population, a more focused case analysis of AMEA is a unique and exemplar case that helps to focus the arguments in this dissertation through specific examples from the individual to the group level.

Participant and field observations were collected at multiple sites where the key socio-political debates of the given year were held. Although a few sites were closed to the public, I was afforded firsthand observation status due to my executive board position with the Association of MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA) since 2003. This research includes attending, organizing, and/or sometimes testifying on key legislative proceedings; attending and participating at biannual 2010 Decennial Census Advisory Committee meetings for the U.S. Census Bureau; participating in all local AMEA and affiliate chapter organization events; and observing as a key organizer of events that received national attention. Other observations that inform this research are media appearances that were conducted over the course of data collection.

Archival research was also conducted using content analysis of AMEA primary documents (e.g., brochures, newsletters, documents, publications) over the past 20 years, as well as, census documents between 1850 and 2000. This data was used to build background information about the multiracial population prior to the 2000 census, such as residential patterns of the multiracial population through its recorded membership growth. Combining the data from the censuses and AMEA helps indicate specific areas populated by multiracial people and interracial families on a quantitative level, while at the same time, provide the qualitative components of the multiracial population that the Census had not been able to capture prior to the 2000 census.

Approximately 122 formal and informal face-to-face interviews were conducted since 2004, starting from a study I entitled, “Simultaneous Identities: The Endless Combinations of Multiracial Bodies.” I created this study through an advanced qualitative methods course in the Department of Sociology at the University of Southern California.

The individuals who agreed to be interviewed had volunteered because they met at least one of the following criteria: 1) self-identify as a person with two or more racial or ethnic categories (i.e., “multiracial”); 2) a transracial adoptee; 3) a partner in an interracial union; 4) a parent or legal guardian of multiracial child/ren; 5) a person or representative of an organization that has an invested interest in multiracial experiences and discourse. Individuals were selected and interviewed without discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, class, ability and sexuality. Interviews were conducted at locations chosen by participants, where they felt secure and comfortable, including offices, restaurants, and places of residence. Audio recording and photography were also taken if the participant marked these options on their consent forms.

1.4 | LITERATURE REVIEW

“Racially Mixed Blood?”: Social Construction or Biology?

The purposeful act of centering multiracial experience and the efforts to define them on the local, state, and/or national levels, publicly and privately, offers critical insights for social science research and for other groups in American society. The manner in which the multiracial population has and continues to be defined theoretically and pragmatically is highly understudied. While the body of literature focusing on multiracial identity formation has taken on multidisciplinary forms in recent years, such works have often been located at the margins of academic scholarship within the humanities and social sciences. Considerable scholarship on the multiracial population tends to focus on micro-level social advantages of including this population into society. Most notably, these studies attest to why people choose partners “across race” and/or begin interracial families (Root 1996; Dalmage 2000; Romano 2003); how children experience and

negotiate multiple racial identities (Pinderhughes 1995; Root 1996; Schwartz 1998; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2001, 2002; Campbell and Eggerling-Boeck 2006); where classification issues might limit their navigation through everyday systematic practices, such as community acceptance (Espiritu 1994; Daniel 2001; Dalmage 2004); and why grassroots multiracial organizations exist to address their needs for healthy development in society (Spencer 1997; Dalmage 2004; Williams 2006). Other studies focus primarily on racial designations and experiences faced only by sub-populations in the larger multiracial community.

Some scholars warn that this oversimplification of multiracial identity severely compromises how monoracial people may come to understand not only how multiracial people experience race, but also it prolongs the inevitable of addressing their unique and unmet needs in public policy now and in the future (Rockquemore et al. 2009). In one longitudinal study of adolescent health that looked at patterns of racial classification, the data showed that “because individuals who are defined as multiracial in some schemes appear as monoracial in others, fluidity in multiracial populations can affect our understanding of single-race populations.”²⁷ Following the changes in the 2000 Census, which was the first census in U.S. history to introduce the option for people to choose “two or more” racial categories, we have already begun to witness the critical impact that scholarship on multiracial identity has had on the discourse of social science research, racial politics and civil rights (Spickard 1999; Daniel 2001; Harris and Sim 2002; Williams 2006).

Despite the growing multiracial discourse that involves qualitative data to show evidence of the fluidity of race, some scholars argue this point has largely been

overlooked with any serious attention in empirical research and current racial theories to date (Harris and Sim 2002; Rockquemore et. al. 2009). Indeed, the ways in which race is studied in the social sciences is quite varied, but the prevalent view is that racial and ethnic identification is a central difference that starts from studies between monoracial or single race populations, with less integration, as some argue, on those who straddle multiple racial and ethnic categories (Harris and Sim 2002; Daniel 2002, 2006; Masuoka 2008; Rockquemore et al. 2009). In some cases when the discourse appears to center a serious discussion on multiracial identity, the experiences they gather gradually become fragmented into a monoracial understanding about how race operates.

Evidence of this is shown quite explicitly in each example by the references to the term “blood” each used as biological demarcations to denote supposed quantities of multiracial identity, yet it gets framed as racial discrimination and belonging to a specific monoracial group. We have witnessed this most extensively among Native Americans, where Snipp (2002) points out that in the late twentieth century “American Indians were more likely to be married to non-Indians than to other Indians”.²⁸ At the same time, however, Snipp also claims:

For the reasons just mentioned, blood quantum has seldom if ever been applied to groups other than American Indians, at least not for most official purposes. There is, however, a historical analogue in practice used by the federal government in the late nineteenth century. This classification system subdivided the black population into mulattoes, quadroons, and octoroons... The purposes served by this classification system are not readily apparent, and, perhaps for this reason, it was relatively short-lived. Moreover, hypodescent rules rendered such distinctions irrelevant: any amount of black is all black. Nonetheless, they also represent a precedent in federal practices that, at least in theory, could be revived if the need arose.²⁹

On one hand, we can view this argument from a monoracial lens to understand that yes, the legal ramifications of “blood quantum” were applied to the American Indian

population at large. On the other hand, I argue that the reason these laws were created was because there were a visible number of multiracial people that existed, for which various interested parties, especially the state, wanted to define. This is not just among American Indians, but other populations, most notably the African American population.³⁰ For sake of argument, one could claim that these individuals were still of multiracial heritage, and a denial of this in current research seems to maintain rigid racial boundaries, rather than to deconstruct them.

It is important to note, however, that this notion for clarity and defining racial and ethnic identities based on invalid biological determinations is nothing new, because all groups have gone through this iterative process of labeling and (re)defining in this country. As Werner Sollors (2002) eloquently describes here:

Against the particular past of the U.S. census and race, which includes fractional counting (of slaves) and noncounting (of Indians), counting to see racial peril (of the Chinese), and the use of counts for deportation purposes (of Japanese Americans)—a past in which mixed-race categories were introduced to find evidence for the mulatto-sterility hypothesis (“mulatto” being thought etymologically derived from “mules”) on which rested biological racism and its presumption that races were like species and that intermarriage was therefore “unnatural” and had to be prohibited by the state—the unraveling of “race” might not be the worst thing that could happen in census history, though I am sensitive to the question of which tools shall be needed to keep enforcing antidiscrimination law in the future. Still, the combination of state power, census, and race has wreaked too much havoc and has produced too many Kafkaesque absurdities to be too naively or carelessly adopted, even for well-intentioned policies (264).³¹

This point is illustrated must further in Chapter 2. The point here, however, is that the ways in which meaning making about race has been constituted and hence, defined for all groups (not just multiracial) is quite complex and it calls for closer examination.

This is further expressed by other scholars that have grappled with the concepts of race and ethnicity and the complexities through which race is defined by the state and

communities themselves. This is witnessed as far back as W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Study of the Negro Problems* (1898), and in the past two decades, scholars such as Stanley Lieberson and Mary Waters in *From Many Strands* (1988), Suzanne Oboler's *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives* (1995), Mary Waters in *Ethnic Options* (1990) and Yen Le Espiritu's work in *Asian American Panethnicity* (1993) have taken up this tasks. Together these scholars show that even within supposedly monoracial communities, defining racial identity is a malleable process, and thereby socially constructed. Definitions about race have been formed by society over time, and adopted internally and externally by groups to whom racial identity is important for social meaning and political power. Espiritu (1992) suggests that cultural and structural variables such as religion, language, generation, and geography make it virtually impossible to fix a specific definition to any one racial or ethnic identity. Similarly, Lieberson and Waters (1988) argued that racial and ethnic groups are not to be seen as static and fixed categories. Instead, they should be seen 'as products of labeling and identification processes that change and evolve over time'".³² The point remains that the multiracial population is just one among many that are impacted by the fluidity of racial categories, and this dissertation centers it as an important point of inquiry.

With the ongoing slippages in recent years among even some of the most highly educated practitioners witnessed in the previous cases, this then raises the question on whether or not social science research has really advanced beyond outdated biological arguments—not just in academic circles, but in the public domain at large—in order to secure race as an indisputable fact that is socially constructed once and for all. Despite the extensive theoretical scholarship and empirical research proving the socially

constructive process of racial meanings, and despite the growing literature in recent years that examines the experiences of the multiracial population in non-pathological ways, biological explanations have not completely disappeared from America's language about race, and hence, remain a lingering feature in how we define race today.

Some might argue these slippages might occur because of the disciplinary and methodological cleavages that exist when studying multiracial identity (Rockquemore et. al. 2009; Shih and Sanchez 2009); the rigidity to which the black and white paradigm and the historical usage of the hypodescent rule still manifests in current day practices (Daniel 2001; Segura and Rodrigues 2006; Thornton 2009); or the nature in which the context of multiracial identity is not understood in the larger arena of race and politics more fluidly (Root 1996; Pittinsky and Montoya 2009). These works help to focus on identifying the problems and critiques with current racial theory, providing justification how research on multiracial identity would make an impact on social scholarship. However, I argue they are limited by simply identifying issues, rather than offering nuanced ways to build upon existing racial theories; ways that recognize the need to urge continued future research to incorporate the important issues they raise.

Together, these arguments conjure up late nineteenth and early twentieth century scientific scholarship when race was fundamentally regarded as a biological fact predetermined by one's supposed genome and predicated on one's perceived "blood" makeup (Boaz 1901; Davenport 1911; Snipp 2002). As Snipp remarks,

The concept of blood quantum became popular in the early to mid-nineteenth century in connection with ideas associated with eugenics and scientific racism. “Blood” was a convenient metaphor to describe racial heritage. “Blood quantum” denoted the amount of racial heritage that could be ascribed to an individual. In this era, it was widely believed that ethnicity and cultural practices were mostly the result of inheritance. Thus, blood quantum also indicated the degree to which certain behavioral characteristics might be manifested in individual behavior.³³

As a consequence, this form of scholarship influenced much of the twentieth century where race-as-biology arguments and arbitrary delineations of blood were used to form, uphold, and rationalize segregation in public policy.³⁴ It was based on purely racist premises, which served to restrict citizens in this country from land and home ownership, voting privileges, educational access, and other equal protections under the law (Blauner 1972; Harris 1993; Crenshaw et. al. 1995; Lopez 1996; Gates 1997).

Sociological Race Theories

These race-as-biology slippages are at odds with the burgeoning strands of sociological race and ethnic theories that developed as a counter to scientific racism in the twentieth century and present day. Biological arguments at the end of the nineteenth century focused primarily on black and white relations, and alone could not explain the concept of race and perceived racial differences among the host of other groups who were now very visible in the United States. The processes of immigration and assimilation were then introduced to explain how new groups were adapting to the mainstream Anglo-Saxon Protestant population. Earlier immigration and assimilation theories argued that assimilation was an inevitable and irreversible process by which everyone would acculturate into the mainstream (Park 1921), albeit at different paces among groups such as African Americans (Gordon 1964). The critiques of these theories were that the mainstream was always changing, and that race is best explained as a process of cultural

pluralism, not a “melting pot” analysis. The ideologies of race-as-cultural pluralism viewed racial difference as a result of certain groups not being able to overcome cultural pathologies carried down from generation to generation (Moynihan 1965; Moynihan 1965; Moynihan and Glazer 1970).

Cultural and class theorists in the late sixties and seventies critiqued cultural pluralist formulations for their failure to explain why the mainstream was occupied by a particular group in the first place (Lewis 1968; Ryan 1971). Race-as-culture ideologies challenged existing social structures claiming they were a direct result of former struggles in society namely to do with racism. However, culture was believed to be a limited construct to explain racial differences alone. Caste-class and internal colonial ideologies began to emerge as a result, arguing that the ethnic splits in the labor market (Bonacich 1973) and economic disparities in education and employment (Wilson 1978) could best explain why racial difference existed, not the existence of race itself. However, some scholars claim that class-reductionists hide behind economics to avoid discussions of institutional discrimination and racism, arguing that race and class must be analyzed together (Blauner 1972, Barrera 1977, Dawson 1995, Kelley 1996).

By the late seventies and end of the eighties, racial theories began focusing more attention on differentiating between “race” and “ethnicity” as discrete categories. Race theories began examining how people ended up choosing between ethnic and racial identifications, given possible allegiances to home and host countries, identifying with nationalist pride movements, and/or in some cases, distancing from a generally imposed racial group classification. In contrast to previous theories where race and ethnicity were studied monolithically, these theories were interested in determining different

characteristics *within* groups, not just *between* different groups (Gans 1962; Yancey et al. 1976; Waters 1990). In the early 1990s, the strand of racial theory known as “panethnicity” was introduced (Espiritu 1992) as a theoretical response to earlier claims that people automatically grouped together to form alliances based on common cultural origins. It also served as a challenge to symbolic and emergent ethnicity (Waters 1990) that ethnic group solidarity and identification is experienced from *within* not *across* groups. These theories suggest alternatives to assimilation and cultural perspectives in explaining racial and ethnic cleavages by claiming structural factors shape and create ethnic alliances that form panethnic identities (Lopez and Espiritu 1990, Espiritu 1992; Oboler 1995).

One of the major critiques panethnic theories confronted was from critical race theorists that developed around the same time and into the mid-nineties. These theorists believed panethnicity fails to reference the structural factors historically embedded in the legal system with regard to racial inequities. Hence, the law for which has historically maintained social, economic, and political advantages of whites over other Americans, they argue explain racial and ethnic alliances and perceived racial differences based on how the law has police communities differently (Gotanda 1991, Harris 1993, Crenshaw 1995).³⁵ The work conducted by critical race scholars and other race theorists leading up to the remainder of the nineties has helped marshal more attention in problematizing color-blind ideologies and challenging the legal and historically unmarked category of “whiteness” in the present day (Lipsitz 1998; Kim 1999; Bonilla-Silva 2003).

Finally, this leads up to one of the dominant ideologies today, which argues that race, is indeed a social construction (Frankenberg 1993; Lopez 1994; Omi and Winant

1994, 2002; Bonilla-Silva 1999, 2006), under which arguably all of the aforementioned strands of theory represent. That is, race, much like gender and class, is regarded as a “social fact” that is real and historically-bounded, not biological. It is a fact that cannot be fixed or essentialized, but nonetheless is still a “central principle” by which groups socially organize (Bonilla-Silva 1999).³⁶ Any linkage made between race and biology is unsubstantiated and outright invalid. However, as I argue early on, although theories on the social construction of race continue to be the dominant ideology to explain race and perceived racial difference today, biological meanings for race still linger in practice and application. As Rainier Spencer (2006) contends, “Even given the proven fallaciousness of biological race, Americans cling to the concept ever more tenaciously.”³⁷

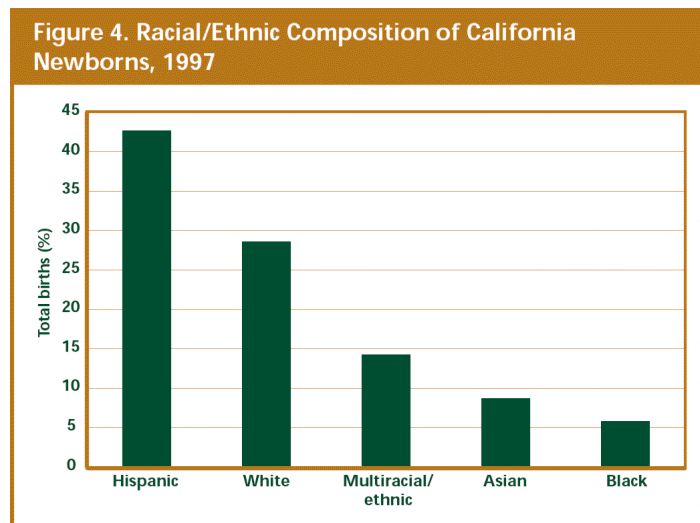
1.5 | EMPIRICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CHALLENGES

According to the data revealed in the *Race Contours: USA, California, and Los Angeles in the Census 2000* research, approximately 1-in-5 residents of the entire state population of Hawaii self-identified as multiracial (21.4%), followed by Alaska (4.9%), California (4.7%), and Oklahoma (4.5%).³⁸ In the rest of the United States, the research noted that 1-in-10 residents claimed more than two races on the census 2000. As the multiracial population continues to grow exponentially in America and abroad, and as the prevalence of interracial couples and their children continues to be more visible, it is even more essential for society—from parenting to policy—to know how best to serve the unique needs faced by this population and to devise the most appropriate means to support their efforts to be fully incorporated.³⁹

However, despite these figures, quite often the incorporation of multiracial people as a population can be so troubling to fit into the current rubric of how race and ethnicity

are currently discussed, that in terms of public policy, the solution seems to be to exclude this population altogether. Figure 1 produced by the Public Policy Institute of California illustrates the significant presence this population has on the state of California alone. In 1997, multiracial/ethnic births reportedly outnumbered monoracial Asian and Black births, a statistic that has not received any critical attention.⁴⁰

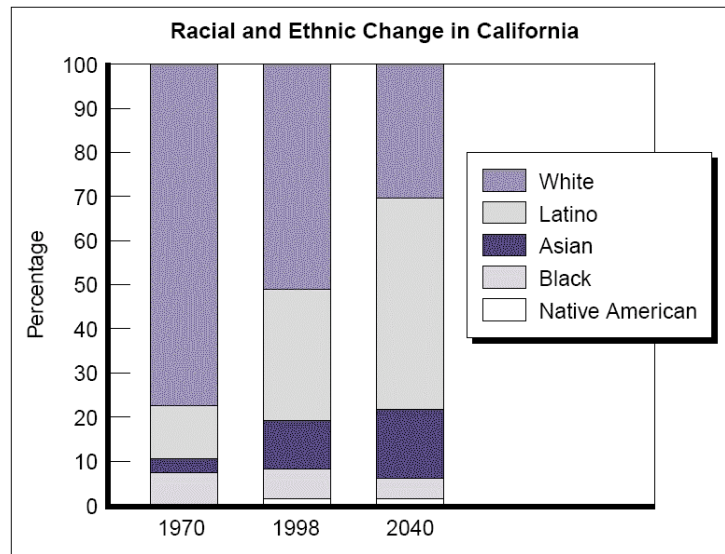
Figure 1: Multiracial Births in California, 1997



Tafoya, Sonya. 2000. “Check One or More... Mixed Race and Ethnicity in California.” In *California Counts: Population Trends and Profiles*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California. Vol. 1. No. 2. January 2000. P. 6.

However, Figure 2 shows another study derived from the same data out of the Public Policy Institute of California that states, “By 2040, whites are expected to represent only one-third of the population. Two in three Californians will be Latino, Asian, or black.”⁴¹ Obviously this a stark contradiction from the previous figure which showed multiracial births outnumbering Asian and Black births in 1997, but somehow by 2040, it appears multiracial people will cease to exist as a sizeable population to be incorporated in the projection.

Figure 2: Population Projection Excluding Multiracial Identity in California, 2040



By 2040, whites are expected to represent only one-third of the population. Two in three Californians will be Latino, Asian, or black.

Hajnal, Zoltan and Baldassare, Mark. 2001. "Research Brief - Finding Common Ground: Racial and Ethnic Attitudes in California." San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California. March 2001. Issue 44.

This represents a specific example when hegemonoracial ideology is operating among the researchers who applied this data, presenting it in such a way that privileges monoracial experience and existence. This is significant because the work produced from this institute is specifically used a mechanism by which social science researchers, policymakers, public officials, and professionals serve the community at large. In theory, race is a social construction where terms and meanings change to describe populations, yet in practice, there is such a belief in the racial order and the fixed application of the five most designated racial identities in this country that this dramatic exclusion does not raise any red flags among those who use the data to produce, and those who the data inadvertently defines.

This issue is a key example that underlines the Politics of Being Multiracial; that is, the potential impact of undermining the existence of this population in future projections will yield consequences on future policies (Chapter 4). What is quite obvious here is that not only are the inconsistencies problematic, but there is an obvious disconnect between how bodies that do not fit neatly into the existing social structures of a society are typically “erased” empirically and institutionally, but yet we still know they exist on the everyday level. Some scholars warn that despite disagreements about how this population might matter because of the insight it offers other populations. Here Kim Williams (2006) discusses the impact the rise in multiracial research may have on the future of other groups:

Reasonable people can and do disagree about what multiracial politics means and how it will matter. In the search for clarity, it is helpful to think about what it is that the multiracial movement exemplifies. I consider it an example of mobilization around the idea of race-as-construct. Placed in this context, it is not the only such contemporary case. Panethnicity, after all, is similar in that its key descriptive involves a shift in the scale of identification from a smaller group boundary to a larger one. What makes Chinese or Puerto Ricans, respectively, Asians or Latinos? Panethnicity focuses attention on the ways in which previously diverse or unrelated groups identify common interests and assume a shared identity. While one manifestation of this (multiracialism) appears to be on the rise, the other prominent example of it (panethnicity) currently shows considerable signs of strain. Together, the emergence of multiracialism and the decline of panethnicity offer important clues about the future of the color line (30).

The reference to concept of the “color line” alludes to the fact that multiracial identity has a critical place in deconstructing racial meanings and the (mono)racial hierarchy W.E.B. Du Bois coined at the turn of the twentieth century. Perlmann and Waters’ (2002) description of their compilation of essays regarding the “choose one or more” option on the Census 2000 mirrors Williams’ comments above. “This volume brings to light the many ways in which a seemingly small change in the way race data is solicited and

reported can have far-reaching effects and expose deep fissures in our society” (Perlmann and Waters 2002).

Together, they point to the ways in which centering multiracial identity focused research can make obvious the lessons we take forward in American society here and in the future. This is significant because these discussions seem to suggest that research on race does not always have to begin first from a monoracial vantage point. When not recognized, these limited understandings can incarcerate us by hiding the complexities necessary in theorizing about race, and through understanding the intricacies of the multiracial population, from the individual to collective, this might liberate our understanding about U.S. racial formation more broadly. This becomes increasingly important when considering its relation to legal issues (Snipp 2002), civil rights enforcement (Williams 2006), and public policy (Snipp 1986; Snipp and Thornton 1999).

1.5 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Three theories in particular have been useful to conceptualize the research and the terms and concepts critical to my intended theoretical contributions: Howard Winant and Michael Omi’s, ‘racial formation’ (1988, 1994); Yen Le Espiritu’s ‘panethnicity’; and Patricia Hill Collin’s ‘intersectionality’. While each does not address multiracial identity as the main demographic focus, they do have room to build upon these theories to incorporate emerging groups such as the multiracial population. So I ask, why does there continue to exist a staunch application of a singular racial identity on multiracial individual today, and more importantly, where do multiracial identities fit within the larger discourse of racial theories in the social sciences?

(Multi)Racial Formation Theory

In the opening of their introduction on Racial Formation, Omi and Winant discuss a story about a woman named Susie Guillooy Phipps, a descendant of a white planter and black slave in the 18th century, who unsuccessfully sued the Louisiana Bureau of Vital records in her attempt to change her racial classification from black to white in 1982-1983.⁴² Racial classification was argued to be a necessity in order to comply with record-keeping on the federal level and to “facilitate programs for the prevention of genetic diseases”. The state law declared that individuals with at least 1/32nd “Negro blood” be classified as black, despite research at the time that indicated that most whites in Louisiana had at least 1/20th “Negro blood”. Omi and Winant go into the difficulties this case raised with regard to how the state defines race and how racial categories are assigned to individuals and groups in the present due to how race was shaped in the past.

Racial Formation was introduced by Omi and Winant as an approach to remedy what they considered “the defects of existing theory” about race, focusing primarily on the three decades leading up to the 1990s. Three particular concerns about racial theories helped to frame their theoretical framework. First, they focused on the postwar period by assessing new social movements and political subjects that spawned out of the 1960s. This included movements focused on antiwar, feminist, and environmental issues, which were mobilized by rearticulating existing political and cultural themes—particularly those resulting from the black movement in particular.⁴³ Second, they were concerned with providing a corrective to most theories that reduced race as if it were simply a manifestation of other fundamental characteristics of society, such as class and ethnicity. Instead, they locate race at the center of political history in the United States, without

aiming to minimize the importance of other social relationships (i.e., class, sex, gender, etc.). Finally, their third concern posited a model that centers socially based movements in the political processes of the day, rather than traditional class based models. They address these concerns by assessing the trajectory of dominant racial theories in U.S. history, which they argue were not only guided by racist principles, but also came to be the sources by which Americans have come to understand race as a variable of ethnicity, class, and nation, rather than at the center of all three.

My dissertation attempts to add to the theoretical framework of Racial Formation by rearticulating the three main concerns that Omi and Winant raise in several specific and comparable ways. First, where their focus is primarily to locate race more generally at the center of social and political history, I aim to specify how individuals and groups that represent more than one race (multiracial population) simultaneously are part of this discourse on racial formation. I do this by demonstrating how to implement this complex population in existing racial theories and ideologies later in this chapter. Second, while they focus on social movements within the postwar period leading up to the 1990s, my work chronologically adds to the literature because it focuses on the multiracial movement, which gained much traction in the state post-1990. Chapters 2 through 5 illustrate this mobilization from a critical perspective behind the scenes through my on the ground research in multiple cities, from 2003 to 2010. Last, the research I present in this dissertation expands upon Omi and Winant's third concern which argues that the trajectory of dominant racial theories in U.S. history, guided by racist principles, are the sources by which Americans have come to understand race as a variable of ethnicity, class, and nation, rather than at the center of all three. My work illuminates their concern

by centering the multiracial movement as a point of departure, from individuals to groups in both private and public discourses. This is done in order to present research in Chapters 4 and 5 regarding the unmet needs of this population, which are unbeknownst to mainstream society. Together this work has several implications for policy that I conclude with in Chapter 6.

This research is important to the expansion of Racial Formation because the multiracial movement, as I will discuss herein, represents the notion of what Omi and Winant call, *unstable equilibrium*. “In racial terms the state’s trajectory of reform is initiated when movements challenge the pre-existent racial order. Crisis ensues when this opposition upsets the pre-existing *unstable equilibrium*. The terms of challenge can vary enormously, depending on the movement involved. Opposition can be democratic or authoritarian, primarily based in “normal” politics or in disruption; opposition can even reject explicitly political definition, as in the case of cultural movements” (Omi and Winant 1994: 87). Hence, while Omi and Winant use the Phipps case as an example, one, to illustrate the fluidity of racial categories; two, to challenge that there is no biological basis of race; and three, to show the extent to which the state helps to shape historical definitions, values, and perceptions about race in America, I would argue that the discussion about Phipps in particular is still framed from a limited vantage point. That is, the discussion of her case appears to focus the reader’s attention on understanding her dilemma as failing to either get the state to recognize her as monoracially black or white, rather than as both. Thus, my work expands on this premise by having us recognize when racial discourse essentializes monoracial views in the guise of a multiracial experience.

Pan-Multiethnicity

In *Asian American Panethnicity*, Yen Le Espiritu (1992) grapples with the complexities embedded in our institutions that help bridge, while at the same time, threaten a pan-Asian American identity in the United States. Cognizant of the growing subgroups in the Asian American community, panethnicity seeks to incorporate groups that come from diverse nationalities, ethnicities, and cultural affiliations, similar to how I argue a multiracial identity forms at the individual level.

[U]nder what circumstances, and to what extent groups of diverse national origins can come together as a new, enlarged panethnic group. The theoretical question concerns the construction of larger-scale affiliations, where groups previously unrelated in culture and descent submerge their differences and assume a common identity.⁴⁴

This focus is the closest I can find among racial theories that seeks to explain how seemingly disparate groups come together to form a unified identity. Espiritu's language articulates possibilities for which I envision a multiracial identity might be able to enter and the political movements for which they participate. In other words, individuals who self-identify as multiracial, and whom make up the larger multiracial population, presumably grapple with the tenets of panethnicity when forming their own identities, but within the framework physically and mentally embodiment.

Although Yen Le Espiritu's theory on *panethnicity* recognizes the confluence of multiple ethnicities forming a unified racial identity, I would argue that it is still situated within a hegemonoracial construction of multiracial identity. Her discussion about the incorporation of mixed race Asians (i.e., EuroAsians, hapas, etc.) into the panethnic framework appears to have more to do with increasing the strength in numbers for monoracial Asian political power, than it has to do with ensuring healthier identity development and all of the socio/economic/political reasons that come along with the

sub-population of multiracial individuals that identify with their Asian background and some other race(s). However, how might the circumstance be different when considering how those of multiple racial and ethnic identities come together to form a larger multiracial identified population? I am attempting to build upon the main tenets of this theory, positing that perhaps a “multi-panethnicity” might be a more applicable reformulation in this case.

My research shows that just because people fail to understand how a multiracial identity forms outside of a monoracial construction does not necessarily suggest that a multiracial identity fails to exist. Could one not also argue that people who straddle two or more racial categories do have identities regardless if they are difficult to classify by others? Espiritu goes on to explain that

[N]ewly forged panethnic groups include the Native American, the Latino American, and the Asian American. These groups enclose diverse people who are nevertheless seen as homogeneous by outsiders: the Native American label unites people of linguistically and culturally distinct tribes; the Latino American category combines colonized Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban refugees, and documented and undocumented immigrants; and the Asian American unit comprises groups of different national origins that continue to be divided along class, linguistic, and generational lines.⁴⁵

This calls into question how to factor in a group that forms not only around individuals with singular racial or ethnic designations, but amongst people whose identities are already fused together attempting to forge with others much like them. That is, how do you factor in the phenomenon of Mexican-Asian American identified persons who forge alliances with African American-Cuban-Italian identified persons? This question is invoked in the everyday operations of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans that serves multiracial people of infinite combinations and couples united from many different racial and ethnic backgrounds. By inserting “multi” to “panethnicity”, I am

simultaneously recognizing Espiritu's analysis as an opportunity to answer how people are able to mobilize around shifting and contested categories, while at the same time, I am problematizing the panethnic framework by moving it beyond a hegemonoracial construct that assumes people enter first with only a monoracial formed identity.

Simultaneous Intersectional Identities

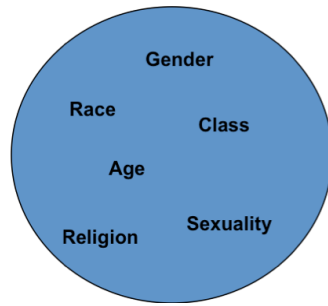
In the 1990s and leading into the present day, there was a strand in feminist scholarship that emerged to argue that race is not a mutually exclusive variable that is experienced, but rather, part of a cross-section experienced with other variables that inform identities. These theories argue that social categories must not be universalized, and that race, class, gender, and sexuality are interlocking systems (Cyrus, 1993, 1997, 2000; Acker and Lorber 1999; Anderson and Collins 2001, 2006) or as Patricia Hill Collins (1990) refers to them as “structures of domination”.⁴⁶ These intersecting identities cannot be divorced from one another to account for their separate influence on some outcome (Crenshaw 2003, Bettie 2003, Hays 2003). Audre Lorde later added ‘age’ to the equation, arguing that age detects gender difference among people of different generations and bridges the disconnect that often arise from one historical moment to the next. Patricia Hill Collins later added ‘religion’ as another structure of domination that affects identities of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

I wish to take this opportunity to differentiate between what I now refer to as “simultaneous identities” from what has come to be known as the strand of feminist theory called “intersectionality.” In 2003, I came up with the term, “simultaneous identities”, as a way to recognize the saliency of multiple identities that are experienced at exactly the same time. This includes race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, sexual

orientation, and so forth. However, while all people possess these intersecting identities, the “simultaneous” is purposefully there to represent identities where multiple racial and ethnic categories are always operating, even while some may be more latent than others. Thus, I see the formation of simultaneous identities and intersectionality as complimenting one another, although the focal point from which they depart are slightly different. Simultaneous identities is a concept I also formulated as a way to disavowal the use of the word “race” in the term “multiracial” because the term itself problematically reinscribes the notion that race is a fixed term of reference when in fact it is a social construction that cannot be fixed. At this current time, I use the term multiracial with the intention of problematizing the usage in the long run, and simultaneous identities offers me the flexibility to not be bound by the rigidity by which the term race itself holds. Furthermore, I created the following diagrams as a way to visually explain how social science research and racial theories can understand the complexities that a multiracial identity entails. There are an infinite number of ways to visually depict these concepts, but for clarification, I have included the primary examples I believe demonstrates how multiracial identity fits within the larger discourse on race.

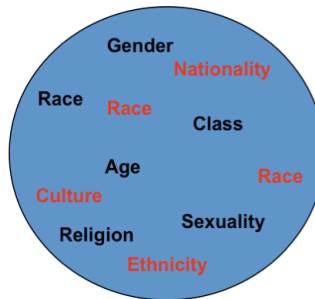
Figure 3 shows the main purpose behind intersectionality, which is to foreground multiple categories to interrogate axis of power together. As it is understood more loosely, race is one singular entity on equal footing with a combination of other identities, such as gender, class, sexuality, and age. Again, each identity is not a mutually exclusive element, but rather constitutive of the other in one space.

Figure 3: Intersectionality Diagram



In Figure 4, I intersperse a few additional identities into the axis to incorporate people who identify with multiple race and ethnic categories, but not necessarily in a localized American context. Rather it visually complicates what “race” represents in the framework by specifying other terms that often signify the fluidity of race, such as culture, nationality and ethnicity.

Figure 4: Intersectionality + Race/Ethnicity/Culture/Nationality Diagram

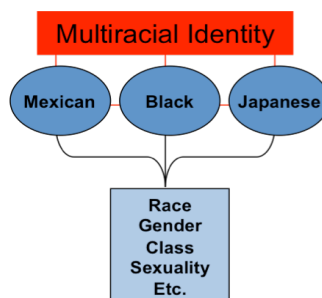


Figuring multiracial identity into to the current understanding of intersectionality is much more complex because we must rid ourselves of several assumptions about the ways in which race does not always function in singular contexts within the U.S. supposedly rigid racial order. For example, a person whose parents are Japanese born and American Italian born simultaneously negotiates two separate *national* identities (Japanese and American), two socially constructed *races* (Asian and White), two *ethnic* identities (Japanese and Italian), and not to mention, two heritages with distinctly different *cultures*, histories, and traditions. Arguably these terms often become conflated within the discourse of racial

formation witnessed in the trajectory of racial theories outlined earlier. Nonetheless, these intersecting identities are part of the discussion when additional racial and ethnic categories factor into the equation. This image is important because it visually complicates how we currently understand intersectionality by making it more apparent that some identities are multiplicative. This is important because often when research on multiracial identity and the population at large is conducted, research fails to complicate and describe the experiences outside of rudimentary and simplistic binary combinations.

In Figure 5, I depict the relationship between simultaneous identities and intersectionality by foregrounding “multiracial identity” as always operating in congruence with intersectionality through one’s specific individual racial or ethnic categories. Here I aggregate an example of a multiracial person who identifies as Mexican, Black, and Japanese. The general understanding of intersectionality that comprises gender, sexuality, age, class, etc. is operating through each of the racial/ethnic identities, and together, they form a multiracial identity.

Figure 5: Multiracial Identity + Intersectionality Flowchart Diagram

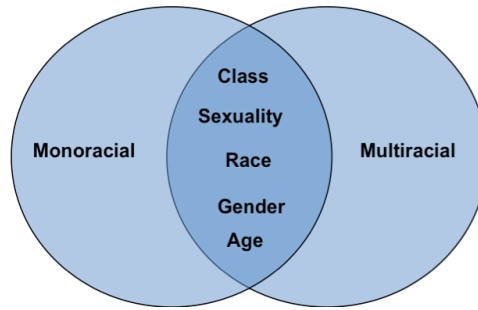


It is important to note that the term “race” is not complicated in intersectionality theories in the way that I am looking at it in this example because I argue, these three racial identities work simultaneously, not as separate entities as Figure 4 highlighted. Figure 5 moves away from a monoracial understanding of how race operates by not limiting the

analysis to only one racial entity, but rather multiple racial identities forming one another. For example, this person is not only balancing their simultaneous identities as a Black female, a Mexican female, and a Japanese female separately, but as all of those elements together, in combination with other intersectional identities they embody. Nowhere else does the current theory on intersectionality spell out that two or more races can happen simultaneously, unless they are referring to “multiracial” in the sense that Maxine Baca Zinn et al. (2000) position in their anthology, *Multiracial Feminism*. Here, multiracial is defined as many singular race women coming together under the umbrella term. For my work, multiracial simultaneously stands for both monoracial and multiracial identified individuals and communities in tandem.

Finally, Figure 6 envisions both theories as independent and dependent on one another, speaking directly to my dissertation project. I see my project synchronizing between the different ways racial identities can form (whether mono- or multi- racially), while continuing to factor in the identities that intersectionality claims we can never keep mutually exclusive. Since people cannot divorce themselves from other interlocking identities, I take it as a given that regardless if it is a monoracial or monoracial identity being factored in, intersectionality is always operating, and multiracial people can not divorce themselves from the other identities that are also operating, regardless if their *claimed* identities speak otherwise.

Figure 6: Multi/Monoracial Identity + Intersectionality Venn Diagram



Herein, I pay particular attention to the intersections of other identities that may also be operating through my research examined in each chapter in this dissertation. It is through this type of focused analysis that we gain a clearer understanding about the intricate complexities this population raises in social scholarship and racial theory construction.

1.6 | TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Politics of Being Multiracial (PBMR)

A unique set of principles or views to describe the unique experiences—positive, negative, and neutral—felt primarily by individuals that self-identify and/or are identified as multiracial to create a larger multiracial population. As I have argued earlier in this chapter, a multiracial identity much like other monoracial identities are not always self-imposed, but rather, imposed external to one's own self-identification. Due to the long history of intermixing around the world, a person who claims a particular monoracial or multiracial identity might be startled when someone might apply a racialized identity that is not congruent with their own self-identification. phenomena, or set of politics that I argue are confronted primarily by multiracial people. This exists because as I argue, the Politics of Being Multiracial are at play—reoccurring themes that are located in the subtle but explicit ways that multiracial people have to experience their identities to varying degrees. These experiences part of a collective set of experiences that help to

form a shared ideology that inadvertently creates a multiracial population. Such is part of a view I incorporate in my framework for the Politics of Being Multiracial. Again, I describe multiracial as a fluid term to represent *the confluence of multiple socially constructed racial and ethnic identities, populations, movements, and set of politics that are privately-identified and/or publicly-imposed*.⁴⁷ Multiracial, for the purposes of this dissertation, describes a person who either internally self-identifies with two or more socially constructed racial or ethnic categories, and/or is a person whose identity is externally identified and imposed as such.⁴⁸ Included in this definition are individuals whose past or immediate heritage comprises different racial and/or ethnic groups here and abroad, as well as, individuals referred to as transracial adoptees.

Briefly, I will use the cases introduced in the introductory opening to create context about what the Politics of Being Multiracial entail. At first, each incident appeared to be indicative of multiracial politics; that is, each seems to only involve the experiences and relationships between the six most commonly designated *monoracial* groups defined in social science research, public policy, and broader racial politics.⁴⁹ With a more trained eye, the cases are arguably an issue of Multiracial politics represented by exclusion, erasure, and lack of knowledge of multiracial identity in this country. In the Schwarzenegger-Garcia case, his prejudgment and stereotypes are clearly predicated on longstanding racial politics between White ethnics,⁵⁰ Blacks and Latinos (Rodriguez 1992, 2000; Fischer 2006). However, his explicit references to Garcia's Puerto Rican identity represents not just an insult or attack on a singular group identity, but one made up of three distinct cultures in one body (African, European, and indigenous). Her supposedly "very hot" temperament was excused away by

Schwarzenegger who believes that a *combination* of both Latino and Black “bloods” inherently possesses an undertone of aggressive and socially unacceptable characteristics. The keyword, combination, is relevant here because had he just attributed Garcia’s temperament to simply ‘Latino blood’ or ‘Black blood,’ it would have been charged as an explicitly racist and discriminatory statement with little to no question. The fact that his statement refers to a combination of two socially constructed races to form one ethnic identity—a multiracial identity—the politics of race, or rather, the PBM experienced by the multiracial identity in question appears to be excused away by all monoracial parties involved.

Similarly in the Freedmen case, the example illustrates how a long social history of harmony and political contention between Native Americans and African Americans with regard to the resources and privileges afforded to group membership clashes in modern times (Forbes 1998; Brooks 2002; Bier 2004). However, the quest to designate those who have at least a proven “drop of Indian blood” also concerns the actual individuals who identify as both Native American *and* African American in one body. This is problematic as it stands because the issue gets framed solely as the experience of the monoracial African American person who might have Native American ancestry, or vice versa, experiencing discrimination. This is a result of the inability in contemporary social science research to translate past racist language to reflect the reality that is lived today. We must deal with complexity head on rather than (un)consciously focus on simplifying the intricacies that centering multiracial identities offer us. In the Do Family case, the example highlights how race and biology are still present in healthcare to save Luke’s life, and in his case it was among pan-ethnic Asians⁵¹ and White donors (Espiritu

1992; Ngo-Metzger et. al. 2004; Okamoto 2005). Again, from whom the blood transfusion was made possible may have less to do with the parents separate monoracial backgrounds, as much as it has to do with the confluence of their social constructed races that forms the identity of Luke. His challenge as a multiracial child and his parents as an interracial couple, to navigate his life and death situation in an ill-informed medical system where race-as-biology slippages occur so matter-of-factly everyday in this country are profound.

Furthermore, due to the complexities such cases propose to society, our understanding of what is occurring is framed within a hegemonoracial perspective, evidenced by the Los Angeles Times reaching out to the Legislative Black and Latino caucuses for their input on the situation with Bonnie Garcia, rather than to national organizations dedicated to serving the needs of multiracial identities, such as the Association of MultiEthnic Americans, one of the oldest leading umbrella advocacy organizations on behalf of multiracial and multiethnic individuals, families, communities, and allies. In all cases a representative voice among this emerging population was not called upon for public comment and as a result, the multiracial population as a whole was excluded from the multiracial politics at hand, when it also appears to be an issue of Multiracial politics. As Chapter 4 will show, the multiracial population primarily enters the external debates about multiracial politics not by invitation, but by the internal will to effectively mobilize amongst themselves to bring attention to issues indicative of the Politics of Being Multiracial. This phenomenon might be present because again, there does not exist a clear, mainstream understanding of who makes up this population in question.

Finally, there are eight (8) reoccurring themes, myths, and perspectives that emerged in my research and across a range of work about, by, and for multiracial people. These themes include what I've labeled as: the "tragic mulatto syndrome"; "having to choose creates no community"; mixing races is a contemporary phenomena"; the "black and white binary is applicable to all"; "multiracial people do not face discrimination"; "passing for mixed"; "global multiracial history"; "identification as mixed race is a personal, political, and historical process". Together they represent what I claim are the underlying Politics of Being Multiracial. This is not an exhaustive list as I do not intend to tackle any one specific point since it is not the focus of my dissertation. Rather, together the points provide context to address my overall research questions and main arguments, specifically where these issues help frame how multiracial people are defined. These issues also are the impediments that I believe are still embedded in racial discourse from understanding the complexities and multiplicative layers that multiracial identities embody, much like those illustrated in the examples. I believe these complexities are a result of the lingering race-as-biology slippages that continue to make it difficult for society to understand the significant contribution multiracial identities make in understanding how race operates from a non-monoracial perspective.

The "Tragic Mulatto Syndrome" is a longstanding belief that gets presented in popular culture, rooted historically that multiracial people are confused, bewildered, and always struggling for the unwavering, one-race self for which they cannot attain (Larsen 1986; Williamson 1980; Talty 2003). It is a play on Freud in which the multiracial person is constantly battling the impossibility of being one race, and is always in a constant

psychological struggle with the self to be one race or to fit seamlessly into a monoracial identity.

“Having to Choose Creates No Community” is one multiracial scholars challenge in that it is a belief the multiracial individual by virtue of not having one community, and having to “choose” to which racial community they belong or relate to more, creates no community at all (Root 1992, 1996; Spencer 1997; Daniel 2002). This fallacy is a lingering issue in that the literature hardly postulates the reality that one can actually fit into two or more communities simultaneously. As Chapter 3 reveals, the choice of “not choosing” forms a community of people who “choose to not choose.” Inadvertently, this “liminal space” creates the population by virtue of a common experience feeling betwixt groups, not outside of them.

“Mixing Races is a Contemporary Phenomenon” centers on the belief that the topic of mixed race is something new and untapped appears to lessen the urgency this population has had for centuries in this country (Parker and Song 2002; Daniel 2002; Brunsma 2006; Spencer 2006). The media is notorious for presenting stories as if ‘racial mixing’ is cutting edge and new, yet there is a long body of research on multiracial identity in America that has been untapped. Spencer (2006) states: “One of the racial myths Americans cherish is the idea that the West and Central African slaves who were transported to the Americas via the transatlantic slave trade were *unmixed* blacks... The slaves imported from Africa by no means represented ‘pure Negro races’.”⁵² Scholars note elsewhere that some of the original tribes brought here were an “admixture of Caucasoid genes from crosses with Mediterranean peoples. During the slave trade more white genes were added. The Portuguese who settled on the Guinea Coast had relations

with the natives. The slave traders themselves were known frequently to have had promiscuous intercourse with their female merchandise” (Myrdal, Sterner, and Rose 1944: 123).⁵³

“Black and White Binary is an Applicable Experience for All” is the idea that people talk about multiracial identity, much like other monoracial groups, the underlying experience that is most dominant are those individuals who are identified as black and white (Parker and Song 2002; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2001; Daniel 2002; Rockquemore 2002). While this subpopulation is sizeable within the larger community, however, it has a distinct history that is not always applicable to the population as a whole. Yet, this is hardly questioned when the experience of multiracial America is framed. It is presumed that black and white multiracial people have a blanket experience that is applicable to all. This limits our understanding about other relationships that exist outside the binary (Brunsma 2006; Bailey 2006).

“Multiracial People Don’t Face Discrimination” has steadily begun to be raised in the discourse in recent years in particular, that the reason multiracial experience is not always involved in serious discussion of racial politics in the U.S. is because it fails to carve out the importance of their concerns (Wehrly, Kenney, and Kenney 1999; Gallagher 2002; Daniel and Castaneda-Liles 2006). It appears that after the census 2000 there has been no other issues to contend with outside of being recognized for individual preferences of self-identification with “two or more races”. It is the belief held that once this feat was accomplished, somehow the other issues dissipated and people were more accepting of multiracial people in society (Farley 2001, 2002). This has not been the case,

as we have seen for example, with the media and societal frenzy around President Barack Obama's multiracial identity.

"Multiracial People Still Want to Pass for White" is a longstanding historical issue regarding "passing", which was the process by which multiracial people would try to "pass for white" in the Antebellum period in order to be afforded privileges unavailable to a monoracial Black identity (Larsen 1929; Talty 2003). I illustrate in Chapter 3 that today a shift is happening where multiracial people are opting to preserve their multiracial identities, not pass for white, and in some cases where someone phenotypically perceived as a particular identity, a unique negotiation takes place. This challenges that longstanding myth that mixed people struggled to in today's term, and it also pushes the discussion beyond black and white where this concept does not even apply. According to research I conducted back in 2003, "The Exotic Project," I argued that we are moving into an era where the multiracial experience is being exoticized as a commodity, so much so, that it is quite beneficial and henceforth, profitable, for multiracial and monoracial alike to be able to "pass for mixed".

"Multiracial Only Exist in the United States" applies to the belief that there is sometimes a tendency for people to limit their discussion of multiracial identity in a localized context, disregarding the larger diaspora of multiracial identity around the world (Parker and Song 2002; Perez-Torres 2006; Daniel 2006). Furthermore, there is a longstanding history of other mixed race populations around the world that far exceed the shorter history of the United States. This includes the history of multiracial people in places like Brazil (Daniel 2006), Canada (Mahtani 2001), England (Ifekunigwe 2001)

and South Africa (Patterson 1989; Loveman 1999), and other designated populations such as Creoles and Mestizas/os (Perez-Torres 2006}.

“Multiracial Experience is Only About Identity and Classification” is the belief that sometimes people identifying as mixed race or not, the discussion is always couched in a surface level analysis. There are multiple dimensions and much grey area that inhibit or play a part into ones decision to self-identify as such (Parker and Song 2002). Also, depending on other attributes such as geography, age, specific racial/ethnic backgrounds, cultural and religious elements, familial influence, parental cultural competence, phenotype (actual, stereotypical/perceived), and so forth, the process is different for individuals (Root 1992, Perlmann and Waters 2002; Nakazawa 2003). As a larger population, one might still be deemed as being part of the mixed race community despite their own self-identification, because as I define the multiracial population, it is both a self-identified process, and well as imposed process that is external to ones own preference and self-identification.

Hegemonoracial Ideology

Similar to concepts of “white hegemony” (Lipsitz 1998) and “hegemonic masculinities” (Connell 1992), where all other racialized and gendered categories are measured against the privileging of “white” and “male” in a prescribed racial and gendered order, my concept on “hegemonoracial ideology” adds to these existing discussions. The former concepts challenge the socio-political dynamics through which masculinity and/or whiteness are understood in an ascribed gender or racial order that struggles for hegemony and maintaining domination.⁵⁴ Similarly, I have argued that racial formation theories are symptomatic of what I consider to be hegemonoracial

ideology in a restrictive yet endorsed racial order. Again, I describe this concept as the philosophy I believe veils race as something that is unquestionably understood as a singular entity that is studied, interrogated, experienced, and sustained; it's the privileging of 'one race' units of analysis in the social sciences; and it is where "monoracial" becomes the unmarked category by which multiple racial and ethnic identities always become measured.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the term is most present when the question that appears to be asked first is not 'what *is* multiracial identity?', but rather, 'what *is not* monoracial?'. So in the case of Omi and Winant's formulation, anything that cannot be classified as one race potentially risks having "no identity" at all by the mere explanation that multiple races in one body are entirely too fluid to incorporate into the racial rubric society has created and adheres to over time.

A visual representation of hegemonoracial ideology was executed in a 2004 comedy sketch segment on Comedy Central's *Dave Chappelle Show: Season II* entitled "Racial Draft".⁵⁶ This segment illustrates the confluence of my intervention and Omi and Winant's assertion that in fact having a complex identity tinkers on having no racial identity among the larger public. In this particular sketch, the studio audience is segregated into four distinct monoracial communities—Asians, Blacks, Whites, and Latinos. The satire is complete with three gentleman—one Black, one Jewish, and one White—serving as commentators together in a raised press box similar to an ESPN sporting event. Sitting side-by-side on the lower stage were individual members referred to as "racial delegates" who presumably represent each distinctive community in the audience. At the opening of the skit, Chappelle proclaims: "We need to finally settle this

once and for all! We need to decide which side of Tiger Woods is hitting the ball so hard,” obviously speaking about Tiger’s multiracial identity.

The first person to take to the stage was the African American delegate who won the first draft pick, for which the commentators slyly remark, “Wow, that’s the first time an African American has won a lottery since the Jefferson’s!” The delegate boastfully announces at the podium, “We the Black delegation proudly pick... Tiger Woods!” The camera pans to the audience where comedian Dave Chappelle is dressed in an attempt to imitate Tiger Woods, adorned with golf gear, holding a golf club, and a mouth full of protruding fake teeth. Across the screen the words flash “Tiger Woods Now 100% Black!” Woods, played by Chappelle, hearing the news gives his infamous three-fist-pump to the camera seemingly relieved and brought to tears that he has finally found his “clearer” racial identity.

The sketch coupled with the laughter of the live audience, illustrates that Tiger Woods obviously had no racial and political identity, that is, until it was somehow cleared up in the draft that he was “now 100% Black.” He proclaims he is no longer Thai, “good bye fried rice, hello fried chicken. I love you dad!” One is first struck with the image panning over to the racial community designated as “Asians” who appeared upset that “Blacks” got to claim him first. Their dissatisfaction is shown through the lowering of their “TIGER IS ASIAN” signs, and their cold glances toward the Black community that are cheering to their left. Further aspects worth mentioning include the boos from the crowd; how happy Tiger Woods and his fake television family appear when the decision has been dealt; and how he hugs his father but not his mother. I am struck by the undercurrent riding this entire racial draft which on one hand suggests that we can all

finally move on once people stop fussing over whether they are multiple races or “Cablinasian” because *clearly* that does not make sense. On the other hand, the skit also seems to suggest that the saviour of fixing the *crisis* of multiracial identity are monoracial communities who apparently just want to help out and relieve multiracial people of their worries of having no apparent racial identity. The concept of a “draft” also signifies power and capacity over a player, a soldier, and in this case, one’s identity.

Simultaneous Identities

Due to the complexities that the terminology “multiracial” evokes, it is critical that I acknowledge my works reference to it, my relationship to it, and how I envision challenging it in the long run. Linguistically speaking, using the term poses a challenge because the word “race” appears in the term itself, which appears to reify race as a “fixed” entity, not a fluid one that social construction proposes. Saying someone is “multiracial” walks the dangerous tightrope of language, but at the same time, as I will illustrate in Chapter 3, there currently does not exist a popular alternative of which most people would be able to recognize the topic of discussion. Furthermore, it is not readily adopted by all people who may or may not fall under the description I created for the purposes of this dissertation. It begs the question whether or not a group ceases to exist if there is no recognizable term from which to identify or classify it. For example, some people like myself, consider themselves a combination of different racial, ethnic, and cultural heritages that cannot be reflected from the term. By saying that I am African American and Korean, the first term (“African-American”) represents a racial category, and the second (“Korean”) represents an ethnic category, whereby the latter would fall under the “Asian” racial category. Therefore people of multiracial heritage cannot go

around speaking in these complexities on the everyday level, and hence, are relegated to “simplifying” into a terminology to fit into a monoracial speaking society.

For the reasons I expressed earlier, I currently use the terminology as a *concept* used as a means through which to begin a dialogue about a population that deserves critical attention in racial scholarship. Recognizing how a term is problematic and how it is defined, I believe is different from merely accepting a term unchallenged. One way that I intend to reconcile using “multiracial” at this time is to propose we begin to think critically about alternative language for future research on the multiracial population. In 2003, I came up with the term, “simultaneous identities”, as a way to recognize the saliency of multiple identities that are experienced at exactly the same time. Again, this includes race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, sexual orientation, and so forth. Earlier I argued that while all people possess these intersecting identities, the “simultaneous” is purposefully there to represent identities where multiple racial and ethnic categories are always operating, even while some identities may be more latent than others. I also envisioned the term as a way to avoid the reification of the term “race” in describing the diversity that multiracial identities represent. This concept is representative of the participant experiences that I share in Chapter 3, and I apply this concept throughout the chapter by not redefining their experiences in this limited terminology, and instead, I leave their self-selected terms in the manner in which they are given. Simultaneous identities is therefore defined as an alternative language to represent people who experience their multiple racial and ethnic identities along with other intersecting variables they represent, at the same time.

1.8 | CHAPTER BREAKDOWNS

In this chapter, I provide the foundation that guides the research in this dissertation by describing the main arguments, concepts, theories, and questions. I argue that we must reexamine the ways in which previous and existing theories, namely ideologies on racial biology and social construction, have and continue to limit societal awareness of the issues impacting the multiracial population from the individual to the group levels. This in turn, has caused social scientists, theorists, policymakers, and the larger public to be unable to integrate a more sophisticated and holistic discussion beyond surface level understandings. These limited understandings are symptomatic of applying a one-race formula of understanding how race operates in the twenty-first century, and is part of a larger phenomenon I describe as the Politics of Being Multiracial versus the more general multiracial politics. Finally, I sought to expand the trajectory of racial theories in the social sciences by setting the parameters to engage in the current discourse and to articulate a new language that is more applicable to multiracial identities.

In Chapter 2, “The Multi-Whos?: Unpacking the Political Discourse on Defining the Multiracial Population in the United States,” I use archival research blended with the trajectory of racial theories in the U.S. to highlights the relationship between racial ideologies, state level practices, social and political phenomenon, and the shifts in attempting to define multiracial people in 150 years of U.S. census schedules from 1850 to 2000. This chapter reveals how blood and biology demarcations on the censuses were impacted by the leading social science research to define who is multiracial (with other various terms and classifications), and how this leads to present day limitations on how the population continues to be defined in ways that inhibits society’s understanding on

who makes up this population today. I also show how the political complexities regarding race and ethnicity for multiracial people has been confronted, translated, and sometimes overlooked, in racial formation theories and social science research in seemingly inconsistent ways.

