

**Copyright**  
**by**  
**Aurora Chang-Ross**  
**2010**

**The Dissertation Committee for Aurora Chang-Ross  
certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:**

**Racial Queer: Multiracial College Students at the Intersection of  
Identity, Education and Agency**

**Committee:**

---

**Luis Urrieta, Supervisor**

---

**Keffrelyn Brown**

---

**Lisa Cary**

---

**Victor Saenz**

---

**Gregory Vincent**

**Racial Queer: Multiracial College Students at the Intersection of  
Identity, Education and Agency**

By

**Aurora Chang-Ross, B.A. in English, M.A. in Education**

**Dissertation**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction in the College of**

**Education**

The University of Texas at Austin

May, 2010

*Dedication*

*Para mi mamá y papa, gracias por enseñarme que soñar y amar son  
los unicos requisitos para vivir con pasión.*

*For my mom and dad, thank you for teaching me that to dream and to  
love are the only requisites to living a life of passion.*

## *Acknowledgements*

I never thought I'd actually arrive here. Yet, here I am acknowledging those who believed in me, even when I was in the depth of despair. Every time I would feel a pang of discouragement, sadness or loneliness in this dissertation process, I would envision my village of family, friends and supporters – hand in hand, surrounding me in a circle of love and *ánimo*.

I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Luis Urrieta, Dr. Keffrelyn Brown, Dr. Lisa Cary, Dr. Victor Saénz and Dr. Gregory Vincent. Thank you for your patience, thoughtfulness, rigor and heart. I especially thank Luis, my profe, my #1 fan and my amigo. Luis, you held such high expectations of me to the point of bringing me to tears at times in the thick of writing, editing and revising. You are a hero to me. You taught me the academic tools of the trade but, much more than that, you taught me to be humble in the face of achievement. Me diste ganas – mil gracias.

I wish to thank various communities that I was a member of including: the West Contra Costa County Unified School District, the University of California at Berkeley, Stanford University, Balboa High School, UC Berkeley's Early Academic Outreach Program and its participants, The College Board, The University of Texas at Austin's Preview Program and all the Previewers who I was fortunate enough to work with, Office of the Dean of Students and the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Austin Community College and Beloit College.

Specifically, I want to thank my Richmond, California public school teachers for setting high academic standards for my siblings and I, even amidst corruption and bankruptcy within the district. In particular, I want to acknowledge Mrs. Landfear, Mrs. Forcier, Mrs. Garrigan, Mrs. McGuire, Mr. Bauer, Ms. Payne, Mrs. Jones, and the many teachers, teaching assistants, librarians, cafeteria workers, office staff and physical plant maintenance workers that impacted my life so positively. I thank all of the students that gave me the honor of

working with them in my different administrative and instructional roles. Specifically, I want to acknowledge Abraham Peña, Laura Ileana Cerda, Ann Pham, Jonathan Phillips (JP), Sharee (Princess) Davis, Ben Pham, and Gina Cameras. I thank my University of Texas at Austin Texas colleagues and friends: Melissa Martinez, LaGarrett King, Henna Tayyeb, Rian Carkhum, Laura Cortez, Jason Chang, Maria Cruz, Brenda Sendejo, Tifani Blakes, Corina Lopez, Amy Kraehe, Daniel Spikes (the newbie) and so many more. I especially want to acknowledge Dr. Gregory Vincent and Enrique Romo for their pep talks, sense of humor and grace. I give special thanks to The University of Texas at Austin Graduate School for awarding me with a continuing fellowship which allowed me to complete my dissertation. I also thank The University of Texas at Austin's College of Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction especially Jim Maxwell and Shawna Matteson, for their patience and guidance. I also thank The University of Texas at Austin's Hispanic Faculty Staff Association, Asian/Asian American Faculty Staff Association, Association for Professionals in Student Affairs, Center for Mexican American Studies and the Office of the Dean of Students for welcoming me to Texas and supporting me, both professionally and financially, in my journey to a doctoral degree.

I thank Dr. Giao Phan for providing me with a wonderful teaching opportunity at Austin Community College while I struggled to complete my dissertation.

I thank my study participants who gave of themselves so generously for this cause.

The final leg of my dissertation was only completed through the angelic support of my Beloit College colleagues, who took me in as their own, during the most painful period of my life. Thank you Tom Owenby for being my amazing force of nature. Thank you Nate Edwards for your calm, grounding strength and limitless patience. Thank you Miss Tasha Bell for being beautiful and allowing me to partake in your aura. Thank you Kristin Frey for always knowing exactly what to say and what to do when I needed that extra push. Thank you Amy Sarno, aka Bette, for our Debbie downer movie

outings, our talks and our friendship. Thank you Jennifer Esperanza for the masterful sell of Beloit College – you are my Hilltop Green sister. I also want to thank my McNair Scholars who were integral muses in my writing process.

While I have many mentors, I want to specifically thank James Montoya, Dr. Francisco Rios, Dr. Lourdes Soto, Dr. Cinthia Salinas, Dr. Anthony Brown, Dr. Angela Valenzuela, Dr. Doug Foley, Dr. Kevin Foster, Dr. Louis Harrison and Stella Escalante (rest in peace). You were there for me when I needed guidance, and I will never be able to repay you for your acts of kindness toward me.

On a personal level, I need to thank my amazing friends who tolerated my frustrations and provided me with the inspiration and courage to move forward when I felt that I could not take one more step. Thank you Camille Wilson, Kesha Evans, Sonia Cortez, Mandeep Birak, Elvira Prieto, Maria Ledesma, Maria Cruz, Ixchel Rosal, Sergio Delgado and Melissa Martinez. Melissa and Sergio, you were especially pivotal in every step of this process – you are my brother and sister and los quiero muchísimo.