In Chapter 3, “Simultaneous Identities: Comparative Interviews Among a Diverse Combination of Multiracial Experiences,” I present ethnographic research to include actual experiences from members of the multiracial community to show how members of the population define themselves in their own voices in relation to state imposed definitions and classifications. I present qualitative research consisting of comparative, sit-down interviews conducted among multiracial people with diverse racial/ethnic combinations. This chapter also discusses how multiracial people have subconsciously adopted the blood-as-race slippage in their own dictions and self-definitions, implying that this ideology is both imposed and (un)consciously accepted. Their experiences together show the complexity to which defining who makes up the multiracial population is a fluid process that has the ability to shift in meaning between public and private arenas for reasons that are both personal and political. I delineate the varying definitions and interchangeable terms that come to stand in for “multiracial” across disciplines, with specific focus on the contradictions surrounding this contested and shifting category.

Chapters 4 and 5 investigates, under what conditions is it possible to politically mobilize around this shifting and contested category and are multiracial people as a population a coherent political group? Chapter 4, “From Manasseh to the Association of MultiEthnic Americans: Grassroots Community Development, Civic Engagement, and Political Mobilization” is a case study on the non-profit organization, AMEA, and it’s 20

year long history serving as a national umbrella organization for multiracial, multiethnic, and transracially adopted communities in the United States. In this chapter, I argue that a closer examination of the development and existence of this particular organization is vital toward exposing the conditions under which it may or may not be possible to politically mobilize around shifting and contested categories of difference. It is the preeminent group in the United States that has stood at the forefront of (re)defining the emerging multiracial population, and continues to remain so on the various positions it has and continues to occupy regarding local, state, and federal initiatives. By examining the changes in organizational structure, founding principals, and goals of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans since its inception, this chapter illustrates how these inner-directional shifts played a crucial role in helping to politically mobilize multiracial families on local, state, and federal initiatives.

In Chapter 5, “Keys to Effective Mobilization” provides five years of field research on several of the key leading events, which required mobilization among the multiracial population nationwide in order to be effective in public policy. A set of unique conditions emerged out of this body of research to explain why, how, and when multiracial organizations formed in the United States, and for what reasons or circumstances historically and contemporarily did they emerge. In-depth, behind-the-scenes fieldwork is shared from a perspective that is only privy to this project. I cover the political efforts of grassroots mobilization and community-based organizations and individuals on transforming public policy to address issues impacting the “two or more races” population, interracial families, and transracial adoptees—the three major subgroups that make up this community. I argue that both institutional support and

external threats have served as the catalyst for AMEA's success in politically mobilizing the multiracial population between 1997 and 2004.

Finally, in the Conclusion/Chapter 6, "Multiracial Politics: Critiques, Challenges, and Strategies", I discuss the critiques and the challenges raised in the previous chapters in order to provide best practices and strategies to overcome lingering race as biology constructs in society as we embark on the decennial 2010 census and beyond. I urge social scientists and practitioners to move toward a nuanced, theoretical approach to understanding the experience and presence of multiracial people and interracial families in the United States; toward a more culturally competent society; and toward a more holistic and global perspective on the possibility of multiracial formation in the 21st century.

1.9 | CONCLUSION

The U.S. Census 2000 was the first census to historically provide an option to individuals to self-identify with "two or more" racial and ethnic categories to reflect the changing landscape of America's diverse population. As a result, approximately 6.8 million people chose this option, revealing that there was a sizeable enough population to render this change.⁵⁷ With more than 100,000 Multiracial babies, representing a wide variety of ethnic mixes being born annually (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996), and with the number of interracial marriages estimated a little over a decade ago at 54,937,000 couples, it is essential for society to foster the positive development of multiracial individuals by respecting and appreciating their distinctness, just as it is for any other group in society.⁵⁸

Research collected from this project could contribute to policymaking in the fields of education, healthcare, racial identification and enumeration, civil rights, public service, and social welfare by: 1) addressing issues and concerns faced by the multiracial community still unmet in public policy; 2) determining what implementation issues make it difficult to fully incorporate this population in the policymaking process and providing remedies; 3) suggesting strategies to address the concerns from both parties (multiracial community and policymakers) to improve social services for this and other diverse populations; 4) creating a database of research and archives to be made available to policymakers, such as a list of partnerships and resources accessible within the multiracial community; 5) and, utilizing Los Angeles as a pilot for other cities to emulate or improve policy efforts elsewhere that target multiracial individuals and families.

To date, no scholar has been able to write from the perspective and position I share as both an insider and outsider to what has been considered the “Multiracial Movement.” As the fifth president since AMEA’s existence, as a social scientist interested in critically examining the inner-workings of organizations and structures, and as a citizen that self-identifies as a first generation African American and Korean woman, I possess a particular vantage point that could make a considerable contribution in this arena. While a number of scholars have mentioned AMEA from the perspective of an outside observer (Farley 2001; Williams 2006; Andrews et. al. 2007), these scholars often miss the untapped resources unavailable to them, leaving little room to uncover the nuances those details can tell us about multiracial organizing in the U.S. The multiple perspectives presented in this dissertation contributes to a more holistic understanding of the complexities confronted by this population post-2000.

In conclusion, I want to make a few things especially clear and I think it is best I begin with what this project *is not* followed by what it actually *is*. This project is not concerned with determining what community is “more accepting” or “least accepting” of a multiracial identity, and nor is it concerned with arbitrary finger pointing at any one community that inhibits or prohibits the formation of these identities because this would take away from the focus of my analysis. I am however concerned with how communities behave positively and negatively toward and with one another when the topic of multiracial identity surfaces in a way that has not been offered in research presently, and how this impacts race relations and the larger body of social science research in interesting and insightful ways on a much broader level.

My project is not an idealistic attempt toward building a “we are the world” utopian mindset either, where if only people recognized the target population as a separate category of difference they would have a better sense of self or the world around them. That is, I *am* less concerned with simply regurgitating the arguments that many multiracial scholars have already discussed with regard to the benefits a so-called multiracial or mixed race identity affords. In other words, by just simply stating that multiracial people need to be included in the discourse on race simply because it would make for healthier individual identities is not enough to explain the how, the why, and the urgency of attending to this population of study, which *Simultaneous Identities* is attempting to accomplish. I am seeking to move the discourse on multiracial formation beyond insular, monoracial population discussions to one that is much more didactic for society at large to understand.

The crux of my project centers around the belief that one of the primary ways to deal with the complication that race and other social categories creates is by making the complexities much more obvious, not simplified, so that no longer are people's existence minimized. By this I mean to suggest, the current empirical and theoretical limitations that exist do not offer those who do not on the every day identify with two or more racial or ethnic categories that "clear" picture that Omi and Winant mention. It is my hope to move us beyond that under-the-belt argument that begs the question, "But, aren't we all multiracial," as if to suggest that since we are *all* multiracial, having a discussion that centers it somehow becomes insignificant. While yes, I believe this to be true that we are all so-called multiracials given the national and international work that already exists, but making this statement does not address the fact that we are all still impacted differently based on where one finds oneself in the multiracial complexity web detailed in Chapter 2.

Furthermore, this dissertation is not a personal quest to make people conform into accepting, or even acknowledging the term "multiracial identity." Nor am I arguing for a "multiracial" category to undermine the much-needed work to tend to "monoracial" communities and the historical disparities that research still grapples with today. I am only using the terminology at this time to engage in the discourse, with the hope of problematizing the usage of it in the long run. On the other hand, my project is what I consider a personal "humbling project;" that is I am not divorced from my own social and political interrogation of multiracial identity as someone who simultaneously embodies Black and Asian heritage, and the histories those communities embody. I do however believe that the personal still remains a political vehicle through which we can begin to

recognize and interrogate social inequality for populations on the margin of focus and attention in the academy.

Therefore, the process by which we try to understand multiracial identity incorporates much of the same concerns in forming a collective racial and/or ethnic identity, but with its own set of unique circumstances, concerns, and meanings. Between all the available statistics, the growing multiracial movement and leadership, and the increasing population at an estimated 6.8 million potential votes in the entire U.S. only five years ago, predicting their socio-political behavior now is vital in understanding the changing face of race and (identity) politics tomorrow.⁵⁹ Given the monumental changes of the 2000 census, which was again the first in U.S. history to allow persons to self-identify with “two or more races,” this data unbeknownst to many social scientists that use it today, would not have been available for their use without the push of numerous multiracial advocacy groups and leaders across the nation fighting to be recognized for their own distinct differences.

This dissertation, however, is not a project that is attempting to focus on the literature and discipline of biology where race is evoked. It is however, a project that focuses on identifying moments where race as a social construction and outdated biological explanations of race contradict in the twenty-first century, using multiracial identity as the point of departure. In other words, if “blood” as a signifier of races continues to be used both in public and private dialogue and broader social science discourse to signify multiracial bodies, as far as the opening examples illustrate, race-as-biology dogma will continue to limit equal access to culturally competent healthcare, coverage in basic concerns in public policy, and educational accountability where race is

still a measure by which resources are allocated. I hope to contribute a nuanced language we can incorporate for future research, public policy, and theory construction on the basis of race and ethnicity, and other structures of identity on a broader scale.

In essence, I envision my dissertation as intersecting policy projects; a theoretical intervention into social scientific scholarship, particularly race and ethnic studies, where currently there is no racial rubric into which the aims of this project can be situated at this time. It is an attempt to add, while at the same time, challenge previous theories on racial formation as we know them today by adding populations of study for which those theories cannot and do not adequately apply equitably. My study is situated within a larger discourse that explores the challenges and possibilities policymakers must confront to adequately provide public services to meet the growing demands of diverse and emerging populations, not just among multiracials. If we are to really study race and ethnic identity, by openly and honestly addressing the complexities that come with the topic, I attempt to bring everyone to the table. If not, we run the risk of maintaining a hegemonoracial order that is forever unquestioned, exclusionary, and wholly non-applicable to each and every person who is affected by the maintenance of the colorline in the 21st century.

Chapter 1 Endnotes

¹ W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," *The American Negro Academy Occasional Papers*, No. 2 (Washington, D.C.: American Negro Academy, 1897). p. 7.

² Blood, Michael R. Associated Press. September 8, 2006. Assemblyman Mervyn Dymally, a Democrat who chairs the state Legislative Black Caucus, called the remarks "usual political banter". We do this all the time. In this case, it just happened to be taped." State Assemblywoman Bonnie Garcia stated that she was "unoffended" and later accompanied Arnold Schwarzenegger during his press conference where he publicly apologized for his statements. For more information on Black, Latino, and Afro-Latino history, see: Oboler, Suzanne. *Neither Enemies Nor Friends: Blacks, Latinos, Afro-Latinos/as*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

³ See, Chief Smith's article on *Native Times*, March 9, 2007. Of the Cherokees that came out to vote, which was reportedly the most in Cherokee history, 77% voted to exclude "non-Indian" members from the Cherokee Nation, despite having a "drop of Cherokee blood." A case was brought against the Cherokee Nation as a result of this ruling through the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia on December 19, 2006. *Marilyn Vann, et. al. v Dirk Kempthorne*.

⁴ When Luke Do was 18 months old, he was diagnosed with Leukemia and Lymphoma, and his story was circulated to national advocacy organizations, such as the Association of MultiEthnic Americans to broaden the message about the disease and becoming a bone marrow match.

⁵ Ibid. Associated Press. "Bone Marrow Matches Hard for Multiracial." January 30, 2005.

⁶ Ibid. The article states, "Today, whites in need of a bone marrow transplant have about a 90 percent chance of finding a match, said Dr. Patrick Beatty, an oncologist with the Montana Cancer Specialists in Missoula, Mont., who researches ancestry and bone marrow. For those who aren't white, "your chances of getting a match are pretty remote," he said."

⁷ Private and public discourses is being distinguished here to represent serious dialogue and conversation in which the language is used to talk about race both 'behind closed doors' or private settings and in more public forums, such as in academia, the media, in the law, and other such institutions.

⁸ The concepts "race" and "ethnicity" are understood in my work as two different but constitutive concepts that are not mutually exclusive. "Race" will denote the racial groups designated by the census, under which "ethnicities" fall. For example, "Black and African American" is a racial group designated in social science research, under which "Jamaican" would represent an ethnicity in this group.

⁹ I use these two distinctions to borrow from Howard Winant and Michael Omi's assertion that race is relational as something that is experienced both as individuals and as collective groups.

¹⁰ For example, depending on the historical timeframe an individual is raised, they may reject any form of multiracial identity, despite if their traceable parentage can be identified as such. However, my definition still incorporates them under the population of "multiracial" because they are recognizably a subset of many individuals who grew up during a time in which this identity was most opposed. Also, parents of multiracial children are often confronted with identifying the racial and ethnic backgrounds of their offspring, and the degree to which they identify their child as 'multiracial' is predicated on a number of factors discussed in Chapter 3 and subsequent chapters.

¹¹ By ‘traditional monoracial communities’, I mean to imply that there exists a core set of designated single race communities that have remained more constant, as reflected by the U.S. Census, where multiracial would be deemed “untraditional”. According to the 2000 Census, these groups included, “White”, “Black or African American”, “Asian”, “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander”, “American Indian”, and a preceding option on “Hispanic origin.”

¹² For this dissertation, I elect not to elaborate on all of the different terms that are used to denote a multiracial existence because not only does it fall outside of my focus on the multiracial population as a whole, but the combinations are endless. Focusing on any one combination or terms, such as “hapa” and “mestiza/o”, does little to deconstruct the larger attention on the multiracial population as a whole. I place these terms in the body parenthetically as they represent subgroups that culturally describe themselves with such terms.

¹³ Daniel 2002, p. 114

¹⁴ The term “veils” is purposely inserted as the beginning of my definition to borrow from a term W.E.B. DuBois’ used in his conception of *double consciousness*. Here I understand it as an ideology through which people consciously and unconsciously negotiate their racial identities in relation to self-agency and resistance to outside-imposition.

¹⁵ Snipp, C. Matthew. 2002. “American Indians: Clues to the Future of Other Racial Groups”. Pp. 203, in *The New Race Question: How the Census Counts Multiracial Individuals* edited by Joel Perlmann and Mary C. Waters (2002).

¹⁶ By this statement I mean that on one hand I am aware of the existing scholarship on multiracial identity to date. However, I would argue that this scholarship is often considered ‘outside’ of traditional race scholarship by virtue of not having as long of a history of academic research focusing on this population as a whole.

¹⁷ Rockquemore, Kerry Ann, David Brunzma, and Daniel Delgado. 2009. “Racing to Theorize or Rethorizing Race?: Understanding the Struggle to Build A Multiracial Identity Theory”. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65(1): 23.

¹⁸ Corbin, J. and A Strauss. 1990. Grounded Theory Tesearch: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*. 13, 3-21.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 7.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 23.

²¹ Naples, Nancy. 1996. *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis, and Activist Research*. New York, NY: Routledge. p. 103.

²² Ibid. p. 102

²³ Merriam, Sharan B., Juanita Johnson-Bailey, Ming-Yeh Lee, Youngwha Kee, Gabo Ntseane, and Mazanah Muhamad. 2001. “Power and Positionality: Negotiating Insider/Outsider Status Within and Across Cultures”. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20: 5, 405 — 416.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 414

²⁵ The only other scholar that has come close to this insider-outsider perspective is Reginald Daniel, sociologist at University of California, Santa Barbara who was secretary of AMEA when it was founded. However, his work focuses on the racial formation of what he refers to as “multiracial subjectivity” nationally and internationally, with less focus on multiracial organizations aside from brief overviews.

²⁶ After publishing *Mark One or More*, Kim Williams (2006), now a Harvard professor, received much criticism by the community she gathered the data from, the most notable was from Ramona Douglass, original co-founder of AMEA, to whom she indebted the research to. The book was beautifully illustrated with tables, graphs, and charts, but Williams misrepresents AMEA by including affiliate organizations that had never joined the organization.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 616.

²⁸ Snipp 2002, p. 193

²⁹ Ibid. pp. 204-5

³⁰ See Margo Anderson. 2002. “Counting by Race: The Antebellum Legacy”. p. 283, in Perlmann, Joel and Waters, Mary. 2002. *The New Race Question: How the Census Counts Multiracial Individuals*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. On her discussion of the “free” black population, she states: “The free black community also provided visible evidence of the “amalgamation” of previous generations of white and black Americans, in that the “colors” of free blacks ranged widely.” Williamson, Joel. 1980. *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States*. New York, NY: Free Press; Berlin, Ira. 1974. *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

³¹ See also, Sollors 1999, pp. 61-63, 127-28

³² Lieberman and Waters 1988, p. 252

³³ Snipp 2002, p. 190

³⁴ It was not until the likes of such prominent Supreme Court cases such as, *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) and *Lovings v State of Virginia* (1967), do we see a shift in cases overturning based on the argument of racial equality rather than a belief in upholding racial biology. In “The Concept of “Race” in Natural and Social Science (Critical Race Theory: Essays on the Social Construction and Reproduction of “Race”) by E. Nathaniel Gates (1997), a compilation of articles are included that discuss the arbitrary methods employed to classify human which were based on invalid scientific methods; the ways in which racial categories are used to promote hierarchy between groups in society; and surveys how race was implied in the law to deny power to racial minorities.

³⁵ In Neil Gotanda’s 1991 essay, “A Critique of ‘Our Constitution is Color-Blind’”, he argues that the American legal system maintains racial inequality by hiding the history of racial oppression in “color-blind” language in the U.S. Constitution. As he clearly states, “A color-blind interpretation of the Constitution legitimates and thereby maintains the social, economic, and political advantages that whites hold over other Americans” (257).

³⁶ Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. “The Essential Social Fact of Race”. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 64, No. 6, December 1999. p. 899

³⁷ Spencer 2002, p. 85

³⁸ The following information was taken from the School of Policy, Planning and Development website at the University of Southern California: <http://www.usc.edu/schools/sppd/research/census2000/>

³⁹ Derived from Digest, online journal article “The Identity Development of Multiracial Youth” by Wendy Schwartz. Number 137, November 1998.

⁴⁰ Tafoya, Sonya M. “Check One or More...: Mixed Race and Ethnicity in California”. Public Policy Institute of California: California Counts Population Trends And Profiles. Vol. 1. No. 2. January 2000.

⁴¹ Hajnal, Zoltan and Mark Baldassare. 2001. *Finding Common Ground: Racial and Ethnic Attitudes in California*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California Press.

⁴² For further discussion of this legal case, see Chapter 4 “Racial Formation”.

⁴³ Omi and Winant define *rearticulation* as “the process of redefinition of political interests and identities, through a process of recombination of familiar ideas and values in hitherto unrecognized ways.” For further discussion of this concept, refer to Chapters 5 and 6 in *Racial Formation in the United States*.

⁴⁴ Espiritu 1992, p. 3

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 2

⁴⁶ Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge. p. 222.

⁴⁷ The concepts “race” and “ethnicity” are understood in my work as two different but constitutive concepts that are not mutually exclusive. “Race” will denote the racial groups designated by the census, under which “ethnicities” fall. For example, “Black and African American” is a racial group designated in social science research, under which “Jamaican” would represent an ethnicity in this group.

⁴⁸ The research in Chapter 2 will provide the rationale for this description, concluding that one can be defined as multiracial *external* to their own self-identification due to factors such as phenotype, movement across spaces and places, and the cultural competency of the external force that is imposing an identity on them. For example, depending on the historical timeframe an individual is raised, they may reject any form of multiracial identity, despite if their traceable parentage can be identified as such. However, my definition still incorporates them under the population of “multiracial” because they are recognizably a subset of many individuals who grew up during a time in which this identity was most opposed. Also, parents of multiracial children are often confronted with identifying the racial and ethnic backgrounds of their offspring, and the degree to which they identify their child as ‘multiracial’ is predicated on a number of factors discussed in subsequent chapters.

⁴⁹ According to the 2000 Census, these groups included, “White”, “Black or African American”, “Asian”, “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander”, “American Indian”, and a preceding option on “Hispanic origin.”

⁵⁰ I use “White ethnics” here to incorporate Schwarzenegger’s ethnic relation to American “whiteness” as understood in Mary Waters Symbolic Ethnicity, whereby European immigrants adopt the privileges of whiteness in America through their symbolic interactionism to the benefits whiteness affords in the US. racial context.

⁵¹ The term “pan-ethnic” here is borrowed from Yen Le Espiritu’s *Panethnicity*, which explained how social, political, and economic phenomena enabled previously disparate “Asian” groups to form together on a national scale in order to garner support and political power in the United States over time.

⁵² Spencer 2006, p. 86

⁵³ See also a discussion on a growing multiracial population from the West African coast bound for the Americas (Berline 1998: 145).

⁵⁴ Connell, R.W. "A Very Straight Gay: Masculinity, Homosexual Experience, and the Dynamics of Gender." *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 57, December 1992. P 735-751. "I argue that we must focus on the social dynamics generated *within* gender relations. The gender order itself is the site of relations of dominance and subordination, struggles for hegemony, and practices of resistance" (735).

⁵⁵ The term "veils" is purposely inserted as the beginning of my definition to borrow from a term W.E.B. DuBois' used in his conception of *double consciousness*. Here I understand it as an ideology through which people consciously and unconsciously negotiate their racial identities in relation to self-agency and resistance to outside-imposition.

⁵⁶ The original segment aired on January 21, 2004 on Comedy Central.

⁵⁷ For more information, see Hacegaba, Noel and Meyers, Dowell. "Multiracial Patterns in the United States By State." Public Research Brief No. 2001-02: April 13, 2001.

⁵⁸ The following statistics were derived from: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Series, "Household and Family Characteristics: March 1994," and earlier reports. It is noteworthy to mention that this alarming figure on interracial relationships only included "married" couples and consisted of those unions where there was a spouse of at least one White or Black partner. In this case, the number of those in interracial relationships or cohabitating arrangements, in addition to the inclusion of other interracial relationships outside of Black and White binary, would no doubt increase the significance of this population exponentially.

⁵⁹ Nicholas Jones and Amy Smith. "The Two or More Races Population: 2000." Census 2000 Brief. Baltimore, MD: U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration (November 2001).

Chapter 2

THE MULTI-WHOS?: UNPACKING THE HISTORICAL DISCOURSE ON DEFINING THE MULTIRACIAL POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES CENSUS AND IN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH, 1850 TO 2000

“Over the years politics have continued to play a vital role in influencing the number of racial categories and the definitions that might influence how people identify themselves.”

~ Claudette E. Bennett¹, 2000 ~

“A major deficiency in multiracial scholarship has been the lack of historical context, together with the concomitant error of viewing mixed-race identity as an exclusively recent phenomenon.”

~ Ranier Spencer, 1999 ~

2.1 | INTRODUCTION

On April 9, 1850, the U.S. Senate came together to discuss a new set of census questions that would finally help count the “number of children ever born” and the “degree of removal from pure white and black races”.² Specifically these questions were suggested as a way to enumerate the growing progeny of interracial unions that several prominent Northern and Southern politicians of the day wished to ascertain.³ Controversial debates ensued between the senators, chief among them Senator William Seward of New York who was in favor of the questions, and Senator William Dayton of New Jersey who was not in favor of enumerating children of interracial background.⁴ Dayton’s reasons to oppose these changes to the enumeration schedule had much to do with the growing attitudes society held then about the validity of scientific racism, as well as, his own “impeccable proslavery credentials” he had been known to exhibit.⁵ In the *Congressional Globe* of 1850, he alluded to having knowledge that “the power of endurance of plantation labor diminishes in proportion to the admixture of white blood;

that the mulatto has, in a word, neither the better properties of the white man nor the negro”, and hence, there should be no need to count this subgroup of the population.⁶ At which time another senator, Arthur Butler of South Carolina disagreed, on the notion that “white blood” increased intelligence, claiming that “the mulatto exceeds the black both in intelligence and pride”.⁷

These questions, as Margo Anderson (2002) explains, were suggested by Senator Josiah Nott of Alabama, and they were

...designed to provide data on a raging scientific controversy, which also had major political implications for the sectional conflict over slavery. Nott and Louis Agassiz denied the unity of the human race and proposed that blacks and whites were literally not of the same species; hence, in their view, the offspring of interracial unions were inferior biologically to the “pure” black or white parents. The political implications of the theory were dramatic. First, if true, the theory implied that whites and black could never successfully intermarry or “amalgamate.” Second, the theory implied that the existing mixed-race population in the United States, particularly the mulatto communities of cities like Charleston and New Orleans, did not represent the upwardly mobile but should be seen instead as biologically inferior to both white and black.⁸

The debates continued back and forth, and eventually the Senate closed the discussion and voted to delete the question on “degree of removal from pure blood”. The category “mulatto” was then added to the 1850 census, alongside the only two other categories “black” and “white”. This debate took place on April 9, 1850, and in less than a month, it became an official U.S. Census bill on June 1, 1850.

Discussed herein, these debates that took place have proven to have had long term consequences (i.e., miscegenation laws, civil rights concerns, etc.), which continue to linger in contemporary times with regard to the ongoing racial politics surrounding multiracial identity and the movement for recognition. Anderson’s assessment is evident of the historical interconnectedness I argue in my research, exists between racial theories

and ideologies, public policy, and social and political phenomena that directly impacted the very beginning to which multiracial people have been rigidly defined.

In fact, this historical debate has hardly ended, witnessed by the controversial hearings held in the late 1990s leading up to Census 2000. Federal officials, civil rights activists, social scientists, and multiracial advocates were among the groups most equally at odds in the push for multiracial identity recognition at the federal level (Perlmann and Waters 2002; Williams 2006). Much like the debates leading up to the Census of 1850, the 2000 outlook to enumerate multiracial people was being highly debated at hearings in the House of Representatives and at the U.S. Census Bureau across the country. In July of 1997, the *Washington Post* reported “Clinton administration officials assured members of Congress yesterday that the proposal to allow Americans to check off more than one racial category when identifying themselves for the next census and other federal forms would not “double count” people and artificially inflate the numbers of minorities. The officials also said the proposed method would not jeopardize civil rights enforcement, because those protections would be extended to Americans who consider themselves only partly black, Hispanic or some other minority.”⁹ Clinton’s officials needed to assure both the public and social scientists of these safeguards because hearings were currently being conducted about the first anticipated census to allow multiracial people to self-identify with multiple racial and ethnic categories. It seems the topic of multiracial identity *was*, and I argue, *is* still situated at the locus of contested racial politics, census activities, and deeply imbedded ideologies about race that impact how multiracial people and others have and continue to be defined today.

2.2 | MAIN ARGUMENTS

In this chapter, I examine the historical discourse on defining the multiracial population to address the primary research questions in this dissertation. To begin, I explore the first research question, *how do we define the multiracial population in the United States and what do these definitions offer about racial and ethnic ideologies and the future for public policy post-2000?* I use the U.S. Census as a critical site through which to explore the constitutive nature existing racial theory and policy has in informing the ways that multiracial identity and the population at large has been constructed and defined. I accomplish this by first tracing 150 years of U.S. census schedules between 1850 and 2000. I discuss the existing racial theories dominant in each of the decades, as well as, social and political phenomenon I believe impacted the shifting categories over this timeframe. This helps to frame Chapter 2, where I examine the current discourse (post-2000) on defining the multiracial population and the contemporary challenges to do so. The basis behind identifying the dominant theories alongside each of the census schedules is predicated on Omi and Winant's (1994) argument where they claim:

Racial theory is shaped by actually existing race relations in any given historical period. Within any given historical period, a particular racial theory is dominant—despite often high levels of contestation. The dominant racial theory provides society with “common sense” about race, and with categories for the identification of individuals and groups in racial terms.¹⁰

By tracing the dominant sociological race theories that existed in each decade following Census 1850—the very first appearance of a multiracial designation—I try to demonstrate how the “common sense” understanding about race helps to construct the various definitions applied to multiracial identified persons in particular.

The 150 years of U.S. census schedules between 1850 and 2000 is a critical site through which to understand how individuals representing a “multiracial” identity have been classified, defined, and enumerated by the state. This overview serves as a backdrop to understand how race is socially constructed through the terminology shifts and changes in meaning over time to count populations designated with multiple race identities. The precise historical lineage on how this population has been defined as a whole has yet to be taken up in the precise manner in which I have developed for my analysis. Ranier Spencer (1999) makes the case for research providing historical context in *Race and Multiracial Identity Politics in the United States*:

... too frequently, people criticize federal racial classification in the United States without an adequate understanding of its history or its implications for monitoring bigotry and discrimination. In other words, a full understanding of what the multiracial category debate truly entails requires the integration of various kinds of knowledge in a more complex way than commentators usually provide, for it is precisely that point where personal identity, racial loyalty, group entitlements and concerns, and federal racial categorization appear to meet—the tiny space of a check-box on a form—that has been the flash point of heated debate and political lobbying about race and identity, extending far beyond the form itself.¹¹

My analysis tries to grapple with the deeper complexities of multiracial identity suggested by Spencer here, by reviewing how the discourse has unfolded over time.

Prior to and leading up to Census 2000, scholars were more likely to only recognize and/or limit their focus on monoracial populations (Smith and Welch 1989; Williams and Jackson 2000). An increasing number of scholars began to produce research with attention to multiracial identity in the immediate years post-Census 2000, however, these studies were consumed with apprehension and assumptions about the outlook these classifications might yield on society in the coming decade (Amaro and Zambrana 2000; Hirschman, Alba, and Farley 2000; Allen and Turner 2001; Glazer

2002). Moreover, the focus of much of this research often rests primarily on multiracial identity within the white and black binary, with little regard to the host of other combinations of multiracial identity that also existed on the census at the exact same time. For example, the predominant multiracial designations mentioned in scholarship about race are the “mulatto” and subsequent “one-drop” and “hypodescent” rulings, representing those individuals with Black and White heritage (Daniel 2001; Winters 2006; Williams 2006). While I agree that it is incredibly important to study the dynamics between these two particular communities that have a distinctive racial history, a limited focus on only these combinations does little to disrupt the rigidity of this racial binary in contemporary society (Espiritu 1992; Omi and Winant 1994, 2002; Kim 1999, 2000), and it further reifies the false ideology that race is a fixed reality.

Next, I attempt to address the second research question, *What critical insights can centering the experiences of multiracial Americans and the efforts to define them on the local, state, and/or national levels, publicly and privately, offer for other groups in American society?* As I illustrate in the introduction above, the difference between the debates that ensued in 1850 and those leading to the 2000 census, is that in the censuses from 1850 to 1990, multiracial people were classified by externally imposed definitions of identity, versus in Census 2000 which offered an option for self-identification. While one could argue that multiracial people still had to choose amongst a combination of already prescribed racial categories, in comparison to each of the earlier decades, they were not strictly relegated to “one drop rulings” prescribed by law. C. Matthew Snipp (2002) remarks that “mutual self-awareness is one of the hallmarks of ethnic group boundaries. Hence, self-identification is an essential element for demarcating ethnic

boundaries” (199).¹² What makes this significant is that it alludes to the power of self-identification as a means through which to challenge current racial paradigms.

The defining difference between pre- and post-Census 2000 offers insights into future emerging groups who may opt for self-identification as a means to challenge racial policies in the United States.¹³ Omi and Winant (1994) argue, “Challenges to the dominant racial theory emerge when it fails adequately to explain the changing nature of race relations, or when the racial policies it prescribes are challenged by political movements seeking a different arrangement”.¹⁴ Centering multiracial identity ushers in this challenge to theorize race and racial meanings for what they might mean to groups that are often relegated at the margins. Due to the complexities I share that this population poses on each of the census schedules leading up to 2000, the existing racial paradigm is disrupted simply because the collection of “two or more” falls outside of rigid monoracial constructs embedded in our institutions, especially where race and ethnic data are collected. This discussion ushers in a new moment for us to critique and challenge existing racial theory where it does not easily apply to emerging groups such as the multiracial population.

Additionally, few studies have critically *centered* multiracial identity and the population at large as the basis of their research, which is one of the major aims of this dissertation. Among the few works that do purposefully center the multiracial population and its’ relationship to the census, the majority of these scholars are limited to reporting findings from a strictly external observation of the innerworkings of Census Bureau activities and the data products it produces. In 2002, a 19-chapter anthology focused specifically on multiracial identity in the census was written by 25 prominent academic

and other social science contributors across the country entitled, *The New Race Question: How the Census Counts Multiracial Individuals* (Perlmann and Waters 2002). Of which, only 3 contributors had an “insider” perspective as an employee or representative of the U.S. Census Bureau or related U.S. Bureau of Statistics. This included Roderick Harrison, an associate professor of sociology at Howard University who served as chief of racial statistics at the Census Bureau from 1990 to 1997; Steve Miller, a statistician in the Office of Survey Methods Research at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; and Clyde Tucker, a senior survey methodologist in the Office of Survey Methods Research at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

I contend that a closer examination on how this population has been enumerated and defined over decades of censuses may be one step closer in understanding who is included within a multiracial population (irrespective of preferences of self-identification) and how we might better serve the needs of this group. The systemic processes that were implemented by the Bureau of the Census to classify multiracial people were not mutually exclusive, neither from the leading social scholarship theorizing about race and ethnicity in any given decade, nor the socio-political events that are happening simultaneously. I illustrate this triangulation through a discussion of the classification shifts and arbitrary definitions to identify multiracial people that developed in tandem with the racial theories and racial events with regard to the multiracial experience that was prevalent in decade groupings, from 1850 to 1920, 1930 to 1970, and 1980 to 2000. I point to various classifications and units of analysis that have appeared, disappeared, and/or reappeared during this 150-year timeframe to highlight the ways in which this population was prevented from building a unified and coherent identity.

This occurs much like other populations in U.S. history, except for the fact that hegemonoracial ideologies are imbued so heavily in our institutions, in our literatures, and in our everyday discourses about race that it continues to minimize new ways of talking about what I believe is the inevitable direction of a majority racial identity in this country. As discussed herein, the discussions that took place back then has proven to have had long term consequences (i.e., miscegenation laws, civil rights concerns, etc.), which continue to linger in contemporary times with regard to the ongoing racial politics surrounding multiracial identity and the movement for recognition. The topic of multiracial identity was, and I argue, is still situated at the locus of contested racial politics, census activities, and deeply imbedded ideologies about race that impact how multiracial people have and continue to be defined today.

2.3 | METHODS

My research contributes a perspective that has yet to be offered in academic scholarship to date about the relationship multiracial identity, racial politics, and social and political movements has had with the work and activities produced by the U.S. Census Bureau. As I explained in Chapter 1, I provide multiple vantage points together which offer critical insights from a unique and privileged position that has not been occupied in combination before in U.S. history. This includes my appointment as a national member on the Decennial Census Advisory Committee since 2006; my affiliation as a national leader in the multiracial movement through the Association of MultiEthnic Americans and other key leadership positions; my role as a multidisciplinary social scientist and data user in American and ethnic studies, sociology, and political

science; and my personal insight as a multiracial identified African American and Korean woman.

The methods of data collection employed in this chapter primarily include to “insider-outsider” approach to research, which enabled me to gather as much information as possible about how census categories and census schedules are created from outside, and within. This includes archival research and content analysis of well-documented primary and secondary sources, many of which were suggested and/or provided to me by key Census staff that I relied on to help with fact checking. In order to build the historical trajectory tables in this chapter, I extrapolated information from the U.S. Bureau of the Census statistical data files, and primary and secondary sources detailing the enumeration process by the Census Bureau between 1850 and 2000.

Much of this information and other leads to explore my research were provided by my fieldwork and participant observations as a nationally appointed member on the Decennial Census Advisory Council (DCAC); an appointment I have served on since 2005 through the U.S. Department of Commerce. My relationships with key staff at the Bureau of the Census were highly instrumental in helping me build explanations as to why shifts in defining the multiracial population may or may not have existed with some degree of certainty. Research in this chapter also includes texts I deemed to be the main burgeoning racial and ethnic theoretical scholarship over this timeframe. While I understand there are many strands of racial theory to span this 150 year timeframe, I specifically focus on the theories that I was able to deduce the best rationale to explain for specific additions, deletions, and changes to any particular census schedule to classify multiracial people.

2.4 | AN OVERVIEW: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. CENSUS AND RACIAL AND ETHNIC THEORIES TO DEFINE MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY, 1850 TO 2000

It is important to situate theories in relation to multiracial mobilization in the country because it provides insight into the ways in which theory and social science inquiry had an impact on how multiracial people have been defined historically and to the present day. Moreover, I would add that when we also examine other social phenomenon and events occurring at the time racial theories exist in their prominence, we are better able to deduct possible explanations as to why certain categories denoting multiracial identity appear on census schedules. From the untrained eye, they may appear haphazard, or unconsciously regarded as a hegemonoracial phenomenon seen as only to disenfranchise historically underrepresented monoracial groups.

As this analysis intends to illustrate, there is another lens from which we can operate, and that is to recognize that multiracial people are also part of the larger history of disenfranchisement in the United States. For example, Anderson (2002) explains that two category shifts in the census, as early as 1790, were distinguished specifically to ascertain information on multiracial people in particular based on the theoretical scholarship most popular during the time. The first involved the addition of “color” categories on the census schedules from 1790 to 1840, which was to determine free and slave, categorized by “white” or “colored”, followed by the changes in 1850 to distinguish white, black, and mulatto. Again, the reason for both schedules and the set of questions that accompanied them were to gather information on “the number of children ever born” and “the degree of removal from pure white and black races”.

On the first U.S. census in 1790, the Constitution specified that the categorizations by race were to be designated among people of color as either “free” or “slave”.¹⁵ This remained the case until the 1850 census when a third category was added, “mulatto”, one of the first explicit attempts to count multiracial individuals as a separate racial category. However, it is important to note that the government did not count these individuals with the intentions of today, aiming to reflect the diversity of all of its citizens by allowing multiracial people the option to self-identify as they wished. Instead, these individuals were not citizens, but deemed as the property of many white slave owners whom fathered children with their female Black slaves (Anderson 2006). Still, some multiracial people received gradual freedom a few years before 1790 and thereafter in northern states, which needed to be accounted in the census. A bill was passed in 1784 by the Connecticut legislature, for example, which called for the gradual emancipation of “black and mulatto children born after March 1, 1784,” and upon turning 25.¹⁶ Hence, multiracial people have historically always been a constituent part of the debates on racialization in the U.S., yet they are not always included, nor centered as part of this larger discourse.

Shown in Table 1, a comprehensive list is presented of all the racial categories and rules denoting any form of multiracial identification (irrespective of monoracial affiliation)¹⁷ used in census enumeration schedules between 1850 and 2000.¹⁸ This table includes the more frequently discussed designations of “mulatto,” “quadroon,” “octoroon,” and the most recent “two or more races” designations. However, it also includes less known classifications not typically brought up in the discourse about multiracial designations on the census, including non “full blood Indians” as they were

referred to in 1900, a tri-racial designation in 1950 under the category “Other Race (non-white), and “part-Hawaiian” in 1960.

TABLE 1: Racial Designations to Classify Multiracial Identity on U.S. Census Enumeration Schedules (1850 to 2000)

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Mulatto	x	x	x	x			x	x								
Quadroon					x											
Octoroon					x											
Negro						x										
Amer Indian + White						x										
Hypodescent Rule*									x	x	x	x	x			
One-Drop Rule*									x	x	x	x	x			
Other Race (non-white)											x					
Part-Hawaiian												x				
Maternal Descent*														x	x	
Two or More Races																x

Note: An "" denotes a "rule" applied in a given census to classify individuals of two or more racial and ethnic categories.*

I have also included arbitrary “rules” of classification that were used in particular decades of the census when it was assumed that the parents of the individual were from two different racial backgrounds, hence a multiracial identity as specified in this project. This includes the “hypodescent rule” (a rule which designated individuals must assume the race of their father), the “one drop rule” (a rule which designated individuals who had any supposed trace of “black blood” to identify as such to restrict them from group rights and privileges to resources), and the “maternal descent” rule (a rule which designated individuals must assume the race of their mother, not of their father).

It is partially due to the concurrent social science inquiry about race and ethnicity most prominent in any given decade that I argue these multiracial designations and rules of racial identification came to appear on the census. In Table 2, I place these categories in context with the trajectory of racial theories in the social sciences discussed in Chapter 1. While I recognize there are many strands of racial theory and social scholarship that developed over the course of these sixteen decades that are not reflected on this table, I

do not claim this list to be exhaustive. I specifically include these examples because they are among the dominant racial and ethnic theories in the discipline of sociology. By tracing these theories chronologically, I was also able to also explore related social and political events that I believe highlight relationships between scholarship and policy decisions and their impact on the ways in which multiracial identity has been defined and socially constructed over time on the census.

TABLE 2: Racial Designations to Classify Multiracial Identity on U.S. Census Enumeration Schedules (1850 to 2000) and a Historical Trajectory of Racial and Ethnic Theories in the United States

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Mulatto	x	x	x	x			x	x								
Quadroon					x											
Octoroon					x											
Negro						x										
Amer Indian + White						x										
Hypodescent Rule									x	x	x	x	x			
One-Drop Rule									x	x	x	x	x			
Other Race (non-white)											x					
Part Hawaiian												x				
Maternal Descent														x	x	
Two or More Races																x
	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Eugenics, Racial Biology																
Immigration, Assimilation, and Cultural Pluralism																
Culture, Caste-Class, Internal Colonialism																
Symbolic and Emergent Ethnicity*																
Panethnicity*																
Critical Race, Color-Blind, and Multiracial Feminism*																
Racial Formation*																

Note: An "*" denotes a "rule" that was applied in a census to classify individuals with two or more racial and ethnic categories.
An "*" denotes the strands of theory that represent the ideology that race is a socially constructed process by which society creates meaning.

To decipher the timeline of racial and ethnic theories located at the bottom of Table 2, each strand of theories are represented by a colored gradient line. Using a gradient scheme illustrates the fact that theories on race and ethnicity are dynamic and fluid processes, whereby the beginning of a theory gradually emerges from earlier theories. I purposely do not use a definitive vertical line to indicate a definitive beginning or end of any strand of theory for this reason. Each line becomes gradually redder to

represent when the strand or set of theories corresponds within a general timeframe that each theory developed more popularly in social science research in the academy.

Finally, each line runs until the end of the table (from left to right) with a grade of light gray or dark red for two distinguishable reasons. The first reason is that the light gray or dark red near the end of each line represents the degree of popularity about the strand of theory or set of theories that are present today. Therefore, earlier theories on eugenicism and biology to explain (supposed) racial difference are held less popularly today than theories that argue race is a social construction born out of the meanings society creates over the course of time. The second reason the gradation of colors is distinguished at the end of each line is because much like the historical census debates about enumerating the multiracial population still lingers in contemporary times, I would argue that there are still remnants of theories within contemporary scholarship that borrows from it. They may continue to be debated in academic discourse, public policy, and in private arenas, as elsewhere. The idea here is not that any one strand or set of theories is arguably ‘more popular’ than another strand or set, but rather, the main aims of this dissertation views each of these theories, among others, both explicitly and implicitly present when the focus of debate centers on defining multiracial identity and the population itself.

2.5 | A BRIEF NOTATION ON U.S. CENSUS ENUMERATORS¹⁹

A brief description of the U.S. census workers who were also selected, appointed, or hired over the history of the censuses is also important to keep in consideration when understanding the developments that took place around the enumeration of multiracial identities. Considered the frontline of the Census Bureau today, enumerators (also

referred to as canvassers), directly impacted the data collection process based on the presumed attitudes they may have held and subjectivities they all possessed. From censuses 1790 to 1870, ‘judicial marshals’ were appointed as enumerators by the President of the United States through the nominations from the U.S. Department of Justice. From 1880 to the present day, ‘census supervisors’ have been appointed by the Secretary of Commerce through the U.S. Department of Commerce. Judicial marshals could “appoint as many assistants, within their respective districts, as to them shall appear necessary,” and Census Supervisors could appoint qualified enumerators. Over the history of the censuses, the types and qualifications of enumerators have ranged greatly, and the manner in which they have been hired has been quite varied. For the censuses in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, it has been reported that enumerators have largely been white, male, educated, and/or politically connected.²⁰

For example, in 1880 the Superintendent of the Census (later referred to as the Director of the Census), specified guidelines to the supervisors in selecting enumerators: “‘The appointments should be made with reference to physical activity, and to aptness, neatness, and accuracy in writing and in the use of figures,’ to ‘active’ and ‘energetic’ young men ‘of good address.’”²¹ These statements were made, despite the fact there were no laws prohibiting women from becoming enumerators. In addition, Congress wrote into census law in 1879 that enumerators be “selected solely with reference to their fitness, and without reference to their political and party affiliations;” a measure to maintain a non-partisan body of census workers to assure a complete count of the U.S. population for political representation purposes between north and south.²²

Still, it is argued elsewhere that political connections had much to do with the hiring process of census enumerators. As Magnuson (1995) explains:

The supervisors—who made the selections—had to have political connections, albeit as party moderates. Would-be enumerators needed to supply testimonials and probably sought them from the socially and politically prominent. Those who could not produce such testimonials or who were not allied to the party of the supervisor would be less likely to apply...²³

This is important to take into consideration with regard to the arguments made in this dissertation because it highlights how the state does not merely exist, but rather, is heavily influenced by the workers it employs to carry out its' constitutional responsibilities. Enumerators are the first line of defense for the Bureau of the Census because not only are they the most visible to the population, but the census relies heavily on how enumerators interpret their procedures and guidelines. In so doing, they have arguably influenced the ways in which people have been and continue to be defined, and for the purposes of this project on the multiracial population, enumerators and the attitudes they may or may not hold about “racial mixing” in the U.S. has bound to have been impacted by how, who, and what has been counted over time.

It is also important to note how the descriptions of qualified enumerators were not characteristics that were used at the turn of the century to describe multiracial people in the U.S. As I pointed out earlier, the language of the day was that people of mixed parentage were “misfits”, “degenerates” and “confused”.²⁴ This is not a point to be overlooked because it can explain the ways in which definitions for the multiracial population shifts over time to presumably mirror the societal attitudes prevalent over time. It must also be acknowledged that the limited decisions in choosing enumerators over two hundred years of census schedules were able to be implemented because

legislation did not exist yet where these actions would have been considered discriminatory and unconstitutional. It has not been since the most recent decades where entities, such as the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, has helped to enforce such monumental legal decisions such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.²⁵ With these safeguards in place, in addition to the OMB Directive 15 since the Clinton administration, developments like those taken up in Census 2000 were able to be actualized.

2.6 | CENSUSES 1850 THROUGH 1920

Explanations to account for the reason why the “mulatto” category first appears on the census of 1850 is quite varied. Interestingly, “no specific instructions were given as to how one was to differentiate Black and Mulatto inhabitants,” only that they were to be counted separately starting in 1850.²⁶ The mulatto category would remain a differentiated category from “Black” for forty more years, until 1890 when the categories for “quadroon” and “octoroon” were added. This was the first time on a census that official categories for blood quantum were introduced. The majority of the other designations in Table 1 also speak to earlier conceptions about race defined as a biological fact, rather than as a socially constructed one. Specifically, in 1890 enumerators had to adhere to the following instructions:

Be particularly careful to distinguish between blacks, mulattoes, quadroons, and octoroons. The word “black” should be used to describe those persons who have three-fourths or more black blood; “mulatto,” those persons who have from three-eighths to five-eighths black blood; “quadroon,” those persons who have one-fourth black blood; and “octoroon,” “those persons who have one-eighth or any trace of black blood.”²⁷

The census enumerators were given no guidance as to how to differentiate people who might be classified under these categories, and were left to make the best guess based on any perceived phenotypic representations and existing racial stereotypes they may have held. These workers were

A translation is necessary here because it relates to the aims of this dissertation to understand the complex definitions to categorize the multiracial population over time. In 1890, a “mulatto” person would describe (but not be limited to) a first generation child or adult of interracial parentage or a child or adult of two “mulatto” parents. A “quadroon” described a child or adult of one “mulatto” parent or the offspring of one monoracial grandparent whose racial background was different from the other three grandparents. An “octoroon” would describe a person of “quadroon” parentage, or two generations of “mulatto” grandparents. The combinations to aggregate these categories in familial terms could go on and on. The point is that when such classifications are raised in race and ethnic scholarship, they are discussed in uni-dimensional terms, rather than translated further to contextualize how these terms manifest in the everyday lives that are impacted by them. It serves to uncover what the sentiments were among the larger multiracial or “mulatto” population that did in fact develop over these fifty years of marked category separation.

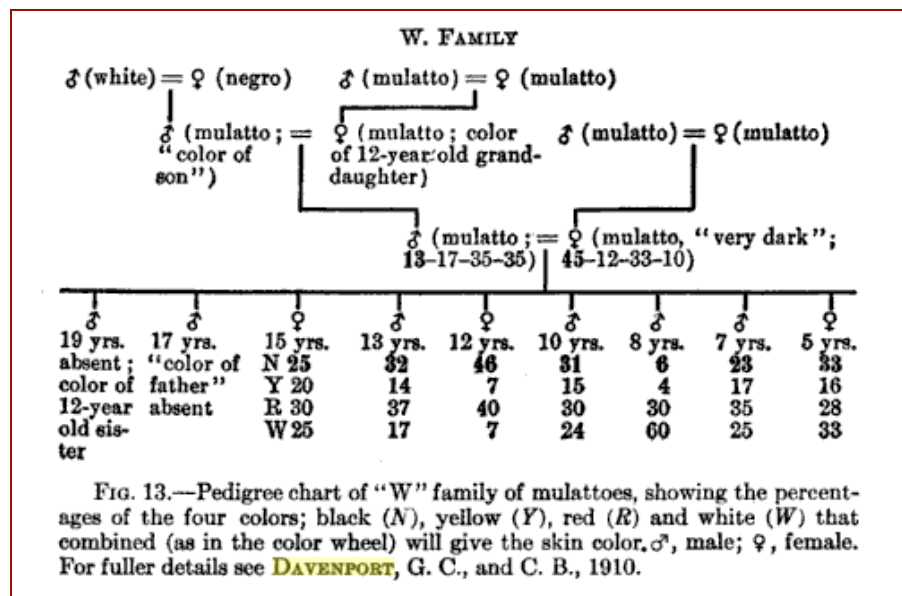
Two contemporary explanations are typically given as to the reasons behind why these categories—mulatto, quadroon, and octoroon—were ever added. The first has to do with the racial hegemony of the time, which was to uphold white supremacy to restrict people (slaves and indentured servants) who were “non-white” from rights and privileges. The second explanation is that these categories were created with the specific intention to

‘dilute’ the Black population from forming any type of unified identity of resistance over white domination. “This effort to further divide the Black population represented the concerns of southern politicians over racial purity.”²⁸ Thus, when referring back to Table 1, scientific research between 1890 and 1920 appeared to be preoccupied with counting multiracial people not because society was concerned with the well-being of multiracial individuals or to recognize them as a serious group, in so much as it was to better understand the identities of the supposedly “pure” and “untainted” monoracial groups that were positioned as the norm. This had much to do with the political climate at the time, which tied race to access to land ownership, educational attainment, and other socio-political privileges. It was also a time where designating who was multiracial in combination with blood other than White created the dialogue about racial mixture as a way to “cure” degenerative qualities in non-White communities, namely among African Americans.²⁹

Referring to Table 2, the second explanation that might provide reason for the transition in multiracial designations from the 19th to the 20th centuries is due to the concurrent racial theories at the time. It shows a trend that supports my argument that multiracial designations were impacted by the theories most prominent in those decades, which described race through biological explanations based on the premises of eugenicism (Darwin 1859; Galton 1862, 1892; Davenport 1910, 1911). Sir Francis Galton, credited as the “founder of eugenics”, wrote the first (1862) and second editions (1892) of *Hereditary Genius*, which were supported by the Carnegie Institute of Washington and Stanford University. Later Charles B. Davenport continued the work of his contemporaries, producing the works of *Eugenics* (1910) and “Heredity in Relation to

Eugenics” (1911). In the latter text, Davenport goes so far as to visually depict racial mixtures in relation to their intelligence levels, “scientifically” speculating the precise percentages of skin pigmentation among multiracial people. Figure 7 is the actual diagram where he depicts his findings.

FIGURE 7:
Flowchart of “Mulatto” Identity Formation as Depicted by Michael Davenport in
“Heredity in Relation To Eugenics” (1911)



This figure illustrates the ways in which early eugenicists like Davenport helped to define the discourse on the ways multiracial identity was to be understood, not only in the academy, but also in the politics supporting the census at the time. His depictions created a hierarchy in which multiracial people are situated in between White and Black racial identity, and it helped to set the stage for how society would be limited to the discourse of framing multiracial identity as only a combination defined by black-and-white for decades to come. This might partially explain why research I share later shows how people do not comprehend how multiracial people can claim a unified and coherent identity because publically historical definitions and explanations such as Davenport’s,

have been so rigidly accepted that any designation outside of the black and white binary today conflicts with how these identities are often lived and experienced privately.

Although these reasons are valid explanations for the concerns circulating at this time to warrant such categories, they represent a hegemonoracial way of thinking about how these categories only impacted monoracial populations. Historical evidence makes it obviously clear that these arbitrary racial divisions inhibited the process by which the multiracial (“mulatto”) population may have sought to develop a unified identity; a process that all racial groups go through when eventually seeking socio-political power. The historical circumstances and the monoracial ideas about what it meant to be multiracial at the time prohibited this from happening. For example, there were many misconceptions and biases that were circulated about multiracial identity and experiences at this time. Earlier studies have been partially responsible for spreading negative connotations that still heavily bear on the discourse of multiracial identity development in the United States today due to a societal lack of understanding where these ideas originated. As Pinderhughes (1995) points out, “For generations the societal view of Biracial or racially mixed people has labeled them not only as confused and bewildered, but as weirdos, misfits, degenerates, moral deviants, tormented and pathological souls.”³⁰ These are some of the lingering tenets that help sets the stage for understanding the Politics of Being Multiracial I introduced in Chapter 1.

As we look closer at Table 1, a few patterns emerge that might suggest this was occurring between the 1890 and 1920 censuses with regard to the category shifts among multiracial individuals in the United States. First, we notice “quadroon” and “octoroon” were short lived, appearing only once in 1890. Until then, multiracial people had been

classified as “mulatto” for three to four generations by this point. Second, on the 1900 census, enumerators were also advised to quantify the blood quantum of American Indians to verify the percentage of “White blood” they represented:

Specific instructions were provided to enumerators to write 0 if the Indian has no White blood and write either 1/2, 1/4, 1/8, or other fraction of White blood. The country of birth was also ascertained for Indians to distinguish between Canada, Mexico, and the United States.³¹

This is important because we need to understand that the racial politics at that time not only were experienced by multiracial people of Black and White heritage, but also includes multiracial people that presumably had no “trace of black blood” illustrated in Tables 1 and 2. The point here is not to speculate the precise reason for this classification change on the schedule of 1900, but to allude to the fact that it distinguishes another subgroup outside of the black and white binary that existed at the same time the blood quantum categories were being constructed for those who make up the larger multiracial population today. Today, the issues surrounding “mixed-blood” American Indians are still very controversial due to the privileges afforded to tribal membership and the exclusion of multiracial Black-Indians noted in Chapter 1.³²

The third pattern that shows evidence of the implications of the census on defining the multiracial population 1900 schedule where the “quadroon” and “octoroon” categories were dropped from the Census schedule and “Negro” was added, but separate from the category “Black.” Then on the very next census in 1910, the “mulatto” category returned, “Negro” was dropped instead (while “Black” remained), and the “Other” category was added for the first time in census history.³³ Such would remain the case in 1920, but in 1930 arbitrary “rules” founded on biological arguments were also introduced to classify multiracial people. This then points to a significant contribution I wish to

make here which will force us to re-evaluate the same historical circumstances we take for granted from a non-hegemonoracial perspective. It suggests that between 1890 and 1910, four different biologically based categories either appeared, disappeared, and/or reappeared specifically to categorize multiracial people, not just singular monoracial communities as the case is often framed. This would support the basis of my main arguments where biological explanations for race were so strongly applied on multiracial families and individuals over the course of U.S. history that it provides rationale as to why race-as-biology arguments continue to linger in contemporary society specifically on those individuals who wish to self-identify as multiracial through two or more racial categories.

Furthermore, if multiracial people had been classified as “mulatto” for fifty years up until the time the categories shifted where they had to be defined under “quadroon” and “octoroon” in 1890, and “Negro” or some blood quantum designation of Native American and White ancestry in 1900, it would seem to suggest that an argument could be made that the historical circumstances surrounding the censuses in these decade, alongside social scientific scholarship of eugenicism, served as explicit attempts to disenfranchise and silence the voices of already existing interracial families, marriages, and multiracial identified “mulatto” people during this timeframe, not just monoracial Black identity as it is often framed. At this point I wish to clarify that this is not an attempt to diminish the Black experience in America and the impact that Jim Crow segregation had on this population in an effort to somehow create a separate category for multiracial. What I am questioning is that it is not necessarily a complete and accurate picture for scholars to continue to assume the impact of miscegenation and biological

application of racial definitions were strictly issues felt by monoracial Black and monoracial White people. This perspective assumes that multiracial (“mulatto”) identities had not formed by this time, and it assumes the terminology shifts on the census were not met with resistance by people who made up this population—a group that existed long before they were categorized in 1850.

One way of understanding this perspective is by letting go of monoracial forms of thinking for a brief moment. For example, all three presidents who were in office—Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909), William Howard Taft (1909-1913), and Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921)—all supported policies that pathologized multiracial identity as biologically immoral by eventually policing their monoracial parents from coming together. By the 1920 census, 30 states had official miscegenation laws in place banning interracial marriage and “race mixing” punishable by fine and/or imprisonment. Leading up to that decade, eugenicist ideologies were permeating in academic discourse around the world among the leading thinkers of the day, and in 1912 the First International Conference on Eugenics was held, followed by the second convention in 1921, where the topic of the day centered around the fear that “racially mixed blooded” people possessed degenerative qualities that make them less fitting, than if they were of “pure race”.

2.7 | CENSUSES 1930 THROUGH 1970

Both the “hypodescent” and “one drop” rules were introduced in the 1930 census schedule, and it would remain the prevailing way to define multiracial people in the U.S. until 1970. It is important to note that a form of the “one drop” rule was already applied to multiracial American Indians a decade earlier. This could be viewed as a precursor to a shared common experience among multiracial people as a whole to include subgroups

that did not necessarily experience race through a black and white paradigm. In short, the one-drop ruling required enumerators to classify a person who had any known or identifiable trace of “black blood” to classify as *only* Black. However, for individuals whose parentage consisted of Black and a “non-White” category, the hypodescent rule was applied which stated that multiracial individuals would be classified with their father’s race. In addition, if a person were White and Indian, they would be classified as Indian, unless they were “regarded as” White, or vice versa, in each respective community.

The arbitrary manners to which these rules were applied, and the reasons as to why they appear in 1930 and disappear after 1970 are speculative. One explanation as to why the rules remained for these five particular decades of the census is because miscegenation laws were rampant throughout the country at this time. In addition, immigration restrictions and exclusion acts were at an all time high since World War I had recently ended and World War II had just begun. Specifically, the one-drop rule is said to have existed as an explicit attempt to keep the White racial category “pure and untainted” by other racialized groups due to the laws in place that afforded benefits to members classified as such. This includes both overt and covert privileges that permeated during this timeframe of Jim Crow segregation, from restrictions in voting rights to access to land and home ownership, among others.³⁴ These rules could be seen as a form of checks-and-balances to ensure a white racial hegemony was maintained, because if a Black man fathered a multiracial child with a White woman, the hypodescent rule would assure the child was classified as Black. If a White man fathered a multiracial child with

a Black woman, the one-drop rule would apply for which the child would still be marked Black.

Another explanation to explain why the hypodescent and one-drop rules existed were also because it was a way to maintain a gendered order, something R. W. Connell (2002) considers a “gender project.”³⁵ These rules were propagated by fears held and spread in previous decades primarily by White men about the intermixing of White women and Black men, and other ethnic minorities that lived in the country. At this time in history, we must be reminded that women were also still viewed as “property” irrespective of race, with limited rights that were only granted to White, married women at this time.³⁶ To keep these rules in context, by the 1930 census the 19th Amendment in the U.S. Constitution had only been in existence for one decade. This important to note because under both rules, mothers appeared to lack agency to identify their own children, an issue I later argue spawned the changes to classify multiracial identity after the 1970 census. This is also significant because it would explain why researchers today continue to—unconsciously and consciously—apply the one-drop rule in their studies and in their attempts to define the population. They are merely mimicking the biologically supported race-based practices imposed on multiracial people that were imposed externally by the censuses from 1930 to 1970.

Aside from the implementation of these rules, there were other attempts by the Census Bureau to classify multiracial populations that are often left out of the current discourse on multiracial designations enumerated on the census. In 1950, “Other Race (non-white)” was added to the census. However, few know that this category was added to count “tri-racial” populations deriving from combined Black, Indian, and White

ancestry. They were classified by different names to include the Siouian or Croatan, Moor, and Tunica groups from the eastern United States.³⁷ I have indicated this in Tables 1 and 2 under “Other Race (non-white)” the way it appeared on the census. This raises another pressing and significant question concerning whether or not longstanding communities designated by mono-labeled categories are part of the larger multiracial community. Puerto Ricans and Creoles, for example, are members of a community characterized by multiple racial and ethnic identities. However, their colonial histories to the United States impact their relationship within and outside the discourse of racial identity development, civic participation and political mobilization around the politics of being multiracial. I include them in my analysis and my working definition because it specifically points to a group that is not recognized as a traditional monoracial community, then or now. The appearance of this category shift in the census makes sense given the influx of immigrants during these years, and the longstanding exclusion acts that were still upheld by the law.

Then in 1960, “Part Hawaiian” was added to the schedule as a separate category from “Hawaiian”; a designation that is also less known in race and ethnic discourse and research that investigates category shifts on the U.S. census. Recognizing the existence of this subtle change should not be overlooked for three important reasons. First, it is clear the qualifier of “part” distinguishes a subgroup that makes up the multiracial population based on my working definition. That is, the census felt this group was sizeable enough in which someone could be classified as “part” Hawaiian, and this would suggest the recognition that this person was also “part” non-Hawaiian. This change falls outside the rigid black and white paradigm of mixed race identity that is often studied, but it was and

continues to be a sizeable group in the total U.S. population. According to 2000 census data, Hawaii ranks as the number one state where self-identified multiracial people live.

Second, this category shift to define a multiracial identity also exposes important moments in history that impacted both multiracial and monoracial identities alike; moments that are often framed in the discourse through the lens of hegemonoracial ideology. Events such as the Massie Affair in 1932, the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, and the adoption of Hawaii into U.S. statehood in 1959, might explain why this category was added by 1960. It all began in 1931 when a false accusation by Thalia Massie, a White woman married to Thomas Massie, a White naval officer stationed in Honolulu, Hawaii, claimed to have been beaten and raped by five innocent young Hawaiian men.³⁸ This caused a national uproar, and consequently, fear surmounted about the “purity and innocence” of White women from men of other (socially constructed) races and ethnicities. As a result of many unfortunate circumstances surrounding this case, one of the young men, Joseph Kahahawai, was kidnapped by Thalia Massie’s husband and mother who then murdered him. Though convicted, they only served one hour of their ten-year sentences in the comforts of the judge’s chamber, and later protected by members of the federal government.

This case is significant because it demonstrates the last reason the appearance of “part-Hawaiian” on the 1960 census deserves attention in the larger trajectory of defining multiracial identity. It signifies a potential of a shared ideology that may have been growing internally among multiracial people who were not only just Black and White, but also Hawaiian and White, and other combinations, during the same decades.³⁹ Once again, the classification decisions applied on the U.S. census during these decades were

limited by understanding racial difference as a fixed, binary relationship between monoracial Blacks and Whites from which all other groups have since been compared in social science research. Whereby some challenge that “whiteness” was ideologically fixed as the undifferentiated category to “blackness,” and vice versa (Alba and Nee 1997; Kim 1999), I would argue it was at this same time, monoracial became the unmarked category by which multiracial people were compared. While yes, the factors of this case deal with monoracial experiences, it was also largely a multiracial issue, a component that builds evidence of the Politics of Being Multiracial.

For one, how people view the restrictions placed on their monoracial parents’ experiences at this time, by in large I would argue, had a profound impact on the varying definitions that multiracial people still hold when defining themselves. Also, this case suggests that being multiracial places one at the bottom of the racial paradigm because purity of any race was the prevailing. In other words, the case exemplifies the saliency of race and how it trumped gender; that is, they were less concerned with the fact she may or may not have been raped, so much as the disgust they held on the intermingling of two different races and the prevention of having a child of “mixed blood”.⁴⁰ Although we live in an era that is much more accepting of multiracial identity and racially mixed couples, biological definitions still exist today through the belief systems people have not let go of even today. I have discovered through my research observations over the years that many people claim it is more socially acceptable to date and cohabitate interracially, but there is still discomfort and pressures from society to not marry interracially or have children due to lingering misconceptions about multiracial identity.

Overall, the one-drop and hypodescent rules, and the other shifts to define different subgroups within the multiracial population were all supported by the burgeoning social and scientific scholarship of the day. Again, referring to Table 2, while eugenicist arguments were becoming less prominent (though still theorized and practiced), the strands of racial theory gaining most momentum into the 1930s through the late 1950s and 1960s were based on explaining racial difference through immigration, assimilation, and cultural pluralist arguments. These theories might explain why “mulatto” and “Negro” fall off of the census schedules from 1930 to 1970, and the “one-drop” and “hypodescent” rules, “part-Hawaiian,” and “Other non-white” are added. Around the 1920s, theories on assimilation and immigration first began to circulate as a critique of previous theories that failed to explain how other emerging groups outside of the black and white paradigm adapted to the inner relations and institutions of a host country.

Robert Park (1921) claimed assimilation was an inevitable and irreversible process where all groups would eventually be incorporated into a common “American” culture. Thus, for Park racial differences could be explained through cultural explanations. Departing from Park’s theory of assimilation, Milton Gordon (1964) took on more of a structuralist approach by offering a multidimensional theory, which consisted of seven stages of incorporation. In *Assimilation in American Life*, Gordon believed that most immigrant groups conformed or acculturated into the mainstream, for which he defined as the core group of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. However, for African Americans he claimed full assimilation would result in a delayed reaction for them due to their history of racial subordination. Each of the designations for multiracial

identity all invoke some way to enumerate who was White and “non-White”, as well as, other multiracial combinations that could no longer be classified as “mulatto.” As the Massie Affair case and events relating to the internal colonialism of Hawaii highlights, there were many multiracial people born there given the military bases in the area before and after they were granted statehood.

2.8 | CENSUSES 1980 THROUGH 2000

All of the rules governing racial classification of multiracial people continued to be staunchly applied until the 1980 census when the mother’s race, not the race of the father, was used to identify multiracial people. Both the “hypodescent” and “one-drop” rules were no longer used in 1980, though arguably were still practiced by those who were accustomed to classifying as such on the previous two census schedules. The “maternal descent” rule, as it is most known, surfaced for several reasons on the 1980 that are indicative of the times. Three of which I will speak to directly which involves the monumental Supreme Court decision in *Lovings v State of Virginia* in 1967, Title IX legislation in 1972, and the range of theoretical race scholarship at the end of the 1970s into the early 1990s.

In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court lifted the ban on interracial marriage in the country. The Loving Decision, as it is often referred to as, was monumental because it overturned centuries of miscegenation statutes that prohibited dating, cohabitation, and marriage between all citizens in the United States, punishable by fine, imprisonment, and other harsh penalties. Before this case was brought to the federal court, 17 states mostly in southern regions, still had laws in place that made it illegal for people to marry someone of another race. Then in 1972, the landmark legislation for Title IX was passed,

which under Section 1681 states: “(a) Prohibition against discrimination; exceptions. No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...”. Although this legislation primarily dealt with equal access in education, academics, and sports, it is important to recognize this discussion in the larger discourse and historical context leading up to the 1980 census. Title IX set the stage for the agency of women to be recognized on a national scale for their contributions not only just in sports, but also in other areas of society.

Therefore, it would make sense that by 1980, there would be a shift in the designation to define multiracial identity in the United States based on maternal descent. As I discussed in the previous section, the hypodescent and one-drop rules ensured that multiracial people were always classified Black or in accordance with their father’s race, to avoid them from being counted in the White category, or presumably with their White mothers. I also remarked that this shift might have been met with resistance due to the fact that they were recorded in their own separate category for decades prior. So in 1980, now that women and men are allowed to marry interracially, and now that women have been recognized in a nationally public debate about their equal rights, the shift in the census to have children classified with their mother’s race seems an understandable projection. Notwithstanding, however, the scholarship most prevalent during this timeframe shifts to more structural and cultural arguments, which I believe had a profound impact on the maternal descent designation to classify multiracial people.

Marked by protests during the civil and human rights movements in the late 1960s and 1970s, class-based arguments (Bonacich 1973; Wilson 1978) and cultural debates

began forming as a basis to theorize race and racial difference.⁴¹ The latter strand of theory is not to be mistaken with cultural pluralism, whereby these theorists were interested in explaining racial inequality in the social structure as a direct result of perceived inner group pathology. As Oscar Lewis's *Culture of Poverty* (1968) claimed, racial differences could be explained by intrinsic values—adaptive strategies and pathologies—that supposedly existed within a culture. Lewis's analysis came only a few years after the controversial “Moynihan Reports” (1965), which blamed single Black female-headed households as contributing to what he believed to be the “downfall” of the Black family unit. According to these two analyses, cultural pathologies explained the “failure” of different racial groups from overcoming their *own* racial and class disparities. In their view, people who are poor are pathologically inclined to be poor because they pass down maladaptive strategies in response to their societal struggles from generation to generation. William Ryan (1971) labeled this misdirected ideology as the “blaming the victim” approach. This approach is a way for society to evade social responsibility by couching a social problem as an individual one. While Ryan still seemed to accept the label of pathology presented, other scholars critique the cultural pathology approach for failing to look at historic discrimination and economic forces (Wilson 1987, Kelley 1996), horizontal Black family structures (Stack 1974), and ethnic antagonisms (Bonacich 1973) in understanding the “underclass” plight of the Black community.

These theories are noteworthy to mention because by the 1980 and 1990 censuses, White mothers, for example, who had multiracial children with Black fathers who were previously categorized as only Black, were also part of this “Black family unit”; something that is not taken up in the literature. Further, to keep this timeframe in context,

mothers of other racial categories that had multiracial children of all different racial combinations, could for the first time since the first census in 1790, classify their multiracial children as singularly White, Asian, Latino, or some other race they represented. In the same vain, an adult multiracial person had to either classify themselves with their mother's race, which would be strikingly different than what they had classified under in the previous decade. Thus, there was obviously confusion among parents, individuals, policy makers, and researches as to how to maintain consistency in defining a racial identity among people of two or more racial categories from census to census. This confusion continues to linger today as I discussed earlier when researchers doing work on multiracial topics cannot agree upon a similar term or population of interest. All of the changes in the census instructions up until this point further complicated how multiracial people were being counted based on monoracial constructs, rather than their entire racial makeup, and hence would explain why multiracial people today classify differently.

One thing that did remain consistent through 1990 census was that multiracial people could *not* choose to classify with more than one racial category to fully represent their parentage if they so elected to do so. Their self-identifications were not self-imposed at all, but rather, externally imposed by the rules and regulations administered by the census and its' enumerators. It is for these reasons that in 2000, the "two or more races" option was added to the schedule. This addition was not an internal decision, or egalitarian attempt of the Bureau of the Census to give multiracial people and the parents of multiracial children agency as is often assumed in the literature. Instead, this change was due to grassroots political pressure from activists of multiracial advocacy groups

under the umbrella of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA) that pushed for this changed. This monumental change did not come easily or without opposition, and understandably so, because what makes the “two or more races” option distinctive is that no longer was multiracial identity tied to any single monoracial designation. In other words, a mother’s race, a father’s race, or an arbitrary delineations of blood quantum did not impede a truer self-identification. Interestingly enough, mothers of multiracial children and multiracial identified adults, primarily lead this movement that some call the beginning of the “Multiracial Movement” in the United States. The Census 2000 and the development that lead to this monumental change to define multiracial identity will be discussed later in Chapter 4 when I present a case study on AMEA.

Overall, the trajectory to which multiracial identity has been defined by the U.S. Census and the concurrent theoretical scholarship on race and ethnicity in this country, further proves the fluidity of racial categories and shifts to define this population. The last four strands of racial theories that I include on Table 2 from the late 1980s to 2000, represent arguments that racial identity and the meanings we make of race are socially constructed. In contrast to previous theories where race and ethnicity were studied monolithically, social construction theories turned the attention to differentiating between “race” and “ethnicity” as discrete categories (Waters 1990; Espiritu 1992; Oboler 1995), in order to challenge earlier viewpoints on biological, cultural, or environmental factors accounting for racial differences not just *between* groups, but also *within* groups. Race is understood to be a concept that is not fixed or stable, but instead a construction of meanings formed by society about how race is lived and experienced (Frankenberg 1993; Omi and Winant 1994; Saito 1998), given possible allegiances to home and host

countries, identifying with nationalist pride movements, and/or in some cases, distancing and/or adopting a generally imposed racial group classification (Espiritu 1992; Wong 2006). Suzanne Oboler (1995) asserts that groups form not out of a common name or label, but through the confluence of their common struggles.⁴²

Of major concern to these theories is also how the formation of race is further sustained, understood and created in our everyday experiences, where the process of categorization has had real and meaningful socioeconomic and political consequences, such as in the law (Gotanda 1991, Harris 1993, Crenshaw 1995). In the mid-1990s, “Critical Race Theories” (CRTs) emerged as a response to the ever-decreasing boundaries of acceptable race discourse, and arguably they have developed ever since the legal victories witnessed during the civil rights movement. These theories view the U.S. legal system as being internally contradictory to the claims of American democracy, or rather, equal rights for all. The scholarship that helped form CRTs aimed to address two common interests according to Kimberle Crenshaw (1995) in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*. The first requires interrogating white supremacy and the subsequent oppression of people of color and the second, involves not only understanding how racial differences are maintained under the law, but to understand how to actually change them.⁴³

As we look over the course of the 150-year long historical trajectory—from 1850 when the first category appeared on the U.S. Census to externally define multiracial identities in this country, to 2000 when people could internally self-identify with “two or more” racial categories—several things become evident to challenge the Politics of Being Multiracial. With the exception of the 2000 census, a minimum of 10 different choices

had been imposed to define the multiracial population. These category shifts to define multiracial identity not only adds to the confusion on how to define this population in current social science research, it also calls into question the degree to which the experiences of monoracial groups can be discussed with any degree of consistency from decade to decade without talking about multiracial identity that was always present in their supposedly “monoracial” data. Because multiracial people were tossed back and forth between classifying under a monoracial category (i.e., hypodescent), a one-unit variable (i.e., “mulatto”), or an un-aggregated blood quantum designation (i.e., “quadroon”), and then later given the option to choose a more reflective racial identity (i.e., “two or more”), this shows a confusion on the part of both monoracial people (those individuals who had a part in creating and implementing these changes), and multiracial people (those who were impacted by these changes to develop coherent identities). Through looking at the last 150 year trends of the U.S. Census schedules, while simultaneously looking at the trajectory of racial theories and social scholarship that propagated during this time, it becomes clearer why confusion still exists in defining this population made up of a complexity of identities today.

2.9 | CONCLUSION

By showing how the U.S. Census between 1850 and 2000 and subsequent policies were guided by the social scholarship prominent during those decades, I demonstrated how this eventually perpetuates the Politics of Being Multiracial and creates the complexities on defining and meeting the needs of the multiracial population today. Furthermore, it becomes clearer as to why a biological argument might still linger when applied to this population due to the historical trajectory to categorize and classify

multiracial people in this country. It is done in such a way that has not been confronted similarly by other communities to the staunch extent that this population has faced due to the persistence of hegemonoracial ideology that inhibits society to think beyond one-race units of analysis to interrogate other ways race and ethnicity are experienced. Recognizing the relationship between multiracial identity, the U.S. Census enumeration process, and the formation of racial theories are important to truly secure the discourse on racial formation as an argument of social construction, and not as a lingering biological argument once and for all.

The evolving social science scholarship has had a profound and lasting impact on the ways in which multiracial identity in particular has been taken up in policy both socially *and* politically over the years. This is important for two specific reasons. First, it shows how this maintains a continual lack of societal understanding about the issues—or rather, *Politics of Being Multiracial*—that this population has had to confront, creating inevitable implications for public policy that need to be addressed, such as in law, education, and the determination of services (Snipp 2002; Persily 2002). This is significant because it is our first glimpse at understanding why biological arguments for race might still linger today when defining and understanding the multiracial population in the United States. It is a stigmatization of sorts that I claim has not been staunchly applied to other communities to the extent that it has historically and contemporarily been applied to individuals that self-identify and/or are perceived to be “two or more races”. This unconscious act of knowing what we think we know about race and the conscious act of knowing there is no biological fact upon which it rests, but yet, not discussing it in truth by excluding the multiracial population from more serious and larger discussions

beyond the frames of monoracial identity, potentially moves us backwards or keeps us at a standstill, in truly advancing racial theory through the socially constructed argument.

Without understanding how this population has and continues to be defined, the Politics of Being Multiracial creates an unconscious burden on policymakers and institutions to re-evaluate how they are to address the needs of a population that is not uniformly defined, but knowingly exists and is exponentially growing. This requires policymakers and other key players to (re)educate themselves on what they know and do not know about the diverse racial experiences in this country. This point will be addressed more extensively in Chapter 5 when I discuss specific policy measures pushed by leading multiracial advocates since the 2000 census schedule, and the keys of effective mobilization that made those efforts successful. Through my research, I have found that many simply “do not know that they do not know” about the deeper complexities multiracial identity/ies represent in the U.S., no less the unique set of experiences that occur when trying to navigate multiracial identities through an already rigid monoracial paradigm in this country.

For what appears to be at stake after the 2008 presidential elections is not so much the immediate outcome of Barack Obama being elected into the presidency, but rather, how will he eventually be recorded in America’s history in racial and ethnic terms. His candidacy is even more striking given what it represents; that is, a longstanding discourse and phenomena about race and politics in this country that is larger than any one of his racial and ethnic identities alone. It is a discourse that points to the conundrum that multiracial identity formation presents, whereby on one hand it is quite often an afterthought in discussions of multiracial politics, veiled in the larger trajectory of racial

theories in the social sciences as secondary to monoracial experiences, or hegemonoracial ideology. On the other hand, multiracial identity becomes forethought when the political climate of the time forces us to publicly confront a historical past for which we are most uncomfortable. Nevertheless the Politics of Being Multiracial are omnipresent in the underbelly of the racial climate at any given time over the course of U.S. history.

Chapter 2 Endnotes

¹ Claudette E. Bennett was a former Racial Statistics Branch Chief in the Population Division of the U.S. Bureau of the Census in 2000. She was commissioned to examine and document the Bureau's efforts to categorize racial populations from 1790 to 2000. For more information: Bennett, Claudette. 2000. "Racial Categories Used in the Decennial Censuses, 1790 to the Present." *Government Information Quarterly*, Volume 17, Number 2: 161-180.

² *Congressional Globe*. 46 vols. Washington, DC, 1834-1873. p. 675.

³ It has also been argued that these questions were requested by other prominent men in the south who presumably fathered children to Black slaves. In *The New Race Question* (2002), Margo Anderson states: "Supporters of the planned questions tried to placate the opposition by noting that they "were adopted in compliance with the wishes of southern gentlemen" (*Congressional Globe*, 31st Congress, 1st session, 1850: 674)." See p. 281, Margo Anderson's "Counting by Race: The Antebellum Legacy" in Perlmann, Joel and Waters, Mary. 2002. *The New Race Question: How the Census Counts Multiracial Individuals*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

⁴ Though the terminology I use here, "interracial children", is not the recognized nomenclature of the day, I choose to imbue contemporary descriptors for consistency in language and to incorporate other multiracial combinations that existed during this time that is not represented by terms used in literature, such as "mulatto".

⁵ Anderson 2002: p. 281.

⁶ *Congressional Globe*. 46 vols. Washington, DC, 1850.

⁷ Anderson 2002, p. 280.

⁸ Ibid. p. 280.

⁹ Barbara Vobejda, "Hill Reassured on Race Check-off Plan for Census," *Washington Post*, July 26, 1997.

¹⁰ Omi, Michael and Winant, Howard. 1994. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Routledge. p. 11.

¹¹ Spencer, Ranier. 1999. *Spurious Issues: Race and Multiracial Identity Politics in the United States*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, p. 3.

¹² See also, Barth, Fredrik. 1969. Introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, edited by F. Barth. Boston: Little, Brown.

¹³ At the time of finishing this dissertation, conversations are heightening at the present time regarding Census 2020 and the emerging Arabic community that is currently pushing for representation on the federal level. At the Decennial Census Advisory Committee (DCAC) meetings I attended in April 2009, the topic was raised during public comment.

¹⁴ Snipp 2002, p. 199

¹⁵ Article 1, Section 2: “Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct.”

¹⁶ *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut*, 9 volumes. Hartford: Lockwood and Brainard, 1894-1953

¹⁷ This refers to terms such as “Negro,” and “Hypo/er Descent Rules” which would presumably appear to represent monoracial people. However, in some census schedules, multiracial people were lumped under a monoracial category due to the historical and political issues that may have been prominent at the time.

¹⁸ The chart I have created is the first of its kind in research on multiracial classifications in the U.S. because I incorporate all combinations irrespective of singular race category affiliations.

¹⁹ Archival information derived in this section is generated from Dr. Diana Magnuson’s work on the history of census enumeration. See also: Magnuson and King, “Enumeration Procedures,” in *Historical Methods*, Volume 28, Number 1, Pages 27-32, Winter 1995; Magnuson, “The Making of a Modern Census: The United States Census of Population, 1790-1940,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1995.

²⁰ Magnuson, Diana. “History of Enumeration Procedures, 1790-1940”. University of Minnesota: IPUMS USA. p. 4 of 10. <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/enumproc1.shtml>.

²¹ Ibid. p. 3.

²² Ibid. p. 4.

²³ Ibid. p. 5

²⁴ Pinderhughes 1995, p. 73

²⁵ According to the “Laws, Regulations, Guidance & MOUs” of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, they describe Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as the following: “This law makes it illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. The law also requires that employers reasonably accommodate applicants' and employees' sincerely held religious practices, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business.” For an up-to-date list of federal laws and regulations of equal employment opportunities in the United States, visit: <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/index.cfm>.

²⁶ See, Claudette Bennett. 2000. “Racial Categories Used in the Decennial Censuses, 1790 to the Present.” *Government Information Quarterly*, Volume 17, Number 2: p. 163.

²⁷ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1979. *Twenty Censuses: Population and Housing Questions 1790-1980* (1979), p. 28.

²⁸ Bennett 2000, p. 167

²⁹ See E. Pinderhughes. 1995. "Biracial identity: Asset or Handicap?" In H.W. Harris, H.C. Blue, and E.E.H. Griffith (Eds.), *Racial and ethnic identity: Psychological development and creative expression*. New York, NY: Routledge.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 73. As more and more research is being undertaken in this area of identity development, we must be able to identify the limitations of past studies to move the discourse forward in the present day. As M.C. Thornton (1996) explains, "ideas such as these usually resulted from research on individuals seeking help for problems, whether race-related or not, so well-adjusted members of the Multiracial population did not become subjects for study and their ability to deal successfully with Multiracialism went unrecorded." See, M.C. Thornton. 1996. "Hidden Agendas, Identity Theories, and Multiracial People." In M.P.P. Root (Ed.), *The multicultural experience: Racial borders as the new frontier* (pp. 101-120). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 101.

³¹ Bennett 2000, p. 168.

³² Fitzgerald, Kathleen. 2007. *Beyond White Ethnicity: Developing a Sociological Understanding of Native American Identity Reclamation*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

³³ Once more, it is not a coincidence that in 1911, Michael Davenport would publish "Heredity in Relation to Eugenics" about "mulatto" identity formation.

³⁴ For a more extensive discussion on Jim Crow segregation and the privileges of being classified as white: Lipsitz, George (1998). *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

³⁵ Connell, R.W. (2002). *Gender*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Inc.. p. 82. Connell states, "Seeing gender learning as the creation of *gender projects* makes it possible to acknowledge both the agency of the learner and the intractability of gender structures" (82). It is important that I recognize that both race and gender played a constitutive part in the formation of multiracial identities given the restrictions placed on both men and women who sought to marry interracially, as well as, to recognize the way gender plays a role in the fluidity of racial identity among male and female multiracials.

³⁶ In 1920, the 19th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution was enacted following movements for women's suffrage from the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

³⁷ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, United States Census Population: 1950, Special reports, Nonwhite Population by Race, 3B (1954): 4, and Bennett, Claudette. 2000. "Racial Categories Used in the Decennial Censuses, 1790 to the Present." *Government Information Quarterly*, Volume 17, Number 2: 170.

³⁸ For more information on The Massie Affair, see Stannard, David E. *Honor Killing: How the Infamous Massie Affair Transformed Hawai'i*. New York: Viking Press, 2005.; Van Slingerland, Peter. *Something Terrible Has Happened*. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.; Also reference, Public Broadcast System. (2005). *The American Experience: The Massie Affair*.

³⁹ This sentiment is shared by other scholars, such as Reginald Daniel (2002): "*It is even argued that individuals with similar backgrounds (e.g., black-white, white-Asian) have more in common with individuals of the same background than with other multiracial-identified individuals. This view argues against a "pan-multiracial" experience and identity, which, this camp maintains, is a necessary prerequisite for multiracial group identity*" (114). Also see, Michael Thornton, "Is Multiracial Status Unique? The Personal and Social Experience," in *Racially Mixed People in America*, ed. Maria P. P. Root (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1992), 321-25.

⁴⁰ The following excerpt was in the transcript of the PBS 1-hour special, *American Experience: The Massie Affair* (2005): "If President Hoover has a spinal column he will take Hawai'i out of the hands of half-breed politicians that have made it a cesspool and a danger spot," wrote columnist Floyd Gibbons, urged on by his boss William Randolph Hearst. "Maybe you don't want white American rule in Hawai'i. I do." Public Broadcast System. (2005). *The American Experience: The Massie Affair*.

⁴¹ In my discussion, I choose purposely not go into an extensive discussion about class-based arguments. I mention this strand of theory because while it may fall outside the realm of my analysis here, I recognize it as a major strand of theory to explain racial difference in this timeframe. Some critiques of this scholarship claim that class-reductionists hide behind economics to avoid discussions of institutional discrimination and racism in the labor market (Blauner 1972, Barrera 1977, Dawson 1995, Kelley 1996). Robert Blauner (1972) argues that both race and class are important to analyze together to explain systemic racism and structural discrimination that could be inextricably linked to political and economic independence.

⁴² Oboler, Suzanne (1995). "Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives." Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. Oboler states, "Therefore it is important to note that it is not language or heritage that unites but: the common goal of expanding and protecting Latinos' rights, by the aim of improving our lives and the communities' standard of living."

⁴³ Crenshaw, Kimberle, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Thomas, Kendall, eds. 1995. *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*. New York: The New Press. Specific attempts to address these unifying interests were adopted by other scholars. See also, Gotanda, Neil. (1995). A Critique of 'Our Constitution Is Color-Blind'. *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*. N. G. Kimberle Crenshaw, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas. New York: New Press. p. 257. Gotanda argues that the American legal system maintains racial inequality by hiding the history of racial oppression in "color-blind" language in the U.S. Constitution. Gotanda states, "A color-blind interpretation of the Constitution legitimates and thereby maintains the social, economic, and political advantages that whites hold over other Americans."

Chapter 3

SIMULTANEOUS IDENTITIES: COMPARATIVE INTERVIEWS AMONG A DIVERSE COMBINATION OF MULTIRACIAL EXPERIENCES

“There’s always someone asking you to underline one piece of yourself—whether it’s Black, woman, mother, dyke, teacher, etc.—because that’s the piece that they need to key in to. They want to dismiss everything else. But once you do that, then you’ve lost because then you become acquired or bought by that particular essence of yourself, and you’ve denied yourself all of the energy that it takes to keep all those others in jail. Only by learning to live in harmony with your contradictions can you keep it all afloat.”¹

~ Audre Lorde, 1981 ~

3.1 | OVERVIEW OF STUDY

“What was that you just said Triston?” I asked before my tape needed to be flipped over in my recorder.

“I said, because I didn’t look what they thought being Mexican looked like, and because... because I couldn’t speak good enough Spanish, I guess I had to work really hard to prove I had a drop of Mexican blood.”

“So are you saying there is such thing as a ‘drop of Mexican blood’, similar to the ‘one drop rule’ imposed on the African American population in this country?”

“You know, I never thought of it that way, but I guess I did just sort of say that without thinking about it... well, yeah, I would say that there is based on that.”

This occurrence would be among one of the first times in my life I had ever heard someone outside of the African American community—one of the communities to which I racially identify—refer to their own community having some type of internal ‘one drop rule of blood’ to denote group belonging. It was at this time I realized that other people I

would interview for my study, ranging from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, geographic locations, ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds, would unconsciously refer to ‘blood’ and other biological markers in their language about race. More striking is that it would happen most casually among multiracial and monoracial people alike, without there seeming to be much thought applied about the race-as-biology slippages. This demonstrates that biological explanations for race still linger within private discourse, despite the fact that race is a social construction that is not bound by any biological determinations, no less demarcations of blood (Perlmann 2000; Snipp 2002; Sollors 2002; Spencer 2006).

In this chapter, I expand the conversation from the previous chapter to now examine the contemporary discourse to define multiracial identity among the perspective of individuals. I specifically address the first two research questions in this dissertation, which again asks *how do we define the multiracial population in the United States and what do these definitions offer about racial and ethnic ideologies and the future for public policy post-2000*, and *what critical insights can centering the experiences of multiracial Americans... publicly and privately, offer for other groups in American society*. The first part of this chapter examines the literature that points to the challenges that social scientists have had to deal with in defining participants for research following the category shifts from Census 2000, as illustrated in Chapter 2. I then present qualitative research collected from comparative, sit-down interviews among a cross-racial/ethnic sample of multiracial individuals with diverse combinations, intersecting identities, and geographic backgrounds. Through these personal experiences, we can gain better understanding how racial and ethnic identities are not mutually exclusive, and how

multiracial individuals themselves come to assist in this process of defining the population. Moreover, I illustrate how they are both shaped by public and private practices that do not necessarily hinge on one's own self-identification, but also definitions that are imposed on individuals and communities irrespective of self-identification. The limitations that contemporary definitions confront are largely to do with the historical legacy of the U.S. census on classifying multiracial people since 1850.

Within my analyses of the participants in my study, several themes were created as a result of the Grounded Theory approach I applied in this dissertation. The themes represent salient aspects present in society that impact an individual's ability to define themselves privately and publicly. They include what I loosely categorize as: Presence of Parents; Parental Cultural Competency; Race, Space and Place; the power of Language and Naming; Gender and Sexuality; Contradictions in Harmony (described through things such as food and hair); Contemporary notions of "passing" and Whiteness; Dating Choices; and Utopia after High School. The identities that are present in each of these themes also showcase the notion of simultaneous identities, the concept I introduced in Chapter 1 as a way to recognize the saliency of multiple identities that are experienced at exactly the same time. This includes race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, sexual orientation, and so forth. However, while all people possess these intersecting identities, I argued that the "simultaneous" is purposefully there to represent other identities in combination with multiple racial and ethnic categories that are always operating together, even while some may be more latent than others. Lastly, I integrate a discussion on the ways in which race-as-biology, vis-à-vis blood and blood quantum language are raised in the interviews unquestioned by each participant who uses them.

As my research illustrates, identifying as a person of multiple race background is not a prerequisite for understanding how other racial and ethnic combinations of multiracial people experience their identities. Nor does being a parent or guardian of a multiracial child automatically mean s/he is culturally competent in fully understanding what their multiracial child is experiencing either (Root 1996; Rockquemore, Laszloffy, and Noveske 2006). In fact, despite a common classification amongst those individuals who identify as multiracial, mixed race, and a host of other terms, great variations still exist between members of this population and those individuals that are invested in their lives. These variations exist in the ways they perceive themselves; in the ways they are treated and perceived by society; and in the ways their monoracial heritages have been racialized historically and contemporarily in relation to each other. However, we need to understand what these variations are, why they exist, and how they ultimately impact larger social and political scale processes.

In essence, the complexities through which multiracial identities form among individuals, within institutions, and through the state, should not stifle our attention toward understanding this population. Instead, it should finally enable us to expand the current discourse to include these very same complex and multiplicative constructs that most research on multiracial identity often distances from. To date, there have been few studies to critically and cross-culturally examine the different experiences of mixed race people in one study, often limiting the analysis to select subpopulations or popular racial combinations.² Quite often certain types of mixed race people are positioned, privileged and universalized as “the” multiracial experience within political race discourse, discussed herein. This inattention or partial focus continues to limit how multiracial

people, educators and researchers, policymakers, and society at large come to understand the existence of different multiracial experiences as a collective identity. Rather than racially lumping binaries or combinations, I make the case that communities with shifting and contested categories can and do in fact form coherent political identities and communities. At the same time, my study problematizes this tendency to also generalize the experiences of one combination of multiracial identity to that of the entire multiracial population because of the limitations it poses on our understanding about how complex multiracial identities operate.

3.2 | METHODS

In order to provide more focused and deeper individual perspectives on the formation of multiracial identities, I chose to share the experiences in six central interviews (3 women and 3 men) out of approximately 100 interviews conducted for this study.³ The six participants represent a unique subpopulation of the multiracial population in that they are what I call “generational bridgers.” They are all in their mid-to late twenties; an age conveniently nestled outside of the younger school age and college-bound population, and that of older cohort of multiracial people who more than likely lived in a generation of interesting (and perhaps extreme) racial climate. Their stories are interwoven with several salient themes that encapsulate each of the research questions taken up in this dissertation. Together, these participants represent a diverse combination of intersecting identities, geographic backgrounds, and relationship to the subject matter. It is also due to these early interviews that a working term and definition for “multiracial” was eventually developed for this dissertation. By juxtaposing the different experiences of each individual, I hope to illustrate where the experiences of

multiracial people of different combinations demonstrate the possibility of a collective political identity.

The individuals who agreed to be interviewed for the study volunteered because they met at least one of the following criteria: 1) self-identify as a person with two or more racial or ethnic categories (i.e., “multiracial”); 2) a transracial adoptee; 3) a partner in an interracial union; 4) a parent or legal guardian of multiracial child/ren; 5) a person or representative of an organization that has an invested interest in multiracial experiences and discourse. Participants were selected from among these five designated populations over the duration of this study without discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, class, ability and sexuality to participate. The range of questions which helped to guide my interviews was geared toward two types of respondents—those who self-identified as a combination of multiple heritages and those who have a in/direct relationship with this population of study.

The interviews serve several purposes in this analysis. First, I seek to create a dialogue beyond the monoracial discourse of discussing race and ethnicity in neatly, fixed “one-race” categories; second, to provide an opportunity for multiracial people whose backgrounds are comprised of different combinations a voice to express their distinct experiences and needs as a unique *part of* and *separate* experience from that of other multiracial people; third, through centering their experiences, to engage in where different combinations that make up their multiracial identity may be in contestation and harmony with one another at the personal and public levels; and last, to suggest how society can learn how to move progressively forward with race relations by understanding the experiences of different multiracial people who often deal with racial

integration as a daily reality, simultaneously in their one body. Through understanding how multiracial people experience their identity formation differently and how the voices of different combinations within this population need to be heard, what can we learn about how race is constructed and often, imposed by society? How then do people who self-identify as multiracial negotiate a balance between their multiple heritages simultaneously? In essence, my study significantly challenges pre-existing ideas or myths about what a multiracial identity entails. It speaks to many audiences, across disciplines and across identity backgrounds, in order to create a space for the subgroups that are included in the umbrella term, multiracial, to raise, argue, explain and/or debate for themselves.

3.3 | PARTICIPANT SKETCHES

All of the first names being referred to in this analysis are pseudonyms of the people I interviewed. The six participants will be known as, Jordan, Marissa, Triston, Rolanda, Dakota, and Anastasia. It is noteworthy to mention that many of them were quite adamant about wanting me to use their real names, as they believed their names served as a reflection of their multiracial identities. However, I have elected for the purpose of continuity and anonymity to use pseudonyms, except in one instance where an actual last name was used to illustrate a point someone wanted to make about their multiracial identity being reflected through their specific culture. Outside of the pseudonyms used, I also decided to leave the terminology that my participants shared as part of their self-identification in exactly the way they worded it to me in the interview. Even if I personally did not subscribe to their choice in terms, I kept their self-identified terms and experiences authentic to the exact way they described them.

Rolanda

Rolanda and I met through her partner, an African American woman whom I had the pleasure of sitting with on a panel at two academic conferences in 2003 and 2005. At the time of this interview, Rolanda had just completed medical school and was preparing to do her residency. We conducted our interview in a Mexican restaurant with her partner, and later we continued talking and walking in a downtown marketplace in Ames, Iowa. Rolanda shared that she had few opportunities before speaking with me to fully discuss her multiracial identity more openly. She found this interview experience one in which she could reflect on her upbringing and allow her partner to hear more about the experiences she faced as a multiracial woman. Rolanda grew up in the suburbs of the San Fernando Valley in California where she was raised with her younger brother and her mother. She self-identifies as “Half British and Half Filipino, first generation American.”

Triston

I was introduced to Triston through another multiracial participant who is not included in this particular analysis. At the time, Triston was a third year law student at the University of Southern California preparing to move to Hawaii with his fiancée after graduation. Triston is originally from El Paso, Texas where he spent most of his upbringing before entering the Navy, and pursuing graduate school. Triston contacted me as a result of learning that his friend had recently interviewed for my study. He admitted that what made him so interested to contact me was that he realized he might never be asked to participate in such a study because everyone always thought he “looked White”. Instead, he felt he needed to volunteer because he had a lot to share about his own

experiences, which he believed might actually serve as he put it, “a therapeutic outlet”. Triston self-identifies as “Mexican American, Anglo American and Multiethnic.”

Marissa

Marissa was originally just a friend who was present at lunch interview with another a participant who wanted her there for support. As a result of being there, she ended up consenting to being part of the interview as well. I include her in this analysis because she represents a unique subpopulation in the multiracial community as a person who can trace at least three or four generations of interracial couples and multiracial individuals in her family’s history; a subpopulation that inextricably changed my initial definition of what “multiracial” constituted as the study began. Marissa is originally from Annapolis, Maryland from a long lineage of elite African-American families in the area. She shared that her family is well known for purposely marrying interracially in order to maintain “light-skin” in their lineage. The legacy continues today, as all of her living relatives would be considered “light skinned with good hair” as she remarks. Marissa also attended the University of Maryland at College Park as a medical student. When asked how she self-identifies, she described herself as “Light skinned Black; third generation Black, Cherokee Native American, and White mixed.”

Dakota

I met Dakota under an interesting set of circumstances back in 2003 and 2004 when I was residing in Hollywood, California. Dakota and I were neighbors in the same 8-unit complex for almost an entire year before we had ever introduced ourselves to one another. One week I had noticed a brand new silver convertible donning the license plate ‘IM HAPA’ in the parking space where Dakota’s former car covered in Hawaiian

hibiscus decals once parked. He came to Los Angeles to begin his new clothing line as an up-and-coming fashion designer, already dressing the likes of Mary J. Blige, Gwen Stefani, and other celebrity rhythm and blues and pop artists. I first interviewed Dakota at a location he suggested, Fred 62 in Los Feliz, California. It is a hipster café hangout known for its diverse clientele and unsuspecting ambience. The servers are adorned with shirts that read, “Jesus is Our Dishwasher,” “We Serve Crackers,” and “Fred 62 is Black Owned.” Choosing this place told me a lot about Dakota’s energy and open-minded personality. When asked how he self-identifies, Dakota said that he was “multiracial” first, and further specified that he was “Japanese-Hawaiian, Irish, American Indian, Half Asian, Half White, Mutt, Hapa Houli.”

Anastasia

Anastasia and I met in 2004 when I presented work in Albuquerque, New Mexico at the First Annual Mixed Race H/E/R Conference.¹ After announcing that I was interviewing participants for this research study, Anastasia came up to me after my presentation eagerly willing to volunteer. She was a doctoral student at the University of New Mexico in the Gender Studies Department. Anastasia admitted that she had never spoken openly about her mixed race background before, much the same way others I have interviewed shared. It was not until after my presentation on the exoticization and commodification of multiracial women’s bodies that she claimed she had felt inspired to share her experiences once and for all. We decided to conduct the interview at one of Anastasia’s favorite local restaurants in downtown Albuquerque while I was still in town for the conference. Anastasia said she openly self-identifies as “a lesbian woman of mixed Chicana, White and Mexican” heritages.

Jordan

I first met Jordan through a Chicago colleague on the executive board of Association of MultiEthnic Americans in 2005. Jordan had just moved to Los Angeles from Chicago when we conducted the interview on the balcony of his Santa Monica apartment. My colleague suggested I contact him for my study given his diverse multiracial experiences as both a transracial adoptee of mixed Black and White heritage. Jordan had just recently graduated from the University of Cincinnati a semester prior and later decided to move to L.A. to pursue a career in modeling and acting with an elite international modeling agency. He grew up in Oak Park, Illinois, a suburb outside of Chicago, which is a historically unique neighborhood populated by multiracial families made up of interracial couples and White families adopting children of different races, ethnicities, and nationalities. Jordan was transracially adopted by a middle-class White family, along with his non-biological sister. To my surprise, he shared that he comes from an open adoption and knows both of his birthparents. He claims this contributed to a more positive adoptee development in his upbringing compared to his peers. Jordan self-identifies as “Afro-Deutsche, Black and German.”

3.4 | CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES DEFINING MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY

One of the common explanations as to why the definitions for the term multiracial have been defined differently is due to *clarity* in research. Many researchers choose not to go into the complexities associated with all of the different combinations of multiracial identity, no less acknowledging them, for the sake of simplification in a set of already complex methods of empirical research. Many choose instead to align their terms with longstanding census classifications to maintain this consistency. Most restrict to certain

binaries, particularly those combinations of black and white heritage. Kerry Ann Rockquemore and David Brunsma (2001) articulate the difficulty with the multiracial term in *Beyond Black: Biracial Identity in America*:

While we recognize that researchers have focused on a variety of different groups and racial combinations under the overarching conceptual term multiracial, this variation has produced a lack of clarity. When combined with the use of widely discrepant measures, drawing generalizations and comparisons across studies is extremely difficult. Therefore, we review only studies that have black/white biracial participants.⁴

Here we observe the term multiracial being used interchangeably with the term “biracial” to specifically denote a black and white combination. The title alone is misleading in that there are two assumptions: first, that the text was about *biracial* people, not *multiracial*; and second, that it was going *beyond* the black/white binary to discuss biracial identity in America. While Rockquemore and Brunsma point out the difficulty of comparisons across different groups of multiracial experiences, they still limit their study to only one combination among so many others. They assume the black and white experience is the best to generalize to all others without explanation.

Furthermore, Rockquemore and Brunsma criticize the usage of the term multiracial over biracial to make the case that empirical research requires simplification.

One of the difficulties facing the debate over a multiracial category is the question of labels and terminology. To conduct empirical research on biracial identity, we had to first answer the following questions: (a) Who is biracial? (b) What does this term mean? (c) Is biracialism a one-generation or multigenerational phenomenon? And (d) What racial combinations should be considered? We chose to answer these questions by focusing on individuals who have one self-identifying black biological parent and one self-identifying white biological parent. In other words, we excluded anyone who is adopted, anyone whose parents racially self-identify as multiracial, and/or anyone who may be biracial but whose parents are not black and white. (ix)

Noteworthy to mention here is the language where race and biology are worded together (i.e., “black biological parent”, “white biological parent”). On the one hand, the stated races may simply indicate the monoracial identities of each participant’s parents from which they were indeed biological born, and not adopted. However, this study is not aiming to be a comparative study between “biracial” people of biological and adoptive parents. On the other hand, one could question whether in the case of a monoracial study of identity whether or not the same language would be employed. It seems less likely that a researcher conducting a study on monoracial identity would feel the need to say “two Black biological parents” or “one self-identifying Black biological parent and another Black biological parent.” They might instead just say, “biological parents” since the assumption would be their parents are both Black (in a monoracial study). This is another subtle example where terms of biology are evoked whenever the topic of multiracial identity is the focus of analysis.

Even when some researchers try to refute using the black and white binary, the term multiracial is still used to denote any individual with at least one Black parent. Jon Michael Spencer (1997) demonstrates this point in *The New Colored People: The Mixed Race Movement in America*.

So this book addresses Americans of mixed-race parentage and the Multiracialists who wish for mixed-race people to join ranks under the racial rubric of multiracial. But my central target for this book is the group of people I sometimes refer to in shorthand as ‘mixed-race blacks’—for instance, people of immediate black-white, black-Asian, and black-Native American parentage. (xii)

He goes on to explain that the term multiracial in America has often been coded as those individuals who specifically have Black and White parentage, claiming this is due to the lingering “one-drop of black blood” rule that still impacts the discourse in the present

day. As I reveal later, this is only partially true because there is evidence in the history of the census that multiracial people were defined beyond this paradigm, to also include Native American and White heritage, and less known tri-racial designations. Although Spencer does urge others to expand the binaries to incorporate other groups, he positions Black identity as the most prominent through which to understand multiracial identity. It seems that while scholars refute that multiracial people should not necessarily be held up to the historical one-drop rule, they inadvertently reinscribe the rule in their study nonetheless.

This elicits another example of hegemonoracial ideology, but through the guise of a multiracial study. By this I suggest that a monoracial Black identity is privileged as the singular entity through which to understand as Spencer puts it, an identity of “black-white, black-Asian, and black-Native American parentage.” The ordering in which “black” appears before the hyphen for each of the combinations he outlines is problematic for one important reason in particular. Although I agree there has been a prevailing and (un)conscious racial order in society where the black and white binary has been most recognizable over the course of U.S. history, it has not been the only one (Kim 1999, 2000). From this perspective it seems that without interchanging the order, he is fixing the Black category rigidly in that paradigm limiting our understandings of the many layers of multiracial identity formation that exist. In Chapter 3, my study of interviews addresses the ways in which race, space, and place can shift how multiracial people experience their racial identities, not just race itself. The location they may have grown up, the absence of a particular racialized parent, or the cultural competency the parent holds about the world and other can impact racial meanings adopted by their

multiracial offspring. To use Spencer's term "black-Asian" for example, three different people with this parentage (and for the sake of simplicity, let us assume they are identical triplets and were put up for adoption), will not experience life through monoracial Black identity the same if one lives in Brooklyn, New York with a Black family, in Alabama with a White family, and in Hawaii with a Japanese family. Therefore, I purposely interchange the order of racial categories in my work that make up a multiracial identity to show the fluidity of making racial meanings from these identities (even if just as a visual representation on paper).

In *More Than Black?: Multiracial Identity and the New Racial Order*, G. Reginald Daniel (2002) argues that using the term "multiracial" to only denote those individuals with at least one black parent is not sufficient as we move into a more diverse society.

The issues surrounding multiracial identity in the United States are not, however, limited to the experience of individuals of predominantly African American and European American descent. And during the past decade the adequacy of the black-white paradigm for understanding the past, the present, and particularly the future of U.S. race relations has been challenged from many quarters. Nevertheless, there are several salient reasons for focusing specifically on the significance of multiracial identity as it relates to the construction of racial blackness.⁵

Similar to Daniel, this dissertation challenges the notion that multiracial identity must always be limited to discussions of black and white. He assures his reader that "unless otherwise indicated, therefore, the words 'mulatto,' 'multiracial,' and 'biracial' are used interchangeably in this book to refer to individuals of predominantly European American and African American descent, although other backgrounds—particularly Native American—may be included in their lineage."⁶ My study is significant in that it

challenges the current discourse on continuing to apply outdated rules of biology vis-à-vis “black blood” or other forms of biological demarcation as being a prerequisite for multiracial identity.

In my research, I am conscious not to limit certain subgroups that I believe make up the multiracial population by arbitrarily adopting rules that are historically bounded by U.S. standards. This is important because the world is increasingly becoming more global, to the extent that research I have collected hints at a growing discussion about the potential of diasporic multiracial identities forming across continents. Though it falls outside the parameters of this project at this time, this issue deserves some mention here because it gets us to start looking ahead to think about whether or not those multiracial individuals in America, who may or may not be similarly affected by the historical and contemporary one-drop rule classification, relates to experiences elsewhere. Defining the multiracial population is thus even more complex when factoring in international experiences as David Parker and Miri Song (2001) illustrate in *Rethinking Mixed Race*. The term “mixed race” itself carries loaded political meanings in England that are not always in line with a multiracial experience in the U.S. “For here the word is associated with paternalistic governmental strategies of the 1970s and 1980s. However, British dismissals of the prefix ‘multi-’ in ‘multiracial’ may be premature. They fail to recognize the distinct relationship between the multiracial and the multicultural in the USA. The ‘multi-’ prefix is used to index a more radical racial pluralism that goes beyond a simple black/white binary”.⁷ In this context, multiracial is defined here as being globally inclusive of different combinations aside from the U.S. black/white paradigm in

order to engage the experiences of multiracial people whose identities are affected by other places and other national histories.

Like Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002) who state they “acknowledge the fact that terminology simply does not exist to describe the multiracial population,” I explain earlier that I have elected to use the term “multiracial” to frame my study and to engage in the current discourse with the intention of challenging this limited terminology in the long run. I also then refer to multiracial people throughout this analysis as people of “multiple heritages” or “multiple parentage”, “mixed race,” or some other delineation I specifically point out. For example, when referencing statements participants have made during interviews, I keep the language consistent with the terms the other person has chosen to use so as not to impose my own set of terms and definitions on their self-identifications. Unlike Rockquemore and Brunnsma who primarily focus on “people who have one black and one white parent who may racially identify themselves in a variety of different ways,”⁸ I am inclusive of any and every combination that exists, not just black and white, to define the multiracial population.

As I stated in Chapter 1, at the individual level, multiracial describes a person who either internally self-identifies with two or more socially constructed racial or ethnic categories, and/or is a person whose identity is externally identified and imposed as such.⁹ Included in this definition are individuals whose past or immediate heritage comprises different racial or ethnic groups here and abroad (i.e., Creoles, Brazilians, South African so-called Coloureds), as well as, individuals referred to as transracial adoptees. This latter subgroup represents individuals who often report assuming two or more racial identities—the racial identities of their adoptive parents in combination with

their own socially constructed racial identity(ies). More and more adopted children grow up feeling connected to their adopted parents race, but struggle with understanding that they are of a different race and are torn between these two identities, much like the experiences of other multiracial families (Root 1996).

In recent years, the influx of multiracial literature on transracial adoption has been monumental. Hawley Fogg-Davis (1997) describes transracial adoption as “an indispensable resource not only for those contemplating adoption across racial lines, but also for those interested in reexamining the ways in which our current racial classification systems affect racial identity construction, our notions of the family dynamic, and what elements are best deliberated when determining the placement of a child in adoption policy”.¹⁰ Pinpointing what exactly constitutes a “legitimate family” invokes the question if whether or not race should play a factor when assessing family “compatibility” with regard to adoptive placement procedure. Society must reexamine preconceived notions of what “race” means on both political and personal levels, and be cautious about how this reexamination of race affects the identity development of adopted youth from transracial placements. After interviewing some of the leading transracial adoption agents and attorneys in the United States and the families they serve, I have found that transracial adoptees undoubtedly expand the current discourse on multiracial identity formation and consequently, should be incorporated into the larger multiracial population. Interestingly enough as one transracial adoption attorney shared in one interview, many adoptees that are given up for adoption and being placed transracially are disproportionately multiracial. Among those who are adopted after white children are adopted first are multiracial children.¹¹

Including transracial adoptees into my overall analysis on defining multiracial identity is essential for four main reasons. First, this subgroups evokes biology with a purpose that is not racially situated; something other scholars as I have already illustrated, have not acknowledged straightforwardly. In other words, this is one of, if not the only excusable time, in which biology should be involved in the discussions about multiracial identity because the identities of transracial adoptees heavily involve a connection adoptees feel with their non-biological parents. These individuals seem to learn about their own racial and ethnic identity from those outside of their “original” racial and ethnic groups, and as result, adopt an identity indicative of multiracial people of known biological parents. The second reason it is important to include transracial adoptees is because it is an emerging subgroup that is garnering a lot of attention in contemporary times. More and more people are adopting children here and abroad that presumably are of another race or ethnicity. My research shows that individuals and their families find solace and refuge in the civically engaging activities sponsored by multiracial organizations across the country.

The last reason I incorporate transracial adoptees into my framework of multiracial identity because the particular differences in appearance of these transracial families, coupled with cultural differences within multiracial and interracial families encourage members of these families to address issues regarding race and identity with greater frequency. By bringing these communities together to form a larger multiracial population, the complexities of multiracial identity formation become more apparent through these different experiences. Overall my working definition for the term “multiracial” enables me to engage in a more fluid and holistic discussion about this

population that is not bound by black-white binaries, biological explanations about race, or (un)conscious forms of excluding subgroups that make up this identity. This is demonstrated in Chapter 3 where I integrate the experiences of transracial adoptees within the experiences of what many would consider “traditional” understandings of multiracial identity. Opposed to doing a separate study on transracial adoptees, a separate study on Black and White, Asian and Mexican, and other combinations, I attempt to study all of their experiences cross-racially to show the dynamic and multiplicative layers of complexity in understanding the multiracial population.