Finally, I thank the most important people of my life, my family: Peppina Liano, Jorge Arturo Chang, Blanca, Andrés, George, Maria and José. You were in my heart every step of the way, and although you were far, I felt you with me. José, you will always be my baby brother and yet you have taught me so much about the importance of being true to oneself. Marie, thank you for being my sweet and brilliant baby sister – every time I see your face I am reminded of the deep love between siblings. Shauna, you confirm my belief that family is not limited to blood relations - you are my hermana. George, in your quiet stillness, you always showed me unconditional love and support without judgment. Andrés, in the hardest of times, you came through with words and messages that gave me that extra push to move forward. Blanca, your gifts of sisterhood were always timely, and I thank you for sticking with me. Dad, your mantra of “enjoy, be happy, relax and smile” and the ballads you left on my voicemail made me feel loved like no other gesture could. Mom, I could write a dissertation on what you mean to

me. Thank you for your fearlessness, your zest for life, your incredible ability to provide comfort and strength in times of crises, your willingness to learn, your courage, your poetry, your generosity and your friendship. Everything I have ever done has been a result of your inspiration and love. Even in my arrogance and stubbornness, you saw me. You saw me for who I was, mom, and I am eternally grateful.

I also want to thank my second family of ten years: Chris Ross, Linda Upperman Smith, Robert Ross, Sr. and Robert Ross, Jr. for their support. Chris, there is nothing left to say except, for an exquisite time, you knew and loved me for who I truly was and am - for that time, I am grateful. Linda, you are the pinnacle of class, and you will forever remain in my heart. Life certainly took us by surprise in many ways, and I treasure all of the moments, happy and sad, that finally led me to this place. We are always arriving. Thank you for being part of this exquisite journey.

Finally, for all of those undocumented immigrants, low-income, first-generation, underrepresented people in this country, I say to you, each of your acts of courage, pangs of suffering and cries for hope have contributed to my feat. I will not forget the strong shoulders that have withstood my weight. I will never forget.

# **Racial Queer: Multiracial College Students at the Intersection of Identity, Education and Agency**

Aurora Chang-Ross, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2010

Supervisor: Luis Urrieta

*Racial Queer* is a qualitative study of Multiracial college students with a critical ethnographic component. The design methods, grounded in Critical Race Methodology and Feminist Thought (both theories that inform Critical Ethnography), include: 1) 25 semi-structured interviews of Multiracial students, 2) of which 5 were expanded into case studies, 3) 3 focus groups, 4) observations of the sole registered student organization for Multiracial students on Central University's campus, 5) field notes and 6) document analysis. The dissertation examines the following question: How do Multiracial students understand and experience their racialized identities within a large, public, tier-one research university in Texas? In addition, it addresses the following sub-questions: How do Multiracial students experience their racialized identities in their everyday

interactions with others, in relation to their own self-perceptions and in response to the way others perceive them to be? How do Multiracial students' positionalities, as they relate to power, privilege, phenotype and status, guide their behavior in different contexts and situations?

Using Holland et al.'s (1998) social practice theory of self and identity, *Chicana Feminist Theory*, and tenets of *Queer Theory*, this study illustrates how Multiracial college students utilize agency as *racial queers* to construct and negotiate their identities within a context where identity is both self-constructed and produced for them. I introduce the term, *racial queer*, to frame the unconventional space of the Multiracial individual. I use this term not to convey sexuality, but to convey the parallels of queerness (both as a term of empowerment and derogation) as they pertain to being Multiracial. In other words, queerness denotes a unique individuality as well as a deviation from the norm (Sullivan, 2003; Warner, 1993; Gamson, 2000).

The primary purpose of this study is to illustrate the agentic ways in which Multiracial college students come to understand and experience the complexity of their racialized identity production. Preliminary findings suggest the need to expand the scope of racial discourses to include Multiracial experiences and for further study of Multiracial students. Their counter-narratives access an

otherwise invisible student population, providing an opportunity to broaden critical discourses around education and race.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b> .....	1
An Autobiographical Preface.....	1
Overview of Study.....	10
Research Question.....	15
Importance of the Topic.....	16
Outline of Study.....	19
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review</b> .....	23
Introduction.....	23
Critical Race Theory and the Social Construction/Lived Experience of Race.....	24
The Multiracial Population – The Census: “Check One or More”.....	33
Historical Origins of Multiraciality in the United States.....	36
Multiracials as Underrepresented Group – One Step Forward or Backward?.....	49
Racial Identity Development Theories and Models – An Overview...	59
Multiracial College Students.....	93
Student Development Theory & Campus Climate.....	122
Education and Multiracial Students.....	131
Conceptual Framework.....	134
Introduction.....	134
Social Practice Theory of Self and Identity.....	137
Chicana Feminist Theory.....	145
Tenets of Queer Theory.....	162
Racial Queer.....	175
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology</b> .....	185
Reflections of a Multiracial Researcher.....	185

Genealogy of Methodology.....	186
Research Overview.....	191
Why Qualitative Research?.....	195
Setting.....	207
Participants.....	211
Selection Criteria.....	215
Counter Storytelling.....	217
Methods Rooted in Feminist Thought.....	221
Observations.....	226
Field Notes.....	227
Interviews.....	229
Case Studies.....	234
Focus Groups.....	236
Data Management and Analysis.....	239
Researcher’s Positionality.....	247
Making Sense of Methods.....	252
<b>Chapter Four: Portraits of Racial Queers.....</b>	<b>257</b>
Introduction to Participant Narratives.....	260
Participant Narratives .....	263
Dee-Dee.....	264
Solomon.....	274
May.....	287
Jonathan.....	297
Melissa.....	311
Conclusion.....	323

## **Chapter Five: Themes – Understanding and Experiencing Multiracial**

<b>Identity</b> .....	325
Introduction.....	325
Racial Rubric – “I don’t have a racial rubric to follow.”.....	327
Racial Disclosure – “I couldn’t be passive about it. And I just told this girl, No! I am Hispanic!”.....	335
Identity Fusion – “There’s little way of being able to separate all of those identities out.”.....	346
Multiracial Entitlement–“ I felt more entitled to the [Multiracial] label.”.....	356
Development of Portraits/Narratives.....	363
Discussion.....	366
Agency.....	367
Culturally Responsive Teaching and Hidden Curriculum.....	376
Conclusion.....	381