Altogether, the aforementioned literature on multiracial identity and the work I discuss herein can be understood best as balancing contradiction on the one hand, as it simultaneously struggles to carve out a space of significance in academia for this segment of the population, while at the same time being limited to re-inscribing many of the same principles and problems it attempts to disavow just in order to engage in the discourse. Focusing on multiracial identity as a point of departure to theorize race helps us to push the rigid racial boundaries and definitions about race that continue to ill-prepare many of us in society from handling, no less, discussing at this time. As the next section will reveal, the potential failure to acknowledge the limited ways multiracial identity has evolved over the course of history through the U.S. census and concurrent racial and ethnic theories, fails to move the discourse beyond conceptions, definitions, and classification of multiracial identity reminiscent of pre-2000 census politics. Hence, the premises underlining the Politics of Being Multiracial becoming ever more apparent.

3.5 | PARENTAL AND GUARDIAN INFLUENCE

The “Presence” of Parents and Guardians

Among the various factors that could deeply impact the identity development and diverse experiences faced by a multiracial individual, the presence of the parents and/or guardians in his or her life is among one of the most influential. When I speak of “presence” here, I am referring to all that is *present* and which the parent brings with them—from their culture, from the foods they prepare, from the community/ies they raise their children, and even from passing on a mere last name. In the past decade, studies have begun to explore the complexities that often come with parenting children of multiple heritages (Forehand and Kotchick 1996; Root 1997; Radina and Cooney 2000; Hitlin, Brown, Elder 2006). In my study, I found that individuals believe their parents to have an intentional and/or unintentional influence how they lived and confronted their experiences by the presence or absence of their parent in their lives.

Initially, I discovered that more than three-quarters of the participants in my study self-identified in three particular ways: 1) in accordance to how their “more marginalized”, or rather, “minority” parent self-identified, if applicable; 2) by how the majority of those living in their racial and ethnic communities labeled them based on other factors, such as phenotype; 3) or, by blending a combination of their parents heritages to create a name to represent them simultaneously. Presented in Chart 1 are the answers each participant gave when asked how they self-identified racially and ethnically.¹² Again, these are the actual terminologies they chose to describe themselves during their interviews.

TABLE 3: Participants Reported Self-Identification

Name	Self-Identification
Jordan	“Afro-Deutsche, Black and German”
Marissa	“Light skinned Black; Third Generation Black, Cherokee Native American and White Mixed”
Triston	“Mexican American, Anglo American and Multiethnic”
Rolanda	“Half British and Half Filipino”; “First generation American”
Dakota	“Multiracial”; “Japanese-Hawaiian, Irish, American Indian”; “Half Asian, Half White, Mutt, Hapa Houli”
Anastasia	“Mixed Chicana; White and Mexican”

Together, the demographic range of racial and ethnic backgrounds are quite diverse in this smaller subset of the larger multiracial population. Some of the terms creatively link their racial and ethnic combinations through hybrid set of terms (ex: Afro-Deutsche) and more culturally specific language (ex: Hapa Houli, Mixed Chicana), while others prefer hyphenations (ex: Japanese-Hawaiian), numerical designations (ex: Half Asian, first and third generations), or a comprehensive list of monoracial categories. Terms such as “multiracial,” “mixed,” and “multiethnic” were also commonly mentioned as terms used for self-identification.

Not surprisingly, many people preferred to identify with the heritages of their parents in some form or another as a show of respect and honor toward them. When I asked Rolanda why she specified ethnicity in her self-identification as “Half British” instead of the constructed category “White”, she responded:

Rolanda: Um, so she [my mother] says she’s British because her parents are Scottish, but she grew up in England. So that’s like a phrase that she taught me to use. So to honor that, I say British.

Overall, the interviews revealed that those individuals who were mixed race with “white” parentage often leaned oppositely towards the identity of their “minority” parent. For

example, while growing up, Triston self-identified only with his father's Mexican American heritage.

Triston: Well my mom... um, is Anglo descent. So Anglo-American and then my dad is Mexican American. He's aaaa... first or second generation. So... that... that's how the term has come to be known through me... I always say I'm Mexican. I think only until recently, I didn't even consider to say I'm "Multiethnic".

His experience demonstrates the disconnect between earlier public policy in the census schedules discussed in Part I regarding the application of the maternal descent rules despite the preferred self-identification of a multiracial person. In Triston's case, he would have been classified as White American on the 1980 and 1990 censuses, and in 2000, marked as "Hispanic, non-white" because he had not adopted a multiethnic identification by then.

Another issue the aforementioned stories present is that individuals who negotiate 'whiteness' as part of their identities have a unique relationship to it (Twine 1996; Storrs 1999; Rockquemore and Brunσμα 2001; Winters and DeBose 2003). Among the individuals in my study, I found there to be a contradiction between individuals who believe it to be most appropriate to self-identify solely with the minority parent's heritage over completely rejecting identification with their white parent's heritage. In Marissa's case where the last four generation of grandparents in her family history was knowingly of multiple black and white heritages, her family influenced how she self-identified because the majority of them also identified as such.

Marissa: Okay, um. Right... um, I identify as Black. Um, I sometimes identify as light skinned Black in particular. Um, because of the community I grew up in, like, well it was mostly my relatives, but just everybody in that community with the very... not everybody, but the majority of people were also light skinned, Black. And so sort of, in some way it's a category that is recognized in some places and not others.

Some of the underlying issues that cause many multiracial people to distance themselves from their white heritage may have a lot to do with the tenets explored when studying “whiteness” itself. As Birgit Brander Rasmussen’s (2001) compilation of scholarly essays in *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness* illustrate, “the visibility of whiteness (or the lack thereof); the “emptiness” of whiteness as a category of identification; and conceptions of whiteness as a structural privilege, a harbinger of violence, or an institutionalization of European imperialism,” is enough to cause many like Marissa, Triston, and even Rolanda, from accepting the white label of racial identification.

In Dakota’s situation where the heritages of both of his parents consist of socially marginal groups—Japanese Hawaiian, Native American-Irish—he embraced both of his parents heritages by self-identifying as “multiracial”, instead of rejecting one or more over the others.

Dakota: I think the fact I am multiracial *is* [emphasis] the main, key factor why I did not choose. I did not choose between one or the other, because... that would be almost like choosing one (parent) over the other. It would almost be like accepting one culture, or one religion, over the next, and I didn’t want to do that personally, because I didn’t want my parents to feel differently and I didn’t want myself to feel like I gave up on something other than what I am, because that’s still what I am. So it was bad for me not to choose either, but... at the same time, it was a means for me to accept both, but still do my own thing.

Notice that Dakota understands racial and ethnic identity to be an individual choice that he believes carries social implications that affect the public sentiments of his personal identity. In this case, the public sentiments are held by the culture of his parents and their religious affiliations. This is also evidence of the intersection of private and public sentiments that impact the choices of identification imposed on the multiracial self.

Jordan, who believed the umbrella term “multiracial” to be too limiting, developed his own terminology to self-identify with his birthparents’ backgrounds.

Jordan: Uh... I say I'm Afro-Deusche. Some people don't understand what that means, like, (in a high pitched voice) "Afro-Dutch, what is that?" So I explain that it's like Black and German, and they're like, oh, okay. ... Yeah, society sees me as Black. Um, but that... that doesn't matter. Yeah, I say I'm Afro-Deusche. I... I say I'm Jordan really. Like, I really don't care, like, what ethnicity I am.

Interestingly enough, Jordan, who was transracially adopted into a White family when he was two weeks old, somehow was still able to foster a positive sense of his multiracial identity. This "somehow" here that I speak of relates specifically to his adoptive parents influence in his life in fostering what he claims is a healthier conception of his multiracial identity; something that I refer to next as Parental Cultural Competency.

Parental Cultural Competency

Studies show that the mere physical existence of a parent in a multiracial child's life is not enough to build a positive multiracial identity, but the cultural cues the parent imparts makes every bit of difference, herein referred to as parental cultural competency. Parental Cultural Competency refers to when one or both parents or legal guardians of a multiracial or transracially adopted child is able to exhibit the socially acceptable understandings of what it means to be a member of a particular culture or community (Baden and Steward 2000; Coard et. al. 2004; Griffith et. al. 2006). They provide their children with the means to feel confident in any one of their racial communities by various means, such as attending cultural gatherings, teaching applicable languages and cues, and staying on top of a set of modern events that help their children negotiate a more balanced identity. All of the people who were interviewed in this analysis, with the exception of Rolanda, have parents (biological and adoptive) who are still married and both living. Rolanda's experience is interesting because she lost her father who was

Filipino at an early age, and somehow, she was still able to embrace both of her heritages simultaneously without his physical presence in her life.

Rolanda: My dad died when I was thirteen. So, that connection... that direct link into the culture was taken away from me. Um, so I think that um, I think I've worked hard to maintain it through my cousin, through my best friend, um, but you know, definitely moving through the world, basically as White. You know, always known I've... that I was Filipino and that's how I act and carry myself, etc., but that's how and what people see me.

She credits her mother for maintaining this parental cultural competence to ensure that she still had this connection she longed for from her Filipino heritage. Rolanda shared that even though the Filipino family functions that she once enjoyed as a child somewhat shifted due to her father's passing, her identity as Filipino still remained in tact.

Rolanda: I... I don't, I think for me... the way I identify as Filipino has always been constant. It's, how much access I have to feeding my roots, that's what's changed since my dad has died. ... the family connection wasn't there. And actually one thing I was talking about... about yesterday, um, my mom is British but she's worked very hard also to keep me Filipino. She's the one who is still in touch with that family. She knows all the family stories. She knows more about my second and third cousins than I do. And she goes to weddings, funerals, baptisms... you know, maintains that connection.

From other informal discussions I have had with other multiracial people over the years, if they shared that they lost a part of their heritage due to a divorce or death of a parent, it was due to the fact that the living parent or the parent they lived with was not actively engaged in providing a culturally competent experience that reflected their heritages. This is an example where multiracial individuals grow up with less of a simultaneous identity, skewing disproportionately toward one heritage over another.

In Jordan's case where neither of his adoptive parents reflected his birthfather's Black heritage, he explains how others have often questioned his multiracial identity.

Jordan: I'll talk to some Black parents, um, and they'll be like, "Well, you know, don't, don't you miss out on your culture?" Like, yooour (emphasized) culture. Having White parents. Noooo. What's... what's my culture? You know, like, just 'cause... just 'cause I'm Black... say I'm just Black. Just 'cause I'm Black... it... I... I'm only supposed to eat soul food? I'm not supposed to eat, uh, Korean food, or, or, or Mexican food... or African food? You know, it's like, you're American. You live in this, this planet. Why not try everything? Why not eat everything? So, for someone to say hey, you know, your parents are White. You're missing out on your culture. What, I'm supposed to only celebrate Kwanzaa... nooo.

Based on his response here, three particular observations come to mind. First, we understand that his parents have actively given him the confidence to respond if and when other people challenge his multiple racial identities as "authentic." Second, we witness Jordan simultaneously balancing his position between his multiracial combination of Afro-Deutsche heritage. Last, we observe his connection to other racial experiences outside of his prescribed socially constructed categories, demonstrating the potential to build a more comprehensive identity with other racial experiences.

He goes on to explain that his adoptive parents competently provided cultural experiences that did in fact reflect his multiple heritages.

Jordan: I started to embrace the biracialness thanks to my parents and they, they really kind of enforced, not enforced but um, they supported me being black and white instead of just black or... whatever. They gave me biracial pride and umm, I've kind of just harnessed that and, you know, some people don't understand that and some do. Having my sister¹³ and I has really just changed their perspective on, on how segregated things were in the media, commercials, and print ads and all that other stuff. If I was never in the house, they'd still have books around with interracial stuff. You know, my mom would still have the United Benetton of Colors ads up on the wall because it's really diverse... she didn't do that to educate us. She did that because she thought that was right (emphasis) and that's kind of rubbed off.

His comments also address longstanding beliefs that monoracial adoptive parents (most often White) are incapable of fully understanding, raising, and fostering a connection to

the culture for their presumably child of color. Leslie Stein and Janet Hoopes (1985) in *Identity Formation in the Adopted Adolescent* explain that the evidence they found in their twenty-five year long history of studying adoptive families and adopting children themselves suggests “that adoptive status in and of itself, is not predictive of heightened stress among adolescents . . . as a group, the adolescent adoptees were doing quite well.”¹⁴ I believe this again, has much to do with the type of competency the adoptive parents have, not only in terms of adoption issues, but transracial competency as well.

Unfortunately, although this was the experience that Jordan shared about growing up, this did not mirror the experiences of other people in my study.¹⁵ When I finally sat down to interview Anastasia, there were several moments when she could no longer fight back her tears, which most often had to do with her parents’ lack of cultural competence about her experiences as a multiracial person.

Anastasia: I think that they knew I looked different, but they didn’t know why. And so, growing up, like I remember distinctly like, in first and second grade, that the Mexican kids would call me “nigger lips.” That was what I got called. Straight up. So then going home to tell my mom, that this was happening, um, my mom, like, no context. Had no context for it, would just be like, “Are you sure that that’s what they were really telling you?” It was just like, total denial about what was going on.

In response to her mother’s inability to address her concerns, Anastasia had to negotiate and rely on her own limited cultural competency, but through the negation of her own identity. This is reflected in the following response where it is evident that even in her adult years, it is still difficult to comprehend and articulate.

Anastasia: Um, so, and I remember being really... and I remember this... being really confused about like, knowing that they were calling me a name to be mean, but also having this belief that like, being Black wasn't wrong. That, and I knew that that wasn't what I was, but that they were trying to make that seem like it was a bad thing. But that, you know... it's like, so try... and, and yet I couldn't, I didn't have like, my... there wasn't a place for me to talk about that. Because when I went home to my mom, like she'd dismiss it so that I didn't talk about it with my dad.

Triston shared similar experiences as Anastasia, but does so about both parents.

Triston: No... I think... my parents... you know, obviously they've been together for a long time, but they're not the most communicative, like... they don't communicate very effectively sometimes. I don't think that's something they ever chose to discuss. It's more like an underlying tone. Like, my mom never wants me to deny the fact that I'm Anglo, or my Irish heritage and my dad's kind of... it's funny my dad, um, doesn't really... (giggles) he doesn't care one way or the other.

It is interesting to point out that both Anastasia and Triston self-identify with a common Mexican and White combination. The issues they express are also raised by Kevin Johnson (1999) in *How Did You Get to be Mexican?: A White/Brown Man's Search for Identity*. Johnson, a man of Mexican American and Anglo heritages, explains how his life existed within the borderlands between two racial identities and how his mixed heritages helped to further examine issues of assimilation, affirmative action, and other race related contradictions in American society. For Anastasia and Triston, it is obvious that the contradiction both of them faced was the fact that their parents married across racial lines, yet their parents were ill-prepared to deal with their own discomfort to discuss issues of identity that may eventual impact their own children one day.

To clarify what I mean by Parental Cultural Competency, the argument here is not that all parents in multiracial families should automatically have the cultural *know-how* to address every issue that their multiracial child may come across in their experiences. This would be unrealistic for any parent, regardless of the type of family. However, there is a

lot to say for parents who are part of interracial families that raise children, yet who either ignore the stark racial climate that exists in our society or who do not at least actively provide an atmosphere in the home where their children can talk openly about their experiences. Parents in interracial unions must heed the discourse on multiracial identity in the privacy of the home to arm their children with the culturally competent tools for a more healthy identity in the long run.

This was witnessed in the case of Marissa's interview where she noted that her family discussed their mixed race family history quite often, even if it brought up issues that were not so positive. On her mother's side of the family, she shared the following:

Marissa: Um, it was discussed a lot. I mean, in some ways, it was just family history. Like, my family was very big on keeping track of family history and you know, we could go back until, either immigration or slavery for, most people in my family. So, people tried to emphasize how things happened and there were stories about, you know... there's some story about a... can't remember how the story... I think a White man who married a Black woman on my mother's side. And, his punishment was he had to... they didn't put him in jail, but he had to build a wall. He had like, forced labor. He had to build part of this wall that's in some park in Baltimore (giggles). So there's stories like that we're always told.

Similarly, her father's family also shares a multiracial history.

Marissa: And on my dad's side, there was a civil war lieutenant, or something, who on the way back after war... he was going to his house... on the way back he married this woman who was half-Black, half-Cherokee. And so, like, there's just all this family lore about this stuff and what all that means.

While the stories may at first appear simplistic and a bit romanticized, they clearly highlight deeper political implications that impacted the lineage of her multiracial family as it pertains to miscegenation, immigration, and slavery. As Steven Selden (1999) examines in *Inheriting Shame: The Story of Eugenics and Racism in America*, we come to understand the privilege of being White and male in Marissa's retelling of her family's

history because it is due to his status as a White person that affords him his life and a punishment of forced labor for marrying a Black and Native American woman. Had it been a Black man during the same era that married a White woman, the end result would have been much different. In fact, the idea of “marriage” would have never been granted in the first place. At the same time, her story is still fascinating on multiple levels in that it situates multiracial identity as something that is not new but with a traceable history.

From Dakota’s perspective, much like Marissa, he also believed his parents were able to competently provide an atmosphere where his multiracial identity could be fostered, as well as other cultures despite the limited knowledge that either one of his parents may have possessed in a particular subject area.

Dakota: They told me to, you know, respect everyone’s beliefs, everything they do, so um, it kind of opened up my horizons, just being able to appreciate other people’s beliefs and everything they stand for. So as far as when I was growing up, um, I couldn’t... that’s like a key factor that I think my parents forged, that if I came home and I was wondering, you know, if someone had this hanging on their walls or they are talking such and such, um, they would either explain it to me or help me better understand it. So regardless of what my parents had as like an upbringing, they wouldn’t shelter me from not accepting others. So, um, they’re educating me on theirs, as well as, other things I was interested in.

Clearly Dakota’s parents fostered a supportive and open environment in which he could ask questions and dialogue about racial difference. One might ask, why is it that Dakota’s parents were able to foster such an egalitarian sense of identity in him and not others? On the same token, can Dakota’s parents be the sole reason for his ability to balance his multiple heritages simultaneously? Dakota was partially raised in Hawaii and according to the Census 2000 statistics reported earlier, Hawaii is the number one state where people self-identify as “multiracial” among total state populations.¹⁶ This suggests that geographic location might impact the identity formation of a multiracial individual.

3.6 | PLACE DOES MATTER

Shifts in defining multiracial identity cannot be attributed to only the multiracial person wanting to identify solely with their “minority” heritage, but it also has much to do with where they were raised and socialized (Renn 2000, 2003; Wright et. al. 2003; Rockquemore, Brunisma, and Feagin 2007). In Figure 9, the demographic profile estimates of each of the cities where the participants were primarily raised are indicated. The figures are based on the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS) data, which provides population estimates every year between each decade of the census since 2006.

Table 4: Self-Reported Descriptions Given By Participants on Where Primarily Raised

Participant	Location(s) Raised	Total Population	Medium Household Income*	White	Black	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian and OPI	Some Othr Race	Latino or Hispanic	2 or More Races
Jordan	Oak Park, IL	51,474	\$109,255	70.4%	12.3%	0.8%	4.4%	0.1%	5.8%	5.7%	2.2%
Marissa	Huntingtown, MD	2,436	\$81,672	79.8%	17.0%	0.4%	0.8%	0.1%	0.3%	0.9%	1.6%
Triston	El Paso, TX	731,496	\$35,637	77.9%	2.8%	0.6%	1.1%	0.1%	15.3%	81.4%	2.1%
Rolanda	San Fernando, CA	24,252	\$50,931	69.3%	0.0%	0.7%	1.0%	0.4%	25.9%	N	2.7%
Dakota	East Los Angeles, CA	120,985	\$36,376	63.5%	0.3%	0.6%	0.7%	0.0%	33.8%	97.8%	1.1%
	Orange, CA	2,985,995	\$75,176	63.0%	1.7%	0.5%	1.6%	0.3%	15.9%	33.2%	2.5%
	Honolulu, HI	903,231	\$68,655	22.6%	3.1%	0.3%	43.8%	8.3%	1.3%	7.8%	20.8%
Anastasia	Phoenix, AZ	1,468,633	\$49,933	77.2%	5.4%	1.9%	2.5%	0.2%	10.9%	42.1%	1.9%

*N denotes data for this geographic location could not be calculated because the ACS deemed the sample size to be too small.
 Median Household Income reported in adjusted 2008 inflation figures
 **Census 2000 figures were substituted when recent data of the geographic area was not available in ACS reports due to limited sample sizes.

The place one is socialized can have a profound impact on ones relationship to their combined racial and ethnic identities. For example, what Triston and Marissa highlight earlier with regard to where they had been raised brings up the important issue of “place” and how the location in which a parent brings up their child can have an impact on their identity. Why does Marissa feel she can only identify as Black or light skinned Black if her family speaks about their generational mixed race history frequently? Why also might Triston have first self-identified as solely Mexican American in his life and then start considering himself “Multiethnic”?

The reason Triston may have first self-identified as Mexican American in his life was not necessarily due to his father's heritage or identifying with the "marginalized" heritage in his combination, but rather because the El Paso community in which he was raised was predominantly Mexican and Mexican American. Arguably this community had a profound influence on how he saw himself and how he was perceived by others.

Triston: I think ultimately, you have to... you have to decide what it is that made you in the first place. And for some people it's community in itself. Some people it's other things, but I think for me it's my community. Like, that's where I identify from. I haven't known anything other than Mexican American community until I've left. And it's only been, in my total life span, I've been outside the Mexican community like, maybe 5 or 6 years. Maybe.

When Triston traveled from El Paso, Texas to Los Angeles, California to begin law school, his Mexican American identity shifted to reflect both of his parents' heritage. Hence he changed his self-identification from Mexican American to Multiethnic, finally incorporating his mother's Anglo identity. As he stated earlier, he is often mistaken as only White in Los Angeles based on his phenotype, which was a striking difference from El Paso where the community knew him and knew his father. Similarly, Anastasia describes this shift in how she self-identified and experienced more of a balance of her multiple heritages when she finally moved from her predominantly Mexican community in Phoenix, Arizona to a more diverse neighborhood in New Mexico. She also questioned whether or not her experiences growing up would have been different had they lived in California where her mother's family lived, opposed to living nearby her father's family in a Mexican suburb of Phoenix. I speculate that her sense of identity would have shifted had she lived in the predominantly White community where her mother is from.

Interestingly, although Rolanda explained that while she lived in a predominantly White community, she lived in close proximity to her father's Filipino family and that gave her an opportunity to balance her heritages.

Rolanda: Um, but in terms of the community I grew up in, I think mostly it was in a White community. But... that's the world that I lived in as a kid. Um, but my Filipino cousins, my dad's brothers family lived five minutes away from us, so that's where my Filipino connections and sense of community comes from.

This close proximity afforded Rolanda a unique experience that enabled her to have a deeper sense of her heritage and larger community connection. Surely her identity would have been impacted had they not lived so close to neighboring Filipino communities. Not to mention, Rolanda grew up in the same community for the majority of her life, which enabled her to consistently embrace a culture she would have been estranged from, especially after the passing of her father.

Dakota on the other hand, constantly moved from one community to another until his family settled back to Hawaii. He moved from an East Los Angeles community that he described as being a predominantly Asian community after middle school to a predominantly White gated community in Orange County, California. He shared that his sense of himself as both a teenager and as a person of multiple heritages was a bit in flux. He felt that neither of these places helped to balance his multiracial identity as much as when he traveled to Hawaii to visit his family

Dakota: (Smiling with eyes open wide) Uh, I used to go there about every 5 to 6 months to visit my brother and my family and my cousins and grandmother! Just... because, when I'm there, it's a whole other story. Like, I'm, it's... it's a vibe that as soon as I get off the plane, I'm automatically happy and I'm not doing anything. It's... it's an energy that I get from that place. So, I love going there.

When he does not have an opportunity to travel to Hawaii, he claims that he feels others treat him differently based on his perceived multiracial identity from east to west coasts.

Dakota: Um, like when I went to New York... (shifts uncomfortably and looks down)... um, every person there thought I was Puerto Rican. Eeevery single person! And um, I didn't take that as an offense. I didn't... I just took it as cool. That's what they're used to seeing. My features may symbolize something in my face relate to as being Puerto Rican and as being whatever, but um, it was a different vibe when I was on the east coast. I mean, I was only there for a short time, but it was completely different than in L.A. Like, whether words were spoken or not, I could just pick up on different people's, um, the energies they were giving off and I have to say, I liked it better because it was more real.

Whether the people on the east coast can be seen as arguably "more real" or not, the point still remains that depending on where someone multiracial travels or lives, their experiences seem to be different based on how they come to form their identity and how they are perceived or racialized by others. For Dakota, he accepted the labels others placed on him, but he did not internalize them to construct his own multiracial identity. Again, his confidence instilled at an early age through the cultural competency of his parents had remarkably much to do with his continued positive identity formation.

In fact, Rolanda expresses the influence of place best when she explained why her brother's self-identification is different from her own.

Rolanda: I asked him (my brother) recently how he identified as a mixed race person, because I told him I aligned myself more with the Asian community. And he said he aligns himself more with the Latino community. Which is... um, kind of... it was kind of interesting for me to realize that we had different identities in terms of how we walk through the world. But I think a lot of it also has to do with where we've gone with our lives. He's still in Los Angeles, and, that somehow makes sense for me.

As evidenced in her brother's experience, he neither embraces a multiracial, British, or Filipino identity. Instead, the local racial community he lives with in Los Angeles, and the ways in which he is perceived to be a member of that community, allows him to

choose an entirely different identity of his own. This speaks to the dynamic relationship that is unique to the experiences of multiracial people in that phenotype and perceived racial difference can affect identities.

3.7 | PASSING FOR MIXED AND LINGERING ISSUES OF BLOOD QUANTUM

So far, I have reported several findings on the different facets which contribute to a multiracial person's ability to balance (and not balance) their multiple heritages, but what happens when they are confronted with others who do not recognize that they are anything other than one or none of the heritages to which they identify? As indicated earlier in Jordan's experience, for many multiracial people regardless of their combinations, they are often questioned on their "mixed race status", for lack of better terminology. That is, doubt is cast on whether or not select individuals are multiracial at all. This is peculiar because on the one hand, it suggests there is an existing basis or definition from which others can measure another person being multiracial or not. On the other hand, it highlights the complexity to which multiracial people are constantly being physically perceived and defined irrespective of their own self-identifications.

Passing for "Mixed"

This phenomena is what I call, "Passing for Mixed." For clarity, I am not referring to historical and political understanding of passing; that is, passing for "white" and the privileges afforded with particular racial membership (Williams et al. 1997; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2001, 2002; Daniel 2002).¹⁷ Rather, when it comes to this idea within multiracial discourse, "passing for mixed" has to do with a struggle that many face when they declare multiracial identity and their physical characteristics according to society renders them stereotypically otherwise (Rockquemore, Brunsma, and Feagin

2007). This specifically relates to those situations when a multiracial person whose immediate parentage renders them of multiracial identity, however, because society essentially believes physical characteristics of one parent dominated over the other, they are constantly declaring in any way shape or form something which would demonstrate their multiracial-ness. One way of understanding what is being described here is to ask something to the extent, what does it mean to look “White”¹⁸ but self-identify as “multiracial”?

Both Rolanda and Triston explained that at some point, if people were cognizant of their last names, people would question that perhaps they were of multiracial background. However, when I asked them what happened in those cases where people did not know their last name, they recognized that they could easily “pass for White,” not multiracial, and never for the minority community in their combination. For Triston, this becomes another reason he always asserted Mexican American as his identity because his Mexican American heritage was not physically visible.

Triston: If someone would ask my ethnicity, what are you... Mexican American. And they'd be like, “Really, I didn't see that. I, I could tell you were mixed but I, I wasn't sure.”

He explained further how people would even begin to question whether he was Mexican American at all, even in the community in which he had been raised. Similarly, Rolanda remarked that people seldom ask her if she is Filipino, but they never question the fact that she is White.

Rolanda: Um, folks don't usually know what to do with me. They look at me and will often say, “What are you? Italian. German.”

As she explained earlier, she aligns herself more with the Filipino community and larger Asian population. A large part of her self-identification has to do with her feeling she

needs to assert her mixed race identity to society to counteract societal stereotypes and misperceptions about what a multiracial person of Filipino heritage is supposed to look.

Blood and the Lingering Issues of Race-as-Biology Language

In accordance with the overarching argument in this dissertation, I cautioned earlier that race-as-biology and the language that is indicative of this outdated scholarship from prior centuries still lingers by the language that is still used to define racial difference in society. After revisiting my interviews, I was surprised by the casual mentions of the term ‘blood’ with the majority of my participants, including those whose experiences are not included in this particular analysis. It is clear why this is the case given the long history of using blood quantum as a demarcation of multiracial identity as evidenced by the 150 years of census enumerations covered in Chapter 2.

When I followed up a question with Marissa about how she felt hearing stories about the importance of skin gradation in her family history, she responds:

Marissa: And, I mean, that’s a common... you know, almost every Black family that’s been in the United States for a long time has mixed blood. You know. And I think... I mean... Black and Chicano families have that. Like, there’s a lot of mixed blood already in the culture. So there’s already this huge, you know, gradation of color and whatever, um, but I think it was particularly talked about in my family because it was particularly obvious. (Giggling).

She references ‘blood’ twice in the short span of time she responds here. It seems as if an unconscious type of ‘common sense’ attitude is projected by her response to describe her family, and more notably, in biological terms. I did not question her usage as I did not want to affect the natural way in which she comfortably spoke and unquestionably used the terminology.

Similarly, both Jordan and Triston refer to blood as a way to describe an experience where they needed to either define their biological relationship to a family member more clearly. When I asked Triston for simple clarification on the number of siblings he had and their names in order of chronological age, his response is quite revealing.

Triston: I have two. My oldest brother is Jason... who's actually from a different marriage. So, it's... it's kind of funny because he's full Anglo, and he looks entirely different from me. Like, if you look at my brother Jason, he's 6'4. Blonde hair, blue eyes. And then my brother Dustin is 6 foot. Brown hair. Light complected. And then, I'm 5'6. Um, short, dark hair, and I have a tan most of the time. So... like if you look at us, we don't look anything like brothers. So... if we tell somebody on the street, like, no, we're brothers. They'll be like, "You're lying!"

Self: So how old's Dustin?

Triston: Dustin's uh... twenty-eight.

Self: And then, Jason?

Triston: Thirty... thirty-one.

Self: Thirty-one. Okay, so they're both... they're from your dad's... oh, no your mom's...

Triston: (interrupting) My oldest brother Jason is, but my brother Dustin is not. He's my full-blooded brother.

For Jordan, the clarification was necessary to differentiate himself from his own multiracial background and that of his White adoptive mother.

Jordan: You know, my mom is my mom for sure. You know, I don't think of her as my adoptive mother. I don't think of her, um, I don't think of adoption when I see her. You know, she looks nothing like me. She... the things she likes to do are totally different than what I like to do. Um, we don't have a drop of blood the same. But she's mom. Like, I can't... I can't picture anyone else being my mom. Same with my dad. Um... but when you're in a grocery store, people don't know.

While both instances showcase both Triston and Jordan differentiating themselves from certain family members where adoption and siblings through marriage do not evoke a

biological relationship, it was interesting that they framed the discussion in a racialized dialogue. For Triston, he and his brother's phenotype, though sharing a similar biological parent, still made him differentiate blood quantum through the usage of the term "full-blooded." Full blooded is inextricably tied to discussion of race, where it is commonly used to designate how non-multiracial someone is the closer they are to proving supposed blood from one, not two or more, socially constructed racial categories. As for Jordan, his statement "we don't have a drop of blood the same" was specifically used to differentiate his own multiracial identity as an adopted "Afro-Deutche" individual from that of his mother's White racial and ethnic heritage.

3.8 | NEGOTIATING CONTRADICTIONS IN MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY

Outside of the ways in which parents, place, and community influence how many multiracial people learn to balance and choose how they wish to self-identify, it is imperative that we understand how the lived experiences of this population are also negotiated every day, from childhood to adulthood. Similar to other scholars, I also argue the importance that common situations and occurrences that many people who do not self-identify as multiracial take for granted are the same situations that are negotiated within multiracial identity, from the types of food they may have grown accustomed to eating (Root 1999; Renn 2000; Shih et. al. 2007), to concerns of hair (Root 1997; Rockquemore 2002; Gatson 2003), to the different negotiations they make with those they even choose to date (Twine 1996; Downey, Bonica, Rincon 1999; Gillem and Thompson 2004; Roberts-Clark, Roberts, Morokoff 2004). I found that although multiracial people may argue that the every day choices they make are not always tied to a conscious negotiation of their multiple heritages, the choices are still an unconscious

negotiation of racial identity. I feel that among any other areas of my analysis, this part of my research findings benefited from my multiracial insider's status tenfold because I knew to ask about negotiations of food and hair, two vitally important issues that are overlooked in the current discourse on multiracial identity development.

For example, one of the first observations that I made growing up was that my friends were always amazed with the meals my parents prepared for family dinners. It had not occurred to me for quite some time that the types of meals I normally ate and the side dishes that were commonly prepared could have remotely been seen as different or abnormal from other people's typical family meals. Since food reflects a lot about a culture (and not necessarily race or ethnicity specific), I therefore started questioning whether or not other multiracial people grew up eating meals that encompassed dishes that reflected a combination of their multiple heritages. Not only did I find this to be the case but many of the people I interviewed had never noticed that the foods they ate were reflective of their combined heritages either.

Dakota: And my dad never cooked, so, um... I mean, we would eat food from other cultural backgrounds but it was never combined, like you said you would have that because... I mean... I know... actually, I take that back! Cause she would make something called "Tonkatsu Chicken", it's like a breaded chicken. And then she'd have American side dishes, and things like that, you know, like mashed potatoes and corn. And we're like, what the hell is this... there should be rice with this! So, in a sense, I do see how they did mix it.

Overall, it was interesting to bear witness to Dakota who appeared to have an epiphany during the interview on the topic of meals in his household.

However, in Jordan's case, he recalled that although they attempted to prepare diverse meals, it was difficult for his White adoptive parents to incorporate stereotypical African American dishes for him and his sister to eat at home.

Jordan: When I grew up, mom cooked all the dishes. Um, your typical European, meat and potato type dishes. Um, and then dad would cook like, the big feast whenever people came over. This was a little bit later on 'cause dad didn't know how to crack an egg open when they got married. But uhhhh, now that, now that he's three-quarters retired... man, that fool throws doooooown!

On the other hand, he shared that his experiences outside of his homecooked meals reflected the insensitivity of others in understanding his background.

When I was a kid, um, I was there at my friend Andrew's house... and uh, his mom made greeeeens. They were so damn good... I came home and said, (in a high pitched little boy's voice) "Mama, mama... why don't you cook some greens?" (In an exaggerated "White" mother's voice) She was like, "Well, a, dear... um, I really don't know how to make greens."

Despite the fact that Jordan did not grow up with a parent who could cook collard greens, he still made one rather amusing observation that helped him to negotiate and balance his multiple heritages through food. He states it best when he said proudly:

Jordan: Here... here's the number one difference between Black people and White people. Black people use aluminum foil. White people use seran wrap. ... Every time I went to a poetry spot, (in a high pitched, Southern woman's voice) "Can I fix you a plate honey." It had aluminum foil on it somewhere. So I'd come out the place... with a whole bunch of food with aluminum foil of course. Man... first thing you do, you go to a White person's house, (in an exaggerated high nasal voice) "You want some leftovers?" Seran wrap comes out.

Once again, the overwhelming amount of literature on "Black-White" mixed race identity (Helms, 1993; Sollors, 2000; Romano, 2003) does little to demonstrate the negotiation in harmony that takes place in the lives of people like Jordan, especially with regards to every day issues such as food.

Another overlooked issue within multiracial identity formation is the lack of attention on everyday practices such as monoracial parents and their children's multiracial hair. While all my cousins on my father's side were getting their hair braided or put in French rolls, I was always told by others that I could not get these same styles—

it would be a waste of time and money because I would have to wash my hair in two or three days tops. In Jordan's case, he explained that his parents had similar trouble with doing his hair. He and his sister experimented with several styling products in order to balance out how to negotiate what to do with their own hair.

Jordan:Ummmm, hehehehe. They were... they didn't know what to do with it. You know. My mom would pick my hair and she would pick it all gently and stuff. I was like, "Mom, you need to diiiiig up in the roots... you, you need to get that hair out." So it was funny, 'cause this little White lady having fun with the Black people hair and then I was having with the White people hair 'cause you know, you get their hair wet. You can comb it. You get the waves and stuff and I was like, "Wow, that's really cool" (in an exaggerated "nerdy" voice). And my sister and I used to try to put mousse in our hair 'cause you know, we'd see it on TV and we didn't... we didn't know that Black people, Black people hair doesn't take mousse very well. You know, we could slick it back a little bit, but not, not to the extreme where you, you can get Mohawks and stuff like that. So at that stage, there was no, there was no color boundaries.

Although Jordan presents his hair experiences in a joking light, it is important because of the private and public implications. Privately, it points to the cultural competency on the part of the parent who might often assume that what is good for their hair is good for their multiracial child's hair. In turn, depending on the choices they make to remedy this matter, their multiracial child may be teased publically which may further influence how they self-identify over the long run.

For Marissa, she explained that sometimes, hair was emphasized more than she would have wished while growing up and still today in her family. Her discussion of "good" and "bad" hair carries a long (and painful) legacy within African-American history.

Marissa: Actually I had this thing that... at some point I remember when I was growing up thinking I wish I lived in a place where nobody could alter their hair. Where everybody just had their hair and it was just their hair and it wasn't an issue, you know. It's... it's just such a big thing you know. Um, it kind of bothered me... sometimes it just bothered me in the, you know, sitting around the kitchen sink and my mother straightening my hair, like, it hurts and it's a pain in the ass and I was never all that into doing my hair anyway, so it was always this... I mean, it was a gender thing as well as a racial thing, like, dealing with hair. Um... um... I don't know, definitely most of the time growing up I would have been happier if I had good hair, just 'cause you know what I mean?

This legacy of hair in the “Black” community is discussed in Paul Sniderman’s (2002) influential text, *Black Pride and Black Prejudice*. On one hand, hair has been a symbol of pride within Black culture, from afros to braids. At the same time, however, the “types” of hair that exists within the community can bring out a long legacy of prejudice amongst Black people and other communities where hair texture is deeply political.

Unbeknownst to me before I began this study, the conception of good and bad hair stretches beyond Black culture. Dakota shared that he felt his older brother had “better” hair than he possessed because it was more “Asian” than his own. For the past several years, Dakota has resorted to wearing dreadlocks:

Dakota: Um... I have dreads because... I think of dreads... it's kind of weird... I see it not as wisdom, but as something that you can't change. It keeps growing and growing and growing and I know that I relate it in the sense of, of how I am. As I grow and I grow wiser and I become more knowledgeable, my hair is eventually going to get longer and actually I got pictures of, like that people are going to see up until 10 years from now... I'm going to see everything change and my hair is going to be, you know, down to my back, and that's... that's like... I look at it as kind of almost like... the rings of a tree.

He goes on to describe how his hair serves as a reflection of his identity and his growth toward accepting his identity over time.

Like, that entails everything I've been through in the past 10 years. Like, I can change a lot of stuff but for the past 10 years, my hair has entrapped that. It's been me and it's going to be me. And it's a weird way of looking at it, but I see it as a part like, extension of myself. It just that's the way I see the time... because I change my views and you know, my daily life is so crazy. So every day, that's going to pretty much stay with me and it's going to be grounded through me and um, it's kind of like a memory tool.

The emphasis on hair spans across communities alike, and with it carries an essentialist belief of hierarchy in hair types and that certain “types” of hair can be attributable to a particular race or ethnicity. This in many ways mirrors the larger debate about racial hierarchies and the notion that multiracial people fall within a monoracial conception.

3.9 | THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LANGUAGE AND NAMING

All of the first names being referred to in this analysis are pseudonyms of the people I interviewed. However, it is noteworthy to mention that these particular individuals actually consented to the usage of their real names. Some were quite adamant about their names serving as a reflection of their multiracial identities. To ensure they were okay with this, I asked every person several times to make sure, just in case they felt they “had” to do it since I was a “fellow” multiracial person. I have elected for the purpose of continuity and anonymity to use pseudonyms, but one of the last names used is an actual last name of someone interviewed in my study; it is used to illustrate a point they wanted to share about the multiracial identity reflected through naming. Again outside of names used, I also decided to leave the terminology that my participants shared as part of their self-identification in exactly the way they worded it to me in the interview.

Further findings I discovered suggest that multiracial people feel they are constantly balancing language through the ways in which they speak amongst the people in their multiracial backgrounds, and also, on whether or not they can balance the native

languages of their parents, if applicable (Root 1996, 1997; Rockquemore 2002; Gatson 2003). When I tell people my mother is Korean, the first question that always follows is usually, “Do you speak Korean?” That usually tends to be my way *into* the Korean culture since I do in fact know how to read and write Korean, something that many first generation Korean Americans have trouble mastering.

Triston and Anastasia shared similar experiences with consciously balancing their grasp of speaking Spanish and English. Often this negotiation of language continuously has them being challenged. Both added that due to their father’s last names, they felt this also contributed to their multiracial identities because their first names alone were ambiguous, but their last names rendered a Mexican heritage or Spanish speaking identity. Triston shares this sentiment with his Spanish pronounced last name.

Triston: When I was eighteen. One of my first experiences outside of El Paso. It was like, uh, “Triston, how do you say your last name?” I was like, “Cazares”... sounds like “Cah-sahr-dez.” And the “r” is like a “d”... you roll it, so that’s it. That’s how my dad says it. We all say it that way. And he called me on it, he’s like, “You know Triston, don’t you think it’s possible that somewhere along the line, one of your relatives could have pronounced your name wrong?” I was like, “What do you mean?” He’s like, “Well, I just don’t think you’re... you’re supposed to pronounce your name like that.” And I was like, this is a guy from Maryland. He, he took high school Spanish and... that qualified him to tell me how to pronounce my name! I was just a little surprised by that...

Again, Triston is being questioned from multiple directions by the inability of the larger society to understand that his phenotype does not stereotypically match up to his racial background, and then, to their inability to trust his position as an authentic speaker of one of his racial communities.

Dakota, on the other hand, finds that he negotiates language when he changes his diction from “standard” English to a more pigeon dialect when he is amongst other

multiracial Hawaiian people. He says that it “comes out of nowhere” because it is so commonplace to how he has negotiated his multiple ethnicities while growing up.

Dakota: Right, um, I mean, it’s weird, because when I go there, I immediately start talking like them. It’s like, I pick up the pigeon dialect instantly. Like my brother speaks it and my dad still speaks it. Like we might be having a conversation right now, I’ll have little snippets and it’s like, where’d the hell did that come from.

Jordan and Rolanda also contributed that they felt they were well aware of when they negotiated different ways of speaking in and among the communities they identify with, in addition to other diverse communities they move freely in and out of in their lives. Jordan said that he appreciates amongst his friends, “the fact that I speak a certain way isn’t gonna deter them from liking what I have to say.”

3.10 | PARTNERING RELATIONSHIPS

Joel Crohn (1995) in *Mixed Matches: How to Create Successful Interracial, Interethnic, and Interfaith Relationships*, explains how the very same qualities we find attractive in our partners are also rooted in our most difficult problems as it relates to race, ethnicity and religion. A growing interest has risen in the past decade to attempt to understand the types of relationships that people who are already “interracial, interethnic and interfaith” within one body choose to date (Twine 1996; Downey, Bonica, and Rincon 1999; Gillem and Thompson 2004; Roberts-Clark, Roberts, and Morokoff 2004). I therefore became interested in the love lives of my participants. Here is what Anastasia had to share when I asked her if she had any particular dating preferences:

Anastasia: Yeah. Like straight up, I was like, I am not going to date White people.

Self: So why did you say you weren't going to date a White person? What was the reason for that?

Anastasia: Um, just a... I think wanting someone that I could just like, be able to talk about racism with or like, not have to explain shit to, or not have to... and that was harsh. I mean...

In terms of relationships, whether it is dating or the friends that they made, their choices seemed to really highlight the point that multiracial people are constantly negotiating multiple contradictions in ways that are positive and reaffirming of all of their racial identities. From Anastasia's standpoint above, the contradiction appears to exist within herself. She rejects a part of herself (whiteness) while seeking to find someone who she feels will understand her full multiracial identity. Marissa goes on to explain how her choice in dating options has reflected her multiple heritages, from an equal number of White and Black partners. She also added that when she realized she was only dating within these two categories, she purposely sought out to date people of different backgrounds.

Rolanda also shapes Anastasia's sentiments, expressing that her choice in dating and attractiveness has led to a trend in dating other people who were multiracial.

Rolanda: Yes, indeed, hehe. I remember having conscious thoughts of... I'm not going to find someone who matches me. Who am I going to find who's half British, half Filipino. Right, so, there it's just eliminated right there. The first person I remember consciously being attracted to, um, I was thirteen... it was a girl who was half Black, half White... and I was attracted to a woman who's half Lebanese, half Irish.

In all of these interviews, everyone explained that their multiracial identity had everything to do with the types of people they were interested in, which meant that they felt they had a more diverse selection because they did not limit themselves to one

particular dating pool over others. Additionally, when multiracial people date, they are always already interracial dating; that is, unless their partner comes from exactly the same racial and ethnic background to which they identify.

3.11 | UTOPIA AFTER HIGH SCHOOL AND BEYOND

Racial identity is said to be an important aspect of self-esteem development and one's relationship to other stages in life from adolescence to adulthood (Renn 2000, 2004; Udry et. al. 2003; Bracey, Bamaca, and Umana-Taylor 2004). In a longitudinal study on a national sample of adolescents in grades 7 through 12, Udry et al. (2003) reported that adolescents that self-identified with more than one race exhibited increased health and behavioral risks, versus their monoracial peers, on questions relating to their experiences at school, participating in smoking and drinking, and other risk variables. While this study raises important questions for future research on multiracial youth, it did little to explain how multiracial youth were selected for their sample, and the impact that salient variables such as gender, racial make-up or combinations, place, and age may have contributed to their findings. In my interviews and participant observations across the country, my findings reveal that the difficulties that multiracial teenagers face in their adolescents can be more accurately attributed to being a teenager than being a person of mixed race.

When asked if they felt negotiating their multiracial identity as a teenager was difficult while going to high school, each of them was adamant about conveying that their ethnic make-up had little to do with why high school may have been challenging.

Dakota: Um, especially as someone who's seen as or just becoming a teenager, it's a crucial time to feel lost. It's like, it's horrible. So, um, I tried to adapt to other people to maybe, somewhat, some would accept who I am or who thought I was. I don't know what it might have been but um, I felt, because when I left East L.A. when I first moved, I had a hundred friends. I was, you know, king of the school. You know, I had like, anything I wanted and so, I felt like I had to put up that façade in order for me to get that acceptance that I had back before I had left. So it was a horrible way to make myself, more you know, self-worthy, in a horrible, horrible way. That's pretty much what it was.

Self: So do you think then, that it was partially because of the fact that um... that putting up the façade was for... to be accepted as a kid at that time, or is it because it's something that's connected to your ethnicities?

Dakota: I don't think it had anything to do with ethnicity. I think it had mainly to do with being a kid. As a kid you have to... it's the hardest time to try and find yourself. To try and be happy. There's certain periods I think in a person's life in which it really impacts them and I think that year (freshman year) for most people, is a very, very difficult year. So it definitely wasn't to do with ethnicity, it has to do with that person inside of you.

When asked what the transition was for him after high school, Jordan explains this phenomena as something that I phrase as "Utopia After High School." That is, once individuals leave the confines of high school and home to enter the world with a different lens, they come to understand their multiracial identities much differently.

Jordan: In high school, you know it's a fashion statement. And, and you wake up and you worry about what you look like and what you wear... And then college is, ...is when I more so broke loose and just said, hey, let me wear some comfortable clothes. Um, so in college, I... I said hey, let me, let me be comfortable with myself... As college went on, the more comfortable I became with just being me. Being one thing instead of trying to jump back and forth and please both people.

It is clearly after high school that Jordan finds the confidence to rid himself of labels that may have restricted him during his adolescent years. Triston eloquently describes the feeling he and so many others realize once they move beyond high school.

Triston: It's like, well, you're faced with two choices. You either jump the hurdle and fit into your criteria so you can have your identity, what you believe yourself to be. Or you have it stripped away. And even if it is in one person's eyes... or a thousand people's eyes... you always want to be who you are. But then when you realize, after... I think it comes after time... that nobody's taking that away from me. They're just idiots. Then you stop jumping. I mean, why, why the effort? For who? For somebody to feel more comfortable at night, so they, they can say they know I'm Mexican? I mean, what am I doing it for?

For many multiracial people that I have had the pleasure of interviewing over the years, I can state with confidence that many of them share Triston's sentiments of reaching a point in their lives where they have come to accept their multiracial. Eventually, balancing their heritages becomes nothing more than an afterthought, but until the unmet needs are addressed for this population in the public arena, there is much to be learned.

Does the lack of a shared term of recognition become a condition under which a coherent political identity can form? Furthermore, can a coherent political identity form with a lack of a shared term of recognition? They appear to be similar questions, yet I argue, they are vitally different and important to ask in order to expand the discourse on multiracial identity. As discussed in Chapter 1, the former question suggests the fact that by virtue of *having no shared term* is the very basis by which people form a group; that is, together they recognize that they fit in a space described as 'neither here, nor there', and hence, are identified as a group by the liminal space they all share (Daniel 2002). The latter question invokes the opposite of the former question in that political power is created through coherent and clear terms to define a group. How does a group gain access to politics if they lack a term to all be recognized, as was the case of Asian Americans who needed to form a panethnic identity to be acknowledged more politically in the United States (Espiritu 1993).

Next, in Chapter 4 I will turn to the possibilities that exist which enable a multiracial community to form around seemingly diverse racial combinations of multiracial identified persons in the United States. Using the case study of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA), and how it came to form and develop in the late 1980s and further maintain its' presence through the first decade of the new millennium, I will explore how the private experiences and the public discussions regarding multiracial identity have been taken up publically to address the unmet needs of the multiracial population in policy and other institutions. More specifically, how do grassroots organizations, such as AMEA, thrive over decades by continuously mobilizing a seemingly disparate group that presumably lacks a shared racial or ethnic identity?

Chapter 3 Endnotes

¹ Hammond, Carla M. 1981. "Audre Lorde: Interview." *Denver Quarterly* 16.1, pp. 10-27.

² Here I refer to a study as not just a compilation of writings of mixed race people put into one text, as is often the case, but the intentional, empirical research conducted as part of an examination of many multiracial experiences in one comparative study.

³ Thirty-four interviews were recorded, and the remaining comprised of informal interviews conducted at field and participant observations recorded through handwritten fieldnotes at conferences, policy proceedings, events, and other gatherings.

⁴ See, Kerry Rockquemore and David L. Brunσμα. 2002. *Beyond Black: Biracial Identity in America*. Rowman and Littlefield. p. 20.

⁵ See, Reginald Daniel. 2002. *More Than Black?: Multiracial Identity and the New Racial Order*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, p. xi.

⁶ Ibid. p. xi.

⁷ Parker, David and Song, Miri, eds. (2001). *Rethinking Mixed Race*. London; Sterling, VA: Pluto Press. p. 8.

⁸ Rockquemore, Kerry A. and Brunσμα, David L. *Beyond Black: Biracial Identity in America*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002. p. ix.

⁹ As Chapter 1 points out, one can be defined as multiracial external to their own self-identification. This can occur due to factors such as phenotype, movement across spaces and places, and the cultural competency of the external force that is imposing an identity on them. For example, depending on the historical timeframe an individual is raised, they may reject any form of multiracial identity, despite if their traceable parentage can be identified as such. However, my definition still incorporates them under the population of "multiracial" because they are recognizably a subset of many individuals who grew up during a time in which this identity was most opposed.

¹⁰ Fogg-Davis, Hawley. 1997. "The Ethics of Transracial Adoption." Derived from Online Journal: The Interracial Voice. p. 2. See also, Hawley Fogg-Davis. 2000. *In Their Own Voices: Transracial Adoptees Tell Their Stories*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

¹¹ Interview transcript with Michelle Hughes, JD from the Law Offices of Michelle Hughes, Chicago, Illinois. April 16, 2006.

¹² The terminology here is the actual words (in the same order) that the participants used them in my study. The terms were derived from their individual typed transcripts.

¹³ Jordan's sister is also a transracial biracial who identifies as Black and Irish. His parents do not have any other biological children outside of Jordan and his sister.

¹⁴ The following information was derived from the Adoption.com website under the "Encyclopedia of Adoption" at <http://encyclopedia.adoption.com/entry/identity/172/1.html> posted in 2000.

¹⁵ Again, I believe many studies fail to accurately report the complete findings whether they were positive, negative or neutral. My study aims at reporting all of the experiences that are shared, so as not to skew my research on multiracial experiences one particular way over the other.

¹⁶ The following information was taken from the School of Policy, Planning and Development website at the University of Southern California: <http://www.usc.edu/schools/sppd/research/census2000/>

¹⁷ As many scholars have written about this phenomena, such as James O'Toole (2002) in *Passing for White: Race, Religion, and the Heal*, the idea here is that many multiracial people with White heritage would try to pass in order to be afforded privileges of "whiteness." How they were able to pass had much to do with their physical characteristics which bore a resemblance to stereotypical European features.

¹⁸ This can be replaced with any socially constructed race or ethnicity, but I chose to use "White" based on the experiences shared by the people in this particular analysis.

Chapter 4

FROM MANASSEH TO AMEA: A CASE STUDY OF MULTIRACIAL COMMUNITY BUILDING AND GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM THROUGH THE ASSOCIATION OF MULTIETHNIC AMERICANS

“Because there are as many different types of multiracial identification and experience as there are multiracial backgrounds, there has been some debate as to whether multiracial-identified individuals actually form a group.”

~ Reginald Daniel, 2002 ~

“This club had a dual significance, however, for on one hand, the Chicago society was not so rigid that intermarriages were taboo, yet, on the other hand, such couples were sufficiently alien to both the Negro and white communities as to make it desirable to organize among themselves for mutual aid and recreation.”¹

~ Catherine Slaney, 2003 ~

4.1 | INTRODUCTION

“So you mean to tell me that I got blood clots from my ‘Black blood’ and not from my ‘Korean blood’? How are you able to say that with certainty?”

Dealing with the concerns of those of mixed heritage can no longer be considered a seemingly passive issue of identity recognition, but instead as an active matter of life and death. I would have never thought that at the ripe age of twenty-four, prior to the beginning of my PhD program, that I would have been given my first possible death sentence—premature coagulation, that is. After being rushed to the hospital for dehydration, I left in a matter of hours, only to return three days later with blood clots forming at the locus where my IV had been inserted into my right arm. The coagulation had accelerated in a matter of a week and they were steadily journeying up my vein, making a pit stop upon my underarm. Doctors soon feared a blood clot would break loose and get lodged near my heart, eventually taking my young life. I was soon placed on

blood thinners in my mere twenties, yet there was no trace of blood complications in my family history. Though this situation was particularly life threatening and will remain so in my future, what ensued with the medical professionals during the course of my treatment as a direct result of being multiracial was even more alarming. This experience has since demonstrated what my research reveals is a type of racial politics that permeates in this country around multiracial bodies as they navigate their way through institutions where longstanding attitudes about race are deeply embedded, and where hegemonoracial ideologies are unchallenged. This type of politics, what I have since referred to as the Politics of Being Multiracial, are experienced by multiracial people and their families in everyday situations, sometimes without realizing it themselves and hence, unbeknownst to the public at large.

The specialist taking my blood that day engaged me in conversation for the fear I would double over and faint. We had seven vials to fill. Without hesitation she asked whether I was more comfortable speaking Spanish to her, or English. I was confused. I had never spoken Spanish. To break the silence she said matter-of-factly, “You’re a Latina, right?”

I looked down at the syringe and then back at her, “No. I’m Black and Korean.”

“But you don’t look Black! I’m Latina and you look Latina. Are you sure? Do you get that a lot? I mean, look at your hair!” she exclaims. She scratches something down on my charts as she puts the label on the last vial. She informs me that she will be sending my blood to the lab and that the doctor would be coming in to ask me a few more questions.