## **Chapter Six: Multiracial Students in the Daily Practice of Schooling.....383**

Introduction.....	383
Learning the meaning of race at school.....	385
General Findings.....	396
Identity.....	396
Findings Specific to Multiracial Identity.....	400
The Politics of racial identification terminology.....	400
Negotiating and Strategizing – Racial Identity and Relationships.....	410
Phenotype Matters.....	420
Collective Experiences – Multiracials as Community.....	425
Skills, Intuition and Perspective – Lessons in Constructing Multiracial Identity.....	430

Implications and Significance.....	432
Expansion of Racial Discourses-Challenging Racial Inclusivity.....	432
Rethinking and Reevaluating of Educational Public Policies ....	433
Final Thoughts.....	436
Reflections of a Native Researcher.....	436
Recommendations for Future Research.....	438
Lessons Learned.....	443
<b>References.....</b>	<b>445</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>465</b>
-A Brief Genealogy.....	466
-Email to Participants .....	467
-Interview Questions and Prompts.....	469
-Informed Consent to Participate In Research.....	470
<b>Vita.....</b>	<b>475</b>

The queer are the mirror reflecting the heterosexual tribe's fear: being different, being other and therefore lesser, therefore sub-human, in-human, non-human.

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands, La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

Writing vulnerably takes as much skill, nuance, and willingness to follow through on all the ramifications of a complicated idea as does writing invulnerably and distantly. I would say it takes yet greater skill. The worst that can happen in an invulnerable text is that it will be boring. But when the author has made herself or himself vulnerable, the stakes are higher: a boring self-revelation, one that fails to move the reader, is more than embarrassing; it is humiliating.

-Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer*

I am a woman with a foot in both worlds; and I *refuse the split*.  
I feel the necessity for dialogue. Sometimes I feel it urgently.

-Cherrie Moraga, *La Guera*

You insult me  
When you say I'm  
Schizophrenic  
My divisions are  
Infinite

-Bernice Zamora, *So Not to be Mottled*

I didn't have the luxury, I suppose, the certainty of the tribe. Grow up in Compton and survival becomes a revolutionary act...I had nothing to escape from except my own inner doubt. I was more like the Black students who had grown up in the suburbs...You could spot them right away by the way they talked, the people they sat with in the cafeteria. When pressed, they would sputter and explain that they refused to be categorized. They weren't defined by the color of their skin, they would tell you. They were individuals. That's how Joyce liked to talk. She was a good-looking woman, Joyce was, with her green eyes and honey skin and pouty lips...all the brothers were after her. One day I asked her if she was going to the Black Students' Association meeting. She looked at me funny and then started shaking her head like a baby who doesn't want what it sees on the spoon. "I'm not black," Joyce said. "I'm Multiracial." Then she started telling me about her father, who happened to be Italian and was the sweetest man in the world; and her mother, who happened to be part African and part French and part Native American and part something else. "Why should I have to choose between them?" she asked me. Her voice cracked, and I thought she was going to cry. "It's not white people who are making me choose. Maybe it used to be that way, but now they're willing to treat me like a person. No—it's black people who always have to make everything racial. They're the ones making me choose. They're the ones who are telling me that I can't be who I am..." They, they, they. That's the problem with people like Joyce. They talked about the richness of their multicultural heritage and it sounded real good, until you noticed that they avoided black people. It wasn't a matter of conscious choice, necessarily, just a matter of gravitational pull, the way integration always worked, a one-way street.

- Barack Obama, *Dreams of my Father*

## Chapter One: Introduction

### **Key Words: Multiracial, racial queer, identity**

*Multiracial – one who identifies with multiple races*

*Racial queer – one who deviates from monoracial categorization with or without a conscious intent of challenging normative racial constructions*

*Identity - a negotiation, position(s) and construction of self-understanding from which individuals enact agency*

*Agency – conscious or subconscious improvisational activity, individual and/or collective, that responds to particular situations, as a form of positioning within hegemonic structures*

### An Autobiographical Preface – Mi Testimonio, Mi Cuento

If there is a typical immigrant story, I do not think it is mine. I grew up in a family of secrets and *apariencias* – everything was about our appearance to the outside world, *el que dirán*, what others would say, at the expense of what was happening inside of our own home. My five siblings and I were raised to believe that we were political refugees that daringly escaped the civil war strife of Guatemala, our native home, as a result of a death threat to my father. We were survivors. Not until my late twenties, did my mother reveal a series of truths – one of them being that my father was actually a fugitive of the law. As a result of a land dispute, where my father was the *patrón*, my father had engaged in a serious scuffle with one of the indigenous farm workers, shot and killed him. This was the reason for our escape. I raise this particular story because it really

lies at the heart of who I have become and wish to become – a truth-teller. When you grow up learning to lie, it becomes second nature. When you learn to tell the truth in a family of lies, you become the traitor. As Gonzalez (1998) notes, in *Speaking Secrets: Living Chicana Theory*, a crucial theme in Chicana feminism is to “speak secrets” (p.46). My identity as a Multiracial woman, coming out as a *racial queer*<sup>1</sup>, rather than accommodating to appearances, is about speaking my secrets - telling the truth and taking pride in queering what has been my familial norm, no matter how high the stakes.

I am the one in my family who is seen as the “rock”, the pillar, the self-righteous over-achiever with strange feminist and activist tendencies. I am possessed with a mission to tell the truth because I strongly believe that my family and I have suffered and continue to suffer from not doing so. One of the first places I felt safe telling the truth was with my teachers in my classroom because, unlike home, I was rewarded for speaking up. In the classroom, sharing my opinion seemed to correlate to good grades for the most part. At home, articulating my own opinion seemed inappropriate, rude and/or insubordinate. Usually, the first thing I would do on a school morning in my early elementary years upon arrival was to go to my teacher and say, “I have a stomach ache,” and I did. I felt something that I can only put into words now, anxiety. This anxiety stemmed from the stress in my home – my patriotic, paranoid, idealistic and

---

<sup>1</sup> I define *racial queer* as one who deviates from monoracial categorization with or without a conscious intent of challenging normative racial constructions.

severe father coupled with my brilliant, afflicted, shamed and repressed mother, and the various stressors that accumulate with six children sharing two bedrooms and one bath. My home life was traumatic and chaotic. When I went to school, however, I felt as if I had control over my world. It was a safe space where I could forge my own identity. School has always been my sanctuary.

In an academic setting, I was praised and singled out as superior and gifted. I thrived in this competitive environment. Reading, doing homework, writing, exploring and anything that took me to an imaginative place, a *figured world*<sup>2</sup> of schooling, came with ease and joy. At home, academic-related chores served as an escape hatch from my familial troubles. I could always say that I needed to go to the mobile library which would visit our neighborhood three times a week (as part of an outreach program) and hide out there in the company of infinite books and a soft-spoken librarian. My scholarship was my ticket out of a house full of pain, duality, religion and strictness. I used it to my every advantage.

I would check out books about all sorts of topics, sometimes reading things that I knew would be forbidden at home. At school and in the library, I indiscriminately learned about whatever was available in the bookshelves and hid

---

<sup>2</sup> Figured worlds, according to Holland et al. (1998), are imagined communities that operate dialectically and dialogically in “as if” worlds. These “as if” worlds are both social realities defined by power dynamics and spaces of agency and improvisation. They are defined by the ways in which individuals participate in and with these *figured worlds* on a daily basis. A detailed definition of *figured worlds* can be found in the Conceptual Framework section within the Literature Review section.

in my own intellectual space. At home, I learned about culture. Both my parents were born in Guatemala<sup>3</sup>, as was I. My mother is of Italian heritage while my father is of Chinese heritage.<sup>4</sup> We spoke Spanish at home (this was my first language), my parents had grown up in Latin America and we looked the part, sort of. Depending on which sibling you see, you can notice different clues of our mixed heritage. One would think that growing up in such a home would foster tolerance of difference and ambiguity. This was not the case.

From my mother, I learned that Italian features were most desirable and that the European culture was sophisticated, something to aspire to. From my father, I learned that indigenous features were poorly regarded, ugly and that the culture was backward, savage and poor. Both of my parents taught me that to be Guatemalan, or Ladina, meant that you distinguished yourself from Mayan roots and sought to better oneself by mixing with a better race. I was the more Mayan-looking one in the family. In an effort to de-indigenize me, my father would have me place my finger, raising the tip of my nose, as an exercise to create a more Romanesque nose, rather than the flatter, wider, more indigenous nose I was developing. As children, we were also highly protected from the sun, so that our skin tone would remain as light as possible. This “protection” from the sun’s rays was a combination of racial beliefs and markers of class. The lighter/whiter you were, the more racially and economically superior you were.

---

<sup>3</sup> For future reference, I refer to Guatemalan as a person who was born in Guatemala.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to *A Brief Genealogy* in Appendix.

In college, when I dated my first Black boyfriend, I was forbidden from returning to my childhood home. My parents had internalized all of the same things that media images, biased history lessons, colonialism and white supremacist ideals teach us about Blackness. This was the ultimate disgrace for my parents – to bring home, to have sexual relations with a *negro*, or as my father would say, *el más negro posible*, the blackest one possible. After I revealed to my mother that I might be pregnant with his child at nineteen, her response was rage and tears – *paraste como las otras*, you ended up just like the other girls, referring to the neighborhood teens who were less than lady-like with their Black babies. It was the strangest irony for me. Here they were – my parents who are of multiple races and come from parents who also intermarried, telling me that I was doing something wrong. This is not an indictment of my parents for to blame them as individuals for beliefs that are severely engrained in our collective psyche, history and education would be too easy and irresponsible. Yet, I raise this taboo experience to illustrate its impact on my understandings of race relations. I knew, from a young age, that phenotype played a major role in notions of beauty, intelligence, sexuality and class. And I knew that breaking these explicit and implicit rules had real life consequences.

Interestingly enough, and unlike my high school experience, Latinos/as tended to approach me for friendship while I attended UC Berkeley. Whereas before I had friends from many backgrounds, even Multiracial friends, I was

assigned a racial category in college. I attribute this to my perceived Latina “look” and the fact that I spoke Spanish. The campus was also highly segregated with regards to race – there were physical locations where different ethnic groups would tacitly claim ownership of and hang out. As a Multiracial woman, I felt divided but remained silent regarding my complete racial identity. I pretended I was only one race to outsiders and kept my multiple racial identities to myself except under certain circumstances where I felt I really could trust the person whom I was sharing this information with. This act of non-disclosure made my experience much easier. I neatly fit into social circles and kept people from having to think too much. This was not a difficult exercise - I had mastered this art of illusion from my childhood training.

As a graduate student at Stanford, I quickly learned that I was not going to get away with this racial disguise for long. As a student teacher there, I was referred to as “Miss Chang”, not “Aurora”, thereby accentuating my Chinese heritage, an abrupt transition from my former life as “Aurora”, the Latina. It was then that I was forced to think and speak more openly about my racial background but, still, for the most part, I clung to my Latina roots. It felt risky to do otherwise. But, with time and self-assurance, I came to vocalize my Multiracial background. In my professional life as an educator in various settings, including high schools, universities and educational companies, I felt the freedom to “come out” as a *racial queer*. I define *racial queer* one who deviates from monoracial

categorization with or without a conscious intent of challenging normative racial constructions. In other words, a person of Multiracial heritage challenges monoracial construction, simply by not identifying as solely one race. The act of identifying as Multiracial disrupts traditional notions of racial representation. So, in identifying as such, I found uniqueness, strength and pride in my diversity. Perhaps it was the pleasure I found in reinventing myself as I moved from the world of student to that of professional. This transition gave me the incentive I needed to disclose myself.