Perhaps that was a way for her to find out my background without being held to the restrictions of medical staff not being allowed to ask patients their racial backgrounds. When the doctor came into the room, he quickly looked over my charts. I will never forget this. He said he was unsure what was triggering the blood clots because studies show that Asians do not have coagulation problems. I waited patiently to hear what else he had to say about my Black heritage. He said nothing. That is when I took a quick glance at the bottom of my chart and saw the note scribbled, “Asian.” I then informed him that I was not just Asian and that my father was African American. The doctor then had an epiphany, as if to finally solve my blood clotting issues. He then told me that my “Black blood” (quote end-quote) was the likely cause of me getting blood clots. Bothered by his reference of blood quantum, I asked sarcastically, “Without having my blood results back yet, how can you determine what “drop” of my blood is from my Black side or Asian side?” I followed this question by my opening remarks above. He ignored me. Needless to say, I trust medical professionals less.²

Whether conversations like these are typical or not, they still need to be contextualized. Had I never offered the information of my multiracial heritages, my medical *treatment* would have been vastly different based on how I was being subjectively codified. I began to imagine what the case would have been if I had signs of sickle cell anemia. If he had believed me only to be Asian, he may have never thought to first diagnose me as such because sickle cell predominates in the African American community, for which he assumed I was not a member of. Surely this would have been discovered eventually, but the issues with regard to health, cultural competency of medical professionals, and race based coding of patients can be a matter of life and death

for all people. That syringe is still in my arm, even if just metaphorically today. Luckily for me, their potential mistake of misclassifying me did not cost me my life. In the research I have done over the years and through my grassroots activism, I have discovered that others were not so fortunate.

Making A Case for AMEA

My personal experience in the hospital raises an important underlying question in particular which has not been taken up in previous literature to the extent this study investigates. That is, who do I and other people like myself (such as Luke Do and his family from Chapter 1), reach out to when advocacy is needed when we confront unique forms of discrimination that are directly tied to having a multiracial identity first and foremost, and not just one of our racial and ethnic identities? Due to my own vulnerability having to deal with the Politics of Being Multiracial—that of having difficulty explaining that my concerns are not just because I am either Black *or* Korean, but rather, a confluence of the two—I spent the past six years conducting research on the local, state, and national levels from the frontlines of what some scholars call the “Multiracial Movement” (Root 1995; Daniel 2002; Williams 2006). I soon began researching whether or not there was a group that already existed that could fully represent multiracial people in the United States on the national level. In the fall of 2003, I stumbled upon a website about a national organization called the Association of MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA). It is an umbrella organization that has advocated over the past twenty years for multiracial and multiethnic individuals, families, and groups. It is an organization that I had never known about before moving to Los Angeles and had only sought out because I felt I was on the verge of dying. I was curious why I was

unaware of AMEA's existence until then, especially because I was quite actively involved in multiracial organizing prior to moving west. In 1997, I founded Blend of Traditional Heritages (B.O.T.H.) at Pennsylvania State University, which has since been coveted as one of the first multiracial recognized student groups in the country. This early research made me ask myself whether there were other people who sought advocacy from these types of organizations and why they were not as prominently known as other umbrella organizations, such as the NAACP for example.

In this chapter I use the development of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans as a case study through which to examine the development of multiracial organizing in the United States. So far, each of the previous chapters helped us to better understand how the multiracial population has been defined by the state, in social science research, and by members of the multiracial population, as well as, what those definitions potentially offer us about existing racial and ethnic ideologies. In the previous chapter, I also addressed the second research question regarding critical insights we can gain when centering the experiences of multiracial Americans on a private level, where I focused on a unique subset of individuals that I argued help to bridge the experiences of younger and older generations in the larger population. In Chapter 4, I begin to examine the second and third research questions in this chapter. I focus on the public, group perspective with research on AMEA to help us understand, *what critical insights can centering the experiences of multiracial Americans and the efforts to define them on the local, state, and/or national levels, offer for other groups* (research question 2). I also examine *under what conditions organizations such as AMEA make it possible to politically mobilize*

around this shifting and contested category to address the unmet and lesser known needs of this emerging population (research question 3).

These questions and the case study focus on the Association of MultiEthnic Americans are taken up for three particular reasons. First, a deeper analysis of organizations such as AMEA can broaden our understanding of multiracial organizing and non-traditional forms of mobilizing in the United States by expanding the discourse to include non-monoracial groups as a focal point. “From Manasseh to AMEA” complicates the difference between what it means to be a *multiracial organization* and what *multiracial organizing* entails—for the two are not seen as synonymous in this project. I wish to point out a distinguishing feature between the type of multiracial *organizing* and multiracial *organizations* I am examining, which is strikingly different than the usual nomenclature it is used in the social sciences and in related professions.

Typically when the qualifier, “multiracial” is used in the sense of mobilizing people to form an organized unit, it is used loosely to describe groups whose membership and leadership are open to—hegemonically speaking—all (single) races of people. This is witnessed under the guise of topics such as “Multiracial Feminism” (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996); “Multiracial Education” (Sarup 1986; Howard and Nieto 2006); “Multiracial Religion/Congregations” (Matsuoka 1998; Yancey 2003; DeYoung et. al. 2004), and “Multiracial Politics” (Hanks and Assensoh 2000). When research does represent multiracial-identified people, the history of multiracial organizing is often couched in a limited timeline, reflecting back to only the past few years of public service organizations across the country (Root and Kelley 2003; Williams 2006).

Another reason the Association of MultiEthnic Americans is a good case study is because of the increasing attention to understand multiracial identity post-2000. As discussed in Chapter 3, a historical shift to define the multiracial population in the United States leading up to the 2000 census occurred because of the grassroots activism exhibited by groups such as AMEA to fight for a fuller self-identification process. The organization advocated for a mark “two or more” races option which was successfully adopted, thus making AMEA undoubtedly one of, if not, the leading grassroots organizations serving the multiracial community on the federal level. As I will illustrate in this chapter and Chapter 5, this was the primary organizing vehicle through which multiracial mobilizing has occurred in the United States from a local to national level over the past 20 years. Furthermore, AMEA is the only organization in the country that represents the voice of Multiracial America on the national level, not only through the U.S. Census and key legislation, but also through its involvement in the media as a formative member of the Media Image Coalition, a national group formed out of the Los Angeles Commission on Human Relations.

Therefore, if a scholar is going to engage in any national issue in the United States involving the multiracial population, a mention of AMEA is essential if their research is to be conducted with any level of accuracy. Given this organization’s key position on the socio-political landscape of multiracial organizing in the United States, without mentioning AMEA, it is a clear indication the scholar has not adequately done his or her research. This was supported by Kim Williams’ (2006) study which assessed how multiracial organizing, a type of mobilization that receives little attention in comparison to other specific and more prominent movements, fits into the larger discourse on civil

rights. She attempted to use case study analysis on several multiracial organizations in the county, until she realized "...AMEA was the only organization with an active network of affiliates at the time of my research. Accordingly, my case studies of local organization were all AMEA affiliates" (Williams 2006: 13). In other words, multiracial movements and organizing in Williams' study was actually just a representation of AMEA alone, which points to the critical importance this organization has in understanding insights into multiracial/Multiracial politics. Williams spent years interviewing and surveying the key figures in the organization, as well as, key players in the Multiracial Movement.³ However, her research was later criticized by many of these very same leaders for misrepresenting details and making conclusive arguments based on limited observations. In one such personal email correspondence Ramona Douglass sent to me on October 31, 2006 at 3:36pm, she expressed her disappointment and frustration with the recent publication of Dr. Kim Williams' *Mark One or More*.

She was given a great deal of time and energy in our community and as far as I am concerned glossed over the really crucial/pivotal participation and coalition building done on the national level and over emphasized the "white mother, black father" power imbalance at the local level. Trust me...if we were not dealing directly with "Beltway Politics" and building other community alliances...nothing would have made a difference via pot lucks and picnics.

I, along with four other national multiracial leaders, were further included on email strands where Douglass and Williams sent correspondence back and forth to one another. Douglass openly told Williams that she felt her analysis reported erroneous data that misrepresented the multiracial movement.

While her main argument was that the multiracial movement has origins in the civil rights movement and should be considered part of this discourse, not tenuously

outside of it, her basis for making this argument may have been viewed as questionable on three accounts in particular. First, upon further investigation, it appeared as though Williams was caught in a classic case of “outsider” status, relying extensively on limited documentation that was provided to her, and having little access to other sources of information to build her research.⁴ The data she collected came primarily from 45-minute interviews with board members, and a leadership survey and questionnaire she created prior to the interviews. As a result, despite the considerable effort she may have made to research what she believed to be the Multiracial Movement, the subtle but important details she missed impacted what and how she eventually analyzed and reported her findings. In Williams’ defense, at the time of her research she stood on the outside of the organization and could only make sense from the position she occupied as a monoracially identified African American graduate student. I would argue that she may have been looking in at a much more complex set of identities and definitions than she originally anticipated. Therefore, Williams may not have been able confront or grapple with the intricacies that members of AMEA wished she had presented because she did not know to ask such questions from the outside, let alone, know that they were missing from her research to claim a holistic perspective of an organization that was and is still largely unknown in the mainstream.

Second, Williams’ entrance into the multiracial activist community seemed to be welcomed at first because they believed she was centering multiracial mobilization for “multiracial identity’s sake”. She states, however, “Read as a means of maneuvering toward whiteness, multiracialism offers little for blacks to celebrate. Read as part of a wider failure of black elites to navigate difference within black communities,

multiracialism leads to the inescapable conclusion that racial identity, blackness included, is manifestly composite” (Williams 2006: 130). Instead, however, her project hegemonically frames the impact multiracial identity and mobilization had on monoracial Blacks and Whites in America, doing little to disrupt the black-and-white binary to which many scholars have argued the Multiracial Movement does not just represent (Root 1996; Spickard 1999; Parker and Song 2002; Daniel 2002; Brunsma 2006).

This leads to the last element present in her work which appears misleading about the multiracial activists in the Association of MultiEthnic Americans. Although she stated that her case study focused on AMEA and its leaders, sometimes her research misrepresented other members within the multiracial community as being affiliated with the organization, in addition to making generalized statements about multiracial leaders and the movement without any supportive evidence. For example, she reports views expressed by Susan Graham, founder and sole outspoken member of Project Race, and a white mother in an interracial relationship. Williams presents Graham as if she is a representative of AMEA, but on the contrary, Graham has been considered an opponent of AMEA since the proceedings leading up to the 2000 Census. Both Carlos Fernandez and Ramona Douglass represented AMEA in the late 1990s, recommending a proposal for a select “one or more races” option, versus Graham’s proposal for an umbrella multiracial category. This is important because the data Williams reports in her study misrepresents facts about the organization, which I argue leads to generalizations about the Multiracial Movement more broadly. For instance, Williams claims that the racial makeup of the leadership consists of mostly “white mothers” who have spearheaded the movement, when in actuality the majority of individuals she listed from AMEA were

multiracial people running the organization. Again, the information she collected to analyze the multiracial movement came from AMEA and its leaders at the time. The inconsistencies are problematic, and I would say a direct result of her outsider status.

In another example, she shares statements made by Charles Byrd advising readers in the *Interracial Voice*, an online magazine for multiracial people and families, to “Check White! *Check Anything But Black!* Check Every Box on the Form! Don’t Return a Census Form At All! Check Hispanic! Check American Indian!” (italics Williams).⁵ She concludes,

Why check “anything but black” given the allegedly color-blind ethos to which Byrd subscribes? Multiracial advocates have occasionally shown disregard for the primary rationale behind collecting racial data and have looked coldly upon the difficult predicament of civil rights proponents. Yet if some people do not want to be black... then perhaps black should let them go.⁶

A few issues are apparent here that deserve significant mention. After revisiting Byrd’s commentary—which can still be accessed online today—it was apparent that not only may Williams have misread his argument out of context, but the politically charged generalization she then makes about multiracial advocates is unfounded based on the lack of evidence she provided to support her claims. The aforementioned statements Byrd made were part of a larger commentary framed in intellectual sarcasm, where he neither tells readers in any seriousness how to identify, nor does he attack historical civil rights efforts (for which arguably multiracial people also participated). His comments were intended to express concern circulating that the Census Bureau might re-tabulate and collapse those individuals that would eventually choose “two or more” in 2000 into a monoracial category. The undertone was that this would minimize the efforts by AMEA and its supporters, as well as, individuals and families who fought for this option to

choose. This is evidenced by his appreciation at the end of the essay where he states, Byrd adds at the end of his commentary, “Thanks to the many long hours spent by members of AMEA, I-Pride and multiracial organizations across the country, people of multiracial heritage can now identify themselves as more than one race on federal forms. All of the implications of this change will not be known for years but it is certainly cause for celebration.” These comments do not appear to advocate for any option other than to choose all that apply.

The last issue this excerpt raises is that Williams interpreted his frustration as an attack on Black racial politics, rather than as a frustration from a multiracial identified American who was concerned that the new check option would turn out to be a trivial pursuit in tabulation form. In retrospect, some of his statements could be considered erroneous and problematic because that time has since passed and we know the multiple-race tabulations were eventually reported. Still, his concerns mirrored the real fears leading up to the 2000 Census that all of the efforts being made about multiracial identity at the federal level might be a plot of a modern day “one drop rule”.⁷ However, we can also view Byrd’s statements as a way in which to understand the importance of this monumental change and AMEA’s role within it. In addition, it demonstrates how multiracial individuals leading up to the 2000 Census used vehicles, such as the internet, to individually mobilize people to identify fully with their heritages, not negate them.

There has been no other scholar to date who has critically examined the internal organizational structure of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans as *the* primary organization in their research. This leads to the final reason why the Association of MultiEthnic Americans is a good case study to examine multiracial organizing in the U.S.

because it provides insight into an organization that has not been written from an insider's perspective before. Grassroots organizations are often studied afar, rather than within, lacking the intricacies that are often unnoticed by an observer to fully analyze the inner-workings of the organization. Group members tend to be more insular and more reluctant to expose the innerworkings of an organization for fear of the observer's intentions. Due to the time Williams spent studying the multiracial advocates in her dissertation, and as a result of the heightened concern Ramona Douglass circulated after Williams published her book, I believe this contributed to a fear of multiracial activists to easily accept interviews thereafter.

Methods of Data Collection

The data collected from this chapter involves archival research, interviews, participant observations and fieldwork from 2003 to 2009. Eventually during the course of my research, I became (and continue to be) a prominent leader, policy maker, and voice for the larger emerging multiracial population in the United States through AMEA and other entities. In 2004, I was elected as an AMEA board member, and after successfully representing the organization on several national issues I was later elected as president in 2006. During the course of my data collection, my research became more and more of an active insider-outsider engagement where I could not simply divorce my own position within it, because simultaneously while I was observing, I was overwhelmingly impacting policy changes in arenas across the country through my leadership, and thus, observing myself. Due to my unique position as the president of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans and the behind the scenes research I was afforded due to my position (i.e., access to AMEA archives, etc.), I will present much of this in

this chapter. No other president of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans has ever straddled the position of being not only an advocate and activist, but also an academic.

Many of the leaders Williams interviewed were no longer active in the movement as my research commenced, however, among the top leaders in AMEA, I had the privilege of not only interviewing them, but working alongside of them on many grassroots initiatives across the country. This includes Ramona Douglass, co-founder of AMEA and prominent multiracial activist; Matt Kelley, founder of the MAVIN Foundation and magazine in Seattle, WA; Nancy Brown, the former president of AMEA and director of Multiracials of Southern California (MASC); Michelle Hughes, adoption attorney and founder of Bridge Communications, a transracial adoption education consultancy in Chicago, IL; Harold Gates, long time multiracial ally, AMEA board member, and co-founder of the Center for Cultural Competency in Madison, WI; Tarah Fleming, prominent leader of iPride (Interracial/Intercultural Pride) and the Multiethnic Education Program (MEP) in Northern California; Ken Tanabe, founder of the Loving Day Project in New York City; among many other multiracial activists and leaders in the U.S. and abroad. I got to know these people outside of just interviews and into their every day lives, including meeting their family members, understanding their “day jobs”, and who they were as individuals that volunteered and breathed life into a movement.

The archival information I had access to consisted of documentation (in paper-based and digital form) that chronicles different developments in the organization, including conference planning documents, letter and email correspondences, select articles, membership files, and so forth. After changes in presidential leadership, all files are given to the next president to conduct business for AMEA, and therefore I had access

to old and new files that make up the AMEA archives. Participant observations shared in this chapter come from research collected during monthly executive board meeting proceedings, annual board retreats in Los Angeles, and attendance at every census advisory committee meeting in Washington DC since my appointment in 2006. Fieldnotes were taken at each of the meetings, and I also requested the video and audio recordings be sent after each meeting for my own records.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, my insider-outsider positions could be viewed as problematic because of the potential proprietary information that cannot be shared, while at the same time, a very fruitful perspective because of the insights my observations offer about the innerworkings of multiracial organizing in the United States. In other words, my analysis is layered with many meanings by *looking in* as a researcher and observer, *looking out* as an advocate and leader, and *looking within* as a multiracial identified person. This has been one of the most challenging aspects of my research because I have had to be conscious about what is to be shared as a researcher, but not shared as a leader and advocate of sensitive topic matter. As the national leader of AMEA, it was not possible to study around myself, therefore, to deal with this issue I decided that much like other social scientists who apply an insider-outsider approach to research (Collins 1986; Kondo 1990; Napples 1996; Griffith 1998; Merriam et. al. 2001), it was best for me to be upfront about my subjectivity, rather than ignoring my impact on my own research. In addition, all scholars face the challenge of not being able to be completely objective when conducting research, because we all ultimately impact our work through the differences we each bring to the table through our racial and ethnic identities, our gender, age, and so forth. Instead of viewing my different positions as adversely affecting my

research, I take each position as a benefit to fully explore the complexities through which an outside observer might be limited.

To date, no scholar has been able to write from the perspective and position I share as both an insider and outsider to what has been considered the “Multiracial Movement.”⁸ As the fifth president since AMEA’s existence, as a social scientist interested in critically examining the inner-workings of organizations and structures (despite affiliation or not), and as a citizen that self-identifies as a first generation African American and Korean woman, in the least I possess a triple subjectivity-objectivity vantage point that is worthy of serious attention and consideration. As illustrated by the difficulties faced by Williams who was relegated to understanding AMEA as an outside observer, the result was that her scholarship may have missed the finer details not necessarily known to ask, sometimes leaving important facts, figures, and analysis with preventable errors.⁹ The lack of internal access to these groups is due to the reality of insularity and gatekeeping that individuals exhibit until trust is established. As a result, this limits one’s analyses to merely describing what may only be available to them from the outside, leaving little room to uncover the nuances those details can tell us about multiracial organizing in the U.S. from the centered perspective of the multiracial population and people who together represent diverse racial and ethnic combinations.

4.2 | A BRIEF HISTORY OF MULTIRACIAL ORGANIZING IN THE U.S.

Before discussing the internal dynamics of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans, it is important to first situate the organization in the longer trajectory of multiracial organizing in this country. After all, the formation of multiracial organizations is not a new phenomenon. At the turn of the 20th century, before the World Wars and lasting until the Great Depression, there existed a society known as the Manasseh. Some

called it a club. Others considered it a secret society. While even others simply referred to it as an ordinary group of people coming together to support each other's needs that presumably could not be met elsewhere. What was the Manasseh? A fraternal society comprised of interracial marriages (and their offspring), which some historians claim originated in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and later expanded into Chicago, Illinois around 1890.¹⁰ The organization sought to provide support for one another as they navigated their way through a much more racially overt and discriminatory climate in U.S. history. They declared their club motto to be "Equal Rights for All", stating that this motto represented the members need for a "supporting ideology."¹¹ Despite questions surrounding their origins, what is clear is that the members formed at an unprecedented time for such a group to exist. It was a time characterized by socio-political turmoil, racial strife propagated by anti-miscegenation ideologies in the academy, and a burgeoning economic and wartime crisis yet to come. The Manasseh Society did not just form spontaneously either. Evidence shows that they were an organized group that lasted for over thirty years, with appointed officers, community programs, and they even owned a cemetery plot for their members.¹² The existence of the Manasseh Society deserves closer examination as it provides us with insights on early multiracial organizing in the United States, unbeknownst to the larger society.

Nearly one hundred years later, the Association of MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA) currently based in Los Angeles, California, formed to serve in a similar capacity as the Manasseh to provide a refuge of sorts for interracial families and their children. Today, AMEA is one of the oldest leading umbrella advocacy organizations for interracial families, multiracial individuals, transracial adoptees, and allies. Arguably

before AMEA, there were many other multiracial organizations that developed. This included the Penguin Club (1936), Club Internationale (1947), the Miscegenation Club in 1940s Los Angeles, and the Club of Tomorrow (circa 1950).¹³ In 1978, Interracial, Intercultural Pride (iPride) formed in Berkeley, CA and later it became a chapter of AMEA along with several other groups that remain affiliated to this day, referred to herein as “AMEA affiliate organizations”. It is important to note that these latter groups were not aimed at being an umbrella organization like AMEA, where several organizations with the same goals and missions are brought under one overarching group, but instead as smaller, individualized groups.

**TABLE 5:
Timeline of the Formation of Multiracial Organizations by Decade**

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Mulatto	x	x	x	x			x	x								
Quadroon					x											
Octoroon					x											
Negro						x										
Amer Indian + White						x										
Hypodescent Rule*									x	x	x	x	x			
One-Drop Rule*									x	x	x	x	x			
Other Race (non-white)											x					
Part Hawaiian												x				
Maternal Descent*														x	x	
Two or More Races																x
Manasseh Society (1890)					x	x	x	x	x							
Penguin Society (1936)									x	x						
Club Internationale (1947)										x	x					
Miscegenation Club (1940s)										x						
Club of Tomorrow (1950)											x					
iPride (1978)													x	x	x	x
Biracial Family Network (1981)													x	x	x	
Honor Our Ethnic Youth Org (1983)													x	x	x	
Interracial Family Circle (1984)													x	x	x	
Multiracials of Southern California (1987)													x	x	x	
Assoc. of MultiEthnic Americans (1988)													x	x	x	
Oregon Council of Multicultural Affairs (2002)														x	x	
MOXCHA (2002)															x	x
The Topaz Club (2006)																x
Melting Pot Moms (2007)																x

Note: An "x" denotes a "rule" that was applied in a census to classify individuals with two or more racial and ethnic categories.

In Table 5, I use the trajectory of census schedules to define the multiracial population presented in Chapter 3 alongside the development of multiracial organizations in each decade to show potential relationships between the two. I argue that the ways in

which multiracial identity has been defined by the state in any given decade relates to the formation of multiracial organizations and the number and types that exist over this 150-year timeframe. Omi and Winant (1994) also recognize a distinct relationship between the census, and individual and group identity. “For example, consider the U.S. census. The racial categories used in census enumeration have varied widely from decade to decade... The variation both reflects and in turn shapes racial understanding and dynamics. It establishes often contradictory parameters of racial identity into which both individuals and groups must fit” (3). Although this list is not exhaustive since much research still needs to be unearthed about organizations in the last century, in addition to, the ongoing fluidity to which new organizations have formed in recent years is a critical site of observation.

Three observations in particular are important to raise from this comparison to understand where the Association of MultiEthnic Americans and its affiliate organizations are situated in contemporary society. First, while there appears to be gaps in the existence of a multiracial organization until 1890, and then again in the 1960s, what is clear is that there has still been a steady presence of such groups since the nineteenth century. This is important because today, the histories of the Manasseh Society, AMEA, and other such multiracial organizations are relatively unknown in the public mindset of America and they are typically situated as outliers in the larger discourse on the history of multiracial organizing and civil rights in the social sciences.¹⁴ As I discussed earlier, the predominant representation when the topic of multiracial organizing is raised is not the image of interracial families, multiracial identified persons, or transracial adoptees organizing as a unified whole. This is partially because this type

of organizing in the United States evokes a prescribed mainstream sentiment; one that is indicative of many monoracial groups mobilizing together around a particular issue or toward a particular cause, an obvious example where hegemonoracial ideology can be seen in practice.

The second observation from Table 5 is that starting in the 1930s—where I have discussed in earlier chapters was a drastic change in the U.S. census to define multiracial people based on blood quantum due to the miscegenation laws that were being enacted nationwide—we also see a corresponding shift in the organizations that also exist. The Manasseh Society is said to have extinguished at this time, however, organizations such as the Penguin Society, Club Internationale, the Miscegenation Club, and Club of Tomorrow forming. The point here is not to distinguish how many made up these groups, but rather, to understand that they existed at a time when being multiracial was not acceptable, yet, they existed nonetheless, perhaps as a form of resistance and a need to maintain a sense of community that they found amongst themselves. This would partially explain the reason the label of multiracial organizing fails to conjure up the image of ‘mixed race’ organizations because it has much to do with the debate on whether or not this group can be considered a community to begin with (Daniel 2002). Little is understood why multiracial identified persons and their families feel the need to organize with other families and individuals like them since they are ultimately entitled to the same rights and privileges as their monoracial counterparts. To ask such questions might be rooted in a colorblind ideology that race might matter for monoracial communities, but when people intermix, somehow the belief is that their problems dissipate, or that their racialized experiences are only tied into their experiences as one race. As this chapter and

Chapter 5 will illustrate, not only do multiracial people form a community, they do so because of the support and advocacy of organizations such as AMEA, that help to mediate their concerns in national debates.

The last and most noteworthy observation from Table 5 is that after the 2000 census, there is a noticeable spike in the formation of multiracial organizations than at any other time in the past 150 years. I would argue that a few of the reasons for this is because in 2000, one could for the first time in U.S. history self-identify oneself or one's child with two or more racial and ethnic categories, and the visibility of multiracial identity and families had heightened more publicly than in previous decades. A community that has had to in decade prior, organize in church basements and gather in other private locations, could begin for the first time to be vocalize their concerns as a more coherent, but still contested, identity. It would also explain why such organizations with more than one hundred years of history combined have yet to craft out a space in the public frame of reference with regard to multiracial organizing. Despite the undoubtedly public and visible history where interracial mixing was not taboo, as detailed by the historian Gary B. Nash (1995) through the untold accounts of interracial mixing in "The Hidden History of Mestizo America," there is still a vacancy in our recorded history. Nash argues, "The silence of our history books on the topic of multiraciality reflects the antimiscegenist attitudes supported by the law".¹⁵ I would also add that while it is no longer supported by the law, per se, it is still supported by the unchallenged social science inquiry of race-as-biology arguments that continue to linger when defining the multiracial population today, in addition to, the societal attitudes people still harbor which I have discussed in earlier chapters.

With that said, what might the two-decades existence of an organization such as AMEA, and the subsequent members that continue to support it, tell us about the decade of multiracial organizing we live in today? It is my belief that the lack of an inside perspective on such groups prevents society from getting a better understanding of and grapple on the formation and importance of multiracial identity, and the impact this community of identities has on the larger landscape of racial politics. It is this missing vantage point that serves as an incubator for the persistence of hegemonoracial ideology today, for which this chapter will attempt to identify and dismantle.

4.3 | THE FORMATION OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MULTIETHNIC AMERICANS (AMEA)

National Executive Board Development

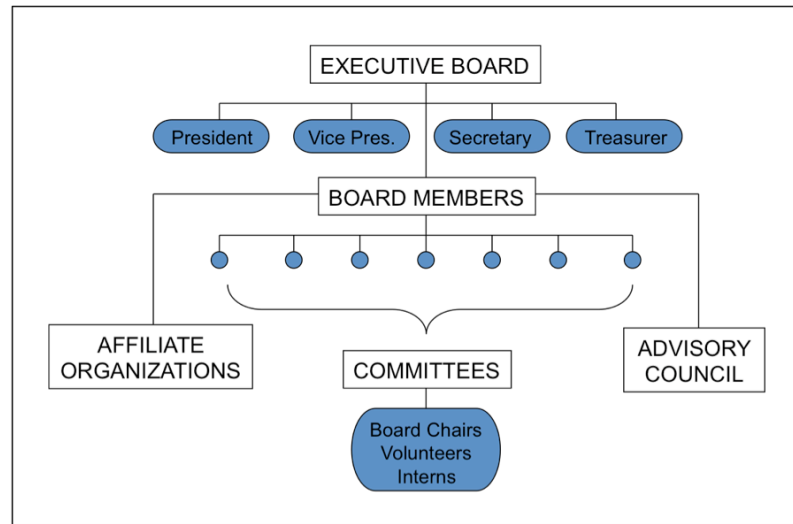
On November 12, 1988, the organizing committee of the National Association of MultiEthnic Americans held a meeting in Berkeley, CA to determine the first board of what is now known as the Association of MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA). The first executive board consisted of Carlos Fernandez (president), Ramona Douglass (vice-president), Sarah Ross (treasurer), and Reginald Daniel (secretary).¹⁶ They came together in order to bridge their organizations under a more unified, umbrella organization that would represent their groups in a more national and public spotlight. AMEA was later incorporated in 1995, obtaining its official 501(c)(3) non-profit status as a public service benefit organization for the purpose of serving multiracial, multiethnic, and transracial adoptees, individuals, families, organizations, and allies. The organization describes itself as a secular, non-denominational organization, open to people of all faiths. It has an expanding membership base, consistent programming through its growing affiliate organizations, and an executive board that continues the legacy of the original founding

members. AMEA was originally headquartered in Tucson, Arizona where the first original leaders resided before non-profit status was granted in the state of California. The association is currently headquartered in Los Angeles, CA.

Consistent with the organization's original bylaws that were adopted in 1995 and last updated in 2006, the structure of the organization is depicted in Figure 8. The head members of the executive board consists of the president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, in addition to no more than seven other board members at any given time. Members are recruited throughout the year based on a number of factors, such as expertise, knowledge of multiracial history and AMEA, interest in volunteering in the non-profit sector, and available board vacancies. The organization also makes it a priority to recruit new board members every year to keep the ideas in the organization fresh and moving forward since "burnout" is a typical reality in the non-profit sector.

In addition, the recruitment process is highly selective in that the board pays special attention to the diversity of new members, where diversity does not necessarily represent racial and ethnic backgrounds and expertise, but also geographical location. Therefore, monthly board meetings take place via conference calls because members are dispersed throughout the country. Diversity in geographical location is essential to the tasks of AMEA because it ensures that a national presence is in place through the leadership and perspectives they all represent. The only location that has been difficult to recruit has been in the southern region, which in some ways, might be predictable given the history of Jim Crow segregation and miscegenation laws that propagated in southern states for hundreds of years.¹⁷

**FIGURE 8:
AMEA Organizational Structure**



Affiliate Organizations and Advisory Council

Equally important are the AMEA affiliate organizations and the advisory council. Affiliate organizations are groups that together make up AMEA as the umbrella organization. Everyday community members who wish to not only organize around social issues, but also wish to have larger national representation through a national organization create each affiliate. These organizations are created for different reasons based on who is designing the group and the location(s) they serve. By 2004, there were eight nationally recognized affiliate organizations under the Association of MultiEthnic Americans. These groups could be considered to some degree the eight traditional or longstanding charters of AMEA. They include iPride in Berkeley, CA; Biracial Family Network (BFN) in Chicago, IL; Honor Our Ethnic Youth (HONEY) in Eugene, OR; Interracial Family Circle (IFC) in Washington, DC; Multiracials of Southern California (MASC) in Los Angeles, CA; Oregon Council of Multicultural Affairs (OCMA) in Portland, OR; Getting Interracial Families Together (GIFT) in Montclair, NJ; and

MOXCHA in Edmonton, Canada. During the course of my presidency since 2006, the number of affiliate organizations has grown to represent all but twenty states in the U.S. Some of the groups included Melting Pot Moms in San Diego, CA, a group dedicated to mothers of multiracial children who wanted to develop playgroups and programs in the Southern California area; The Topaz Club, a nationwide online multiracial women's support group originating out of Indiana; and Mixed Philadelphia, a social club for young multiracial professionals.

The advisory council is an ad hoc group, which consists of prominent members in the multiracial community, such as academics, policy officials, and other positions deemed vital to advise the innerworkings of AMEA when needed. The difference between affiliate organizations and the advisory council is that the affiliate leaders have voting power, whereas the advisory council's main duty is to advise on key issues. Many allies, members, and original leaders of AMEA transition to the advisory council to still play a supportive role in the development of the organization long after they retire. Both the affiliate organizations and the advisory council help to promote the overall vision and goals of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans through their organizational activities and scholarly or professional work.

Executive Committees and Interns

In order for AMEA to maintain the necessary momentum to continue to tackle national projects well beyond 2007, we devised a number of concrete action plans at our December 2006 meeting. As a result of wanting more accountability and delegation among the organization, the executive board and board members now have the opportunity to also chair several of the national committees AMEA offers, which

includes Development and Fundraising; Media and Public Relations; Outreach and Internships; Social Programming and Networking; Education and Resources; Website Development; and, Membership and Recruitment. Ideally, each board member who chairs a committee accompanied by other volunteers and interns across the country that are available in each quarter of AMEA activities. Prior to this restructuring, the organization did not have defined committees or an infrastructure set in place to run such projects. The keyword is that this structure is “ideal”, however, it is constantly being revisited due to feasibility, human capital, and funding to support the activities for each committee. In Chapter 5, I will discuss how this restructuring of committees served as a beneficial system to successfully organize the largest multiracial conference—Loving Decision Conference 2007—in Chicago, Illinois that same year.

Funding Sources

Altogether, from the executive board members to interns, all of the work conducted for the organization is unpaid and voluntary. This has been a principle difference between AMEA’s organizational structure and other non-profit organizations where overhead includes paying an Executive Director, staff, and other members wherever necessary. Through my on the ground research, I have found that many groups that were not affiliated with AMEA, that also advocate on behalf of multiracial populations, but were for-profit, have tended to dissipate and lose momentum when funding was scarce. Sources of funding that assists the organization to cater to the needs of the population come primarily from grants, donations, membership dues, in-kind funding, and other forms of fundraising. Ninety-five percent of the money that AMEA

receives goes directly into programming, and the remaining funds go towards operating expenses and fiscal year tax preparation.

Funding is always the most contentious aspect to running any entity. However, the success of AMEA's continued existence as a non-profit is that it truly is a grassroots operation. The organization has always carried modest capital to produce the projects it creates in order to get the country to support key issues and concerns in a massive way. As I will illustrate in the next chapter, volunteer service has been one of the keys to successful mobilization over the past twenty years because money has never dictated the dedication to those who have been committed to the goals of the organization and the needs of the multiracial community. The board has stood by this conviction for 20 years.

4.4 | AMEA'S SHIFTING GOALS AND VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

The Association of MultiEthnic Americans was developed by its founding members with the goal of building a national presence in the United States. Since 1988 when AMEA was first formed, the language used to describe the goal of the organization has changed four times. The manner in which it has shifted I believe tells us about the fluidity of multiracial organizing through the growth of this community over the past twenty years and the definitions used to describe this population. The following two vision statements show the shift in wording AMEA main goals from 1988 to 2003.

1988 to 2000

AMEA's primary goal is to educate and advocate on behalf of multiethnic individuals and families by collaborating with others to eradicate all forms of discrimination.

2001 to 2003

AMEA is an international public advocacy organization that advocates in the areas of education, health, social issues and other unmet needs of the multiracial/ethnic and transracial adoption communities.

There are two noticeable differences between the first and second goals with regard to defining the community and specifying areas of advocacy. The first difference is that the former vision statement only specifies the term “multiethnic” to describe *individuals* and *families*, whereas the latter goal references “multiracial/ethnic and transracial adoption” to form *communities*. The second difference is that the second vision statement specifies areas of advocacy to include education, health, social issues, and other unmet needs. In the first vision statement, the goal is much more general and lofty in hopes to “eradicate all forms of discrimination.”

For the second goal when the organization expanded to represent the needs of multiracial, multiethnic and transracially adopted communities, a list mission statements accompanied this, which would remain the case until the goals were revisited in 2004.

The mission statements were as followed:

We believe that:

Every child, every person, who is multiethnic/multiracial has the same right as anyone else to assert a personal identity that embraces the fullness and integrity of their actual ancestry;

Every multiethnic/multiracial family, whether biological or adoptive, has the same right to grow and develop as any other;

Our children have the right to love and respect each of their parents equally;

A positive awareness of interracial and multicultural identity is one of the essential keys to unlocking America's, and the world's, profound difficulty with the issues of race and inter-ethnic relations;

Our community is uniquely situated to confront these issues because of the special experiences and understanding we acquire in the intimacy of our families, our own personalities, and our friends;

Our community has the potential of becoming a stable core around which the ethnic pluralism of this country is unified; and,

We are an anchor for promoting understanding and peace among the nations of the world.

At the same time, from a critical lens, two observations are noteworthy to mention. First, the terms to denote race and ethnicity are convoluted in this list to such a degree that some might argue, it creates a lack of clarity or coherence. This includes terms such as: “actual ancestry,” “biological or adoptive,” “interracial and multicultural identity,” ethnic pluralism,” and “nations of the world.” The second observation is that the list is written from a particular perspective, primarily that of adults and parents in interracial unions, not from the voices of multiracial people themselves. The statement evidences this, “Our children have the right to love and respect each of their parents equally.”

It is because of the two divergent goals, the convoluted nature of the mission statements, and the changing faces of AMEA leadership to a majority of multiracial identified members, that the executive board of AMEA decided they needed to re-evaluate the organizational structure through our by-laws, membership criteria (or lack thereof), our recruitment efforts of board members, our collaborations and projects, our funding mechanisms, and the general benefits we offered to the public for whom we served. On February 24, 2004, the executive board convened in Los Angeles, CA, led by Nancy G. Brown¹⁸ as president and Matt Kelley¹⁹ as vice-president. Nancy G. Brown is a clinical psychiatrist at Kaiser Foundation in Culver City, CA. She self-identifies as a Jewish and German American woman who is married to an African American man, for whom they have two multiracial identified daughters. At the time, Matt Kelley was the founder of the MAVIN Foundation, which began as a magazine dedicated to stories about

multiracial people in the United States, headquartered in Seattle, Washington. He self-identifies as Korean and White American.

This annual retreat was an important one because the executive board was concerned about the future of AMEA and the new directions that needed to be taken in order to build awareness of the projects the organization wanted to mobilize the country around post-2000. This was the first annual retreat I had ever attended for AMEA because I had just been recruited onto the executive board at the end of December 2003. I was excited to become a part of a national movement and to help craft the language that would be used to promote the organization from here forward. I was also accompanied by other board members, which included Harold Gates, an African American professor from Wisconsin who joined because of his multiracial grandchildren; Michelle Hughes, a Chicago adoption attorney and founder of Bridge Communications²⁰; Michelle Krok, a Latina woman who served as an accountant of a Fortune 500 company and partner in an interracial relationship; Cheryl Quintana Leader, who self-identified as a Latina and European woman who was a producer of a prominent television company; and Ramona Douglass, original co-founder of AMEA of African American and Italian heritage, and representative of the census advisory committee for the U.S. Census Bureau. As one would notice, five out of the eight board members were multiracial, ranging from mid-twenties to early fifties. This would debunk the longstanding belief that primarily white women lead the multiracial movement. Kim Williams claimed, “It turns out that the multiracial movement at the grass roots was predominantly led by white, middle-class women living in suburbs.” She neither substantiates this claim, nor explains who she is referring to, and yet it becomes one of the elements of the Politics of Being Multiracial

that is recognized in earlier literature. It involves the claim that minimizes the presence of multiracial people advocating for themselves, opposed to the belief that monoracial people advocate for them.

We therefore made it a priority at this retreat to revisit the vision statement, in order to reflect a more definitive community that embraces all of these differences. At the conclusion of our retreat, we defined the following vision and mission by recycling what we could from the previous statements, while at the same time, providing clarity of what AMEA offered to the public at large.

AMEA Vision (2004 to 2006)

AMEA envisions a world where individuals and organizations collaborate to meet the needs of the multiethnic, multiracial and transracial adoption community.

AMEA Mission (2004 to 2006)

AMEA is an international association of organizations dedicated to advocacy, education and collaboration on behalf of the multiethnic, multiracial and transracial adoption community.

While the language changes may be subtle to many, they were debated and discussed with a high level of intensity at the retreat. The first adjustment that was made was to change “communities” to “community”, followed by the next change to remove the redundancy, such as “public advocacy organization that advocates.” For the first change, while the board understood the terms multiethnic, multiracial, and transracial to distinguish three very unique sub-populations in the larger multiracial community, using the plural version seemed to evoke a disparate group, rather than a more cohesive one.

These discussions help to understand how AMEA’s executive board took the initiative to help define the population as a cohesive group by deciding to address the

subpopulations as a unified, single community. Similarly, other groups lump many different subpopulations under an umbrella term to reflect the Diaspora of people that make up their cohesive community. The board also believed that the earlier missions lacked specificity, and therefore came up with three (3) primary objectives they believed AMEA's mission accomplished:

AMEA provides access to culturally competent resources by connecting service providers to clients.

AMEA facilitates collaboration between organizations dedicated to multiethnic, multiracial and transracial adoptee issues.

AMEA conducts needs assessments to identify and meet unmet needs and recognize new trends.

The objectives were implemented to create focus for the organization, whereas the earlier list simply stated issues but fell short of specifying how those issues could be eradicated through AMEA's advocacy. These objectives also represented the bulk of the work that AMEA provided at the time. Together, the board focused on professionalizing the organization in a direction it had never been taken before. Thus, these statements and objectives were used on all of the publicity materials the organization created.

Membership Restructuring and the Latest Re-Vision

This discussion then led to reevaluating our membership structure. At the time, AMEA only consisted of affiliate organizations that paid modest annual membership dues, and through the affiliates across the country, individual members and families were served. However, we realized that often times when people would contact AMEA for advocacy on a host of issues and concerns, many of them lived in parts of the country where we did not have an established affiliate organization in place. In order to expand the organization and grow the membership to reflect the different segments of the

population AMEA served day in and day out, the executive board decided upon a paid membership structure to now include individuals (from students to seniors), organizations (from student groups to affiliates), multiracial families, and allies. AMEA knew that it had a legitimate position in the multiracial community because the benefits of membership included everything it had promoted since its inception, to include national advocacy on the Census, in the media, in education, and other social issue where the needs of the population were unmet or needed a voice. I was the leading member to begin creating for the first time in the history of AMEA, professional forms and documentation outlining the membership structure through an application and benefits package.

Finally, when I took office in 2006, a recommendation was made by one of AMEA's board members that our overall vision statement was still lacking in specificity in terms of aggregating who we served in the community based on our improved membership structure. Many believed that while "community" was the better suited term over "communities," it was still unclear as to who made up the community based on how the vision read. In other words, how could we now reflect the new membership structure we had created in 2004 since we had moved beyond just affiliated organizations. Our current vision statement reads as follows:

2006 to Present

AMEA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit international umbrella association that advocates on behalf of the multiracial, multiethnic, and transracially adopted community of individuals, families, groups, and allies since 1988.

It was the belief of the executive board in 2006 that if they were to professionalize the organization, they needed to do so with a concrete statement that spelled out exactly who they were, who they served, what they did, and for how long. This was to build AMEA's

longstanding legitimacy for which many were and are still unaware of as AMEA continues to grow the organization for years to come. Most importantly, what needs to be recognized above all is that the Association of MultiEthnic Americans defines the organization and the constituency it serves not on biological grounds of blood quantum (as witnessed in the previous chapter's historical trajectory), but rather, in a fluid, malleable way that is always being challenged and molded with the current times.

4.5 | AMEA'S EARLY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE U.S. CENSUS

Earlier in this dissertation, I discuss how AMEA helped to historically change the U.S. Census by advocating for a "two or more races" option on the 2000 census. In this section, I will briefly explain how the organization eventually received a seat on the Census Advisory Committee due to the grassroots mobilization led by AMEA leaders and other organizations in the late 1980s into the 1990s. The majority of my discussion, however, will consist primarily of post-2000 census activities and participant observations leading up to the 2010 census because the significance of my research is that I am the only person in the country that can provide the first insight and most intimate perspective into AMEA's involvement on the 2010 census. In 2005, I was selected by the executive board (before I became president) to serve as the alternative representative to Ramona Douglass on the 2010 Decennial Census Advisory Committee (DCAC). She believed it was time to groom the next leader she believed could continue to raise awareness at the federal level and to continue the work she had single-handedly fought for since her appointment in 1997 to represent all of multiracial America. Then in 2006, I was appointed to represent AMEA as the head representative, approximately six months prior to the unexpected passing of Ms. Douglass from cancer. My research also includes participant observations and personal conversations I had with Ramona Douglass as my

mentor before she passed away in 2007. Our conversations about the census would typically take place over dinner or in our hotel rooms when we were attending meetings in Washington DC and Suitland, Maryland where the U.S. Census Bureau is headquartered.

Each decade of the census is managed, created, and implemented from the end of the previous census until the next one appears ten years later. The Census Advisory Committee (CAC) was established in 1991 to provide the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau with multiple perspectives from the data user community in preparation for the 2000 Census. This primarily involves key stakeholders from a broad range of national perspectives, including special populations such as the multiracial community and tribal populations. The CAC group, now officially known in this decade as the Decennial Census Advisory Committee (DCAC), is among the highest distinguished group that advises the Census Bureau activities, followed by members of the Race and Ethnicity Advisory Committee (REAC), which has representation from the five traditional racial categories and diverse ethnicities that make up these groups. There is no multiracial representation on REAC at this time since AMEA has only occupied one seat on the national level for both CAC and DCAC.

In terms of the first Census Advisory Committee, a seat was granted to AMEA after grassroots mobilization occurred in the early nineties by leaders within the movement who believed that by working on the federal level, and utilizing something tangible like the census, AMEA would be able to positively affect the thinking of the United States as a whole, enabling them to raise awareness of the larger multiracial population. In September 1989, AMEA sent a letter about the issue of not being able to

classify people with a multiracial identity from the local to federal levels to Congressman Thomas Sawyer (D), Chairman of the House subcommittee monitoring the census. As a result of the letter, Congressman Sawyer invited AMEA to present testimony in 1993 for the first “Census, Statistics and Postal Personnel” subcommittee he chaired. The president of AMEA, Carlos Fernandez, presented the testimony on June 30, 1993, assisted by Edwin Darden, who served as AMEA’s Eastern Regional Vice-President at the time. Then in December 1995, the late Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown, asked AMEA to send a representative to be appointed to the “Census 2000 Advisory Committee.” Ramona Douglass was chosen to represent AMEA, and again, AMEA remains on that Census Advisory Committee today, represented by myself, Jungmiwha Bullock. Both of us, who happen to be women and whom also self-identify with multiracial parentage, are the only two people to ever be appointed on behalf of the multiracial constituency in United States history.

It is important to note that the seat on the census was not granted easily. Project Race, an organization led by a woman name Susan Graham vied for the seat, for which AMEA prevailed because of their position on the issue of racial classification. Whereas Project Race wanted to implement a “multiracial” category on the census forms, AMEA argued this would undermine the civil rights protected groups and their political power. Hence, they supported a “two or more races” option, which would allow individuals to be counted amongst their traditional groups. There was much debate about the addition of this option on the 2000 Census. The most common arguments mostly centered upon fears that multiracial identity would take away from the overall count of civil rights protected groups. As Williams (1996) observed,

[C]ivil rights groups...increasingly came to perceive the multiracial movement as a threat. The link between numbers and power was the driving impetus behind this concern. The civil rights community feared that a multiracial category would dilute the count of minority populations, and—although in actuality this prospect triggered different concerns for different civil rights organizations—their shared position was that a multiracial identifier would undercut existing civil rights safeguards.²¹

Furthermore, Perlmann and Waters (2002) discuss how the degree to which multiple racial categories were perceived to complicate these safeguards also heightened concerns.

[T]he development of the strong antidiscrimination and voting rights laws of the 1960s, and affirmative action policies, came at great social and political costs, first for African Americans and later for other groups as well. These laws need simple and clear race categories into which to place individuals for the purposes of documenting and redressing discrimination. Yet the social reality of racial intermarriage is increasingly at odds with this requirement for simplicity.²²

More explicitly, Ramona shared with me that before she earned the respect of the other members of the advisory committee who all represented monoracial identities, she was constantly questioned and felt under attack by others for even raising the issue of multiracial identity. One evening over dinner in the Hyatt Hotel in Arlington, Virginia, she remarked that a woman on another advisory group (who shall remain nameless) followed her into the bathroom during one of the breaks and attempted to threaten her if she continued to keep pushing for the two or more races option. Her experiences come at no surprise given that many political advocates considered the discussion leading up to this change on Census 2000 as some type of “right-wing conspiracy.”

On one hand, multiracial category proponents tried to position themselves to the left of “traditional” civil rights groups. On the other hand, those same civil rights groups, along with a range of supporting minority institutions, treated the multiracial initiative as a right-wing conspiracy. Contrary to conventional wisdom, my contention is that the multiracial category effort was *not* a right-wing conspiracy; instead, powerful people with right-wing agendas appropriated it. This distinction is important. My account leaves open the otherwise foreclosed possibility of the left’s productive engagement with multiracial issues.²³

It is important to point out the ways in which politicized language is intertwined within this discussion on multiracial identity in each of the passages above. It illustrates how movements around multiracial identity socially and politically impact the larger discourse on racial politics in this country, and in this particular case, civil rights discourse. Overall, Ms. Douglass shared all of this with me to describe the harsh socio-political realities she faced behind the scenes as the lone member on the council. In retrospect, she appeared to be preparing me for the potential of what might exist for me as well as the new appointed member to the Decennial Census Advisory Committee.

Despite these unfavorable experiences, Ramona Douglass continued to push forward and on July 10, 1997, the Federal Interagency Committee made a recommendation allowing Census respondents to “check one or more boxes.” In addition, the revisions of the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 15, *Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity*, were made official and posted in the Federal Register of October 30, 1997 - Volume 62, Number 210. The report recommends that data on multiple races and ethnicities be collected and specified in the following manner:

1. When self-identification is used, a method for reporting more than one race should adopted.
2. *The method for respondents to report more than one race should take the form of multiple responses to a single question and **not** [OMB emphasis] a “multi-racial” category.*
3. *When a list of races is provided to respondents, the list should not contain a “multi-racial” category.*

Although the OMB Directive 15 was officially implemented in 2003, the federal government has yet to issue specific guidelines for educational institutions to follow regarding how to report individuals of more than one race or ethnicity. For example, in education, the OMB has been asked by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to provide more guidance with regards to achieving agreement and compliance across universities receiving federal funding. Meanwhile, NCES has strongly recommended that institutions “do nothing at this time” to change their current race and ethnicity reporting systems until these guidelines are created and disseminated.²⁴ Due to this lack of consistency, universities across the nation have been left to devise their own guidelines on reporting this data. This has obviously led to inaccurate data collection on students who wish to identify with multiple racial/ethnic categories.

Overall, the data provided by the Census 2000 on the multiracial population has been of great benefit to AMEA in serving the needs of the community. The organization was able to come up with a list of the top 10 cities where interracial families live in the United States, as well as, identify the top states where people self-identify as multiracial. This is important because unfortunately in today’s age, interracial couples are still not accepted everywhere. Knowing where to move and raise children is important for all people, and for interracial couples it could mean access to culturally competent resources

in locations that serve a high clientele of multiracial families. In addition, it enables organizations such as AMEA to do targeted programming, as well as, locate areas where education is still needed throughout the country. Data from Census 2000 also enabled a wealth of research to be conducted about race and ethnicity more broadly, where in earlier decades, this information was non-existent. Finally, when 6.8 million people elected to use this option in 2000, it demonstrated to the country that a sizeable number of people make up a community that has existed and will continue to grow exponentially in decades to come.

4.6 | AMEA AND THE 2010 DECENNIAL CENSUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Although Ramona Douglass and I had built a strong relationship as colleagues on the executive board of AMEA since 2003, we only attended three meetings together in Washington D.C. for the Decennial Census Advisory Committee. Again, AMEA had no idea that Ramona would soon pass away unexpectedly from cancer in 2007, but because Ms. Douglass was looking forward to passing along the leadership, she nominated me at the 2005 board retreat to serve as her alternative. My official appointment consisted of a newly formed letter written by former AMEA president Nancy G. Brown and the executive board, as well as, a proposal accompanied by membership support, which conveyed to the Bureau that multiracial people still required advocacy at the national level on DCAC. In 2006, the appointment was made official. What also became official is that the original 40 members on CAC, had now been reduced to 20 members on DCAC. While on one hand AMEA was relieved to still be granted a prominent seat on DCAC, the reduction of members was a bit disconcerting because it meant I would need

to prove why AMEA still deserved one of the limited seats seeing that we had only been represented on the census that had just passed.

Ramona Douglass cautioned me with two pieces of advice in her hotel room one evening in the spring of 2006, when she asked me to help her take out her bobby pins to change her wig (she had lost most of her hair by then). First, she told me that no matter what, I should never remain quiet during the proceedings by always having something concrete to say on the microphone when the conversation warranted advocacy on behalf of the multiracial population. The second piece of advice she gave me was that just because she had earned respect on the advisory committee over the years, that I would have to earn my own respect by building alliances across the aisle. She said this would not come easy, but as long as I did not remain silent and spoke up, even if I was in the minority, we would never lose our seat at the table.

I had no idea that this day would come sooner than I had expected, because less than a year later, I found myself alone, sitting in congressional board meeting style seating with some of the most prominent people in the country. Luckily Ramona Douglass had already gotten me conditioned to the environment from previous meetings, introducing me to key players, and building my confidence that I would be able to serve in this capacity long after she stepped down. She also allowed me to work with her to make recommendations or contest a point that had been presented in the meetings we attended together, which helped in the transition. For example, during a two-day meeting in the fall of 2006, members of CAC and REAC broke up into working groups in the afternoon to discuss different components of the 2010 census wording. We attended the session on “Hard to Count Populations and the Differential Undercount.” While this

session was primarily focused on populations the Census Bureau deems most difficult to count due to various reasons, such as homeless and other transient populations, we argued that multiracial people were also an undercounted group due to the history of the census not fully counting this population. We raised the point that although changes were made on the census in 2000, many people were still unaware that this option existed. We simply urged that the emergence of multiracial people and their families be part of the discourse on undercounts. The session coordinator in the group contested our claim, until a Census official stepped in and said this was a good point to consider.

Differential Undercounts and Overcounts

It was at this time that I learned that there was much discrepancy at the Bureau on how to classify multiracial people on the 2000 census who had written in two or more racial or ethnic categories. As this official shared, some of the enumerators down to the data analyzers, eventually lumped people by historical protocols, such as if they had a Black and Latino parent, they were classified as Black first, instead of Black and Latino. Or, if the person wrote down a recognized monoracial category in conjunction with an ethnic group or tribal affiliation, they were simply classified monoracially because tribes are not necessarily racially affiliated. Leading up to the 2010 census, we were assured that there would be more of an overcount, rather than an undercount, because multiracial identified people would be classified under all of their racial categories. In other words, a multiracial person who self-identifies as Japanese, Black, and White would be counted as a person in each of those categories. However, we were informed that after a fourth category or more would not be recorded. As we move into an era where multiracial people are beginning to have children with other multiracial people, a fourth or even sixth

racial identity will become more of a norm, and the loss of this detailed information might be useful in future censuses.

The Adverse Impact of the American Community Survey

This data tabulation was confirmed again at the May 15, 2008 meeting when I stated, “This is going to be the second run of the census. What happens when someone writes in Iranian, Argentinean, and Brazilian—how do you code them?” I asked the question in order to raise a concern the multiracial population was facing with regard to the American Community Survey (ACS).²⁵ The ACS is an on-going survey that was first piloted in 2005 by the U.S. Bureau of the Census to eliminate the use of the long form in 2010. Every year, the survey is sent to a sample of approximately 3 million households to produce information critical to local communities. The information published by the ACS “helps communities determine where to locate services and allocate resources” based on “social, housing, and economic characteristics for demographic groups covering a broad spectrum of geographic areas in the United States and Puerto Rico” (ACS Handbook 2006: 1).

Although the Census Bureau cautions data users that ACS data includes estimate totals of the U.S. population, they have run into issues with data users taking ACS figures as actual total population figures following Census 2000. This concern followed a story that was published on the front of *USA Today* on May 4, 2007 entitled, “Fewer Americans Call Themselves Multiracial.”²⁶ The story was based off of research conducted by Reynolds Farley at the University of Michigan who had conflated figures from the Census 2000 with survey data published in 2005 by the American Community Survey. The story reports, “In the 2000 ACS, 2.1% checked more than one race. The drop

to 1.9% in 2005 is ‘a slight decrease but statistically significant,’ Farley says.” The study is erroneous on the account that it refers to “2000 ACS”, but the ACS did not exist until 2005. Therefore, the figures he refers to in 2000 were based on *actual population totals* from the census (approximately 281 million total households), which he compared to *estimated population totals* from the ACS (approximately 3 million total households). He went on to explain that this was a trend that showed multiracial people were decreasing by 2% every year.