As a doctoral student at Central University, I was riveted, disappointed and set off by the lack of discussion around issues of Multiraciality, especially in a Cultural Studies program. I was, more often than not, the only person who would raise such issues in my courses. I ruffled some feathers and brought awareness to others. Multiraciality was my soapbox. I never doubted that I would study Multiracial college students as part of my research. I found support among my colleagues, mentors and faculty members; they commended this intriguing new scholarly terrain, but I lacked the kind of camaraderie and emotional support I longed for as a Multiracial person. I felt that I was seen more as a novelty. Yet, serendipitously it seemed, as I continued to toil with the assertion of my Multiracial identity, nothing could have prepared me for the affirmation that would result from what was to come next – Obama.

Barack Obama was elected president, the first Black and first arguably

Multiracial president of the United States. I was so moved. All of his words about growing up as a Multiracial youth resonated with me. I felt a swell of positive emotion and a communal exhale from Multiracial communities and individuals. While it was beautiful to think that here I had a prominent Multiracial role model, I, along with the rest of the country, witnessed the ways in which Obama's racial identities were co-opted, challenged, embraced, despised and usurped. This momentous election has raised the discussion of Multiraciality to new heights. I feel as if I was destined to live, learn and write now at this juncture – when unpredictable political and personal circumstances are intersecting in awesome ways.

This autobiographical preface is important because it provides context for this study and also shapes my positionality as researcher. As Davalos (2008) so astutely notes in her piece, *Sin Vergüenza: Chicana Feminist Theorizing*, when relaying her elation at receiving a rejection letter from a journal which demanded as a condition of consideration for publication that she “write herself back into her analysis” (p.151), she feels as if she “had found a home in feminist scholarship because clarification of the author's standpoint or positionality was fundamental, an essential aspect of theory-making” (p.151). This recounting is therefore an internal guide to the themes recounted in this study. Such a project is a bittersweet one, as it forces me back to confront painful memories and current realities, but also empowers me in recollecting the ways in which my Multiracial

identity has unquestionably impacted my life. When I go home to the California Bay Area, my mother always reminds me that while I am luxuriating in the company of books, professors, classes and writing, she is in the “real world” of the Richmond Iron Triangle, directing a charter school. There, she experiences violence on a daily basis and engages the community with a zest, passion and dedication that is difficult to capture in words – you just have to see her in action. At times, I feel guilty – why do I get to write in the comfort of my home and libraries when my mother works with kids that suffer at the hands of social inequity in a crime-ridden, poor and neglected neighborhood? Most often, however, I feel fortunate to have this opportunity. My mother has a *dicho* that says something to this effect (translation is never exact) - when people speak well of her children, it is like putting *miel*, honey, in her mouth. So, it is with my academic journey – every time I write, read and speak – it is like *miel* – sweet and sticky off my tongue, viscous in its content and, if done well, touched with a golden transparency.

### Overview of Study

This is a qualitative study (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Gamson, 2000; Landman, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake,

2000; Yin, 2003) with an ethnographic component (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Benmayor, 1991; Clarke, 1975; Davies, 1999; DeVault, 1996; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995; Foley, 1995; Foley & Valenzuela, 2000; Lassiter, 2005). The study includes the following methodological instruments: interviews of twenty five college students who identify as Multiracial, five case studies, three focus groups (drawing from the pool of the aforementioned interviewees), document analysis, and ongoing ethnographic observations of the Mixed Student Collective (MSC)<sup>5</sup>, the sole registered Multiracial student organization at Central University. Data was analyzed as data was collected resulting in a narrative describing the understandings and experiences of Multiracial students in a large, public, tier one research university in Texas, Central University<sup>6</sup>. The thesis asks the following broad question, followed by a set of sub questions (described in the Research Question section) - **How do Multiracial students understand and experience their racialized identities within a large, public, tier-one research university in Texas?**

To explore this question, I begin by providing a literature review to situate the historical underpinnings and relevant work related to Multiracial identity, followed by my conceptual framework which begins to show how Multiracial college students may utilize agency to construct and negotiate their identities

---

<sup>5</sup> Pseudonyms have been used to protect the confidentiality of study Participants.

<sup>6</sup> A pseudonym for the university's name has been used to protect the confidentiality of study Participants and of the higher education institution.

within a context where identity is both self-constructed and produced for them. I end with my methodology for the study.

The primary purpose of this study is to illustrate the agentic ways in which Multiracial college students come to understand and experience the complexity of their racialized identity production within a predominantly white university. My intent was to study how Multiracial college students, in their processes of understanding and experiencing Multiracial identity, utilize their agency in their day-to-day interactions with others. I explored how Multiracial students navigate these social interactions by focusing on the following major themes (which I will detail in the literature review): 1) the perforation of monoracial *storylines* through the introduction of Multiracial *figured worlds*, 2) Multiracial identity production within the figured world of Multiraciality, 3) the use of *improvisational activity* as a tool of agency, 4) the influence of *cultural intuition/la facultad* in shaping improvisational activity, 5) the consequences of this improvisational activity and 6) how Multiracial students are positioned as *racial queers*, as deviants from the monoracial norm.

This study suggests that it would be helpful for educators, in the broadest sense of the word (families, communities, teachers, counselors, administrators, legislators), to gain further understanding of Multiracial students' experiences in an effort to provide increasingly inclusive learning environments. This study has direct implications on the ways in which students, teachers and administrators

perceive, characterize, or ignore Multiracial students within educational contexts.

I suggest that discourses, policies, curricula and campus climates must be revisited in an effort to solicit and incorporate Multiracial student voices as integral members of the educational community and beyond.

The notion of Multiracial identity has become more visible and acceptable in the United States (Alvarado, 1999; Brunsma, 2006; DaCosta, 2007; Funderburg, 1994; Hall, 1992; Jones & Smith, 2001; Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993; Kich, 1992; Nakashima, 1992; Nishimura, 1998; Poston, 1990; Renn, 2000, 2003, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004; Root, 1992, 1996; Wallace, 2001; Williams, 2006; Williams, Nakashima, Kich & Daniel, 1996; Winters & DeBose, 2002; Zack, 1993). In recent years, and particularly with the events leading to the campaign and U.S. presidential election of Barack Hussein Obama, the son of a Kenyan immigrant and white mother, a growing conversation around Multiracial identity has ignited in this country (Binning et. al, 2009; Daniel, 2002; Martin, 2008; Rodriguez, 2008) . Prefacing this historic election, however, media outlets have played a major role in depicting Multiracial characters in a variety of forms: as symbols of racial harmony, sex appeal, exoticism and science fiction miracles. For example, Keanu Reeves, is a prominent example of the archetypal Multiracial character. In movies like, “The Matrix”, he is the ethnically ambiguous savior of the future world of chaos and darkness. Halle Berry is another famous example of a character that is known for

her sexual appeal and exotic aura. Tiger Woods' self-identification as "Cablinasian" became a classic term, establishing an all-inclusive assertion of his racial identification. In *Multifacial*<sup>7</sup>, a short film about the real-life challenges that a Multiracial actor (Vin Diesel) faces as he auditions for various roles in New York City, the director gives the audience a glimpse into the ways in which Multiracial actors are positioned to "act out" pieces of their racial identity (as a black man, as an Italian man, as a Latino), dependent on the role. In a poignant climactic scene in the film, Vin Diesel performs a moving monologue about his Multiracial identity to a panel of casting agents. While they are visibly moved by the tender and rich audition, they can only share how impressed they are, however, they "pass" on him because no roles exist for such a "complicated" racial script. Diesel is escorted out of the room, given a token pat on the back and is sent off with a "good luck" look and directions to the exit.

I argue that such a scene is symbolically replicated in the lives of Multiracial students on a daily basis and are particularly robust on university campuses. Multiracial students are, in many ways, on a constant casting call. They show up to classes, social functions, political meetings, dates, places of business, job interviews and the like, only to be sized up and racially cast by a panel of or individual peers, professors, administrators, community members, and strangers. Given that campus environments are ripe sites of self-inquiry and

---

<sup>7</sup> Diesel, Vin. (1999)

identity formation (Hardiman & Bailey, 2006), this study illustrates how Multiracial college students at a large, public, tier-one, research university in Texas (Central University), come to understand and experience their own racialized identities. So, while Multiraciality as a concept is not new, per se, and, arguably, some would rightfully say that we could all lay claims to that identification, I argue that the assertion of a Multiracial identity is relatively new. I argue that this “new” Multiracial self-identification can manifest itself as an act of agency because in so doing, Multiracial students disrupt traditional monoracial identification, and the notions associated with them.

A study of Multiracial college students is particularly important because discourses, policies and educational matters continue to operate through a monoracial lens, thereby excluding those who identify as Multiracial. Specifically, 1) even those who consider themselves most progressive with regards to racial politics, have traditionally used monoracial categories as the common sense way to label under-represented communities and individuals with minimal, if any, regard for Multiracials 2) all types of policies are determined by data that represent everyone as monoracial, thereby failing to include Multiracials and 3) educational matters which revolve around discussions of under-represented communities are framed in monoracial terms, ignoring Multiracial individuals. Studying Multiracial college students is a crucial step towards challenging these

practices so that they are increasingly inclusive of Multiracial experiences and voices.

### Research Question

When studying matters of race and education, there seems to be an assumption that the inclusion of all monoracial populations equates to a comprehensive look at all students, particularly students of color. Historically, issues of education and schooling have been framed in monoracial terms (African American, Latino/a, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American) and for good reason. The current educational climate demands that underserved groups be studied and should continue to be studied in order to improve issues of educational access and equity. But what about students who identify with more than one race – those that do not identify or fit in to the standard categorizations of race? How do they identify and how are they included/excluded with respect to educational curricula, policies and climates? This growing group presents an immediate opportunity and challenge to the educational community, because while educational researchers appropriately and vigorously pay attention to matters of traditionally under-represented monoracial groups of color, it has yet to be seen where Multiracial students fall into this discourse. This study hopes to contribute to this budding discourse by asking the following research questions.

***How do Multiracial students understand and experience their racialized identities within a large, public, tier-one research university in Texas?***

- *How do Multiracial students experience their racialized identities in their everyday interactions with others, in relation to their own self-perceptions and in response to the way others perceive them to be?*
- *How do Multiracial students' positionalities, as they relate to power, privilege, phenotype and status, guide their behavior in different contexts and situations?*

Importance of the Topic

The Multiracial student is scarcely acknowledged (Wallace, 2004). Since there is little research about Multiracial students, I argue that it is important to begin to study the untapped experiences that Multiracial students may present within the crucial study of race and education. This research hopes to yield new understandings of Multiracial students' experiences in order to broaden the educational field's inclusion, study and awareness of Multiracial students' needs. The ways in which Multiracial students self-identify, and how others identify them, uniquely positions them at the intersection of identity, education and agency because their presence impacts: 1) educational public policy (such as

affirmative action, educational opportunity/access gaps, curricula and/or any policy in which racial categories are used), 2) socially constructed notions of monoracial categorization, and 3) the ways in which issues of educational equity, with regards to traditionally under-represented racial groups, are represented, discussed and addressed. Educators have generally inadvertently overlooked these students by classifying them in monoracial terms (as our society has been trained to do), but this rigid classification does not take Multiracial students into account. Educationally, this oversight is potentially damaging because of the ways in which we know one's social identity is linked to one's academic identity. Students' social identities are inextricably connected to their academic identity because the quality of one's social experiences is related to one's facility to acclimate to educational environments (Steele, C.M., Spencer, S. J., & Aronson, J., 2002). If Multiracial students' social identity is neglected, it is conceivable that their academic identity may be affected because of the lack of support, anonymity and/or rejection that they may perceive and/or experience as a Multiracial individual. This affective isolation may pose a threat to their academic acclimation.