News spread quickly because on this same day, both Reynolds Farley and I were asked to participate on a pre-recorded show for NPR-Los Angeles. To make sure my criticism of Farley’s research was accurate and supported by the Census Bureau, I quickly invited Nicholas Jones, currently the Chief of the Race, Ethnicity, and Ancestry Division at the U.S. Census Bureau to participate on this NPR discussion. Similarly, Jones purported that Farley’s assessment was inaccurate based on his confounding of estimate data with total population data which would not be available until the 2010 census figures were released. In fact, Jones commented that based on the research they were conducting at the Bureau, they estimated that individuals who self-identified with “two or more races” are actually showing an increase in population by 2% every year, not a decrease. The discussion became a little heated when Farley realized his facts were not being supported by the very institution that produced the data, nor the multiracial advocates he had claimed had “faded” since census 2000. At one point, I asked Dr. Farley how he could conclude that multiracial people were decreasing so dramatically every year because multiracial people could not “unmix” based on this premise. The recording eventually never aired, and a phone apology was given to AMEA by the producers of the

show stating that they were unaware the research was not supported or accurate, and it was best not to air it to the listening audience.

This was a troubling year with regard to AMEA's involvement with the census and how the data was used in an adverse way by social scientists that did not understand how to use the data. When I raised this issue at the May 2008 meetings, other members on the committee shared in my concern stating that similar experiences were affecting their own communities. At which time, officials at the Bureau apologized, stating that they would remedy this issue by changing the wording on the website and on ACS instruments to explain the difference between population estimates and total population figures.²⁷ Overall, this is a critical insight on how census activities and social scientific scholarship that uses this data, still inadvertently defines the multiracial population today. Although references to "blood" are not as evident in this case, what is obvious is that the erasure of multiracial people as I argue elsewhere, takes place without much challenge, unless the challenge comes from multiracial people themselves, allies, or advocacy groups such as AMEA.

Inclusion in Media and Advertising for the 2010 Census

On October 20, 2007, DRAFT FCB and its' subcontractors were announced as the 2010 Census advertising and media campaign team at the DCAC meeting. The members of the advisory committee were delighted by the selection because DRAFT FCB had representatives and departments reflecting the diversity necessary to pull off a integrated campaign. The committee also decided to put forth recommendations three years ahead to ensure the future ad campaign would reflect the constituencies we represented from our respective positions. Among our recommendations were that the final ad campaign

slogan translates into many different languages and levels of literacy to reach hard to count populations; that different messages be used to ensure confidentiality and privacy for specific audiences; that there be attention to hiring diverse staff to help develop the messages; and finally, that “greater attention needs to be paid to ensure that a diverse and fully representative images used with the messages, including diverse multicultural families.” A cost close to \$14 billion dollars has been projected to rollout the media campaign for the U.S. Census 2010, which would make this the largest integrative and most expensive campaign in census history.

This would also be the most difficult measure of advocacy that I would have to face in my involvement on the Census Bureau. At least once at every DCAC meeting since 2007, I have voiced a concern about ensuring that the images that are used and presented in the overall campaign truly reflect the growing diversity of families in the United States, including diverse multiracial people and interracial families. Every meeting has been audio taped and recorded where I have consistently stated that the campaign stay consistent to the historical changes of the Census 2000 which allowed people to choose two or more racial or ethnic categories. I have also gotten so specific as to state on the record in public forum, to the directors and heads of the Census Bureau, that the images not just reflect Black and White, and Asian and White families (the two predominant groups that are often reflected in other arenas), but also families of minority-minority combinations, international makeup, and transracial adoption families. I was assured after every meeting that these concerns would be addressed and incorporated into the overall media strategy to reflect the constituency I represented.

On July 21, 2009, Steven Jost, the Associate Director of Communications for the U.S. Census Bureau, presented updates on the integrated media campaign being created by DRAFT FCB under his direction and leadership. After explaining the ways that the advertising and communications plans were being integrated, he played a video to the members of DCAC, which began with “The First Census of 1790.” As it played to the present day, I was ecstatic to witness the image of two different multiracial families and a young multiracial girl appear in two parts of the video. It was at this time I realized my voice had been heard on behalf of the larger multiracial population because this would be for the first time that there was a concerted effort on the part of the Census Bureau to make sure a diverse set of images were used, and ones where multiracial identity were displayed overtly. Unfortunately, this occurrence would be short lived because at the time of writing this dissertation, DRAFT FCB no longer had any images reflecting the multiracial population exhibited in its’ campaigns, from print, web, and television. When confronted about the issue on December 8, 2009 at the Radisson Hotel in Arlington, Virginia where the meetings were taking place, Steven Jost pulled me to the side to tell me he would work with me to work with DRAFT FCB to see what they could do to reflect the multiracial population. At the time, this minimization was very insulting given that the campaign was set to roll out in less than a month on January 4, 2009. Not to mention, AMEA had advocated for this addition since 2006 when I was first appointed and the same concern was voiced at every meeting since then.

Despite these challenges, the Association of MultiEthnic Americans has been indebted to the U.S. Census Bureau for allowing multiracial people a voice, even if just one, to make key decisions on the highest advisory committee. Over the past three years

serving on the Decennial Census Advisory Committee, AMEA has worked to not only raise the needs and concerns of multiracial people in America, but also other emerging populations where the Census has a great stake on their identity development. This has included the apportionment of resources allocated each decade for all communities, and this is significant because the 2010 census will represent the first one post-9/11 and post-Hurricane Katrina. It occurred to me early on that my triple-positionality on DCAC is most evident because I represent as a *leader* of AMEA, a unique organization that advocates for millions of people and families in this country; as an *advocate* for everyday data users and community members who wish to self-identify with their complete parentage; and as the only *academic* on DCAC to challenge the longstanding racial politics about multiracial identity and larger discourses on race and ethnicity that the census is often times unaware of.

4.7 | BUILDING COMMUNITY AND OTHER LANDMARK CONTRIBUTIONS

In addition to AMEA's involvement with the U.S. Census, the organization and its' affiliates have been involved in a number of projects from the local to national levels. In Chapter 5, I will cover four specific national events that AMEA helped lead between 2004 and 2007, where each of these events represents what I consider a key to effective mobilization among the multiracial community. Aside from these key events and ongoing census involvement, the Association of MultiEthnic Americans has been instrumental in building a national community through other landmark contributions and benefits. This includes but is not limited to the first national newsletter for the multiracial community, representation in the media, access to a clearinghouse of resources through the Mixed Heritage Center (MHC), and the development of the first student scholarships for

multiracial undergraduates. The following consist of a description of each project and why it is significant.

Quarterly Newsletter

The purpose of the newsletter is to include the latest news on the multiracial, multiethnic and transracially adopted community across the country. Under my leadership, I developed this tool in 2006 to showcase what organizations were doing across the country, as well as, individual and family members. It was also used as a tangible benefit of AMEA membership because members could also submit stories, events, and projects to publicize for free to others with their own bylines. It was designed to give community members ownership in the type of news they wanted to present, rather than waiting for stories to be presented about them. Stories have included networking opportunities and support groups that developed in cities across the country, newly published books and films accompanied by thought provoking reviews, and upcoming programs and conferences promoted to the different subgroups that make up the multiracial community, such as transracial families. Currently, the newsletter is on hiatus as the organization is looking to pursue newer technologies to publicize information at a faster frequency than newsletters can be produced.

Media Representation

In 2004, ABC pulled an ad during Super Bowl XXXVIII when Sheridan made a movement to remove her towel in front of Philadelphia Eagles' Terrell Owens as he sat in his locker room. The ad was tasteful in the views of many, but for the executives of ABC, the image of a White woman motioning to be intimate with a Black man is still taboo in the twenty-first century. Many community members were outraged not by the

commercial, but by the fact the commercial was taken off air when many of them represented or knew of other couples where this was commonplace. Incidences like these, in addition to other concerns reported by multiracial actors who are confronted with unique forms of discrimination in casting, for example, raised the idea among the board of AMEA that perhaps we needed to step up and secure a place in a reputable organization that advocated for diversity in the media.

AMEA has been a member of the Media Image Coalition (MIC) since 2004, which is an umbrella organization that was originally a project of the Los Angeles Commission on Human Relations established in 1989. The main aims of the MIC is to promote “increased visibility, diversity and balanced imagery of ethnic, cultural, racial and religious groups, women, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer), seniors, people with disabilities and other protected groups that the MIC determines to be subjects of discrimination in media and the arts.” MIC creates innovative programs to build cooperation among communities, organizations, and key stakeholders in the media and the entertainment industry at large through print, radio, television, internet, and other vehicles. Through MIC, the Association of MultiEthnic Americans has been able to put the concerns of multiracial people as both facilitators and audience members for more fair and accurate images of the community on the map. Through the membership of MIC, AMEA has been able to build alliances with groups that have had no knowledge of multiracial identity or the community before, which aligns with AMEA’s overall goals.

Access to the Mixed Heritage Center (MHC)

AMEA and the MAVIN Foundation developed a partnership in 2003, to create the idea to develop a national clearinghouse of resources about everything that deals with

multiracial subject matter. In 2005, the beginning of this project unfolded through grant funding through the K and F Baxter Family Foundation to develop the Mixed Heritage Center (MHC). The MHC has been slow to develop due to internal considerations, but it is currently a virtual concept where members of both AMEA and MAVIN can access resources through an online portal, and eventually, we would like to develop it into a full fledged physical library. This project is the first of it's kind, serving as a database of information that members of the larger public can access to fully explore the intricacies of the multiracial population. The implementation and development of this resource is constantly being updated, and heading into 2010, it is expected to be fully functioning.

First Multiracial Scholarship and Internship Program

Following the untimely passing of Ramona Douglass in 2007, AMEA joined forces with the Biracial Family Network (one of the affiliate organizations that Ms. Douglass founded in the late 1980s) to develop the first nationally recognized multiracial scholarship for students attending four-year universities. An application process was created by members from both the AMEA executive board and the board of BFN that made of the scholarship organizing committee. A press release was officially launched on ... , 2007, which requested that each student answer the following question: "What does the multiracial community mean to you?" As a result of this first attempt at announcing a national scholarship specifically tailored toward students of multiracial, multiethnic and/or transracial adoptive identities, we received a number of applications. Two students were eventually selected, both receiving a small scholarship in the amount of \$500 each.

As a result of all of the stellar applications AMEA and BFN received from the scholarship process, we decided that in order not to lose the momentum and young

leadership of these bright students that we would also offer each of them an AMEA internship if they elected to have one. Our internship program was launched in 2006 in the August/September newsletter where we announced the committees of AMEA that were in need of interns, and the parameters of applying for a position. Both the scholarship and internship programs highlight a significant contribution these projects represent. They signify the growing multiracial community among a sizeable student population across the country where identifying as multiracial is presumably more accepted today than at any other moment before.

4.8 | CHALLENGES, SUCCESSES, AND THE FUTURE OF AMEA

Although the Association of MultiEthnic Americans has been around for a considerable length of time in the non-profit world and maintains a visible position on the past two Census Advisory Committees for the United States, it still remains a hidden entity in mainstream America and the larger discourse on social and political movements. A twenty-year long history might dictate otherwise, but AMEA is nearly absent from the growing discourse on multiracial organizing in the United States. By in large, most of the scholars that do mention AMEA in their work on race and politics do so without a real focused attention on how multiracial organizations operate and how they fit into the larger discourse of race and politics more broadly.

As the current president of AMEA, I have learned that this is not necessarily because the organization has not made its concerns known or promoted the association in a massive public forum over the past 20 years. So far during my tenure, I along with all of the board members have been interviewed on a number of nationally syndicated mediums, including NPR, ABC, NBC, Chicago Times, Los Angeles Times, and the Washington Post to name a few. One interview in particular stands out. On November 12,

2008, which coincidentally was the 20th anniversary of AMEA's founding, reporter, Farai Chideya, interviewed me on NPR's New and Notes. The topic of the hour was "Barack Obama: Face of New Multiracial Movement?" This show was created on the heels of then president-elect Barack Obama's press conference a few days earlier where he stated, "There are a number of breeds that are hypo-allergenic. On the other hand, our preference would be to get a shelter dog, but obviously a lot of shelter dogs are mutts like me."²⁸

NPR had asked Ralina Joseph, a new assistant professor at Washington State, and me as the president of AMEA and 2010 DCAC member, to be guests on the show to discuss the state of the multiracial movement and Barack Obama's "mutt" statement.²⁹ Much like other programs I had previously been a guest on or stories I had been interviewed for, I was quite cautious about the questions that might be asked and the angle the news program or paper would be framed. However, I found this interview to be more of an open dialogue with the purpose of educating the listening audience about multiracial identity and organizing. I was able to discuss the formation of AMEA, its involvement on the census, the option of the "one or more" addition on the Census 2000, and briefly discuss the history of multiracial organizing in this country. The differences between Ralina Joseph and I on the show were very apparent through our positioning. Ms. Joseph could only speak from secondary sources she had gathered about the census and about multiracial organizing in this country, which made it obvious that I received more of the fact-based questions. While not to take away from the research that my colleague has conducted for her own dissertation, our levels of connection to the topic matter spoke to the legitimacy and degree of insight and complexity I was able to offer as an inside and outside observer.

At the close of the program, Farai Chideya allowed me to say the last word. She asked me if there was anything else I would like to share in terms of legal or cultural issues impacting the multiracial community as we look ahead. There were only 15 seconds left on the clock, and I had not the faintest idea what to say. I then decided to state the following:

I would say that if President-elect Obama is listening... I would say that in terms of the mutt comment, it was wonderful. I think that you made a public announcement in a, you know, kind of I guess covert way of talking about it. But at the same time, I will say that you have a challenge here in the country... that mutt is a derogatory term and there are people who are looking up to you. And we would hope that we can engage in that discussion and be able to talk about it in a more sophisticated way from this point forward.

I left the studios feeling at first, very horrible; afraid that I had misspoke and blew my one shot to speak to Barack Obama, who I had the utmost confidence would be our president shortly. I was not sure how my message came across because it was unplanned and off the cuff, and came from the heart. Not to mention, according to NPR, in 2008 they had a cumulative audience of approximately 20.9 millions listener per week. This would suggest a sizeable audience that day at least heard about AMEA and the history of multiracial organizing because everything concerning Barack Obama prior to the elections was tuned into, and surely a program about his multiracial identity. Later, I received many responses from across the country, mostly from multiracial people, who shared my statements and told me the show could not have ended on a better note. I was definitely relieved but not satisfied.

The reason for the dissatisfaction is that my comment speaks to the ongoing challenges that currently face organizations such as AMEA. Thus, an examination of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans showcases the difference between multiracial

politics and the Politics of Being Multiracial that I first introduced in Chapter 1. On one level, AMEA showcases a group that has insisted on being part of the larger conversation of multiracial politics as specified throughout this dissertation. That is, a politics that broadly involves the discourse that describes many different racial and ethnic groups coming together (not necessarily under collaborative terms) around a particular cause or set of issues to further an agenda of sorts. I distinguish this from the concept, Multiracial politics, which refers to a type of politics that involves the advocacy, civic engagement and political participation among the multiracial, multiethnic, and transracially adopted population.

On another level, AMEA represents an organization that is dedicated to advocating against all of the elements that I have argued elsewhere are representative of the Politics of Being Multiracial. Again, this is what I refer to as a set of static and evolving principles or views that impede a multiracial identity from forming. Another challenge the Association of MultiEthnic Americans faces is that as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, volunteer organization, it walks the fine line of ensuring it is non-partisan and apolitical due to its status, but at the same time, it is an organization that mobilizes around one of, if not, the most political variables in society—race and ethnicity.

In addition to the ongoing racial politics that impact all communities, the nature to which multiracial organizing is still very fragile in the United States (much like how the term multiracial has exhibited fragility over the decades) is an alarming issue. For one, the Association of MultiEthnic Americans stands as the sole umbrella organization for the country, even though not all groups that form around multiracial identity and interracial unions hold membership, no less know about the organization. Still it has a

legitimate history at the federal level, which no other multiracial focused group can claim today. As Yen Le Espiritu (1992) pointed out in the history of panethnic alliance formation within the Asian American community in the 1970s and 1980s, that without having recognition at the federal level through a common umbrella identity, a community potentially has no political power from which to voice their concerns. This reality creates tremendous pressure to make sure AMEA is kept alive and running because without a consistent presence in the mainstream, and in the media, the unmet needs of the population lose it's urgency and momentum.

In fact, during the last year of writing my dissertation I felt this pressure most tremendously as I decided to take a writing hiatus to prioritize my research and writing, and not the organization. As always, the ongoing work was already delegated to board members to maintain the activities of the organization while I took the needed break to finish my work, but still maintaining AMEA's seat on the Decennial Census Advisory Committee and other projects behind the scenes. However, as a result, I have observed that the movement has been relatively stagnant in 2008 and 2009, and I believe it is primarily because AMEA activities have taken a backseat via my individual break. In other words, the movement is so fragile that even my work as a graduate student finishing her dissertation, who happens to be the president of AMEA, has slowed the momentum of the entire movement in general.

While some might argue that this is a pretentious observation, in the next chapter it will be evident that this is not a far-fetched claim. In Chapter 5, which involves ethnographic research conducted between 2004 and 2007 on four key national events that AMEA led, facilitated, and co-partnered with other organizations. Briefly, they involve

the University of California Regents RE-52 campaign pushed by Ward Connerly to institute a misdirected “multiracial” category on admissions forms; the One Box Is Not Enough project co-sponsored with the MAVIN Foundation in 2005 to put pressure on the federal government to fully implement OMB Directive 15; Senate Bill 1615 “The Ethnic Heritage Respect and Recognition Act” developed in 2006; and the international Loving Decision Conference 2007 in honor of the 40th anniversary of the Loving v State of Virginia (1967) Supreme Court ruling. Together these events demonstrate the conditions under which successful mobilization can take place.

It is important to note that for each of these national events, I happened to serve as the primary coordinator or leader elected or appointed by the community to represent them. Also noteworthy to mention is that I had never independently decided to run for any office or position, from AMEA and MIC to the Census, wherein all positions I have ever taken on were by nomination. As I reflect back, I always felt a tremendous sense of guilt and pride at the same time whenever I was selected to represent the community. Guilt, because I felt that if I did not accept a position or step up (in most cases where there were no alternatives), that I would fail the multiracial movement and the hard work that my predecessors and mentors had fought so hard to earn. At the same time, I felt pride because I realized I stood at an interesting position in the multiracial movement, as someone who bridges the younger and older population, represents the first minority-minority background in leadership, and is the youngest ever to serve as president of a relatively prestigious organization in the history of the movement. For these reasons and more, I dedicated long hours as a student, as an independent researcher, as an advocate

and leader, and as a person who simply wishes to respect the racial makeup of her beautiful parentage and family, without regrets over the past 6 years of my life.

Earlier I shared that prior to beginning my doctoral studies on the west coast and before I ascended to the presidency of AMEA, I had never heard of the organization despite my proactive organizing efforts on the east coast. I discovered the same holds true in the present day that by in large, most people are unaware of AMEA and it's growing affiliate group existence. The questions still remain then. How can an organization with a twenty year history that serves the infinitely growing population of multiracial identified persons, interracial couples, and transracial adoptees be vacant in the mindset of mainstream America? What type of history and activities has this organization created that would stand the test of two decades, despite it's fragile moment, in order to look ahead to the next 20 years of multiracial organizing? At this current time, the organization is constantly looking at new ways to transform how it reaches out to support and educate society about the unmet needs of this population from institutions of health, education and other social and political arenas. The next chapter aims to demonstrate just that—to show how a seemingly unknown national organization dedicated to the multiracial community might be here to stay.

Chapter 4 Endnotes

¹ Slaney, Catherine. 2003. *Family Secrets: Crossing the Colour Line*. Toronto: Natural Heritage Books. p. 141.

² An interesting passage in my September 2003 fieldnotes: The blood clots had first formed over the summer before I moved to Los Angeles, and I was receiving treatment at Johns Hopkins Hospital. On this particular day, which fell within the first 3 weeks of graduate school at the University of Southern California, I was getting follow-up blood tests as instructed by my doctors in Baltimore, Maryland at the USC Norris Cancer Hospital in downtown Los Angeles. I just so happen to be taking a qualitative methods course in the Department of Sociology. It was advised that we always keep in our possession at all times a recorder and/or a journal to take fieldnotes. Unbeknownst to the doctor, I had a mini-tape recorder in my purse and I taped my conversation with him when I noticed the conversation started to take a turn. I needed proof in the event I was going to take my medical malpractice case to court because I already knew the blood clots were not hereditary, but due to a medicine I was unaware was injected into my initial IV that I was allergic to. However, I was struck by the conversation the doctor and I were having where he insisted on racializing my blood. It was a very uncomfortable time.

³ Williams, Kim. 2006. *Mark One or More: Civil Rights in Multiracial America*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press. p. 37. She mentions interviewing such notable activists, including Ramona Douglass, co-founder and second president of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans, and Susan Graham, president of Project RACE.

⁴ Ibid. p.136. In the appendices of Williams' book, she states: "I reviewed all internal documentation provided to me by the groups... I obtained and read meeting minutes and back issues of newsletters; in a few instances, I was able to augment this wealth of information with internal correspondence and financial records."

⁵ Charles Michael Byrd, "Census 2000 Protest: Check American Indian!" *Interracial Voice*. January 1, 1998. <http://198.66.252.234/protest.html> (last visited: April 24, 2010).

⁶ Williams 2006, p. 130

⁷ Byrd 1998. "What we *will* have is the "politically correct" version of the old "one drop rule." The "politically correct" version goes by the name: *check all that apply*. Individuals who can claim African heritage and who check the "black" or "African-American" box on the 2000 Census—even if they also check a second or third box—will be reported solely as "black" or "African-American." So much for not being monoracially pigeonholed."

⁸ The only other scholar that has come close to this insider-outsider perspective is Reginald Daniel, sociologist at University of California, Santa Barbara who was secretary of AMEA when it was founded. However, his work focuses on the racial formation of what he refers to as "multiracial subjectivity" nationally and internationally, with less focus on multiracial organizations aside from brief overviews.

⁹ After publishing *Mark One or More*, Kim Williams (2006), now a Harvard professor, received much criticism by the community she gathered the data from, the most notable was from Ramona Douglass, original co-founder of AMEA, to whom she indebted the research to. The book was beautifully illustrated with tables, graphs, and charts, but Williams misrepresents AMEA by including affiliate organizations that had never joined the organization.

¹⁰ The precise year that the Manasseh Society is believed to have originated is unclear. The year falls somewhere on or before 1890, but no later than 1892. Drake and Clayton (1945) claim that the original Manasseh Club originated some time after the turn of the century, however, Slaney (2003) writes that a man by the name of Anderson Abbott wrote about the Manasseh Society in the year 1892, which suggests that the group existed during or before its distribution or publication that year. Political scientists, Spencer (1997) and Persons (2001) pin the origin year at exactly 1890. Also see Nash (1995) and Daniel (2002).

¹¹ See St. Clair Drake and Horace C. Clayton 1945. *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 145. Not by any coincidence, the “Pledge of Allegiance” was written in 1892, securing the origins of this group around this time.

¹² Ibid. p. 146. One gentleman interviewed in the study also remarked, “I was secretary when the club broke up,” which suggests that there were structured officer positions in the Manasseh Society.

¹³ Jon Michael Spencer (1997) discovered these organizations through his research on returning Black soldiers from the war that married non-Black brides. These organizations were stabled to assist in their families adjustment as they returned home. Also see, Persons 2001: 162.

¹⁴ What I am trying to say here is that these types of multiracial groups exist in the social sciences, but typically as outliers; groups that are most likely found in short passages or sections of an anthology when the topic of mixed race is raised.

¹⁵ Nash 1995, p. 949

¹⁶ Carlos Fernandez was the founder of iPride, the first post-Civil Rights organization to form for multiracial families in the United States. Ramona Douglass was the president of the Biracial Family Network (BFN) in Chicago. Sara Ross is currently the head of HONEY (Honor Our New Ethnic Youth), and Reginald Daniel is now a professor of sociology at UC Santa Barbara.

¹⁷ Miscegenation laws were rampant in southern states, in comparison to northern states where many did not put official laws in place until the 1920s and 1930s. The following consists of southern states and the years they established miscegenation laws: Virginia (1662); North Carolina (1715); South Carolina (1717); Pennsylvania (1725); Tennessee (1741); Georgia (1750); Kentucky (1792); Mississippi (1822); Florida (1832); Texas (1837); Arkansas (1838); Alabama (1852); Oklahoma (1897); Arizona (1865); and West Virginia (1863).

¹⁸ Nancy G. Brown is a clinical psychiatrist at Kaiser Foundation in Culver City, CA. She self-identifies as a Jewish and German American woman who is married to an African American man, for whom they have two multiracial identified daughters.

¹⁹ Matt Kelley is the founder of the MAVIN Foundation, which began as a magazine dedicated to stories about multiracial people in the United States, headquartered in Seattle, Washington.

²⁰ Bridge Communications is a consulting business Michelle Hughes created outside of her law offices with the aim of providing workshops and training for monoracial parents who adopted children of other races. Through her research and professional experience, she realized there was a growing disconnect between monoracial parents who did not know how to be culturally competent when raising children of other races, often creating adverse environments to these children. She also found that many of the children she was placing into homes were being classified as monoracially black, when in fact they were multiracial.

²¹ Williams 1996, p. 5

²² Perlmann and Waters 2002, p. 2

²³ Williams 2006, p. 6

²⁴ This notation was taken from the November 17, 2004 minutes produced by the Office of the Secretary of the University of California Regents, addressed to the attention of the Members of the Committee on Educational Policy. It reports, “The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education has asked OMB to provide more guidance to the federal statistical community in order to achieve agreement across agencies. In the meantime, NCES has published guidance to education institutions strongly recommending that institutions ‘do nothing at this time to change their current race and ethnicity reporting systems and formats’.” The documentation can be accessed at: <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/regents/regmeet/nov04/re521.pdf> (last visited: April 22, 2010).

²⁵ For more information about the ACS, you can refer to the *ACS Design and Methodology* report at www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/tp67.pdf

²⁶ Haya El Nassar. “Fewer Americans Call Themselves Multiracial.” *USA Today*. May 4, 2007. http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-05-04-multiracial_N.htm (last visited: April 22, 2010).

²⁷ Changes were not made overnight. This same issue regarding the discrepancies between census decade data and ACS data was raised again at the December 2010 meetings of the Decennial Census Advisory Committee. Since then, the ACS website and supporting documents have changed to include a section specifically targeted at data users and social scientists. A tab called, “How to use the data” was added to the website in attempt to educate data users about what the ACS data represented and that estimates and totals should not be conflated.

²⁸ *Transcript*. “Barack Obama: Face of the Multiracial Movement?”. NPR News and Notes. November 12, 2008.

²⁹ Coincidentally, Ralina and I also happened to sit on a panel at the American Studies Association in 2005 where I presented research on the lesser-known Barack Obama at the time.

Chapter 5

CIVICALLY ENGAGING IDENTITIES: KEYS TO EFFECTIVE MOBILIZATION TOWARD BUILDING A COLLECTIVE MULTIRACIAL COMMUNITY

“[B]oth research on ethnic and racial politics and panethnicity pay little attention to the details of everyday life that illustrate how individuals interpret and give meaning to events at the local, regional, national, and global level. The lived experiences of everyday life are a critical site of observation.”¹

~ Leland Saito, 1998 ~

“The social justice model fights against the oppressive and unjust aspects of ghettoization at the same time as it recognizes that fundamental social critique and oppositional strategies can be forged from the margins.”²

~ Michael Messner, 2002 ~

“Individuals have multiple group identifications, and their individual agency modifies their group identifications just as group identifications shape individual agency. Individuals who mutually identify around a social marker often join together in a politically relevant and socially identified group.”³

~ Janelle Wong, 2006 ~

5.1 | INTRODUCTION

One week before I was to present testimony in front of the California Senate Judiciary Committee in Sacramento, California on behalf of Senate Bill 1615 - “Ethnic Heritage Respect and Recognition Act”, I was told I would be given five minutes to testify. However, fifteen seconds right before I would make my remarks on April 26, 2006, a Senate legislative aid came up to me at the podium and whispered, “I was told you now have 45 seconds to make your case. They have a lot of other bills to go through today. Good luck with that.”⁴ Suddenly, the unmet needs of the multiracial community seemed to be made insignificant and trivial, and I had only five more seconds to decide

what I would say from a well-prepared five-minute speech now in under a minute. To my left sat Walter Kawamoto,⁵ who would also be giving remarks, and behind me in the audience sat other members of the SB1615 organizing coalition and representatives of among 6.8 million multiracial identified Americans and their families.

In this chapter, I present research on the frontlines of the Multiracial Movement by looking at four key national events that AMEA, its affiliates, and partner organizations led between 2004 and 2007. The events involve the University of California Regents RE-52 campaign pushed by Ward Connerly to institute a misdirected “multiracial” category on admissions forms in 2004; the One Box Isn’t Enough project co-sponsored with the MAVIN Foundation in 2005 to put pressure on the federal government to fully implement OMB Directive 15; Senate Bill 1615 “The Ethnic Heritage Respect and Recognition Act” developed in 2006; and the coordination of the international Loving Decision Conference 2007 in honor of the 40th anniversary of the *Loving v State of Virginia* (1967) Supreme Court ruling. These events were selected to highlight because they involved very effective strategies that helped to bring attention to the unmet needs of the multiracial population that have been less known in mainstream society.

As I will illustrate, these events were relatively successful because they consisted of the five conditions (or strategies) I believe are essential to successfully mobilize multiracial identities, herein referred to as the “Keys to Effective Mobilization.” To borrow from Janelle Wong’s (2006) argument on the role that community organizations play to mobilize immigrant communities, the most successful organizations are ones that are able to recognize features that join people together, across multiple identities, through common concerns, shared identities, and interests.⁶ In my research, I identify five

conditions that I use to describe the successful mobilization led by AMEA and its partners which involves what I refer to as: *Institutional Support*, *External Threats*, *Shared Ideology*, *Alliance Building*, and *Collective Resources*. I argue that when these conditions are met, effective mobilization is likely to occur because they help to seriously ground the cause and provide direction and accountability among all those involved. Each event, in chronological order, will demonstrate the strength of a specific condition under which effective mobilization can take place. Together all of these events could not have been as successful without community organizers adopting these strategies.

To create consistency when analyzing the four main events, each event follows the same outline. First, the event will describe *main purpose* or cause that sparked multiracial advocates to civically engage around the country. Next, I describe *background details of organizing* the events I observed and participated on to show how the momentum was built for each of the events behind the scenes. This also includes a brief discussion of the key players that were involved in each of the activities that took place. Last, I discuss the *end results*, in which I share the reasons the cause at hand was successful by tying it back into the key to effective mobilization the event represented. While each of the events arguably utilizes all of the conditions I outline, each event I selected to represent a specific condition serves as the best example to showcase it.

Research detailing the impetus for creating these events is significant because it is the first glimpse into what the first decade in the twenty-first century has looked like in the longer trajectory of multiracial organizing in the United States. As Anne Costain and Andrew McFarland (1998) urge in their compilation of theories on social and political

movements, more integration between researching social movements and political institutions is needed in the social sciences.

Political institutions shape social movements, and these movements, sometimes, in turn, shape the institutions... Unfortunately for such an understanding, the relationship between social movements and political institutions has been split between two disciplines. Sociologists study the origin and development of social movements. Political scientists study the eventual effects of movements on politics, such as the passage of legislation or the issuance of judicial decisions. The sociologists rarely looks to see the impact movements have on lobbying, elections, and other political events. The political scientist infrequently generalizes about the relationships between political events and institutional change or how the development of social movements affects such events.⁷

Likewise, research on the impact multiracial mobilizing has had on American social and political institutions unbeknownst to the larger public is representative of this. For example, as earlier chapters showed, the history of multiracial organizing and the trajectory to which multiracial people have been defined in this country is important as this dissertation has argued, because it proves that race is indeed a social construction to combat subversive forms of contemporary biological claims to define the population in the near future.

In this chapter, I pull together all three research questions proposed in this dissertation to show how the multiracial population post-Census 2000 actually mobilized in ways that centered on internally defining themselves, opposed to accepting external racial identity definitions witnessed in much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To restate the research questions, I ask: *1) How do we define the multiracial population in the United States and what do these definitions offer about racial and ethnic ideologies and the future for public policy post-2000?; 2) What critical insights can centering the experiences of multiracial Americans and the efforts to define them on the local, state, and/or national levels, publicly and privately, offer for other groups in American*

society?; and 3) Under what conditions is it possible to politically mobilize around this shifting and contested category and what are the unmet needs of this emerging population?

In particular, the last research question will fully be addressed in this chapter as it has not been addressed significantly up to this point in the dissertation. I have done this in order to provide the greater, take home significance of uncovering the unmet needs of this population which lends to the urgency of this research. That is, the insignificance I felt that day was less about the dramatic cut in time to speak because quite frankly, all communities encounter moments like this because policymaking is a time limited process. However, what felt insignificant was that it was clear that the time allotted would be no more than a gloss-over of the unmet needs of the population that warranted this bill. In other words, the committee and the audience would presumably be no more educated about the concerns of the population than they were before since forty-five seconds of time hardly captures the gravity that was at stake. This chapter addressed each of the main research questions in this dissertation through a close examination of each of the aforementioned key events.

5.2 | METHODS

Fieldwork largely from participant and field observations, interviews, and content analysis collected between 2004 and 2009 will be presented in this chapter. As indicated above, I will be highlighting four key events that AMEA, its affiliates, and partner organizations orchestrated up to 2007. The research was collected in multiple cities primarily where each of the main events originated and eventually took place in Sacramento, California, Chicago, Illinois, Los Angeles, CA, and Seattle, Washington. I

attended public hearings, coordinated international conferences, held board meetings and conference calls where I gathered much of my primary and secondary data. Sources were also derived from resources created by the Association of MultiEthnic Americans and community partner organizations.

This includes press releases and briefs, agendas, phone meeting minutes and notes, conference proceedings, information packets, and other literature used to chronicle how community members were informed to eventually act on the local, state, and federal levels. I also refer to my personal fieldnotes I took extensively as a primary advocate during the course of these events because they help to paint a picture of the daily, behind the scenes, grassroots activities. Last, I collected as many forms of media coverage about each event, which includes select television (ABC), radio (NPR Philadelphia, WVON Chicago - "The Santita Jackson Show", etc.), and print (*Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *USA Today*, *The Wave*, etc.) news coverage.

5.3 | KEYS TO EFFECTIVE MOBILIZATION

My research has helped me to identify five conditions under which I believe effective mobilization can occur. This involves what I have labeled, *Institutional Support*, *External Threats*, *Shared Ideology*, *Alliance Building*, and *Collective Resources*. I qualify “effective mobilization” to describe a process by which a cause and set of concerns are first identified and validated, followed by a set of leaders and key players that volunteer to organize with the intent to raise the issues in a systematic and informed way, which eventually leads to building enough support to address the cause on a massive scale to reach a desired set of objectives. For multiracial organizers, my research shows this usually involves the goals of educating the mainstream about the unmet needs of the multiracial community at large, as well as, to reach out to less-informed members of the

multiracial community itself to educate them through medium- to large-scale mobilization campaigns of many sorts. The idea seems to be that the more people who become informed and recognize the growing presence of multiracial people and their families in the United States (and beyond), the more allies and community members that eventually might come together to address the lingering needs and concerns that have not been met.

Hence, the five conditions I will describe below and throughout this chapter as I discuss each event I observed and examined that raised a specific cause or set of concerns, will help to initiate this important conversation. Two points are important to mention here, however. The first point is that the condition I call *institutional support* is one that I believe impacts the effectiveness of most large-scale mobilization campaigns and this is evident by the success of each of the events I examine herein which all elicited institutional support from the very onset of organizing. Whereas, the remaining four conditions aid in the effectiveness of mobilizing, but are not necessarily mandatory to yield effective mobilization as my research unfolds. This leads to the second point, which is that these conditions are not listed in any particular order. They are simply listed in the order in which the event described highlights the effectiveness of the condition being discussed. Aside from institutional support that helps to secure the success of mobilization, they are all equally effective and significant.

Institutional Support (Censuses 2000, 2010)

Institutional support proved to be among the main conditions under which it was more likely that an effective mobilization campaign improved in my study. It was ultimately the most tangible piece of evidence that demonstrated change had occurred

and that goals were achieved by impacting an institution, wherein I define an institution as a long established practice or seemingly fixed organizational structure in society. In other words, effective mobilization can be witnessed when groups form together to push to get a new federal bill to pass, a state law enacted, or a local structure built. These are tangible examples where if the initial goal to mobilize was to get a bill passed to prevent smoking near schools in order to curb the epidemic of second hand smoke to youth, getting the bill recognized through the support of a local, state, or federal official is essential to achieve. As some scholars contend, reaching institutional support may improve the likelihood of having an effective mobilization campaign, but it does not mean a campaign ceases to exist without institutional support (Imig 1996, 1998; Costain and McFarland 1998). It is also through a focus on “government responsibility” and “institutional responsibility”, as Gary T. Marx (1972) once explained, that social science researchers can come to uncover and “document unintended (or officially unacknowledged) consequences of social action, inequality, poverty, racism, exploitation, opportunism, neglect, denial of dignity, hypocrisy, inconsistency, manipulation, wasted resources and the displacement of an organization’s stated goals in favor of self-perpetuation.”⁸

As this chapter will illustrate, gathering institutional support is not an automatic process, nor an easy feat to achieve due to a variety of factors, such as gatekeeping, access to resources, and whether the cause has validity in the first place. This condition is sometimes a necessary evil because the cause of concern impacting a community could be the actual institution itself that is holding the cause back from being addressed. In addition, without enough support of allies within, a cause can remain stagnant and

immobile. Such was the case with activism among American Indians in the early 1970s in their attempt for self-determination. It was short-lived due to the lack of institutional support they were unable to garner both inside and outside federal leadership (Meranto 1998). It is not until the 1990s when American Indian political activists would return, but only eliciting support from lobbyist in Washington DC to appeal Congress on the issues the community confronts. Oneida Meranto contends, “This use of sophisticated lobbying as a strategy points to the recognition by tribal governments that effective pressure now moves from protest in the streets to the hallways of Congress and later to the courts.”⁹ In other words, an issue can be so deeply and historically embedded in the institutional framework that it is far more difficult to challenge in contemporary times by community members alone.

Let us also take for example, issues concerning gender inequity in society. Much like the unfair practices with regard to race and ethnicity that have plagued the United States in our institutions of law, education, and health, the longstanding attitudes regarding gender have been so deeply embedded in society that leveling the playing field has not happened overnight and is an ongoing process of opposition (Messner 2002). In 1972 and 1996 respectively, we saw the likes of Title IX and the WNBA introduced, forever changing the institutions of education and sports. While one can argue to the politics of fairness and equity that these two entities still confront, the point remains that they had to mobilize the support of the very institutions that they were impacted by, or else change may not have happened, at least not in the same course that ensued. That is, effective mobilization strategies to raise public awareness on a massive scale were the key to changing the institutions that openly discriminated against females altogether.

In Chapter 4, the mobilization that took place in the 1980s leading to the involvement of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans on the 2000 Census Advisory Committee and the 2010 Decennial Census Advisory Committee, is an example of eliciting institutional support on a massive scale. This was created because of a longstanding concern building within the multiracial community across the country that they could not identify with their multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds with a limited “mark one” option. As earlier chapters showed, this concern was evident since 1850 when the first category to denote a multiracial identity, “mulatto”, was added to the census. Over a hundred years later, this generated a concern that could no longer be tolerated as the multiracial population in the United States was exponentially growing and AMEA needed to know who and where to locate individuals and families in order to adequately meet their needs. Eventually this involved AMEA, its affiliate organizations, and members mobilizing together to elicit the support from the key players at the Bureau of the Census to change this institutionalized practice once and for all. Involvement on the federal level through the census is not unique to just the multiracial population because most groups have had to go through this process of challenging institutional practices while at the same time garnering their support.¹⁰

External Threats (RE-52 Proposal - 2004)

The next condition, *external threats*, was a significant observation in my research that proved to effectively mobilize the multiracial community. I describe external threats to mean an actual or perceived action or risk that could be imposed by some outside entity onto some individual or group that readily opposes this action. This threat may eventually lead to a *reaction*, and in the events I describe in this chapter, this condition

ignites people to politically mobilize. For example, Leland Saito (1998) discusses that until the early 1990s, redistricting was of considerable concern to Asian Americans and Latinos. Every ten years when the census is collected, this data is used to divide local, state, and federal districts in order to allocate resources. Geographic concentrations of these communities would historically be divided by politicians, which threatened their sense of political influence. As a result, this fragmentation made it difficult for them to capture enough voting power to gain a seat in the general assembly, in the senate, and in congress for decades. Saito further explains,

The fact that the law provides a basis for collective action means nothing unless groups act on it and establish a case. Recognizing the need to institute organizations that could participate in such a technical, political, and bureaucratic process, Latinos and Asian Americans each formed statewide and regional groups to advocate the interests of their respective communities to the California State Legislature, which is in charge of the redistricting and reapportionment process.¹¹

I use this example to illustrate how political mobilization can arguably be read as a reactive process to combat some issue or set of concerns that threaten a communities influence that address their unmet needs.

This issue has also been taken up by other scholars with regard to perceived or political threat concerning citizenship and naturalization (Pantoja et. al. 2001; Pantoja and Segura 2003); the need to increase political representation and voter turnout (Ramakrishnan and Baldassare 2004; Wong 2006); ongoing attacks on civil liberties and other issues involving the impact of race onto politics (Davis 2006; Bowler et. al. 2006). In their study comparing the 1996 California turnout among naturalized and native-born Latino citizens, Adrian Pantoja, Ricardo Ramirez, and Gary Segura (2001) argue that immigrants, for example, who choose to naturalize during politically charged times, are

doing so because they seek “enfranchisement as an act of political expression,” and they represent a subset of citizens who are more likely to express interest in political issues.¹² They caution that not all immigrants choose to naturalize throughout the U.S., but among Latinos they studied in California, newly naturalized citizens made these choices to further political-self-interest they believe were threatened by heightened political discourse. Additionally, Darren W. Davis (2006) looks at the aftermath of September 11th and compels us to think about how political threat made citizens acquiesce several antidemocratic consequences in the name of national security, and how different racial groups were impacted differently. Both studies demonstrate how times of heightened social and political threat are an important site through which to examine the important role that race and ethnicity play in supporting civil liberties and freedom of identity.

In this chapter I will illustrate the importance of the condition *external threat* on mobilizing around multiracial identity. This condition will be discussed by examining a proposal introduced by University of California Regent Ward Connerly in 2004. The proposal, herein referred to as RE-52, sought to implement a misdirected “multiracial” category on all undergraduate admissions applications in the University of California system. This change would essentially take away a “two or more races” option that AMEA and its allies fought for on the federal level. Furthermore, it would not be in compliance with the OMB Directive 15 that requires all state and federally funded institutions to bring their forms and systems up to date that collect and/or require information about race and ethnicity. This proposal was created by Connerly, without consultation with the multiracial community, presumably to carry out former anti-affirmative action agendas and initiatives for racial privacy (Dyson 2003; Amar 2004;

HoSang 2007). As a result, RE-52 was interpreted as a politically charged threat which ignited multiracial advocates to mobilize the community to start a campaign nationwide to prevent this change from being implemented. They argued that a multiracial category was a replacement for “other” which would eventually prevent students from being able to receive adequate campus resources because they could no longer be identified and/or self-identify among the full diversity of their backgrounds.

Ward Connerly has been a long time proponent for racial privacy initiatives that combat affirmative action in the state of California. He was successful in 1996 with an anti-quota Proposition 209 campaign, officially known as the “Prohibition Against Discrimination or Preferential Treatment by State and Other Public Entities”,¹³ and in 2002, he tried to get another ballot passed called, “The Racial Privacy Initiative” (RPI), officially known as “Classification By Race, Ethnicity, Color or National Origin” or “Proposition 54”.¹⁴ Both proposals were designed to prevent public agencies in California, particularly those involving education and employment, from being able to identify individuals based on “race, ethnicity, color or national origin”. Although California voters passed Proposition 209, they voted against the passage of RPI in 2003. RE-52 was the next initiative that Ward Connerly developed in his role as a University of California Regent, but this time, targeting individuals of multiracial identity.¹⁵

Shared Ideology (One Box Isn’t Enough Campaign - 2005)

Vitally important to any effective mobilization strategy is a *shared ideology* among all of those involved. A shared sense of purpose, vision, objectives, and common understanding about the cause or set of concerns impacting some phenomenon is essential to mobilizing people to act. The Civil Rights Movement is indicative of this

condition, as it represented a time in which seemingly disparate groups mobilized together under the ideology that fighting for equality for African Americans would eventually open access for other groups (Dawson 1995; Skretny 1996, 2002; Bonilla-Silva 2006). Sometimes the shared ideology consists of coming to an agreement about how people wish to be defined, which was witnessed very noticeably in the 1970s when seemingly disparate ethnic and nationalist groups would forge together under the shared ideology of an “Asian” umbrella racial category (Espiritu 1993; Lowe 1998). Prior to this, ethnic subgroups that today make up the Asian American community were once so diluted that it prevented them from building a larger community to gain political influence (Saito 1998; Nakanishi and Lai 2003; Wong 2006). Outside of political influence, however, the Asian American community was also dealing with societal issues at the time, such as the beating death of Vincent Chen in 1982 by two off-duty White police officers.¹⁶ The details involved in this case necessitated that the larger community forge together to build a shared ideology to combat Asian Americans as targets of hate crimes in the U.S.

To showcase this condition in this chapter, I focus on the “One Box Isn’t Enough” campaign spearheaded in 2005, herein referred to as the OBIE mobilization project. This campaign was initiated by the MAVIN Foundation who partnered with AMEA and other leading multiracial organizations, which sought to put pressure on the federal government to fully implement its mandate that by 1997, OMB Directive 15 would be implemented nationwide. By 2005, this mandate was not practiced in institutions that required race data, such as in state universities and in state and federally funded hospitals. This sparked multiracial leaders to institute a nationwide letter and telephone campaign to raise

awareness to state and federal agencies and policymakers to implement these practices. In order for the OBIE mobilization project to be effective, it had to be strategic in its research efforts to make sure this was an ideology the community shared.

Building Alliances (Senate Bill 1615 – 2006)

The next condition that proves to be effective when mobilizing communities to erect change on a large scale is to build alliances both within and outside of the targeted group who raises the issues at hand. Whereas in the shared ideology approach that builds a consensus among in-group members, forging alliances across groups that make up a host of multiple identities is highly beneficial and quite necessary to build support. The root of building “alliances” is building “allies” that often share similar concerns in their own communities, but who wish to show support for the cause of another community. As Wong (2006) points out, alliance building often occurs in grassroots organizing efforts that cut across a “multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-sector base” where “putting aside differences to focus on common issues” becomes a priority.¹⁷ This is seen by the likes of coalitions such as the NAACP and NOW, to the likes of projects that warranted coalition building, such as the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride involving Latinos, Asian Americans, whites, and blacks that participated. Wong goes on to state,

These instances of multiracial coalition building belie the assumption that organizations with deep connections to a particular ethnic community will undermine core democratic values and promote racial separation or balkanization in the United States.¹⁸

Although the “multiracial coalition” that Wong discusses here is not the same multiracial focus I invoke in my research, the argument here is still a shared one. That is, building alliances across fluid racial and ethnic boundaries helps to demonstrate that more groups

are coming to understand the plight of other communities that has not always been evident.¹⁹

In the same respect, it has not always been evident to monoracial community groups that multiracial organizations have consistently built alliances with them, where the opposite has not been the case. This is important because Janelle Wong's statement highlights the importance of my research in this chapter, which addresses a gap in the literature where monoracial group alliances with other monoracial groups is well documented, but far less is known about the multiracial alliances that have been built with monoracial groups. This will be shown through the efforts surrounding Senate Bill 1615, a bill introduced to the California state legislature through Senator Joe Simitian who worked with multiracial advocates in 2006 to later get the bill passed through the state judiciary committee. The bill gained momentum through the collective efforts of all of the organizations involved, including alliances AMEA built with groups of monoracial allies that helped to sign letters and support the campaign.

Collective Resources (Loving Decision Conference - 2007)

Finally, the last condition that is as equally important as the rest to effectively mobilize communities to enact needed change is through the identification of *collective resources*. Amenta and Young (1999) advise, "Studies of the impact of social movements need to go beyond specifying the benefits received by any group represented by challengers. Often neglected but also necessary are means to ascertain whether and the degree to which the mobilization and action of any challenger had an impact on collective benefits."²⁰ So far I have discussed how different strategies help to push causes forward and raise awareness about a set of concerns, but often these strategies require an

enormous amount of capital to be successful on a massive scale. At the grassroots level, this becomes particularly troublesome because many of the individuals and groups that come together consist of non-profit groups, community members and small sized organizations, where resources and funding are quite limited. My research shows that these groups are still able to be successful when they marshal their resources together, across coalitions, through combining existing finances, fundraising, and in-kind donations.

In 2007, this was demonstrated by the collaboration efforts that took place to orchestrate the Loving Decision Conference 2007: The Next 40 Years of Multiracial Communities held in Chicago, Illinois. This conference was an international endeavor with the goal of celebrating and educating society about the 40th anniversary of the *Loving v State of Virginia* (1967) Supreme Court case which overturned the illegal ban on interracial marriage in the United States. This conference was a historical undertaking because it was the first to bring all people together from across the country, not only within the multiracial community, cutting across intersecting identities and monoracial communities. The international conference was coordinated on a limited budget that relied heavily on collective resources to include in-kind donations, sponsorship, and pro-bono assistance from over 100 volunteers. The success of the conference was largely due to the collective resources which most importantly, built solidarity around a collective goal to educate the larger public about the historical legal case. Wrong (2002) points out:

Solidarity and organization... are the fundamental collective resources, fundamental in the sense that they are prerequisites for the mobilization of all the others... Since solidarity and organizations are themselves collective resources and also prerequisites for the mobilization of all other collective resources, the opportunity to create with their help other formidable collective resources often determines whether an effort at mobilization is undertaken... Even though a group may be small, the dependence of others—whether the general public or policymaking elites—on its skills and activities may encourage efforts to mobilize it to take advantage of its functional indispensability in order to further its interests or values.²¹

5.4 | EXTERNAL THREATS: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA REGENTS RE-52 PROPOSAL FOR A “MULTIRACIAL” DESIGNATION ON THE UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS APPLICATION (2004)

Description of Cause and Main Purpose

On November 17, 2004, the University of California regents held a meeting in Covell Commons at UCLA. The meeting convened at 12:05pm, presided by Regent Chairman Parsky. Soliciting public comment from members in the audience was the major focus of this meeting where individuals were given an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns about a host of agenda items to be discussed that day. Leading up to this day, a campaign was launched by the MAVIN Foundation, the Association of Multiethnic Americans (AMEA), and Hapa Issues Forum (HIF)²², three of the leading state and national nonprofit multiracial advocacy organizations in the country, to build support to challenge RE-52, the proposal created by UC Regent Ward Connerly.²³ This proposal sought to institute an umbrella “multiracial” category on all UC undergraduate applications, which was viewed as an external threat on the part of Connerly, and the fact that it existed without an option to write-in or select two or more racial and ethnic categories to reflect one’s identity. These three multiracial advocacy organizations reached out through mailings, email, and phone canvassing to compile a list of names and contact information of people across the country that opposed the adoption of RE-52. In a

matter of weeks, news traveled across the country, and together the organizations were able to collect thousands of signatures to present to the UC Regents.

In order to build the most comprehensive understanding about how former Regent Ward Connerly's proposal, RE-52, would potentially impact UC student experiences, it is important to understand how the UC undergraduate application process flows. The three major departments in the application process are the Office of Admissions, the Office of Financial Aid, and Student services (also known as the Student Activities and Retention Centers). Through understanding how and where the actual application travels through the UC system, we gain a better understanding of how instituting a multiracial" category can impact students who wish to identify with multiple races and/or ethnicities. In addition, this becomes one example in education that can arguably follow the same path followed in other institutions and industries where race is recorded, such as in healthcare, and in the media.

A representative at the Director's Office of the Undergraduate Admissions and Relations with Schools at UCLA I consulted suggested the best way to understand how policy RE-52 might affect student experiences is by using an imaginary student. Therefore the following few sections will hypothetically trace an example of a fictional UCLA applicant, Nathan, through the three major departments of the application process if the implementation of the RE-52 changes. Nathan will be an undeclared freshman in the fall and self-identifies with his African American and Filipino heritages. He would also like to be considered for financial aid.

Admissions Department

Once Nathan completes his application, it is mailed to central processing in Oakland, California. Since Nathan did not have an option to check both of his heritages, he decided to select the “multiracial” option. The contractor then compiles the data from Nathan’s application and retains one copy for its records and sends another copy to the Office of Admissions at UCLA. Nathan’s application undergoes a comprehensive review, which consists of three separate evaluations: academic, personal achievements, and life challenges. The academic evaluation considers Nathan’s GPA, standardized test scores, college preparation, the strength of his high school’s academic program, and so forth. The remaining two evaluations consider his extra-curricular activities, community service, and any challenges that may have impacted his academic success thus far. After the evaluations are completed, the admissions staff disseminates Nathan’s application to a team of readers to make the final admissions determination. If Nathan had declared a major, his application would also be forwarded to his particular college(s) of interest.

Before following the application to the next department, there are several issues that arise thus far. Although the number of students who now apply online to colleges and universities has grown tremendously with the popularity of the Internet, a number of students are still applying in paper form. The number of applications that the University of California would have to change would be quite costly given the popularity of the ten campuses, and the online applications would also need to be updated. Furthermore, the research technology that would need to change in order to collect and maintain the data on the single category “multiracial” needs to not only be changed at the central processing level, but each department and office on every UC campus.

According to another representative at the Director's Office of Admissions, "Technological data hardware collection will change dramatically and how that data... if our office changes our system, financial aid has to change to accommodate the policy... it's a pain in the you know what!" This also points to the additional strains that staff workers would need to face with the policy changes, which based on this representative are not as easy to employ. Presently the technology is set up to collect data on all of the racial and ethnic categories that a multiracial student selects. The only problem is that the University of California does not know how to report it based on the current limited guidelines and unsophisticated technology of RE-52, which forces the collapsing of the student into one of their racial/ethnic categories.

Financial Aid Department

Next, because Nathan also marked on the back of his application that he was interested in financial aid, the admissions committee now makes recommendations for which scholarships he is most eligible. The UCLA Alumni Association selects the majority of recipients for scholarship awards. The scholarships that the association receives are dependent upon the requirements that each group requests. For example, the UCLA Alumni Association has a number of diversity scholarships, such as the *Dr. Ralph J. Bunche Freshman Alumni Scholarship and Need-Based Grant*. Preference is given to freshman applicants from California from historically underrepresented groups. Specifically, African-American/Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Mexican/Mexican-American/Latino students are the recipients of these awards. When asked how students who classify as only "multiracial" would be considered for diversity scholarships, one representative of the Alumni Association explained that he really did

not know. “Although it would be difficult to award scholarships to mixed race students if we do not know their backgrounds, if those students really wanted the scholarships, they should search for them their selves [sic].” In Nathan’s case, because the financial aid staff only knows that he is classified as “multiracial” on the application, he misses the financial aid opportunities that he would have been eligible for had the staff known of his African-American *and* Filipino heritages.

Furthermore, aside from academic and merit based scholarships, there are no such awards specifically for students of multiracial heritage. It would seem that the multiracial option has the potential of working counterproductive to RE-52’s goal of accurately reporting students of mixed racial/ethnic heritage. For instance, students may eventually revert back to identifying with one of their heritages simply because they are being overlooked for financial aid. This consequence affects the universities responsibility of fostering positive identity development of all of its students as set out in Policy RE-52. In addition to being overlooked for scholarships, Nathan is also left to bare the full responsibility of seeking out financial aid when he has already stated on his application that he is interested. Not to mention, all scholarships that the alumni association have available are not privy to students at the time the association is deciding on awards. Clearly, the “equal opportunity” that RE-52 believes it is providing by recognizing a multiracial student population is actually one of *unequal* economic opportunities.

Student Services Department

Assuming that Nathan fulfills the requirements of the university and is accepted into UCLA, his information is then forwarded to the student services offices. These offices house special interest groups, which are responsible for reaching out to students

prior to their arrival to the university. At UCLA, the Office of Community Programs at the Student Activities Center gets information from the Office of Admissions on each newly admitted student. This office has three particular divisions: Student Retentions, Student Initiated Outreach and Community Service Projects. Under the Student Retentions Center, there are approximately 25 to 30 groups for undergraduate students of color, according to one representative's estimates. This representative also explained how it has been a long struggle in the UC system for these groups to get the names of students of color in hopes to reach out to them. In order for these groups to contact Nathan, he would have had to select his racial or ethnic categories on the application for his name to be sent directly to the groups.

However, since Nathan is now recognized as only "multiracial" and not Black and Filipino, the groups to which he normally identifies have no idea he exists in this limited system. That is, unless Nathan seeks them out before entering college. This may be unlikely given that Nathan is still in the application process as a high school senior and is not familiar with the departments at the university level. Also, depending on his location to the university, it puts Nathan at a disadvantage in comparison to his peers who do not have to take these extra steps to become more acclimated to the university. Nathan's absence from the list of students sent to each group to which he identifies eventually puts the burden of responsibility on himself and not the university. Other students are able to be identified prior to their arrival and do not have to go through the added effort of contacting groups, but multiracial students such as Nathan would have to seek them out individually. So while most students experience this type of support prior to coming to UCLA, multiracial students on the other hand, come into the university without this

similar experience. This only adds to the strains that incoming freshmen feel at this time in their lives, which is most often centered on being accepted. The point here was to demonstrate how a multiracial student would be adversely affected by the adoption of the RE-52 proposal.

Background Details of Organizing

On the day of the actual meeting where the University of California Regents were finally preparing to vote on Regent Connerly's RE-52 proposal to institute a non-aggregated, singular "multiracial" category on all UC admissions applications, three particular figures were there to testify. Ms. Janiva Cifuentes-Hiss represented MAVIN Foundation, Mr. Anthony Yuen represented Hapa Issues Forum, and I represented the Association of MultiEthnic Americans. We were all nominated by our respective organizations to work together to prevent the bill from passing. We arrived at UCLA about 3 hours early at the south end of campus where Anthony Yuen had an office. We needed to go over our plan of action to ensure that we actually got a chance to testify. We had been forewarned that nobody was guaranteed entrance since the room usually filled up quickly, and that our best chance was to arrive early to make it known that we wanted to make a statement during public comment not to exceed 2 minutes. Meanwhile, we sat outside near one of the campus eateries, consulting with one another about the most succinct wording we would use to express the top arguments and recommendations we knew we had to make. Given the limited time to testify, only one of us could speak and I was eventually designated as the one to speak. However, we all agreed the three of us would still collectively represent our organizations by standing as a unified coalition before the regents of the University of California.

We shared three arguments in opposition to RE-52. First, we argued that Regent Ward Connerly failed to communicate with our organizations, our partners, the targeted audience, and the community at large prior to and during the creation of the proposal. It was due to this failure to collaborate with these organizations that we argued this proposal failed to represent the voices of the population to which we served. It therefore made sense that the first recommendation is one of collaboration between the UC Regents and advocacy organizations such as AMEA, HIF, and MAVIN in the future. Policy RE-52 was written from an isolated standpoint and it clearly reflected Regent Connerly's own political racial privacy and anti-affirmative action initiatives. We argued that the experiences needed to be heard from multiple standpoints, not from just one.

Second, the advocacy groups testified that instituting a "multiracial" category is not the answer, and other alternatives could be used to address accurate data reporting on students who wish to identify as such. Again, the term itself is problematic because it is term that is heavily contested within the larger multiracial community. The category "multiracial" also lumps a diverse population into one option, which takes away from the diversity that makes up this group. Instituting this category would also reverse the efforts that these groups have fought for at the national level (i.e., Census 2000). Therefore, the recommendation was one that supported keeping a "check all that apply" option, in addition to a "multiracial" category, but with a more general title. Instead of "multiracial" being seen as a sixth category to replace the "Other" option, students would first select all of the racial/ethnic categories they wished to identify. Then, a separate question could give them the option whether or not they wanted to also be identified as "multiracial" for

statistical purposes. The difference here is that the multiple option should supersede the single category, and it allows each department to identify how best to serve them.

Finally, we argued that the policy should focus on the technology that would improve reporting multiple races to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and not the students themselves, who may or may not identify as multiracial in the first place. This was what they felt was the most ideal and preferable recommendation for several reasons. The current problem is that the technology that the UC system (and other universities) uses is unsophisticated at this time because currently there does not exist a system which compiles the different combinations that students report. Management information experts should be consulted in order to devise a system that allows universities to report multiple race data, opposed to collapsing the student into a single category. The United States census staff manually collects data from “write-in” surveys, and also do not have such a system in place.

After deciding on what we would say, we decided to head up early to the Covel Commons. As we walked in that direction up a particular steep hill on campus, I recall that this is the point in which we all began expressing support towards one another in the event our efforts and goals of the day were not met. The stakes were high because we knew our sole mission that day was to get the UC Regents to not pass the proposal so that we could respond proudly to all of the people who had shown their support through signatures and letters that we, the community, had won. We were one of the first to arrive and we were lucky to be able to get seats in the front row, though the UC Regents were a good 20 feet away from the audience. The room became quite crowded, with standing room availability in the back. There were approximately 75 to 100 members in the

audience, including members of the press. Members of the audience were all there, just like we were, either in support or opposition to the other 6 proposals being voted on that day. The proceedings seemed to go on endlessly, and although we were among the first to enter the room, there were exactly 44 people slated to speak before us on other topics. The order in which we were listed was based upon the pre-determined topic or proposal being discussed, and the order in which interested audience members signed up on arrival to the meeting. The wait was quite lengthy at times, and it felt as if we would never get a chance to speak. I could tell the UC Regents were getting just as restless as the audience, and presumably a bit more aggravated than we were because most of the comments were not so positive or complimentary, aimed directly at them.

Finally, when Chairman Parsky announced, “Next, Item RE-52, Committee on Educational Policy, a proposal for a “multiracial” designation on the undergraduate admissions application, we are now open for public comment,” my heart began to race. By this time, there were 9 sets of people who were listed to speak in front of us on this proposal. Among those in line to speak, Janeva, Anthony, and I were the only people on the list that represented a state or national multiracial organization. There were, however, five undergraduate students present representing a UC Berkeley student group called BAMN, also known as “By Any Means Necessary”. Hoku Jeffrey, BAMN’s southern California coordinator, also accompanied them. Other than being a student group, one other distinction is important to make about BAMN versus our groups. Although they voiced opposition to RE-52, their arguments to dismiss the proposal appeared a bit unrelated and were clearly based on monoracial premises. They considered the proposal a

direct offense to Black students and their equal access to education, not to multiracial students that were specifically targeted by RE-52.

One BAMN member in particular named Tania Kappner stated angrily, “Only 194 Black students had been admitted to the Berkeley campus for fall 2004. Please do not support RE-52.” Then she sat down. I had no idea what she meant by this, nor Mr. Jeffrey’s comments where he went on to discuss an upcoming conference in Los Angeles concerning a new civil rights movement. He sped through his comments quickly, and according to the meeting minutes, “He believed that it was unacceptable that many schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District sent very few students on to higher education. The conference will address the issue of equal access to education in the state” (see Appendix). I was not sure whether or not they were there just trying to plug a conference, or whether or not they really understood the issues of Connerly’s proposal. This was bothersome because it appeared as if none of the comments so far had seemed to be resonating with the Regents. This was evident because hardly any of them were spending any considerable time making eye contact with the individuals making comments at the podium. I observed that many seemed agitated, constantly looking at their watches, yawning, and thumbing through their papers.

There were, however, a few people in attendance who opposed the proposal on record with regard to multiracial identity. This included Emily Leach, an undergraduate student at the University of California, San Diego campus who identified as multiracial; Victor Saenz, a UCLA PhD student who researches race and diversity; and Orlando Amádio, a multiracial high school senior from Oakland Technical High School. Overall, nobody seemed to be articulating the specific concerns of the proposal, or even remotely

getting the attention of the Regents who again, were presumably busy looking at the next item on the agenda. Since we were the third to last to go, I finally remember the feeling of being rushed to the podium by some assistant and being told to cut it down to a minute for the sake of time. When we tried to hand her the letters and signatures, she would not take them and kept pointing at the microphone as if to tell us to hurry up, speak and “get it over with.” At this point, I remember thinking that regardless if we were being rushed, our comments had to make impact and that we had to get those letters into their hands. I subtly ignored the assistant’s gestures, and began to speak slowly, loudly and clearly into the microphone with confidence, by first stating that we had a stack of letters and thousands of signatures that we wanted to present. I noticed each of the Regents heads shot up, finally turning to recognize someone’s presence at the podium. It was at this time that the Chairman stated that it would be a “pleasure” for them to receive our letters. The assistant took the letters out of Anthony’s hands and walked them up to the Regents.

Each of introduced ourselves, and then I began to share our three main arguments discussed earlier, with our recommendations. We recommended that a “check all that apply” racial option continue to be offered to applicants, and that having a singular multiracial category would eliminate critical information about students’ race and ethnicity. We were prepared to sit down at this point, but surprisingly, the Chairman asked me to share more with the Regents, so I went on to explain that although I did not attend a UC school, I did attend a state university back east. I told them that prior to attending my freshmen year I received resources from the multicultural offices on campus, as well as, offices that target Asian students and African American students. I shared that this outreach was very welcoming to me as an undergraduate student because

I was made aware that I had options, and most importantly, that the university respected my option to choose. It appeared for that brief moment, the room fell silent and eventually, we were allowed more time to speak. Even Anthony and Janiva were able to share information about their lives. We were the only group that I witnessed who actually got a warm “thank you for all of this information” from the Chairman after we presented and sat down. After two more people spoke after us to also oppose RE-52, the Regents voted in front of the audience. The proposal successfully failed in an 18-to-1 vote, in which Regent Ward Connerly was the only one to vote in favor. Victory.

End Results

When asked what she felt about a multiracial category versus a multiple option, Simone, a senior at UCLA describes her feelings.

Simone: It's like, well, you're faced with two choices. You either jump the hurdle and fit into your criteria so you can have your identity, what you believe yourself to be. Or you have it stripped away. And even if it is in one person's eyes... or a thousand people's eyes... you always want to be who you are. But then when you realize, after... I think it comes after time... that nobody's taking that away from me. They're just idiots. Then you stop jumping. I mean, why, why the effort? For who? For somebody to feel more comfortable at night, so they, they can say they know I'm multiracial? I mean, what am I doing it for?

Simone makes it clear that it is not the category “multiracial” that forms her identity, but how she believes herself *to be*. Further in the interview, she explained how identifying with all of her heritages has helped create a healthier identity for herself in college.

Another student, Caleb, a senior at UC Berkeley explained how the college experience as a multiracial person has to be one where a comfortable environment is fostered.

Caleb: But, you know everybody has their, their clique. And cliques usually consisted of one color. ... Um, in high school, you know it's a fashion statement. And, and you wake up and you worry about what you look like and what you wear. And, you gotta get the right clothes and if you're wearing, you know, khaki's, a dress shirt and a tie, you don't, you don't care who the tie is made by. Um, and then in college is, is when I more so broke loose and just said, hey, let me wear some comfortable clothes. Um, so in college, I... it just, I said hey, let me, let me be comfortable with myself. Um, you know, I, I just think about... I think a lot about stuff. Um, and, and as, as college went on, the more comfortable I became with just being me. Being one thing instead of trying to jump back and forth and please both people.

Caleb's last statement is interesting because it mirrors the "jumping back and forth" that Nathan was forced to do, first in the financial aid department and then in the social services offices. Other students who were interviewed simply expressed wanting to be recognized as the backgrounds they come from, and not isolated out into a single category that would not reflect their diversity.

Other implications of the findings in this evaluation also point to retention issues. If students believe they are being forced to choose a multiracial category, without the multiple selection option, then there is the potential of not feeling as if the university supports their preference to report their entire background. One spokesperson at the Student Retentions Center at UCLA explained why students choose to leave the UC system. She said that retention at the university is usually involved with issues of income status and race/ethnicity. Those individuals with lower income status are more likely to leave the university prior to graduation because they can no longer afford the tuition and rates. Other individuals may leave because of inadequate support for their academics, and more often than not, they leave for the lack of support the university has set up for their underrepresented groups on the university campus. Thus, in terms of the multiracial students who prefer identifying with all of their ethnicities, taking away this option

through RE-52 poses the risk of not retaining these students. This potential risk was also raised and supported by several admissions department staff as a major issue that might surface with the implementation of this policy.

Finally, the changes and consequences that this policy would have created were not only felt with the students' experiences, but also among a number of UC staff members. With the amount of responsibility members in admissions, financial aid and student services have to fulfill on a daily basis, ensuring the successful implementation of RE-52 only adds to their frustrations. As this evaluation has illustrated, staff members are not clear why this policy is necessary if it causes more difficulties than if it had not existed. The common concern that the representatives I interviewed raised was that a single multiracial category would make their jobs difficult in identifying the students they need to serve in their departments. One change in one department would need to change in the remaining departments and this takes time. As one staff member in admissions argued, "Last minute changes have to be set up months in advance. At any rate, this change really puts wrenches in the works!"

In essence, if the University of California had taken the initiative at the time on developing this process, UC would not only be a pioneer on solving inaccurate data collection today, also it would be among the first in this country to technologically recognize the importance of allowing individuals to be respected on how they wish to self-identify. The committee on educational policy and the entire University of California regents should be further commended for their attempts to eradicate the inconsistency of racial/ethnic data reporting. By having this issue remain an important future agenda item, the organization publicly recognizes the importance of the growing population of their

student body. Through collaboration, improved technology and creative alternatives, the implementation of a revised RE-52 would be much more successful.

5.5 | SHARED IDEOLOGY: ONE BOX ISN'T ENOUGH CAMPAIGN (2005)



Description of Cause and Main Purpose

The successful outcomes from the effective mobilization witnessed during the RE-52 campaign still raised three major concerns after we had successfully defeated the proposal. The first concern was that if the University of California, one of the largest institutional systems in the nation, was still debating how best to identify and define their multiracial student population, then surely this was an even larger issue universities were facing across the country. Second, we were still unclear why RE-52 was even allowed to be proposed because again, according to the OMB guidelines that were developed in 1997 that mandated by January 2003 all federal agencies had to update all of their forms and systems requesting race and ethnicity to allow a “mark one or more” races option. The single “multiracial” designation was not even in compliance with these guidelines. This related to our third concern, which was that it was 2005—2 years after this mandate was to be followed through—and our organizations discovered that the largest federal agency, the Department of Education (DOE), had not even updated their forms. In that year, DOE standards impacted over 76 million students, and among them, 2.5 million were multiracial who had no option but to identify with pre-2000 standards. We were concerned that this unnoticed and unacknowledged delay at the federal level meant that students, parents, and society at large did not have a clear picture about the diversity of

the nation's schools and universities. As a result, they were limited in their ability to adequately meet the needs of their students, and not just multiracial students. This would inadvertently impact the services we provided as advocates to these individuals and families. These concerns eventually led to the momentum to continue to push the same topic one year later, but at the federal level.

On November 9, 2005, the founder of MAVIN Foundation, Matt Kelley, and MAVIN's Campus Awareness and Compliance Initiative Project Manager, Alfredo Padilla, published a report entitled, "One Box Isn't Enough: An Analysis of How U.S. Colleges and Universities Classify Mixed Heritage Students." The report detailed the current state of policies among U.S. colleges and universities regarding how students who identify with more than one race are classified. There were many startling findings that were generated from this report. Out of 298 schools they surveyed, 27% allowed an option for students to identify as multiracial, leaving 73%, or 218 schools with no option. Of the schools that allowed an option to identify with mixed heritage, more than half of them did not allow students to mark more than one race, leaving the only options to choose a "multiracial" category or some other format or interpretations of a multiracial heritage. The survey included 4-year public and private universities and community, technical or junior colleges, among which 4-year institutions were more likely to record information about a student's multiracial identity or allow an option to designate such and identity. Most disturbing, however, is that only 3% of the schools that were surveyed actually encoded complete information about these students.

As RE-52 showed, this information is vital when considering the identity development of students who often times come to understand their racial and intersecting

identities when they begin an undergraduate career and have to self-identify themselves. At the same time, everyone does not always attend college, which means that education about these concerns need to begin at a much earlier age. Furthermore, this information that MAVIN was able to gather was able to be validated by using much of the 2000 census figures that were available to them because of AMEA's work that was initiated a decade prior. With all of these concerns, statistics, and lingering issues in mind, multiracial advocates realized something needed to be done, and the Department of Education was our main target.

Background Details of Organizing

The MAVIN Foundation, AMEA, and HIF decided to work together again, and also brought on a new partner, Level Playing Field Institute, a non-profit organization based in San Francisco. This institute promotes "innovative approaches to fairness in higher education and workplaces by removing barriers to full participation." They have a keen interest in exploring bias, stereotypes, and discrimination in the workplace, as well as, develop programs to bridge gaps in resource attainment among talented underrepresented students from secondary to graduate school. Together these organizations decided the task was not over to begin raising awareness within the community after getting the UC Regents to not adopt the RE-52 proposal. Rather, the RE-52 proposal provided footing to start pressing other leaders in the national arena. Hence, a new grassroots mobilization effort was developed called the "One Box Isn't Enough" campaign, which would last for a little over a year.

It is important to mention that originally the project was designed by MAVIN Foundation and the Level Playing Institute. After not receiving enough attention and

traction about the event, they enlisted the partnership of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans and Hapa Issues Forum in Los Angeles, CA again. MAVIN openly admitted during a phone conference meeting when they first pitched the idea that AMEA's historical legitimacy and success at the federal level made them an ideal and much-needed partner if the organizations were to push these causes with much success nationally. AMEA signed on to lend support with its affiliate organizations.

After joining forces, the organizations knew that in order to raise awareness and put pressure on the federal level in education, they needed to build a massive effort by getting as many supporters across the country to adopt a shared ideology that this issue was urgent, and that we, as a diverse community, would not tolerate the lagging implementation of this mandate. We therefore developed a 7-page campaign packet that we would eventually distribute across the country, to everyone from students and families, to educational institutions themselves. However, unlike the RE-52 campaign, which primarily affected students in the University of California system, the OBIE efforts were slightly different because the focus was much broader to include all institutions of education nationwide, with the DOE as the main institution we wanted to impact.

In addition, instead of just collecting signatures that we later passed on to the UC Regents, we decided to be much more strategic this time around. The 7-page packet of information consisted of many important components that we hoped would lead the reader to act by the last page. The cover page exhibited all four organizations' logos at the bottom in order to show an organized front. The first page outlined our main arguments, stating the problem the community was facing and what we were prepared to do about it. Our goal was to generate at least 10,000 comment cards urging the

Department of Education to finally implement the OMB Directive 15 guidelines. The next three pages included an instruction sheet describing how to fill out the comment cards and mail them back in, a frequently asked questions page, followed by the contact information of the campaign. The last and final page was a 2x2 page of comment cards that requested they fill out their contact information and mail it to the address provided.

Due to the ambitious nature of this campaign to collect 10,000 responses, the organizations, all of which were non-profit, knew that they could not print 70,000 pages and pay for the “to” and “from” postage that this grassroots effort would require. Technology and word of mouth was the cheapest vehicle through which they could mobilize people at this level, so they created the packet in Portable Document Format (PDF) and sent it out far and wide through the Internet, as well as, through people-to-people contact. This snowball method was a key strategy in this campaign because in 2005, many of the social networking websites that are popular today such as Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace, either were not equipped to allow large documents to be posted and distributed, or they did not exist at all. Consequently, all of the organizations set out to reach all of their members and allies to get the campaign up and running, with the main goal to educate the masses that this mandate existed and needed to be implemented in order to address the unmet need of multiracial students to have the option to identify with their entire racial makeup if they so choose. Sometimes if you were on multiple listservs or involved in many groups, you would receive the packet several times. Opposed to feeling overwhelmed or bombarded by the packets, many people I interviewed expressed that the constant visibility of the campaign showed that it was being sent and acted upon.

End Results

So far, I have discussed how the four organizing groups came together with three major concerns following the results of the 2004 RE-52 campaign with regard to identifying and defining the multiracial student population, following up on the overdue OMB Directive 15 mandate, and the lack of contribution of the Department of Education to implement the guidelines. We simply wanted to raise awareness, setting the goal to 10,000 comment cards addressed to former U.S. Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings.²⁴ Spellings was U.S. Secretary of Education under the George W. Bush administration and was nominated in November of 2004. She was most notable for being a strong proponent of the *No Child Left Behind* policy.

This is where the intended goals of a mobilization campaign can shift directions and bring about effective outcomes that are not originally envisioned. Although we did not reach the exact numerical goal we intended, we were still able to raise a few thousand comment cards with modest spending. MAVIN eventually mailed the cards on behalf of the organizations to the Department of Education and we then waited and waited for a response. Aside from a generic letter that was received, it appeared our cause was not getting much attention. We decided to shift gears, and together, AMEA, MAVIN, HIF, and LPFI decided to urge supporters to fax personalized letters to Secretary Spellings. If she was not going to take the concerted time to respond back to our concerns, we decided we would block up the fax machines at the DOE so that it would not be possible for them to ignore us. While we still never received a concrete action plan from former Secretary Spellings to address this concern at the DOE, what happened next was even better. The OBIE campaign was still effective because word got around to other policymakers. In a

few short months, we were contacted by Senator Joe Simitian's office in Sacramento, California. He and his legislative aids stepped up to lend support for our cause, which eventually led to the creation of groundbreaking legislation in 2006.

However, it is also important to mention one other piece of information that is important here which was a crucial motivator behind the OBIE campaign, which I wholeheartedly believe is the reason Senator Simitian stepped up. While we were working on the OBIE campaign, we were also working on other projects that eventually got Senator Simitian's attention. For the past few years, MAVIN Foundation, AMEA, and many other multiracial organizations spearheaded Bone Marrow Drives around the country. At that time, Luke Do and his family from Chapter 1, and the many other interracial families were reaching out to multiracial advocacy organizations because they were confronting subtle degrees of discrimination in healthcare. A dialogue about how to combat biological definitions of race that is applied onto multiracial bodies was occurring behind the scenes. Former president of AMEA, Nancy G. Brown, a medical professional at Kaiser Permanente, would constantly inform the board on conference calls that medical professionals and the field of health in general is faced with a grave challenge. She reported what has been expressed to leaders in AMEA and other multiracial groups alike across the country for the past few years, and that is, multiracial people die disproportionately to bone marrow transplants needed for Leukemia and other blood related diseases simply because there is not a bone marrow registry for multiracial people. When a bone marrow match is needed, doctors refer to registries that are categorized by the five traditional monoracial categories. The idea is that there are hereditary markers and traits that exist within supposed racial groups, for which a match

is more likely to be found. For multiracial people, they claim they are more likely to find a match among another multiracial person, than in any particular monoracial group.

Obviously, this is highly problematic because of the race-as-biology slippage that appears to occur, but it further supports my main argument in this dissertation that biological arguments are still used to define and affect people who claim a multiracial heritage. Although I have never been given tangible proof from any medical professional I have challenged about this assertion, nonetheless, these bone marrow drives were developed to do the work that institutions of health in the U.S. should have already been doing. That is, creating a “multiracial” bone marrow registry where families could tap into was vital, since medical professionals were and still are unclear how to “treat” them.

5.6 | BUILDING ALLIANCES: CALIFORNIA SENATE BILL 1615 (2006)

Description of Cause and Main Purpose

When AMEA, MAVIN, HIF, and LPFI were notified that the offices of Senator Joe Simitian intended to assist the campaign by creating supportive legislation, the organizations were reignited with the hope that something would come about as a result of two years of organizing around the UC Regents RE-52 proposal and the One Box Isn't Enough campaign. Alfredo Padilla at MAVIN emailed me with the news that this bill would eventually be created with the help of multiracial organizers, and that he wanted me to help set up a national conference call with other leaders that needed to participate to begin going over new grassroots strategies. Up until this point, although we had made considerable headway in the past two years mobilizing support from across the country, the organizations that had been the main organizers were all headquartered on the west coast. There were, however, many leading organizations on the east coast and in the

Midwest that we knew we had to collaborate with such as Swirl Inc., a social organization headquartered in New York for multiracial people. In addition, with regard to the organizing efforts for RE-52 and OBIE, the four organizations that led the cause did not come together under any formalized coalition. We all added our parts that made a united front, but we did not prioritize what the four of us represented as a whole.

Before we would gather these leaders together, Alfredo and I spoke on March 15, 2006 to discuss preliminary organizing details. He shared that Senator Simitian's legislative staff had already come up with a working title of legislation that incorporated the arguments we had expressed all along. It was to be called, "California Senate Bill 1615: Ethnic Heritage Respect and Recognition Act," herein referred to as SB 1615 (pronounced as "S-B-Sixteen-Fifteen"). Alfredo shared that Rei Onishi was the legislative assistant who was assigned to our "group". This is when we realized we had always formalized our campaign titles, but we never formalized a name to define any "group" of organizations that worked together on these campaigns, such as the "OBIE Organizing Committee". I then expressed that we needed to discuss building a broader alliance, even among groups that did not necessarily serve multiracial people as their main target. For the remainder of our conversation, we loosely referred to this group as the SB1615 Coalition, an alliance that for the first time since the Census 2000, would include not only multiracial advocates and members of the larger multiracial community, but also monoracial allies and a prominent policymaker and his staff. Building alliances was key, and soon the name stuck and hence began the new SB 1615 Coalition 2006 mobilizing efforts.

Background Details of Organizing

The first hearing on the bill would be held in the next month because it had already been referred to the California State Senate Judiciary Committee. This meant we had roughly one month to pull the coalition together, edit the bill to meet our concerns, and testify in front of the CA Senate in Sacramento, California on April 18, 2006 with the hopes of getting the bill passed. If it passed, it would still need to go the CA Senate Appropriations Committee that would ultimately decide whether the bill could be funded. If not, the bill would potentially die on the floor of the latter committee and need to be reinstated the following year. Alfredo commented, “Although it’s a slim chance it’ll get passed this year, what we want is to get publicity that will set us up for next steps.” For now, our immediate steps by the end of that first call was that Alfredo and I agreed to go back to our respective organizations, MAVIN and AMEA, and announce our support for SB1615 by creating and distributing press releases, and urging members to become a part of the new coalition. Our strategy was to first build a strong alliance with as many partners and individuals that we could to eventually show support at the state capital in one month.

In one week, we built a strong coalition to include activists, academics, and community members who would form the SB 1615 Coalition. This included representatives from the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association (APAPA), Swirl Inc., the Multiethnic Education Center, iPride, Asian American for Civil Rights and Education, Level Playing Field Institute, MAVIN Foundation, and the Association of MultiEthnic Americans. While this initial group made up the primary organizers leading up to the meeting in

April, all of these organizations also represented a diverse constituency. For example, when the coalition decided to gather letters of support between March and April, I was able to elicit support on behalf of AMEA from local Los Angeles and Beverly Hills chapters of the NAACP, the Jamaican Cultural Alliance (JACL), Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Polish American Commission (PAC), and Visionary Farm, Inc. (VFI). This was possible because in 2005, I was serving as the Vice President of the Media Image Coalition (MIC) through the Los Angeles Commission on Human Relations. I had spent the past few years building alliances with these organizations, knowing that one day I would need their help and support to bring awareness to the unmet needs of the multiracial populations.

When the rough draft of Senate Bill 1615 (see Appendices) was presented to us by Rei Onishi on behalf of Senator Joe Simitian, the bill stated that it would take the “mark more than one” federal option and implement it across the state of California. The bill had three main clauses. First, it stated that California would fully adopt this system to bring it up to compliance with federal guidelines. It was the hope of everyone involved that if California initiated the bill that all other states would soon adopt it as a best practice model to create their own bills. At the time, the sentiment was that California was typically among the leading states to pass progressive politics where all other states eventually followed suit.²⁵ Second, the bill required that all state agencies would have to implement it by a set deadline to be determined at a later date. Finally, it required that a select “one or more” option would be added to all forms in all state funded institutions, including hospitals, schools, and state-run offices like the Department of Motor Vehicles.

One concern that I found interesting in the bill and through discussions I held with Simitian's office, was that they wanted to make sure that traditional monoracial groups did not feel threatened. Sometimes it appeared as if allaying monoracial concerns about the perceived impact multiracial identity might have on their lives were of higher priority in some of the discussion and observations I witnessed. The bill even adopted federal civil rights enforcement language, which stated that people who are multiracial should be counted not only as multiracial under a "one or more" option, but also among their multiple minority populations to protect these groups as defined in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.²⁶ The point I raise here is not that monoracial groups should be left out of the discussion of multiracial classification where race and ethnicity are collected, but their concerns should not be privileged at the expense of the issues at hand which specifically wanted to bring California up to compliance that they should have done anyway. This is not surprising, however, because hegemonoracial ideology is operating, where even though Senator Simitian and his staff were trying their best to address our concerns, the norm could not feel threatened.

Nonetheless, the coalition knew that the first step was to get an initial bill passed that was sufficient enough where we could eventually compromise and amend later. The coalition held weekly and sometimes bi-weekly meetings leading up to the vote in April. Everyone was supportive about helping in any way that they could, and in one call, it was suggested that everyone share the specific and tangible tasks they could commit to so that we could be more strategic and unified in our delivery. Although this was not a problem in previous efforts, in this campaign at least, there were more voices at the table and more bodies to help coordinate the activities, opposed to just four organizations. Using some of

the same strategies we employed in the previous mobilization campaigns, the coalition created several documents for distribution through mail, Internet, and word of mouth. In consultation with Rei Onishi, we helped him create a fact sheet that would be distributed from the state capital and through our various channels. We also created template letters that were addressed to the Senate Judiciary Committee, leaving the signature section blank for supporters to fill in their own information. It was important, just like on the comment cards, that supporters added their full contact information because this is customary to show that these are real supporters across the country, and not fabricated.

Another strategy we introduced in this campaign that we had not considered before was to write our press releases in advance since time was of the essence. For example, when we learned that a press conference would proceed the bill being introduced to the California senators, we all came up with the language to announce our participation and to mobilize supporters to sit in the audience. That press release was sent out a week before by all of the members of the SB 1615 Coalition on April 13, 2006, where all they had to do was to change the city they were sending it from, and to plug in their organization's contact information at the bottom in the event members of the press in their respective areas wanted further comment. All of us felt confident that everyone was clear on the issues and could serve as advocates to the media in their local cities. If nothing else, as Alfredo Padilla had mentioned, if the bill did not pass, at least we could stir up enough press to bring national attention to our efforts.

End Results

A few days before we had to testify, Rei Onishi informed us that the press conference and hearing was pushed back a week because the Senate would still be on

spring recess. It was at this point we became a little anxious, taking the extra time to determine if there was anything else we needed to do. Although we knew the chances of getting a new bill passed on the first time were slim, we were still very hopeful and proud that we had masked a lot of attention for our cause.

When the day finally arrived on April 25, 2006, members of the SB 1615 Coalition and many of their supporters willing to drive to Sacramento were ready to face the results of our intense mobilization campaign, which had been a long and arduous process that began back in 2003 with the first discussions leading up to RE-52. By April, I was also no longer just an executive board member of AMEA, I was now the president of the organization, again the oldest leading umbrella advocacy organization for multiracial, multiethnic, and transracially adopted individuals, families, groups, and allies. I had been nominated by the committee to be the official spokesperson in front of the CA Senate Judiciary Committee, and Jil-Christina Vest volunteered to make a statement on behalf of the coalition at the press conference if time was allowed. Although I was quite used to high pressure speaking events, I was obviously quite nervous about this one because I realized this would be the first national project I would help administer under my new leadership. I decided to arrive the evening before, driving instead of flying from Los Angeles so that I had time to think through my five-minute presentation I had to prepare. The coalition had helped me to determine the main points we wanted to convey to contextualize what was specified in the bill.

We all met at the steps of the State Capitol Building that morning around 10:30am, and it was interesting because we felt so close through the bonds we created by working together through conference calls and emails, yet many of us had never met in

person because we were dispersed around the country. It clearly showed how alliance building is an effective tool that is not limited by geography. It also showed how something of this nature would have been much more difficult to carry out in decades prior because the technologies we employed—free conference call websites that could join endless number of participants on one line and internet access—were not available to previous generations of multiracial organizers to the extent we were able to use them. Which would explain why in Chapter 4, we notice the considerable spike in multiracial organizing from the late 1990s and onward.

We then walked into the massive entrance, together down the long corridor to the Governor's Press Room in room 1190. We sat there for about an hour or two, introducing ourselves to the supporters we had mobilized to Sacramento to sit in the audience during the final vote. We wanted to ensure that there was a physical presence of diversity represented by the multiracial community and its allies in eyesight of the senators. Senator Joe Simitian entered the room at 12:30pm and everyone stood. By this time, the room had already filled up and there were local reporters from various news agencies. The Governor's Press Room was relatively small, with about forty theater style seats. I, along with members of the SB 1615 Coalition, Senator Joe Simitian and his staff, and Attorney General Bill Lockyer, stood in the front while he shared his intention to introduce the bill and get it passed today.

The press conference was very quick and to the point, and immediately after this, we were ushered into Room 112 to be ready for the 1:00pm hearings. All of the senators were already in their seats that are elevated high off the ground in the front. This room was much more massive and it held at least a hundred people in the audience. We were

lucky because Senate Bill 1615 was slated first in a long list of bills being considered that day. I was lead to the platform where I was instructed to sit in front of the Senate Judiciary, to the right of Walter Kawamoto who was representing the JACL. Unlike at the UC Regents meeting where the committee sat far away from the audience, Walter and I were so close that we could see beads of sweat on each of their faces under the intense lighting. As I was preparing in my head the remarks I was already prepared to give, Rei Onishi came up to both of us and whispered that neither of us had the 5 minutes they originally told us we had to give testimony on behalf of the bill. Instead, he told us that we would both need to shorten our remarks to about 45-seconds because there were other bills in line.

Due to what happened at the UC Regents testimony where we were also told to shorten our statements at the last minute, I was somewhat prepared that we might be told to shorten our statements, but I did not expect 5 minutes to be cut down to 45 seconds. This left me with no time to edit as I sat in front of the members of the committee. As I looked up to face the committee, I could not help but notice that they did not represent a diverse group—one African American, the rest White, and one woman—to decide on the fates of the multiracial population in the state of California. I had to push this aside for the time being, hoping that Walter and I could make our remarks powerful enough to get them to pass the bill. I must admit I did not know what Walter was going to say because he was not an official member of the coalition, but he represented a monoracial alliance that could lend support to our campaign. I spoke first, calmly running my pen down my notes, paraphrasing any remarks that jumped out at me on the page that I either highlighted, underlined, or starred earlier. I was cautious to make sure I kept within this

limited timeframe for fear that if I did not, it would aggravate the senators who had made the request. Walter spoke a bit longer and one statistic I remember him stating that I had heard for the first time in my life that day, was that more than fifty-percent of Japanese women, for example, are married interracially in the United States and Japan. I thought this really added to the urgency that both of us conveyed for the bill, and it also highlighted that the multiracial population is made up of all of the monoracial communities, making this bill one that benefited everyone in the long run. Overall, we both stayed within a reasonable parameter given the dramatic cut in our original time allotment. After we had made our remarks, I turned back to look at a sea of faces in the audience smiling proudly at us, noticing some members were throwing up discrete thumbs gestures to let me know we did a good job. The senators began flipping through the documents in front of them (documents they hopefully already read by that point), and the motion was made to vote on the bill. The room fell silent and all I remember is that I could hear myself swallow, as I kept my eyes intensely on the entire committee. It was as if we were on trial, waiting to hear the verdict of an innocent or guilty sentence.

All but one senator voted in favor of the bill. It had passed almost unanimously. Although the audience was already instructed that they were not allowed to make any sound during the proceedings or else they would be asked to exit the premises, the audience erupted in applause. I had never experienced something so profoundly powerful, where I actually got to see and feel the degree to which our efforts to build a historical alliance with so many partner organizations, allies, and members of the community could be witnessed. Until this point, we were simply behind the scenes in our grassroots efforts, never really seeing the gratitude that people felt by what we had

accomplished. The bill was later sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee a month later. The bill unfortunately did not pass in this committee because they claimed that California did not have a budget, which could actually orchestrate these changes on all state forms and computer systems requesting this information. The coalition fought back, and re-introduced the bill again in 2007, but was not as successful because the state was steadily heading into one of California's worst economic crises and recessions in a very long time. There are currently talks of riding the current economic situation out before mobilizing the community again. Still, the mobilization efforts that took place to raise awareness about the Senate Bill 1615 were largely effective due to alliance building.

5.7 | COLLECTIVE RESOURCES: LOVING DECISION CONFERENCE (2007)



Description of Cause and Main Purpose

It is evident that one could argue that the momentum from a previous campaign to mobilize the multiracial community has helped to inspire the development of proceeding campaigns and grassroots efforts. The momentum behind the external threats leading to the RE-52 proposal, the shared ideology and consensus building through the “One Box Isn’t Enough” campaign, and the strategic building of alliances to pass Senate Bill 1615, led to the vision of celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Loving v State of Virginia 1967 Supreme Court decision that ended the illegal ban on interracial marriage in this country. By the end of the spring of 2006 when SB 1615 had to wait the next following year to re-introduce the bill, the Association of MultiEthnic Americans wanted to initiate the

dialogue to begin thinking about how the community would honor this historical landmark decision.

Similar to the other campaigns, I realized there continued to be certain concerns that developed out of the organizing efforts and end results that were witnessed by the most recent event. First, while the coalition was very effective in building alliances across intersecting identities and populations, the groups involved were still limited when considering how many organizations exist that mobilize around racial and ethnic identities. The second point is that even when new organizations were brought into the fold of the coalition, it was still evident that monoracial groups and individual allies were still unclear about what other unmet needs the multiracial population experienced. So far, the projects all focus on classification issues, which is only one of many unmet needs I discuss throughout this dissertation.

At the same time, it seems that strategies are also needed to educate not only monoracial communities, but also, members who are within the larger multiracial population who remain unaware of these efforts on their behalf. Third, Senate Bill 1615 helped to initiate a much-needed dialogue that must continue between monoracial and multiracial communities alike. Last, all of campaigns so far exposed the vulnerability that continues to face this unique community, in that people are unaware of the longer trajectory of multiracial organizing in this country (not to mention in other countries). While the coalition relied on AMEA's historical legitimacy on the federal level, people I spoke to over the course of the last campaign saw these efforts as a "new" phenomenon. When things are considered new, they lack credibility, and the main reason why SB 1615 had a considerable high stake in 2006 is because of the reliance on Senator Joe Simitian's

support. For all intents and purposes, Simitian was relatively new to the historical trajectory of multiracial organizing in this country, but in some ways was seen as a pioneer to get things off the ground.

After considering these concerns and keeping in mind all of the effective strategies employed in the mobilizing efforts from the past three years, the executive board of AMEA and the leaders in its affiliate organizations across the country decided to look ahead and plan for an conference in 2007. The key was that in order for this effort to be successful from beginning to end, everyone would need to pull together their collective resources, where resources are far ranging to include everything from diversity in expertise to funding connections. Given the confidence others had in me to mobilize the country based on my head involvement in the other campaigns, members of my constituency urged that I, as the president of AMEA, coordinate what would eventually be the first historical undertaking to bring people from not only the United States, but from around the world, interested in learning, advocating, or addressing the unmet needs of multiracial populations. To this end, the mobilization strategies that were implemented for the conference were largely under my direction. From an academic standpoint, in many ways this could be considered not only participant observation on my part, but also an implementation of multiple methods to carryout the final project, which in this case happens to be an international conference.

Background Details of Organizing

In May 2006, a month after the SB 1615 hearings, the AMEA board held its monthly conference call to discuss whether it was feasible to organize a conference and initiate the coordination. We had actually been talking about it for months, but on this

call, board member Michelle Hughes, shared that Dr. Heather Dalmage, a professor of sociology at Roosevelt University in Chicago, Illinois who researches multiracial identity, and director of the Mansfield Institute for Social Justice and Transformation, would be willing to offer us free conference space. To the board, this news seemed ideal because there was a lot of news circulating about then Senator Barack Obama, a politician whose autobiography cover displayed pictures of his multiracial identity; someone who to us seemed like an ideal person to have as a potential keynote speaker if we could pull the conference off. We unanimously voted that it was time for AMEA to coordinate another conference because the one and only conference it had ever coordinated was back in 2002 in Tuscan, Arizona, the “National Conference on the Multiracial Child.”

Following this conference call, we sent out an email across the country to request volunteers who wanted to get involved with the planning of this conference. Unlike the other events, this one would require a lot of foresight, an entire year ahead, because we had high hopes about how successful we could make this conference given the momentum trailing from Senate Bill 1615. The email was somewhat targeted because we first solicited help among the supporters we collected over the previous three campaigns. This also included members of our affiliate organizations, advisory council, general membership, and colleagues from other organizations. We also made it a priority to solicit the help of interns across the nation, something that had not been prioritized in the same degree as other campaigns. Nobody who wanted to volunteer would be turned away and they could join as many committees as they wished, just as long as they were there to work in the spirit of camaraderie to get the conference up and running, and could devote

the time and energies. We received a lot of response as a result of this email, and the first conference call for volunteers was held on June 24, 2006.

Using the already existing structure of AMEA, we used our main committees to facilitate volunteers. In Chapter 4, I explained how AMEA committees were instituted as soon as I took office in January of 2006, where each was headed by a designated board member. In order to keep consistent with our new structure and to accomplish one of our major goals as an organization to facilitate dialogue with/in the community, we maintained the same committees. An AMEA board member was eventually paired with a volunteer who wanted to serve as a co-chair. The committees consisted of *Administrative and Logistics*, *Fundraising and Development*, *Events and Activities*, *Public Relations and Marketing*, *Speakers and Workshops*, and *Education and Outreach*. In order to further explain the background details to organize the conference, I have chosen to briefly describe each committee, its tasks, activities, and dialogue that occurred. Overall, the committees proved to be very effective in having an organized action plan, and surprisingly, there were hardly if any disagreements or red flags that were raised during the course organizing this conference and nothing that ever appeared unresolved.

A conference call would be held once a month for each of the committees until the actual conference took place, whereby the number of committee meetings were much more frequent. Although it was a tremendous time commitment and undertaking, as the head coordinator of the entire operation I eventually sat on every call that was held for every committee from the planning phase to the implementation of the conference. As a researcher, this enabled me to avoid gaps in my observations because I had the most holistic view of everything that took place behind the scenes and was able to generally

keep things unified from committee to committee. My viewpoint was useful to maintain the efficiency of work carried out by each committee so as not to duplicate work that another committee may have initiated or to bring co-chairs together in collaboration. For example, in the beginning of the planning phases, the Event and Activities Committee focused a great deal of their conversation thinking of activities that might potentially be good for fundraising efforts. For a minute, they had forgotten that there was a Fundraising and Development Committee that they could work with to implement their ideas, so that they could focus on the details of the activity, and not fundraising.

Administrative/Logistics

This committee was a formalized title to describe the conference executive board that consisted of the AMEA board members and the other committee co-chairs. We were responsible for the overall administrative and logistical tasks of the conference. As the coordinator of the conference, I oversaw the operation of all conference organizing activities with the support of this committee, and especially made sure to keep committee co-chairs on task and accountable to their intended contributions to the overall implementation of the event. This committee also included being the frontline to the press and those interested in learning more about the conference, securing high celebrity and high profile figures, and making sure things leading up to and during the conference were efficiently and effectively administered. AMEA Vice President, Harold Gates, served as my assistant coordinator.²⁷

Among the biggest challenge facing this committee was to come up with the length of the conference and the final dates it would be held. They discussed in great detail about whether the conference should span two to four days. After considering a

number of factors involving the types of activities that were being envisioned, it was decided that it would cover three and a half days. This decision did not come easy because details were still being formalized about what would take place during the conference that would require a set number of days. In addition, the final date was decided by considering a number of factors. First, we knew it would be held in June because the Loving Decision occurred on June 12, 1967. When we considered having it during that particular weekend, the issue was raised that local schools would be holding graduations at this time. Hotels would be booked, leaving little room for conference guests to stay. Michelle Hughes, our local contact to the area, also researched local events that would be happening in the area during the month of June. It was finally decided that June 21-24, 2007 would mark the conference dates of the conference.

Another major task of this committee was to logistically create all of the necessary documents and information packets needed to carry out the conference by incorporating all of the decisions each of the other committees decided upon and contributed. This included creating press releases, call for proposals, fundraising and donation packages, formal letters and requests, conference application forms, the final conference schedule and program booklet, and much more. Everything created in this committee was reviewed and edited by every co-chair. In addition to this process of transparency, I was responsible for booking and negotiating all the space that was needed to carry out the functions of the conference, as well as, signing contracts, administering the funding and donations, and laying out all of the processes and protocols that were needed. It is important to mention that most of the administrative tasks were operated out of my apartment in Los Angeles. Anything that required being in Chicago, such as

looking at venues to hold conference activities outside of Roosevelt University, were taken on by Michelle Hughes and the local volunteers and interns she utilized.

Public Relations/Marketing

This committee was lead by Ken Tanabe, founder of LovingDay.org and Meredith Mayes, a community volunteer who was part of an interracial union. Because I chair the public relations committee for AMEA, I was basically a third co-chair to this group, and spent a great deal of time with these volunteers to develop the campaign strategies that were implemented. This group was responsible for coming up with the entire branding of the conference, including the logo and conference title, which again were all reviewed and voted upon by all of the committee co-chairs. They had the duty of coming up with and disseminating all of the press materials about the conference to the general public. They also assisted with the design and image of the conference through many creative strategies including the website, a virtual newsletter through an online vehicle called Constant Contact, and a Myspace page. We were fortunate to have Ken, a designer by trade, who eventually took all of the ideas raised and created our final logo used on everything the conference produced from the outset.

The most difficult task this committee had to take up early on in the planning process was to brainstorm conference titles. So far, we had all been loosely calling it the “Loving Conference.” It would take two monthly meetings, and several back and forth email exchanges, to finally come up with the best title to encapsulate this conference. The final full title was, “Loving Decision Conference 2007: The Next 40 Years of Multiracial Communities.” Over a hundred iterations of the wording in this title were developed, discussed, and edited before this was voted on as the final option. In the beginning, I

observed discussions that challenged whether or not this was going to be a “conference,” a “summit”, a “project”, or a “celebration”, or some other description. It was finally agreed that while “conference” might sound much more formal and academic, other options that were presented did not carry the same serious tone this event also wanted to convey. Also, it was no surprise that I witnessed much debate about the term “multiracial”. Some opted for “multiethnic”, “identity”, “mixed race” or some combination thereof. What this revealed was that the process of identifying the community was still very troublesome because there are various opinions about the loaded meanings that each of the designations carry. The term “multiracial” was decided upon because everyone came to an agreement that while most people in the community may or may not identify themselves as multiracial, the term was still recognizable to generate attention among multiracial identified people, and monoracial communities that might also identify with the term to mean collaboration among other racial communities.

Finally, at the last minute, I raised the concern about the word “community” in the title, where it once read “... The Next 40 Years of the Multiracial Community.” I argued that using the word “community” over “communities” might make the conference seem too insular, or perhaps, it might turn people away who question that a multiracial community actually exists. In addition, because this conference was largely developed with the goal in mind to bring together multiracial people, their families, and other monoracial advocates or key players, it was important to have a title that was inclusive, rather than insular. Making the term plural evoked this sentiment we were after, by hopefully inciting a dialogue about what “multiracial communities” might mean in the title since it this set of terms are hardly if ever referred to like this.

Fundraising/Development

This committee was the smallest of all of the committees, but among the most important because without the funds or donations to support the conference, nothing would have been possible. It was led by AMEA board member, Nina Grant and TheosoD'Rejean. AMEA's Canadian affiliate member, MOXCHA. This group was responsible for generating funds and in-kind donations to successfully hold the conference through various fundraising strategies. They were also hoping to raise funds to give out student scholarships during and after the conference took place. The three of us explored several options to raise funds, and the most effective option we implemented in October 2006 was a sponsorship tier, from "Bronze" to "Platinum". This committee worked closely with each of the other committees in order to compile a list of benefits that each of these tier levels would get for a set amount of dollars. They also had the goal of garnering as much in-kind donations as possible to offset actual funds that would be hard to generate at the grassroots level. Already we were saving tens of thousands of dollars because the conference space was being donated to the conference. This committee therefore examined the spaces we were given for the conference in order to devise a strategy to raise funds. For example, when we learned that a large gathering area would be available, the committee decided that information booths could be set up where organizations and businesses would have to pay to participate. Also to the conference's benefit was the AMEA and many of the partner organizations were 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations where tax exempt status was beneficial.

Events/Activities

This committee was led by AMEA board member, Michelle Hughes, and AMEA affiliate member, Tarah Fleming, who represented iPride and the Multiethnic Education Program (MEP) from northern California. This group was populated by volunteers, which steadily grew as conference organizing continued because they were responsible for coming up with and executing all of the social events and activities for the entire conference. They discussed every idea from daycare activities to a possible cruise and evening extravaganza with live performances. Everything this committee came up with and finalized would frame the social components on the conference schedule. Other tasks they had to do involved scouting out possible locations for events to be held, and creating events that would speak to everyone across all ages and diversities of interest.

Since this committee consisted of its own set of diversity in expertise, there was much debate on what type of conference this would eventually be, and for this reason, this committee took charge to help decide this from their first meeting. Some members argued that it would be unexciting if it were made into a strictly academic conference, claiming it would limit the type of people who would attend. Others argued that if the conference was too social in nature, it might potentially impact the serious undertone that the conference was aiming for, which is to say, a conference that spoke to keyplayers from all walks of life that impact the multiracial community. It was therefore decided at the very first meeting that everything this committee planned would consist of a focus on educating and entertaining audience so that a happy medium was achieved.

Working closely with the Speakers and Workshops Committee, they eventually decided that the conference would consist of professional and academic presentations, as

well as, presentations and performances involving the arts. The daily activities would span from morning to evening for the two major days of the conference and on the first day, a welcome reception would take place in the evening while attendees and volunteers registered. On the last day, light activities would be held for those still in the Chicago area. Overall, the events and activities that were developed by this committee helped to anchor the conference and the organizing efforts carried out by the other committees.

Speakers/Workshops

This committee was co-chaired by Logan Gutierrez-Mock and Kristen Murakoshi, both employed by AMEA's affiliate, the Multiethnic Education Project. This group of volunteers was responsible for organizing all of the panels, presentations, and keynote speakers for the conference. They also created the conference schedule in consultation with the Events and Activities Committee. To build the content for the activities of the conference and to keep in line with the conference goal to educate and entertain, this committee created a Call for Proposals (CFP) and a Call for Artists (CFA). Both were disseminated across the country to involve as many presenters as possible. The idea was that even among the presentations that would be offered, there would be something for just about everyone to attend and learn from. The CFP and CFA listed tentative topic ideas, but they were still open broadly just as long as there was a communicated interest in educating society about topics concerning the diversity within the multiracial population.

The proposals to present and/or perform were emailed to the co-chairs of the committee and mailed to AMEA. By the submission deadline, members of this committee decided which proposals would be accepted. Aside from one proposal, which

was on a topic that had not the slightest relevance or connection to the conference, all of the proposals were accepted. The committee then had the task of determining how to arrange and connect the proposals into an organized fashion. The final conference schedule included ten subtopics that were discussed, edited, and voted upon as the leading topics the proposals could be grouped under. They included: Adoption and Transracial Perspectives; Gender and Sexuality; Education, Services and Youth Development; Media and the Arts; Community Building, Organizing and Movements; Whiteness, Passing and Privilege; Classification, Identity, and Racialization; Race, Politics, and the Law; International Experiences; and Marriage, Families, and Parenting. Much like the influence I had on the subtle but important change to the final conference title, I realized the wording of these presentation subtopics were largely influenced by my academic experience. This was my first realization that I was not outside of my own critique or observation that undergirds my major argument in this dissertation, that social science scholarship can have a profound impact on how communities come to define themselves. In retrospect, I notice that my research interests largely affected the grassroots efforts I was in effect leading due to my hierarchical position as coordinator.

Education/Outreach

The final committee was the Education and Outreach Committee, which was co-chaired by AMEA board member, Sara Ferry, a school psychologist, and Dr. Kelley Kenney, a certified counselor and professor in the Department of Counseling and Human services at Kutztown University. This group was responsible for organizing the educational components of the conference, specifically outreach to parents, educators (0/K-12), and other professionals in the field of education. Much of the work this

committee took on involved organizing a book fair at the conference, providing childcare professionals and counselors on site, and creating a master resource file of multiracial resources to distribute to conference attendees. They also discussed the possibility of securing counseling credits for social service students and workers who are interested in attending the conference.

The majority of volunteers on this committee were either current or retired teachers or professionals that had a keen interest in the field of education. They spent countless hours behind the scenes gathering hundreds of resources to eventually create their vision of a future DVD guide. This committee also had to devise directions and criteria for individuals that would eventually be used to monitor the playgroup and daycare areas. In addition, they had to work with all of the other committees to ensure that a youth focus was integrated into the activities and overall content of the conference. Members of this committee were vital in creating an educational database of contacts to disseminate conference materials to reach out to parents of multiracial children and transracial adoptees to inspire them to attend the conference.

End Results

With all of the planning that took place and the intensity and dedication to which volunteers worked tirelessly to coordinate this conference, everyone looked to the Loving Decision Conference 2007 with great anticipation and excitement. Nothing this enormous had ever been coordinated before in the U.S. at least, where the sole focus in mind was to bring all the key players that needed to be part of a much-needed dialogue about the diverse multiracial population, here and abroad. As a result of pulling their collective

resources together, the volunteers and organizations that lent support to this undertaking witnessed the fruits of their labor from June 21-24, 2007 in Chicago, Illinois.

While the Administrative and Logistics Committee did in fact reach out to then Senator Barack Obama and his family with a formal invitation eight months in advance to attend and/or speak at the conference, the result was not successful. They finally received a response in January 2007, where the letter stated that Barack Obama could not attend because of his “upcoming commitments”. It was a month later when the nation would get the news on February 10th that Barack Obama announced his candidacy to run for President of the United States of America. Before receiving this response, committee members entertained the idea during one particular phone meeting that we should also try to get professional wrestler and actor, Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson. People began to chant jokingly on the phone, “The Rock and Barack! The Rock and Barack! The Rock and Barack!” Although an invitation was also extended to Mr. Johnson, he also declined through a letter from his agent who explained that the only reason he could not attend was because he was filming a new movie in June. We received non-responses from a few other celebrity profiles, including Tiger Woods, Kianu Reeves, and Rayne Pryor (Richard Pryor’s daughter).

I was able to get the addresses of the managers or agents of celebrities we identified as multiracial because of my involvement as the Vice President of the Media Image Coalition (MIC) on behalf of AMEA. I befriended a speaker who worked for a prominent organization in the entertainment industry in New York City that came to talk to MIC at one of our Tuesday evening meetings back in 2006. I told him that we wanted to secure at least one high profile multiracial celebrity to bring attention to our

conference, and in a matter of weeks, he provided me a list of names and addresses that I would have not been privy to otherwise. Also on the list was Hines Ward, the 2006 NFL most valuable player, who identifies as African American and Korean. After an interesting turn of events where AMEA was invited to collaboratively work on a legal brief on gay marriage a year prior, the attorney on that case mentioned that he knew Hines Ward's personal attorney. We were very close in securing Mr. Ward but eventually his attendance fell through.

Then one day when the conference organizers were about to scrap the idea of getting a celebrity, I received a personal phone call from actress, Nia Peeples. She eventually would serve as one of our keynote speakers at the Loving Decision Conference Extravaganza on Friday, June 22, 2007. The Events and Activities Committee worked with the volunteers on the Speakers and Workshops Committee to organize a social event at the Chicago Center for the Performing Arts, whereby all the artists that submitted a CFA proposal had the opportunity to perform. It was very well attended and it involved theatrical skits, modern dance, comedy, spoken word, book readings, film viewings, and other forms of art. Collectively, the extravaganza was a remarkable testament to the work being developed by members within the larger multiracial community that transcend social science research, but also the work in the humanities. In fact, one particular performance the audience witnessed was a White mother and Black and White multiracial daughter comedy act, centered around the experiences they faced together as members of an interracial family. The committee also orchestrated other social events, including an opening reception and a social networking party at the River Restaurant in downtown Chicago.

The daily presentations at the conference were also hugely successful, involving the collective resources of over 100 presenters spanning over 60 concurrent sessions involving workshops, panels, presentations, full film screenings, and book readings. Not to mention, free daycare service provided by the Education and Outreach Committee. The daycare rooms were always fully staffed with at least four volunteer conference representatives, where two were always adult professionals certified in CPR, and the other two consisting of interns or student counselors. Also, the committee was able to get books, toys, and snacks donated for the rooms without the conference covering any costs. The Fundraising and Development Committee added to this by getting other in-kind donations and sponsorship. Every attendee and volunteer received free 16 oz. hair care products donated by Miss Jessie's, a company run by two Black and Asian multiracial sisters headquartered in New York.

The professional branding of the conference can largely be credited by the expertise on the Public Relations and Marketing Committee that was prepared at all levels of organizing to send out press releases, monitor social networking sites, and constantly update the clean and well-laid out website (www.lovingconference.com). All of these items and the materials we developed for the conference (t-shirts, bags, conference program, banners, information boards, etc.) donned the official conference logo, and this would build the branding strategy we developed a year in advance. At last, this was possible under the direction and oversight of the Administrative and Logistics Committee, made up of all of the co-chairs, volunteers and interns, and myself as the main coordinator. We finally mobilized close to a thousand attendees and volunteers who paid their own way to fly, drive, or walk to the conference that spoke to their concerns.