According to the 2000 U.S. Federal Census Bureau, the number of people who self-reported two or more races reached 6,826,228, or 2.4% of the total U.S. population. As this population continues to grow, educational institutions and the educators within them will provide better service if they understand the unique

needs and issues that Multiracial students face and broaden their conception of race as a social construct. Educators, administrators, policy-makers, scholars and the larger community can also better address issues of race if their discourses include Multiracial voices and experiences. Multiracial college students present an opportunity to challenge those who claim to possess a philosophical and/or pedagogical stance of cultural responsiveness and equity and excellence for all students, to consider the impact and needs of Multiracial students. Educators should ask themselves if and how they are including and/or ignoring Multiracial students' experiences within classrooms, research, policies and campus climates.

The incorporation of Multiracial students' experiences and stories is a pivotal step in the advancement of educational inclusivity and excellence. Studying the ways in which Multiracial students understand and live out their racial identity can shed light on their schooling experiences as well as the way educators perceive and respond to them. Educators, administrators, policy-makers, scholars and the larger community stand to benefit from discussing the issues of Multiracial individuals, not only by including a student population which is minimally acknowledged, but also by enriching the already robust existing literature about race and education.

### Outline of Study

In Chapter Two, I review the literature with regards to Multiracial

students. I begin by introducing the concept of race from a critical race theory perspective, basing my study on the tenet that race is both a social construction and a lived experience. From there, I provide a present day U.S. context of the Multiracial population according to federal census data. I then explore the historical origins of Multiraciality within the United States and the ways in which that history plays into current day Multiracial experiences and perceptions of Multiracial individuals. I address the question, is the consideration of Multiracials as an underrepresented group one step forward or one step backward in the quest for social justice? In addressing this question, I also reveal the controversy that has arisen as a result of Multiracial activism and situate various arguments in the context of my study.

I provide an overview of racial identity development theories and models, including newer Multiracial identity development models and draw a contrast between psychological models of identity development and the social practice theory of self and identity. I discuss student development issues and campus climate with regards to racial identity and challenge the notion that institutions of higher education are acting inclusively in setting the tone of their campus environment. I raise the issue of education and Multiracial students by calling into question the hidden curriculum of schooling as it pertains to Multiracial students. I also call for further reflection, study and action on the part of educators in fully incorporating Multiracial students' issues and needs into the

fabric of the curriculum.

I end Chapter Two by introducing the racial queer conceptual framework which frames the unconventional space of the Multiracial individual. I use the term to convey the parallels of queerness (both as a term of empowerment and derogation) as they pertain to being Multiracial. Using Holland et al.'s (1998) social practice theory of self and identity, Chicana Feminist Theory, and tenets of Queer Theory, I illustrate how Multiracial college students utilize agency as *racial queers* to construct and negotiate their identities within a context where identity is both self-constructed and produced for them.

In Chapter Three, I detail the methodology of my study. I begin by reflecting upon my own experiences and positionality as a Multiracial researcher. I present a genealogy of the methodology, explaining how I arrived at my methodological approach and give an overview of the research process. I discuss my rationale for using qualitative research with an ethnographic component and follow that with a description of the study itself: the setting, the participants and the selection criteria. I explain how I utilized tenets of Critical Ethnography and methods rooted in Feminist thought to carry out the study but with a clear understanding that this study is not a Critical Ethnography. Rather, this study is qualitative with a small, albeit important ethnographic component. I am only drawing from the practices and orientation of Critical Ethnography. I present the methodological tools used in my study: interviews, case studies, focus groups,

observations and field notes. I describe my data collection process and data analysis and end with further reflection on my own positionality and my own journey in making sense of methods.

In Chapter Four, I present portraits of *Racial Queers* by revealing the five case studies (chosen from the interviewees) and their subsequent narratives. I explain the way in which I constructed the narratives in partnership with the participants and follow this explanation by first-person accounts of the participants' counter-stories. I constructed these narratives in first-person in order to humanize the participants (rather than refer to them objectively in third person) and to engage the reader through vivid, emotive and poignant depictions of the participants' stories. I paid close attention to articulating the participants' counter-stories in a style that is both representative of the participants' personalities and simultaneously recognize that my filter as a researcher is inevitably present in these constructions. I sought a genuine balance in honoring these portraits of *Racial Queers* by maintaining a consistent cognizance of my role as researcher and their roles as study participants.

In Chapter Five, I present the themes that arose from a combination of the participants' interviews and case studies. I explain how I developed these themes using, for the most part, verbatim phrases from participants' stories to capture concepts and themes. I discuss the importance of my process in developing these themes as closely as possible to match the experiences and words of the

participants. I explain how these themes may help us better understand and make sense of the experiences of Multiracial students. Among these themes are: Racial Rubric, Racial Disclosure, Identity Fusion and Multiracial Entitlement. These themes are original to this research study and contribute to a new body of knowledge with regards to Multiracial students and the overall discourses about race.

In the final chapter (Chapter Six), I engage the connections between Multiracially identified students and their educational experiences. I relay how Multiracial students learn the meaning of race in school through the hidden curriculum and the impact of the daily practices of schooling on them. I find that the commission and omission of racially laden acts by members of the educational community shape the overall schooling experiences of Multiracial students in a way that is both similar to and unique from monoracial students of color. I present the general findings of the study, share final thoughts and recommendations for future research. I conclude by reflecting upon lessons learned through my process as researcher and as a member of the larger Multiracial community.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### Introduction

It is impossible to enter a conversation about race without acknowledging that race is both a social construction and a legitimate lived experience. One must account for the origins of race as a concept and as a pivotal actor in the daily lives of people. As Manning Marable (2001) notes, “any discussion about race and ethnicity as social forces within the contemporary American experience must begin from the vantage point of history” (p.42). In this literature review, I will begin by situating my study in the work of Critical Race theorists as a way of explaining race as a socially constructed concept and providing a brief historical account of how race has developed as a concept over time in the context of the United States. Next, I introduce the changing demographics which are illustrated by the 2000 Census, which, for the first time in eighty years, allowed census takers to indicate more than one race to identify themselves. The acknowledgment and growth of the Multiracial population leads me to trace back the origins of Multiraciality as a concept in the United States. I follow this with a discussion of the contemporary discourses around Multiracials, including the advocacy and contestation of a Multiracial community as a legitimate racial group (comparable to monoracial groups) and as an under-represented group deserving of recognition. From there, I delve into existing racial identity development theories and models which attempt to illustrate the process of racial identity development in general in order to contrast these predominantly psychology-based models to Holland et al.’s (1998) Social Practice Theory of Self and

Identity. I discuss the specific issues of Multiracial college students in the larger context of student development theory and campus climate but with a focus on dynamic, agentic social processes rather than linear/stage approaches. Finally, I conclude the literature review with general thoughts around the treatment of Multiracial students in educational contexts and the implications of their presence and participation in schools.