Attendance records and registration applications showed that many participants traveled from global destinations, including South Africa, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Nepal, Nigeria, England, and Burundi.

Furthermore, there was even a spike in our attendance on the second day due to Jessie Jackson's daughter, Santita of The Santita Jackson Show, who invited me as a guest live on air to promote Loving Decision Conference 2007, accompanied by Ken Tanabe from LovingDay.org and Robin Tillmon from the Biracial Family Network in Chicago. It was at that point I fully realized the conference was effective in educating people who had been unaware of the unmet need of the multiracial population, and that multiracial America was on its way to fully receiving a hand across the other side of the aisle from monoracial groups who have, as I have discussed elsewhere, traditionally believed the presence of multiracial people threatened their livelihood and stake in democracy. Being extended an invitation to have a candid, warm, and very welcoming discussion with Ms. Jackson and her listening audience, who also really expressed empathy and appreciation of what we shared, was a great culmination of three long years of looking in as a researcher, looking out as an advocate and leader, and looking within as a self-identified member of the multiracial community.

5.8 | CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I proposed five keys to effective mobilization under which a collective multiracial community has proven to form and does exist. They include what I label as, *Institutional Support*, *External Threats*, *Shared Ideology*, *Building Alliances*, and *Collective Resources*. Each of these five keys to effective mobilization were supported with ethnographic fieldwork consisting of participant observations and

interviews concerning grassroots mobilization efforts impacting the multiracial community from 2004 to 2007. This examination hints to the challenges policymakers and multiracial advocates alike must confront to adequately provide services to meet the growing needs of diverse and emerging populations, and not just among people who identify as multiracial.

Furthermore, the four cases I discuss in this chapter—RE-52 proposal, “One Box Isn’t Enough” campaign, Senate Bill 1615, and Loving Decision Conference 2007—share several defining characteristics. First, they all involved some level of institutional support to maximize the effectiveness of the mobilization strategies employed. I argue that this type of support improves the likelihood of having an effective mobilization campaign, but it does not mean a campaign ceases to exist without institutional support. For example, where at first we did not get the intended support by the Department of Education and Secretary Spellings for the “One Box Isn’t Enough” campaign, these initiatives actually led to constructing SB 1615 through the support of Senator Joe Simitian. Second, these events attest to the arguments made in Chapters 3 and 4 that these mobilization efforts are not new, but rather, part of a longer trajectory of multiracial organizing in this country unbeknownst to the mainstream society.

The last characteristic the examples in this chapter share among others I’ve previously discussed, is that they illustrate the effectiveness of constantly improving strategies from one mobilization effort to the next in order to yield some desired result. Considerable strides to mobilize the multiracial population were met successfully from getting the RE-52 proposal to not be implemented on a local level, which inspired the OBIE campaign to raise awareness nationally, to getting support for SB1615 on a state

level, eventually leading to an international effort to mobilize people to the Loving Decision Conference 2007 from around the world. All of this was able to be orchestrated by bringing together collective resources and by building meaningful alliances among a number of significant key players I describe in Chapter 6, are essential to the livelihood of multiracial *communities* alike.

Chapter 5 Endnotes

¹ Saito, Leland. 1998. *Race and Politics: Asian Americans, Latinos, and Whites in a Los Angeles Suburb*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press. p. 5

² Messner, Michael. 2002. *Taking the Field: Women, Men, and Sports*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p. 153

³ Wong, Janelle. 2006. *Democracy's Promise: Immigrants and American Civic Institutions*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. p. 126

⁴ The Senate legislative aid assigned to our bill was Rei Onishi, who was also multiracial. He worked with the SB1615 organizing committee for months leading up to the hearings. As an aid, he did not have much of any power to change the course of the days events, nor the last minute dramatic time cut, so I had no choice but to follow his order that he was given for me to cut my remarks to a mere 45 seconds.

⁵ At the time of the California Senate Judiciary Committee hearings, Walter Kawamoto, who self-identifies as Japanese and Mexican American, was a representative of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL). This was the first time he and I had ever met in person before the meetings.

⁶ Wong 2006, pp. 204-206. See also, Janelle Wong's discussion, entitled "Do Group Differences Matter for Mobilization?" It is important to note, however, that "multiple identities" as she explains in her research refers to coalition building among Asian Americans, Latinos, African Americans, and Whites, but not to the exclusion of other races and ethnicities and other intersecting identities.

⁷ Costain, Anne and McFarland, Andrew. 1998. *Social Movements and American Political Institutions*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. p. 1.

⁸ Marx, Gary T. (ed.). 1972. *Muckraking Sociology: Research As Social Criticism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books. p. 5.

⁹ Meranto, Oneido. 1998. "Litigation as Rebellion" in *Social Movements and American Political Institutions*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. p. 218.

¹⁰ Earlier in Chapter 1, I discuss how monoracial and multiracial groups, such as the panethnic alliances to get an Asian category and aggregated ethnic groups were marshaled in the 1970s to the present day. A fuller discussion of this can be read in Yen Le Espiritu's (1992) text, *Panethnicity*.

¹¹ Saito 1998, p. 159

¹² Pantoja, Adrian D., Ramirez, Ricardo, Segura, Gary M. "Citizens by Choice, Voters by Necessity: Patterns in Political Mobilization by Naturalized Latinos". *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (December 2001): pp. 729-750. See also, Pantoja, Adrian D. and Segura, Gary M. "Fear and Loathing in California: Contextual Threat and Political Sophistication Among Latino Voters". *Political Behavior*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (September 2003).

¹³ See proposed Initiative Constitutional Amendment, Article I, 31(1996), available at <http://vote96.sos.ca.gov/bp/209.htm> (last visited April 20, 2010).

¹⁴ See proposed Initiative Constitutional Amendment, Article I, 32(a), available at <http://vote2003.sos.ca.gov/propositions/2-3-prop-54.html> (last visited April 20, 2010).

¹⁵ For a further discussion on the multiracial community's response to the Racial Privacy Initiative (RPI) – Proposition 209, see also Daniel, G. Reginald and Castaneda-Liles, Josef M. 2006. "Race, Multiraciality, and the Neoconservative Agenda." pp. 138-140 in *Mixed Messages: Multiracial Identities in the "Color-Blind" Era*, edited by D. Brunsma. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

¹⁶ Vincent Chin was a 27-year-old Chinese American citizen who was brutally beaten by a baseball bat by two autoworkers in Detroit, Michigan on June 19, 1982. The two autoworkers, Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz, who pleaded guilty to manslaughter went to trial and eventually were acquitted in 1984. Neither have ever served a day in jail for the crime. For more legal research on this case, see Matsuda, M. J. 1988. "Public Response to Racist Speech: Considering the Victim's Story". *Michigan Law Review* 87. pp. 2320-2504, and Ngai, Mae. M. 2002. "The Legacy of Vincent Chin: A Twentieth Anniversary Commemoration. UCLA Asian American Studies Press. *Amerasia Journal*. Vol. 28, No. 3. pp. 1-6.

¹⁷ Wong 2006, p. 127-128

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 128

¹⁹ Saito 1998, p.175. In Saito's study on multiracial politics in the San Gabriel Valley, he shares his observations during the first meeting among Asian Americans and Latino Americans who formed a coalition in 1991 to share their respective redistricting concerns. The leaders from both of the communities understood the historical importance of working together in order to build a strong alliance. He witnessed through their comments at the close of the meeting that they appeared to put their differences aside, which was necessary to bridge their issues in a unified way.

²⁰ Amenta, Edwin and Young, Michael. 1999. "Making an Impact: Conceptual and Methodological Implications of the Collective Goods Criterion." p. 36, in Giugni, Marco, Doug McAdam and Charles Tilly. 1999. *How Social Movements Matter*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

²¹ Wrong, Dennis H. 2002. *Power: Its Forms, Bases, and Uses*. New York, NY: Harper and Row. 3rd edition. pp. 149-150.

²² Hapa Issues Forum (HIF) is a San Francisco based non-profit organization dedicated to enriching the lives of Asian Pacific Islanders of mixed heritage through advocacy, education, and research. "Hapa" is a Hawaiian word that means "half" and it is commonly used to describe people of mixed heritage of Asian Pacific Islander descent.

²³ Open testimonies convened at 12 noon on November 17, 2004. Speakers (who were pre-arranged to speak) were given between 1 to 3 minutes to speak at the microphone. Earlier they were told they would be given 7 minutes.

²⁴ Margaret Spellings was U.S. Secretary of Education under the George W. Bush administration since 2004. She was most notable for being a strong proponent of the No Child Left Behind policy.

²⁵ I specify it as a "sentiment" to make it clear that I recognize the fact that California has actually been conservative in its voting for decades, and only overturning restrictive and discriminatory laws and practices at later dates. Again, this was 2006, two years before California would actually show more conservative politics, such as through Proposition 8 which overturned gay marriage rights in the state.

²⁶ The exact language of this landmark legislation is stated in Public Law 88-352 (78 Statute 241) on July 2, 1964: "An Act to enforce the constitutional right to vote, to confer jurisdiction upon the district courts of the United States of America to provide relief against discrimination in public accommodations, to authorize the Attorney General to institute suits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, to extend the Commission on Civil Rights, to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs, to establish a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, and for other purposes."

²⁷ Unfortunately during the beginning of organizing the conference, Harold had to excuse himself to tend to family matters, and would later return before the conference to help organize. This put unintended weight on me to carry but given the number of volunteers that became involved, everything worked out.

Conclusion/Chapter 6

BEYOND THE POLITICS OF BEING MULTIRACIAL: TOWARD A REVISED THEORETICAL AND PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO MULTIRACIAL PRESENCE IN THE U.S.

“Declare a future worthy of living into even if it’s not something you live in today... Speak the truth about yourselves, no matter how uncomfortable it is for others... It’s not so much the term; it’s about acknowledging our families.”

~ Ramona Douglass, 2006¹ ~

6.1 | TO LIVE AND DIE FOR AN IDENTITY AND A MOVEMENT

In the fall of 2006, I stood behind prominent multiracial leader and mentor, Ramona Douglass, not at a podium, nor at a conference table, but in our shared Washington DC hotel room helping her take out one bobby pin at a time. She needed assistance removing the wig she was wearing after undergoing intense chemotherapy treatment that week. Normally when we traveled to the Decennial Census Advisory Committee (DCAC) meetings, I would be in a separate room. On this particular trip, she was extremely weak and asked me to be of both physical and emotional support. At this time, Ms. Douglass was still the head representative for the Association of MultiEthnic Americans on the 2010 DCAC, and I was the alternate representative being groomed for my eventual spring appointment. Despite her weaker than normal physical conditions that evening, Ramona was still just as mentally feisty, strong-willed, and sarcastically savvy as everyone knew her to be. I could not help but notice that here she was on the verge of saving her own life, and yet she had still made the trip from Los Angeles to Washington DC—wheelchair, cane, and all—to represent the future of millions of Americans who had identified with two or more races and their families.

On May 28, 2007, Ramona Douglass made her final sunset, approximately two weeks before the 40th anniversary of the Loving Decision that overturned the ban on interracial marriage. Her death had come at a great surprise because in correspondence I had with her only three days prior to her passing, she had expressed that her strength was at an all time high, her hair was growing back, and that she was looking forward to giving her two session presentations at the Loving Decision Conference I discussed previously in Chapter 5. It was a trip she told me she was not willing to make if her strength was not able to handle it, but she was ready to go months in advance, full of her normal energy and life.² I was quite devastated, not only because I had selfishly lost a dear friend, a great mentor, and a tremendous supporter, but the country itself had lost a leader it had never really known because of the politics that surround multiracial identity and those who fight to have this population's unmet needs met in mainstream America.

In fact, when I attended her intimate funeral gathering, which was held at her favorite little Italian restaurant in Sun Valley, California, it became apparent to me after I shared some words I was asked to prepare that so many people who knew her personally at work, through friendships, and even in her own family, had the slightest clue the gravity to which she meant to multiracial people in America. She founded Biracial Family Network in Chicago, Illinois in the early 1980s, co-founded AMEA in the latter part of that decade and also served as president, and then spent nearly two decades serving on the Census Advisory Committee, making allies across the aisle which transitioned from lack of support to lifelong camaraderie. While she never got to experience the monumental impact the Loving Decision Conference had in 2007, nor the feeling of having a multiracial president who shares a similar international and domestic

identity to her own, everyone living today will still undoubtedly feel Ms. Douglass' impact. It is through her consistent voice at the national level to represent the hundreds of multiracial Americans she consulted with on that very first Census Advisory Committee that I even have the privilege to serve in this capacity today. I personally will be forever grateful to this unsung hero, and I will never truly do this position as much justice as Ramona Douglass because she was indeed one of a kind.

However, despite this realization, and despite the activism and research for which I was involved most extensively these past several years, the challenges which still lie ahead become clearer and clearer to me everyday. Not only do people like Ms. Douglass live and die for movements around identities—whether that be by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and/or some combination of them all—but their legacies still live on in so many unspoken ways that are not always put in conversation with one another, no less accurately recorded in our history. I recall that evening in our hotel room, she told me to sit down and just listen because she wanted to prepare me for my own journey in the event she was no longer around. I told her this would not be the case because if anyone were to fight cancer at her stage, I truly believed she would be the one to do so.

She went on to share that being on DCAC was not an easy road, nor was the road toward getting the institution of a multiple race option on the census in 2000 an effortless process either. In fact, she said it started off very much an isolated road, where other key stakeholders originally would try to keep her quiet for fear this change on the census would “take way” from the resources and benefits allocated to the well-established traditional monoracial groups. Two stories she shared in particular resonated with me that

evening that I shall never forget. The first involved one story where she described being followed and taunted in a bathroom by a prominent racial organization leader who threatened that if she did not stop being persistent about getting the change on the 2000 census, that she along with others would mess up what Ramona recalled was “that pretty little mulatto hair and face of mine.” At which time, Ramona looked down at her frail body, patted her balding head, and chuckled loudly as she made a comment to the extent that she used to be “a looker” in her day. The second story she shared was when she was a little girl, riding in the south with her parents. She told me that her mother, who was Italian-born, drove the car, as she and her African-American father crouched down in the backseat under blankets when stopping at gas stations or other locations where they knew they were not welcome.

Although Ramona had 30 years of experience over me, her stories still reminded me of my own childhood memories, linking a shared experience of discrimination we had not realized we shared before. For myself, I recall witnessing my mom and dad blatantly being called the most vile, racist terms as a little girl simply because we went into grocery stores together. Or, when my own mother was followed out of her office one day and was taunted by two co-workers, one White and one Black, who realized my brothers, my dad, and I sat waiting for her. Surely I cannot forget one of my fourth grade teachers that brought me to the back of the classroom as she did all the other students to show me my quarter grades. I noticed “Hawaiian” was typed on my report card, and I whispered to her that it needed to be corrected because I was Black and Korean. She argued with me, a nine-year-old little girl, in front of all the other students, but I knew she was wrong. The next morning before heading to work, my mom and my dad showed up at her classroom

to have a talk with her, and needless to say, Ms. Kunkel never disrespected my proud multiracial identity, nor my parents again.

She shared several other stories with me over the many years I had known her, all with the purpose of conveying invaluable lessons to prepare me for my own journey ahead. The three most important lessons of them all were that, first, she had to constantly earn respect on DCAC, and that I would have to do the same by continuing the foundation she had set, but on my own accord. Second, she told me there would be many times in which others may not understand why we are there, but never remain silent, always speak up, and stay committed that the human spirit will always come around in others. Third, she wanted me to know that despite how limited people looking in might describe the so-called Multiracial Movement, for all intents and purposes, discrimination and unfair treatment was experienced by all, for which multiracial individuals and their families were no exception. It is through this experience of activism and research that I finally got the answer to that age-old, riddle of a question, “If a tree falls down in the middle of a forest, and nobody is around, does it still make a sound?” The answer is a confident, yes. For whether or not people have ever heard Ms. Douglass speak passionately about what multiracial identity means for this country, nor witnessed the tireless, behind-the-scenes work that I, along with other multiracial advocates around the country have forged, the significance of the very research I have collected and the host of experiences shared in this dissertation raises one major fact in particular. We still and will continue to make a sound.

However, as Ramona Douglass warned, this does not and will not come without challenges. I realize in this conclusion that we still live in an America where it often

seems is never ready to accept the facts, and not the myths, about being multiracial and the politics that paralyze society's ability to comprehend these experiences in a more sophisticated way. My project serves to move private and public discourse beyond surface level discussions centered upon simplistic questions and comments that commonly get raised. Questions such as, "what community is a biracial person more likely to choose?"; "if society says if you have black blood in you, then doesn't that mean you are just black no matter what you say"; or, the most famous one, "what are you?" as if multiracial people are some type of pedigree or non-human species. Again, this is not a far-fetched assertion, given the fact that people are divided in America in labeling President Barack Obama as the first Black president, or the first multiracial president, where the former is far outweighing the latter for the very reasons I have discussed throughout this dissertation. Moreover, as I shared from one of my NPR interviews in Chapter 5, even President Obama called himself a "mutt", which begs the deeper question on what strategies can be devised to educate the masses, and to whom should these strategies target.

In this final chapter, I conclude that everyone is part of this discussion to address how the unmet needs of the multiracial population can be addressed in existing and future policy efforts. I accomplish this by framing the discussion around potential strategies that move us beyond ongoing critiques and challenges. By this I mean to suggest that social scientists and practitioners must first recognize the impact their work truly has in moving research toward a nuanced, theoretical approach to understand the experience and presence of multiracial people and interracial families in the United States; toward a more

culturally competent society; and toward a more holistic perspective on the possibility of forging truer multiracial politics in the 21st century.

6.2 | CHAPTER SUMMARIES, ARGUMENTS, AND QUESTIONS - REVISITED

The body of research presented in this dissertation is representative of Omi and Winant's theory on Racial Formation, as it demonstrates that racial theory is in fact shaped by "actually existing race relations in any given historical period" and that dominant racial theories have a role in providing society a "common sense about race" and the categories used to identify individuals and groups.³ As this dissertation showed, the existence of multiracial people, organizations, and movements shift the "common sense" understandings of past concepts on racial hegemony. It challenges us to (re)think race as a social construction while acknowledging that there are lingering racial biology arguments that continue to impede our understanding of multiracial identity from a non-monoracial perspective. By introducing key concepts such as, the Politics of Being Multiracial and hegemonoracial ideology (Chapter 1), I demonstrated how these ways of knowing developed within the longer trajectory of racial theories and historical circumstances unquestioned and/or unchallenged (Chapter 2). Furthermore, I revealed how individuals actually counteract this myth by fostering positive racial and ethnic identity development today (Chapter 3), who then in turn come together in groups to form shared ideologies with other multiracial people, communities, and allies (Chapter 4), in order to educate mainstream society on the local, state, and national levels through various mobilization strategies used in grassroots activities (Chapter 5).

Each of the chapters sought to answer three overarching research questions that contribute to the advancing a critical perspective in existing racial and ethnic scholarship.

I asked: 1) *How do we define the multiracial population in the United States and what do these definitions offer about racial and ethnic ideologies and the future for public policy post-2000?*; 2) *What critical insights can centering the experiences of multiracial Americans and the efforts to define them on the local, state, and/or national levels, publicly and privately, offer for other groups in American society?*; and 3) *Under what conditions is it possible to politically mobilize around this shifting and contested category and what are the unmet needs of this emerging population?*

I demonstrated how the answers to these questions are much more complex than a surface level analysis that looks at any one particular multiracial combination, activity, or phenomenon. Instead, it requires an examination of many layers and vantage points from the individual to the collective. As my research illustrated, this is due to the inevitable challenges the answers to these questions pose on the longstanding methodologies and racial data collection employed by social science research; the various concerns of federally protected civil rights groups post-2000; the infinitely growing presence this population has garnered in recent years and its subsequent impact on local, state, and federal institutions; and, the steadily rising demand among a sizeable number of members in this community over the past several decades to be recognized and addressed in current and future public policy efforts. I have argued that without attempting to answer these questions, this undermines a set of unique problems and needs presently experienced by multiracial individuals and interracial families that require specific attention, from educational inequities to healthcare disparities.

Specifically, in Chapter 1, I outlined the overarching arguments and defined the key terms and concepts in the dissertation, which provided the significance for each of

the research questions. First, I argued that biological demarcations vis-à-vis blood terminology served as pseudonyms for multiracial identity is raised in public and private discourse about race and ethnicity. Second, I argued that this slippage necessitated an important distinction that needed to be made between the loosely used term, “multiracial politics,” from a concept I introduced as the “Politics of Being Multiracial.” The former term describes many different racial and ethnic groups that may come together around a particular cause or set of issues to further some agenda perhaps. The latter term refers to a type of politics that I believe represents a set of static and evolving principles or views that are felt primarily by individuals that self-identify and/or are identified as multiracial in society. They involve a set of reoccurring themes, myths, and perspectives that emerged about, by, and for multiracial people in my research. The last argument was that researchers in the social sciences and the practitioners that utilize the work that is produced in the sciences, need to reexamine the ways in which theory and practice must be mindful of maintaining monoracial bias in research about race and politics, what I have referred to as “hegemonoracial ideology”. Again, this is the unconscious philosophy I have shown throughout this dissertation where race is unquestionably understood as a singular entity that is thought to be first studied, interrogated, experienced, and sustained; it is the privileging of ‘one race’ units of analysis in the social sciences; and it is where “monoracial” appears to be the unmarked category by which multiple racial and ethnic identities always become measured.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I examine the first research question by demonstrating how the multiracial population is defined from the broader institutional level to the specific individual level. Chapter 2 discusses the trajectory of racial theories in the United States

to highlight the relationship between social science scholarship and the subsequent societal shifts that contributed to defining multiracial people in 150 years of census schedules from 1850 to 2000. As a result of the findings, I demonstrated how blood and biological demarcations on the censuses in this timeframe were impacted by social science scholarship to define whom was multiracial, and how this eventually relates to present day limitations on how the population continues to be defined in shifting and contested ways. Finally, I highlighted the political complexities regarding race and ethnicity for multiracial people that are often confronted, translated, and sometimes overlooked in racial formation theories and social science inquiry in seemingly inconsistent ways. Chapter 3 continues the discussion from the previous chapter from an individual perspective through interviews, as a demonstration how members of the multiracial population define themselves. Their combined experiences showed how defining who makes up the multiracial population is a complex and fluid process because many have subconsciously adopted the blood-as-race slippage in their own self-definitions, implying that identity is both imposed and accepted, biologically and social constructed.

In Chapter 4 and 5, I address the secondary and tertiary research questions to investigate under what conditions is it possible to politically mobilize around the shifting and contested category of identity, multiracial, and whether or not this population is a coherent political group. Through an in-depth look at the development and innerworkings activities of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans in Chapter 4, I showed how this organization has stood at the forefront of (re)defining the multiracial population on the local, state, and national levels. I argued that AMEA was a unique case study through

which to examine the development of multiracial organizing in the United States towards building a cohesive identity for three particular reasons. First, a deeper analysis of organizations such as AMEA can broaden our understanding of multiracial organizing and non-traditional forms of mobilizing in the U.S. by expanding the discourse to include non-monoracial groups as a focal point. Second, the organization and its activities help us to understand multiracial identity post-2000, where my data left off in Chapter 3. Last, AMEA is a good case study to examine multiracial organizing in the U.S. because it provides insight into an organization that has not been written from an insider's perspective before. Grassroots organizations are often studied from the outside, with little known perspective from within, which may lack the intricacies and nuanced ways to understand the inner-workings of an organization that can go unnoticed from outside observation.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I provided rare behind-the-scenes insight of four national activities spearheaded by or collaborated with AMEA between 2004 and 2007, which served to develop five conditions I describe as “keys to effective mobilization”. This included *Institutional Support*, *External Threats*, *Shared Ideology*, *Alliance Building*, and *Collective Resources*. The events included the University of California Regents RE-52 campaign pushed by Ward Connerly to institute a misdirected “multiracial” category on admissions forms in 2004; the One Box Isn't Enough project co-sponsored with the MAVIN Foundation in 2005, which put pressure on the federal government to fully implement Office of Management and Budget's Directive 15 mandate; Senate Bill 1615 “The Ethnic Heritage Respect and Recognition Act” led in 2006; and the coordination of the Loving Decision Conference 2007: The Next 40 Years of Multiracial Communities

held in Chicago, Illinois to commemorate the 1967 Supreme Court decision to end the legal ban on interracial marriage in the U.S. Together these events showcased how each of the successful mobilization strategies above helped to bring attention to the unmet needs of the multiracial population in a national spotlight.

6.3 | BEYOND THE POLITICS OF BEING MULTIRACIAL

In summary, the aim of this dissertation was to provide valuable research and critical analyses from a perspective that is relatively unknown in social science inquiry with regard to organizing around multiracial identity and the politics of claiming such an identity. To date, no other scholar in the 21st century has been able to write from the perspective and position I have shared as both an insider and outsider to what has been considered the “Multiracial Movement”. As the fifth president of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans, as a young social scientist interested in critically examining the inner-workings of organizations and structures, as a key stakeholder on the national level in race and politics, and as a data user and citizen that self-identifies as a first generation African American and Korean woman, I possess a particular vantage point that could make a considerable contribution in the academy. As I have illustrated earlier, while a number of scholars have mentioned AMEA or taken up the topic of multiracial identity in varying degrees, these scholars too often miss the untapped resources unavailable to them (and sometimes to no fault of their own), which has left little opportunity for them to uncover the nuances those missed details can tell us about multiracial organizing in the U.S. from a hands on, direct perspective.

Earlier in this dissertation, I introduced eight reoccurring themes, myths, and perspectives that emerged from my research and across a range of work about, by, and

for multiracial people. These themes included what I labeled as: the “tragic mulatto syndrome”; “having to choose creates no community”; “mixing races is a contemporary phenomenon”; the “black and white binary is applicable to all”; “multiracial people do not face discrimination”; “passing for mixed”; “global multiracial history”; “identification as mixed race is a personal, political, and historical process”. Together they represented what I claim are the underlying Politics of Being Multiracial. I expressed that this was not an exhaustive list, as the purpose was not to tackle any one specific point since by themselves, they would fall outside the focus of my dissertation. Rather, together the points provide context to address my overall research questions and main arguments, specifically where these issues help frame how multiracial people are defined. These issues also are the impediments that I demonstrated are still embedded in racial discourse from understanding the complexities and multiplicative layers that multiracial identities embody. These complexities are a result of the lingering race-as-biology slippages that make it difficult for society to understand how multiracial identities make a significant contribution in understanding how race operates from a non-monoracial standpoint. However, I will still discuss each of the items that make up the Politics of Being Multiracial here to the extent that I want to show how my research in this project helps to debunk the validity of these claims, while at the same time provides the possibilities of changing what we think we know about multiracial identity formation to date.

To begin, the lingering myth of the “tragic mulatto syndrome” is a longstanding belief in popular culture, mostly historically, that mixed race people are confused, bewildered, and always struggling for the unwavering, one-race self for which they

cannot attain. It is a play on Freud in which the multiracial person is constantly battling the impossibility of being one race, and is always in a constant psychological struggle with the self to be one race or to fit seamlessly into a monoracial identity. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, the confusion seems more to do with monoracial people not understanding how a person can claim two or more without difficulty, rather than the person having difficulty by virtue of having no outside influences making them question their identities in the first place.

The second item, “Having to Choose Creates No Community,” is the belief that the multiracial individual by virtue of not having one community, and having to “choose” to which racial community they belong or relate to more, creates no community at all. This fallacy is a lingering issue in that the literature hardly postulates the reality that one can actually fit into two or more communities simultaneously. As Chapter 3 reveals, the choice of “not choosing” forms a community of people who “choose to not choose.” Inadvertently, this “liminal space” creates the population by virtue of a common experience feeling betwixt groups, not outside of them. In fact, as Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrated, multiracial individuals via community members, advocates, and allies, have made a considerable effort to not only forge a common community among the subgroups that make up the larger multiracial population, but also among the traditional racialized communities to which they are a part. For example, AMEA serves on two national umbrella organizations—DCAC and the Media Image Coalition—whose memberships are made up of a diversity of community groups around the country.

The third item, “Mixing Races is a Contemporary Phenomenon,” is the underlying belief that the topic of mixed race is something new and untapped. As I have

shared throughout this dissertation, media for example, has been notorious for presenting the same recycled stories every year as if ‘racial mixing’ is cutting edge and new. Every year I am requested for interviews on behalf of AMEA when June 12th is nearing, because a new reporter wants to cover the same beat about the anniversary of the *Lovings v Virginia* 1967 Supreme Court decision. The coverage of the story is not the problem, so much as the stagnant questions that never move the discussion beyond marriage itself, opposed to what this case has enabled multiracial advocates and organizations such as AMEA to do over the past four decades. In addition, there is a long body of research on multiracial identity in America that has been untapped, which provides further evidence to the research shared in Chapter 2, that there is in fact a long multiracial history in this country that could shed light on race and politics more broadly.

The next item I labeled, “Black and White Binary is an Applicable Experience for All,” is a limited belief system where when people talk about mixed race in U.S. context, the underlying experience that is dominant but unquestioned on the surface are those individuals that are identified as Black and White. While this subpopulation is sizeable within the larger multiracial community, it has a distinct history that is not applicable to the population as a whole. Yet, this is never questioned when the experience of mixed race America is framed. It is presumed that black and white mixed race people have a blanketed experience that is applicable to all. At the same time, however, they become part of a larger discussion of the population because issues they face are faced to a different yet similar degree to this subpopulation. In Chapters 2 and 3, I illustrated how this belief was circulated, and how it has a profound impact on the lingering “blood”

demarcations that continue to haunt multiracial Americans who are and are not even within that binary.

The fifth item, “Multiracial People Don’t Face Discrimination,” is a form of discrimination itself by even claiming such a statement. Through my research formally and informally speaking to different individuals, professionals, and advocates, it appears that after the census 2000, there is an assumption that racial self-identification or classification options are the only topics that really effect multiracial people. It is the belief held that once this feat was accomplished, somehow the other issues dissipated and people were more accepting of multiracial people in society. This has not been the case, as we have seen for example, with the media and societal frenzy around President Barack Obama’s multiracial identity; Tiger Woods claim to be “Cablinasian”; and Hines Ward’s 2006 MVP win where Koreans fought to claim him as their first, and not African Americans. The most recent includes the 2009 interracial marriage debacle in Louisiana where Judge Keith Bardwell resigned for refusing to honor a marriage license for fear of the children they might have one day.⁴ The list of discrimination cases goes on. Again, going deeply into this topic alone could create an entirely different project, but together, it serves as one of many items that form the Politics of Being Multiracial.

The last three items come from a different angle on one hand gives agency to the multiracial population, but on the other hand, still serves as challenges that I believe make up the Politics of Being Multiracial. The sixth item that I labeled, “Passing for Mixed,” originated from research I conducted back in 2003 through a project entitled, “The Exotic Project.” Here I argued that we are moving into an era where the multiracial experience is being “exotified”, that is exoticism used as a commodity. My research

showed that it is becoming quite beneficial and henceforth, profitable, to be able to “pass for mixed race,” rather than the former belief that mixed people struggled to “pass for white”, or in today’s term, passing for the dominant ideology of a one race person.⁵ All of the chapters where I shared the individual and collective experiences more or less seemed to uphold identifying with a multiracial background with pride.

“Global Multiracial History,” and “Identification a Mixed race is a Personal, Political, and Historical Process” are two unmet realities that have been difficult to be recognized in mainstream society. Hence, they remain on the list of the Politics of Being Multiracial because while they do in fact exist, they are difficult concepts I have discovered are less understood and recognized. “Global Multiracial History” is the item I use to describe the tendency for people to limit their discussion of multiracial identity in a localized context, disregarding the larger diaspora of multiracial identity around the world. There is a longstanding history of other mixed race populations around the world that far exceed the shorter history of the United States. This includes the history of multiracial people in places like Brazil, Puerto Rico, and South Africa, and other designated populations such as Creoles and Mestizas/os. For various reasons I could not take up in this project, I recognize that what I shared in this dissertation speaks to the experiences of other multiracial people around the world; a project I look forward to continuing at a later date.⁶

The final item, “Identification as Mixed Race is a Personal, Political, and Historical Process,” is challenged by the belief that people tend to hold when discussing multiracial identity in a surface level analysis. In other words, there are multiple dimensions that contribute to anyone’s identity personally, politically, and historically.

Yet, when the topic of multiracial identity is discussed, I have found that many people often dismiss the complexities that form a multiracial identity. I outline this more extensively in Chapter 3, where I framed the discussion on other attributes such as geography, age, specific racial/ethnic backgrounds, cultural and religious elements, familial influence, parental cultural competence, phenotype (actual, stereotypical/perceived), and so forth. The purpose was to show that the process is different for individuals, but as a larger population, one might still be deemed as being part of the multiracial community despite their own self-identification. Again, I understand multiracial identification to serve as both a self-identified process, and well as an imposed one that may be external to one's own preference of self-identification.

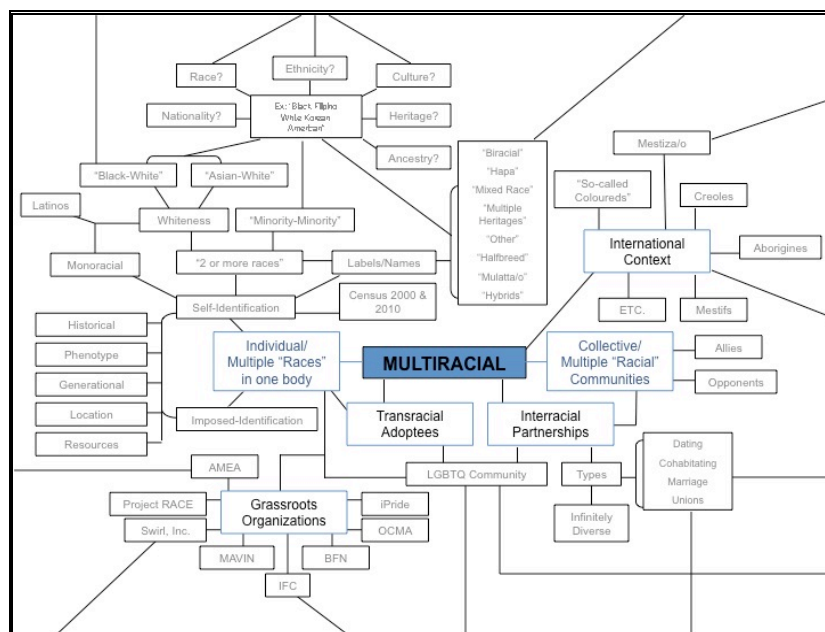
6.4 | RECOGNIZING THE MULTIRACIAL COMPLEXITY WEB OF IDENTITY

The crux of my project centers around the belief that one of the primary ways to deal with the complication that race and other social categories creates is by making the complexities much more obvious, not simplified, so that people no longer minimize other people's existence. This highlights the need for all members of society to understand the deeper complexities that multiracial identities raise about our historical pasts and how they linger in contemporary society. These experiences can shed light on how monoracial people can understand their own identities as a dialectical process that does not always require one to start from a one-race perspective to theorize racial formation. Failing to recognize, understand, or acknowledge the importance of integrating the experiences of multiracial people into the larger trajectory of racial politics and social science discourse in this country—*alongside of* and *not secondary to* monoracial experiences—will continue to perpetuate old wayward, biological arguments that should have long been set

aside. If we are to really study race and ethnic identity, by openly and honestly addressing the complexities that come with the topic, I am attempting to bring everyone to the table. If not, we run the risk of maintaining a hegemonoracial order that is forever unquestioned, exclusionary, and wholly non-applicable to each and every person who is affected by the maintenance of the colorline in the 21st century.

Therefore, I decided to develop the following “complexity web of identity” shown in Figure 9, as a learning tool to illustrate an abstract visual depiction of the many complexities one must grapple when understanding what the term “multiracial” might mean in various contexts. Using the key elements discussed throughout the remainder of this dissertation, I pieced together each component in the web to show how various definitions have, could, and are still used to define multiracial identity.

**FIGURE 9:
MULTIRACIAL COMPLEXITY WEB OF IDENTITY/IES**



The point of this illustration is not to claim an exhaustive web of possibilities, but rather, to show that by choosing to start at any one point of the web is limiting because it

potentially misses a whole host of intricacies that multiracial identities could contribute when building upon existing racial and ethnic scholarship. Often when studies are conducted on understanding the multiracial experience in the United States and abroad, the focus is often limited to some figuration or issue, leaving the conversation stagnant and one-dimensional. Many issues are not mutually exclusive, but rather, connected and fused by other intersecting elements that explain the other. Yet, there is a tendency for sake of clarity for social scientists to simplify these terms by using them as singular units of analysis, leaving out the complexities that undergird these variables that could provide much further data about some phenomena or set of events.

Before developing this illustration, it was difficult for me to create my own working definition of how I was applying the term in my research. As I explained in Chapter 1, I use the designation “multiracial” as a working term that on one hand poses the challenge of reinscribing race as a fixed category of difference, while on the other hand, demarcates an emerging group comprised of different racial combinations in their own space and place, not under the guise of monoracial existence. The multiracial population is a coherent political community by virtue of sharing a similar ideology about the complexity through which seemingly disparate racial and ethnic identities simultaneously form. Again, I distinguish two different definitions for multiracial, as indicated in the web. For my purposes, I specifically define multiracial as a fluid term that represents *the confluence of multiple socially constructed racial and ethnic identities, populations, movements, and set of politics that are privately-identified and/or publicly-imposed*. At the group level, multiracial is understood as either a confluence of many

“traditional”⁷ monoracial communities forming together as a unified whole, or the summation of many different identifiable subgroups of multiple races.

Finally, this identity web of multiracial complexities represents several important tenets of my work. Foremost, it represents how race and ethnicity are complex subjects to comprehend for all people, whether “monoracial” or “multiracial” are centered in the web. The malleable nature of racialized terms means they are also debatable in usage and application, and are not mutually exclusive from other intersecting identities I have discussed elsewhere, such as gender, class, age, and geography. Next, the web also represents the recognition of the many layers and points of departure through which I could focus my research on multiracial identity. I use the term, multiracial, as a window through which to examine larger social issues and racial politics. Such was the case when I elected not to choose, for example, to study one or more subgroups of the population, or limit my definition of multiracial to individuals or groups. This is a common practice among scholars engaged in this type of research because the layers make discussions more complicated.

In fact, many of the studies I referenced earlier admit that their research was limited by the samples they chose to study, and yet, they all seemed to make the experiences of their limited samples universal for all multiracial combinations. Such was expressed in this explanation.

On one hand, this narrow definition of biracial bars us from exploring the dynamics of other racial combinations in the ways in which there may be similarities among multiracial people with various racial backgrounds. It also may perpetuate the stereotype that biracial is equivalent to black/white, as opposed to the myriad other potential combinations. We believe that limitation is offset by the analytic clarity that we gain by focusing on only one parental race combination.⁸

My study pointed out the problematic tendency to universalize the experiences of one combination of multiracial identity with that of the whole. After reviewing this body of literature that exists, one should be reminded to question the validity to which one combination of multiracial experiences are used to speak for the experiences of all multiracial people, similarly for monoracial identified people. At the same time, the different complexities that multiracial individuals confront suggest they do in fact share a common experience to form a cohesive, collective multiracial identity. This web could be seen as providing my work with a degree of clarity from which others can visually see how my work understand that multiracial identity as both a uniquely individual and collective group process that includes people from infinitely diverse combinations.

My study challenges the black and white paradigm, and consciously seeks to include the voices of many other combinations to expose the complex nature of multiracial identity. In doing so, I seek to put into practice what David Lopez and Yen Espiritu's (1990) label as "panethnicity"; that is "the development of bridging organizations and solidarities among subgroups of ethnic collectivities that are often seen as homogeneous by outsiders."⁹ Opposed to defining the term multiracial in limited binaries, and later using these limited findings to argue a universal experience for all multiracial people as the previous studies have done, I leave the experiences of my participants in the actual words and stories they selected to share. This enabled me to cross-culturally compare the simultaneously shared solidarities between them.

Last, the web in its entirety visually shows the complexity these identities present if left undecipherable in the web. In earlier chapters, I raised the urgency that there are unique needs of this population within the likes of education, healthcare, and civil rights

that needs to be dealt with, but of which are met with resistance due to a lack of understanding how complex these identities really are based on the belief that this population cannot be defined. The research demonstrated not only how this population has been defined in various ways, these various definitions form the basis under which this population defines itself. It thus inadvertently creates a shared term of recognition by being the group that seems *undefinable*, located in what Reginald Daniel (2002) calls “liminal space.” It is a space that might force us to ask whether the lack of a shared term of recognition become a condition under which a coherent political identity can form, or whether a coherent political identity can form with a lack of a shared term of recognition. They appear to be similar questions, but they are vitally different and equally complex based on the answers that have the potential to expand the discourse on multiracial identity and racial and ethnic scholarship more broadly. The former question suggests that by virtue of having many people who believe they lack a shared term is the very basis by which people may eventually join to form a group. The latter recognizes that if multiracial people agree they do not fit in the current monoracial paradigm, under one specific term, they become the ‘no shared term’ identified group, but a group nonetheless.

6.5 | WHAT BECOMES OF THE NEXT CHAPTER?

Even while I discussed each of those aforementioned items I believed make up the Politics of Being Multiracial, I recognize that the list is always evolving and changing to include other “politics” of being multiracial I may not have discussed. It serves to illustrate the socially constructive nature to which identities are formed. Each of these examples were used to serve as benchmarks that I am always conscious of confronting when challenged about the underlying issues each of them entails when taking up the topic of what it means to define multiracial, and the impediments to organizing around

individual and collective identities that on one hand are complex for the reasons I have explained, but on the other hand, are no different than other group identities because they follow similar paths of struggle, recognition, and alliance building. More often, I have found that as people struggle to understand the diversity of multiracial identities and the reasons for organizing around the complex topics they raise, that sometimes any one of the politics above are haphazardly thrown in as if to minimize a deeper discussion about the contribution multiracial people have actually had on social science inquiry and racial politics more specifically. People seem to be threatened by the declaration of the identity itself, rather than the truer threat, which is that much needs to be done institutionally to level the playing field of all communities that face discrimination in such a way that when one community enters the discussion, others do not feel their own concerns or allocation of resources are minimized either.

The crux of my project centers around the belief that one of the primary ways to deal with the complication that race and other social categories creates is by making the complexities much more obvious, not simplified, so that people no longer minimize other people's existence. It is my hope to move us beyond that under-the-belt argument that begs the question, "but Jungmiwha, aren't we all multiracial?" seeming to always suggest that since we are supposedly *all* multiracial, having a discussion that centers it somehow becomes insignificant. While yes, I believe this to be true that we are *all* so-called multiracials given the international histories that exist between all peoples of the world, asking this question does little to address the fact that we are *all* still impacted differently based on where one finds oneself in the multiracial complexity web that I previously outlined, and that we *all* have a particular stake in multiracial identity formation.

When the organizing committees and I were first devising our plan of action for the Loving Decision Conference in 2007, we were all in agreement that the main goal of the conference was not to celebrate, per se, but to educate. Who we were aiming to educate was a far more difficult task to come up with than we had anticipated. We eventually came up with ten target populations that we believed we needed to do outreach to in order for the conference to be successful. They include in no particular order: multiracial people in general; transracial adoptees; parents (including adoptive parents); educators; professionals; youth; policymakers and politicians; celebrities; LGBTQ population; and everyone in mainstream society. They are the same groups to which I argue have a particular stake in forming a more cohesive multiracial community, identity, and organizational structure for decades to come. However, reaching these targets was one step, but providing them with the means to become more culturally competent about multiracial identity in the United States was the most important step. This is an ongoing goal for the AMEA and its' affiliates, but nonetheless, a significant goal that must be reached in order for the unmet needs of the population to be addressed.

With these target groups in mind, I will briefly mention several concluding strategies that I believe might aid society, from the individual to the collective, to move beyond the debilitating constructs, myths, and taboos above that undergird the Politics of Being Multiracial, toward a more inclusive Multiracial Politics that brings all communities together on common ground. This common ground I speak of is the shared ideology about the ways in which racial and ethnic identity is theorized, defined, and lived through people, and in this project, I used multiracial identity as the window through which to look at this as a possibility. I believe this can be accomplished by

moving the discourse beyond race-as-biology arguments that continue to still linger today, to move toward a revised theoretical and pragmatic approach to race as a social construction. This is possible by moving fluidly beyond, between, and among studying race in singular identities first, in order to move toward confronting when hegemonoracial ideology is preventing us from acknowledging the experience of multiracial identities that are always present, but most often ignored. Finally, we need to move beyond pathologizing the multiracial experience to limited constructs that leave multiracial people the burden of picking up the pieces embedded in our institutions where they are most impacted, in order to move toward a more cultural competent society. This would involve the acknowledgment that much is to be learned in education, healthcare, and so forth about the multiracial population and the organizations that have developed to meet the unmet needs of millions of Americans, for which we all have a stake.

At long last, I made some clarifying points in the introduction of this dissertation regarding what this body of work *is*, starting from what it *is not*, and I would like to end with these statements. This project is not concerned with determining what community is “more accepting” or “least accepting” of a multiracial identity, nor is it concerned with arbitrary finger pointing because this would take away from the focus of my analysis. I am however concerned with how communities behave positively and negatively toward and with one another when the topic of multiracial identity surfaces in a way that has not been offered up to date. As David Parker and Miri Song state, “The topic of ‘mixed race’ brings out the worst in people.” While I agree to some level, I also somewhat disagree with this statement. I do not think it is the “topic” per se that potentially brings out the worst in people, in so much as it rests in the frustration of not understanding how to

incorporate the historical and contemporary issues felt by monoracial communities, while simultaneously addressing the contemporary exclusion of multiracial experiences that have a contribution in the larger trajectory of race and politics and racial theory. Let's face it. Monoracial and multiracial people are not mutually exclusive communities either. Monoracial identities make up multiracial identities, and multiracial people are the children, relatives, and ancestors that impact monoracial identities.

Also, my project is not an idealistic attempt toward building a "we are the world" utopian mindset, where if only people recognized the target population as a separate category of difference they would have a better sense of self or the world around them. For I am less concerned with simply regurgitating the arguments that many multiracial scholars have already discussed with regard to the benefits a so-called multiracial, mixed race, or interracial identity affords society, per se. In other words, by just simply stating that multiracial people need to be included in the discourse on race simply because it would make for healthier individual identities, for example, is not enough to explain the *how*, the *why*, and the *urgency* of attending to this population of study, which *Multiracial Politics or the Politics of Being Multiracial* has attempted to accomplish. Furthermore, this dissertation is not a personal quest to make people conform into accepting, or even acknowledging the term "multiracial" either because I only use the terminology at this time to engage in the discourse, with the hope of problematizing the usage of it over the long run. The reason is because it reinscribes fixing 'race' in the term itself although it is a fluid process of recognition.

What I believe my project is what I consider a personal "humbling project;" that is, I could not divorce myself from my own social and political interrogation of

multiracial organizing around multiracial identity as someone who maintains multiple positions in my research. On one level, I am simply a data user and researcher interested in understanding how society has come to define the multiracial population over time, as well as, how and why communities have come together to organize around this complex and contested identity. On another level, I am personally invested as a community member who subscribes as always simultaneously Black and Asian physically, mentally, socially and politically. Then, on yet another level, as the current president of the oldest leading umbrella organization in the nation dedicated to those who identify with a multiracial, multiethnic, and transracial adoption identities, I occupy an interesting space in my own work where I tangibly impact my own research, in real time, through real social change through my dedication to social justice. In the beginning, occupying these positions were quite difficult in the early stages of my process because I had to look in as a researcher, look out as an advocate, and look within as a community member. It was not until I noticed I was being asked to participate in so many other students' dissertations as a prominent leader in the movement in which I realized I had something significant to say, from the positions I held, together and not apart.

It is my hope that the research collected and analyses generated in this dissertation might later contribute to policy making in the fields of education, healthcare, racial identification and enumeration, civil rights, public service, and social welfare by: 1) addressing issues and concerns faced by the multiracial community still unmet in public policy; 2) determining what implementation issues make it difficult to fully incorporate this population in the policymaking process and providing remedies; 3) suggesting strategies to address the concerns from both parties (multiracial community and

policymakers) to improve social services for this and other diverse populations; 4) creating a database of research and archives to be made available to policymakers, such as a list of partnerships and resources accessible within the multiracial community; 5) and, utilizing cities like Los Angeles and other cities I conducted field research, as potential pilots for other cities to emulate or improve policy efforts elsewhere that target multiracial individuals and families.

As we look onward to the next chapter of multiracial organizing in this country, the most pressing issues that still need to be undertaken are ongoing projects that far exceed the timing of this dissertation. First, there still needs to be a push to bring the Office of Management and Budget Directive 15 mandate in compliance across the country so that multiracial people and their families are accurately recorded in education, healthcare, media, and other state and federally funded institutions where race and ethnicity are collected. This mandate was to be satisfied by 2003, and yet it still has not been put into practice because a “choose one” option is still prevalent around the country. Second, more resources need to become readily available to the target populations specified earlier in order to fully educate society on the growing presence of the multiracial population, as professionals and policymakers, for example, need to incorporate this population in policies that are formulated today, that will be implemented in the future. Again, multiracial births were the third largest population in the state of California in 1997, over monoracial Black and Asian births.¹⁰ This leaves much to be said with regard to providing culturally competent resources and trained professionals who recognize the diversity of everyone from school-aged children to adults. AMEA and the

MAVIN Foundation are currently working on a joint project to fund the Mixed Heritage Center, which will aid in providing such resources to remedy this inevitable need.

Finally, as I mentioned in Chapter 5, non-profit organizations such as AMEA are limited in many resources and human capital that are necessary in meeting the needs of millions of Americans who are not only multiracial, but the monoracial people who make up a multitude of interracial families. Yet, AMEA and others are relied on to do so much that local, state, and federal agencies could assist with more purposefully. If multiracial people are now counted in the U.S. Census, and if every decade resources are allocated to communities based on these numbers, multiracial people are still left to identify within a hegemonoracial ideological framework in order to collect resources they are entitled to as citizens just like everyone else. This is another project I am interested in taking up at a future date because of the consequences it has and will continue to have if understudied. At this time, there is much to be researched on future projections this dissertation alludes to at the conclusion of this project. That is, how might the existence of multiracial people and the movement for socio-political recognition in the past two decades challenge the pre-existing racial hegemony in the next decade? Furthermore, might this result in a new movement of racial formation where old categories are shattered and replaced by a new type of identification or an anti-categorization movement?

In summary, the aim of this dissertation was to provide valuable research and critical analyses from a perspective that is relatively unknown in social science inquiry with regard to organizing around multiracial identity and the politics of claiming such an identity. To date, no other scholar in the 21st century has been able to write from the perspective and position I have been privileged to share as both an insider and outsider to

what has been considered the “Multiracial Movement”. As the fifth president of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans, as a young social scientist interested in critically examining the inner-workings of organizations and structures, as a key stakeholder on the national level in race and politics, and as a data user and citizen that self-identifies as a first generation African American and Korean woman, I possess a particular vantage point that could make a considerable contribution in the academy. As I have illustrated earlier, while a number of scholars have mentioned AMEA or taken up the topic of multiracial identity in varying degrees, these scholars too often miss the untapped resources unavailable to them (and sometimes to no fault of their own), which has left little opportunity for them to uncover the nuances those missed details can tell us about multiracial organizing in the U.S. from a hands on, direct perspective.

I envision my dissertation as a catalyst to develop intersecting policy projects that might inspire new directions from the ongoing topics discussed throughout. It is also my hope that the concepts and research I developed continue to be reworked, eventually serving as a necessary breakthrough into the social sciences, particularly race and ethnic studies, where currently there is no racial rubric into which the aims of this project can be situated at this time. My work is an attempt to add, while at the same time, challenge previous theories on racial formation as we know them today by adding populations of study for which those theories cannot and do not always adequately apply. If we are to really study race and ethnic identity, by openly and honestly addressing the complexities that come with the topic, my attempt is to continuously bring everyone to the table.

The need for this is reflected in an email dated May 9, 2006 at 10:35pm that I received from Ramona Douglass almost a year before her passing. It reads:

Dear Jummy,

I am already traveling...at LAX waiting for my Red Eye flight. The cards arrived...I got them enroute to LAX thank you.

The NAACP was using the same excuses in 1995-1997 when we were pushing hard for a multiracial category with multiple identifiers. I got someone who was active in the Palo alto NAACP who saw the bigger picture Janet Wells was President or Chair for that Branch which include Santa Clara, Mountainview and I can't remember what else....she was also a former Census volunteer and understood the value of "complete" racial data for medical diagnostic purposes.

With the ability of choosing one or more boxes which includes the ability to check African American along with other boxes, that excuse for not supporting the Bill doesn't hold water. When it comes to counting for Civil Rights issues, apportionment for "Voting Rights" for example, unfortunately for us but fortunately for the African American community it is the group that is most disenfranchised that gets the "count".

For medical purposes it is all people of color who have been undercounted or miscounted for various procedures (bone marrow transplants or Tay Sach; Sickel Cell Anemia, etc. It is the genetic frequency that often matters and the American Medical Association endorsed the "check one or more" format because it provided the much needed detailed data.

All of this is off the top of my head without benefit of notes. Hope this helps.

Ramona

Thus, we are reminded here of the continual importance of engaging this much needed discourse between 'multi' and 'Multi' racial politics, and the Politics of Being Multiracial, as well as, the subsequent impact our decisions in academia and in other institutions have on everyday people and their communities—and in this case, the multiracial community. We are further reminded about the critical insights other groups in society gain by centering the experiences of multiracial Americans and the efforts to define them on the local, state, and national levels both publicly and privately. For together, all communities are not mutually exclusive as I hope this dissertation has

illustrated by using multiracial identity as one of many windows through which to examine racial formation in the United States. If we fail to recognize the complexities through which multiracial identity and the means to define what these identities represent from our historical past to contemporary times, then we run the risk of maintaining a hegemonoracial order that is forever unquestioned, exclusionary, and wholly non-applicable to each and every person who is affected by the maintenance of the colorline in the 21st century.

Conclusion/Chapter 6 Endnotes

¹ The following quotes were taken during Ramona Douglass' keynote address at Claremont College in Southern California for the "Mixed Race Conference" on April 2, 2004.

² In an email dated Monday, March 12, 2007 at 7:33am, Ramona writes: "Hi Jummy: Sorry I have been out of touch...fighting with Blue Cross about approval of my chemo regimen...it has been delayed so it is now late by a week.... I was looking at web site for AMEA ...do we have anything posted on Hotel accommodations for the conference...that weekend of June 22-24 is booked solid in local downtown hotels and the prices of the ones that are safe and available are nearly \$300-\$500 per night. Did anything go out yet on the agenda or accommodations?? I need to know ASAP so I can book accordingly. Thanks. Ramona"

³ Omi and Winant 1994, p. 11

⁴ According to the Associated Press on October 15, 2009, Louisiana judge Bardwell made headlines around the world for refusing Beth Humphrey, 30, and Terence McKay, 32, a marriage license. He officially resigned in November, after making the statements, "I'm not a racist. I just don't believe in mixing the races that way," Bardwell told the Associated Press on Thursday. "I have piles and piles of black friends. They come to my home, I marry them, they use my bathroom. I treat them just like everyone else."

⁵ For more scholarship on the historical concept of "passing," see, Larsen, Nella. 1929. *Passing*. New York, NY: Penguin Group; O'Toole, James M. 2002. *Passing for White: Race, Religion, and the Healy Family, 1850-1920*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

⁶ A few scholars have already conducted work in this arena. See, David Parker and Miri Song. 2001. *Rethinking 'Mixed Race'*. London: Pluto Press; Jaclyn Cock and Alison Bernstein. 2002. *Melting Pots and Rainbow Nations: Conversations about Difference in the United States and South Africa*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press; G. Reginald Daniel. 2006. *Race and Multiraciality in Brazil and the United States: Converging Paths?*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

⁷ By "traditional" monoracial communities, I mean to imply that there exists a core set of racialized communities that have remained more constant, as reflected by the U.S. Census, where multiracial would be deemed "untraditional." These groups primarily include Whites, Blacks/African-Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Latino/Hispanic Americans.

⁸ Rockquemore, Kerry, and Brunisma, David L. 2002. *Beyond Black: Biracial Identity in America*. Rowman and Littlefield. p. xiv.

⁹ Lopez, David, and Yen Le Espiritu. 1990. Panethnicity in the United States: A Theoretical Framework. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 13 (2), p. 198.

¹⁰ Tafoya, Sonya M. "Check One or More...: Mixed Race and Ethnicity in California". Public Policy Institute of California: California Counts Population Trends And Profiles. Vol. 1. No. 2. January 2000.

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