#### Critical Race Theory and the Social Construction/Lived Experience of Race

Critical Race theorists maintain that race is both socially constructed and a real lived experience. Social constructionism became prevalent in the 1970s when it became widely recognized that, while the biological concept of race was simply false, race was absolutely real and consequential as a sociopolitical notion. Omi and Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States* (1994) has become a cross-disciplinary classic, widely cited for its critical contributions to the study of race. Of its many contributions, its primary assertion is that race functions as "an autonomous field of social conflict, political organization, and cultural/ideological meaning" (p.48). In contrast to the paradigms of ethnicity, class, and nation, racial formation, according to Omi and Winant, is "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (p.55). They remind us that the three central categories (ethnicity, class and nation) have been used to understand racial dynamics in the United

States, asserting

The dominant paradigm of race for the last half-century has been that of ethnicity. Ethnicity theory emerged in the 1920s as a challenge to then predominant biologicistic and social Darwinist conceptions of race. Securing predominance by World War II, it shaped academic thinking about race, guided public policy issues, and influenced popular 'racial ideology' well into the mid-1960s.

At that point ethnicity theory was challenged by class-and-nation based paradigms of race. These theoretical challenges originated with the black and other racial minority movements which rejected two central aspects of the ethnicity approach: the European immigrant analogy which suggested that racial minorities could be incorporated into American life in the same way that white ethnic groups had been, and the assumption of a fundamental, underlying American commitment to equality and social justice for racial minorities.

The appearance in the late 1970s and 1980s of a white 'backlash' signaled the decline of these challenges and marked the resurgence of ethnicity theory. Although it had sustained major attacks and required reformulation in certain respects, the dominant paradigm of ethnicity has not been supplanted. Today ethnicity theory once again reins supreme in the somewhat altered guise of *neoconservatism*. (p.12)

They also emphasize "the social nature of race, the absence of any essential racial characteristics, the historical flexibility of racial meanings and categories, the conflictual character of race at both the 'micro-' and 'macro- social' levels, and the irreducible political aspect of racial dynamics" (4). As Shih (2008) notes,

The ethnicity paradigm presumes assimilationism (all new ethnic groups will eventually assimilate, and ethnic difference will disappear), the class paradigm is insufficient for a full explanation of race (race does not equal class), and the nation paradigm is not fully applicable to the United States (because of the paradigm's origin in colonial relations). (p. 1540)

Omi and Winant implicate "the racial state" for developing and implementing

policies that result in severely negative racial consequences, that, even in the severity of such repercussions, have led to the present favored ideology of *color-blindness*.

Color-blindness refers to the ideology that does not “see” color. In other words, it is a way of rejecting past and current discrimination and racism by contending that one is immune from seeing race in others and in this process, a form of race subordination (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Brown, 2005; Harris, 1993; Urrieta, 2006). Color-blindness assumes ignorance of race and a warped belief that racism no longer exists, rather, that everyone is on the same playing field and that any contestation of that fact is due to individual faults such as bad values, poor education, family issues and the like. Color-blindness embraces the notion of the American mantra – that if you just pull yourself up by your boot-straps (aka, work hard), you will be compensated. Color-blindness, under the guise of equality and nobility, becomes akin to “racism lite” (Bonilla-Silva, p.3). In other words, under the false pretenses of impartialness, color-blindness becomes a means to relieve oneself of responsibility from one’s own contributions and adherence to racist systems, structures, actions and/or tendencies. Color-blind racism, according to Bonilla-Silva (2003), is framed in the following terms:

I contend that whites have developed powerful explanations—which have ultimately become justifications—for contemporary racial inequality that exculpate them from any responsibility for the status of the people of color. These explanations emanate from a new racial ideology that I label *color-blind racism*. This ideology, which acquired cohesiveness and dominance

in the late 1960's, explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics. Whereas Jim Crow racism explained blacks' social standing as a result of their biological and moral inferiority, color-blind racism avoids such facile arguments. Instead, whites rationalize minorities' contemporary status as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and blacks' imputed cultural limitations. (p.2)

Omi and Winant (1994, 2001) note that an effort must be made to understand race as an unstable and decentered complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle. Race, in other words, is a social creation (Hayman & Levit, 2002), fluid and dynamic, adopting different meanings and definitions dependent on the time and place in history.

The constructionist contribution to the understanding of race is crucial because it provides a foundational starting point and shared meaning from which to examine the significance and value of race in the context of the United States. The literature supports that race is neither a biological or genetic reality but rather a socially constructed reality enacted and imposed by white supremacy (Akintunde, 1998; Cameron & Wycoff 1998; Chang 1985; Parker, Moore, & Neimeyer 1998; Takaki, 1993). Race is a social, cultural, and political creation which itself continues to change in definition (Armelagos, Carlson, & Van Gerven, 1982; Marks, 1995). Omi and Winant's (1986, 1994) theory of racial formation,

emphasizes the social nature of race, the absence of any essential racial characteristics, the historical flexibility of racial meanings and categories, the conflictual character of race at both the "micro-" and "macro-social" levels, and the irreducible political aspect of racial dynamics. (p.4)

Indeed, it is important to emphasize that this study accordingly adopts the constructionist view that race, while not a biological entity, is undoubtedly a lived reality.

This study does not equate Multiraciality with color-blindness. It is tempting to be swept off one's feet by this notion that Multiraciality somehow signifies a utopian racial harmony. I will admit that, as a Multiracial woman, I have sometimes adopted a color-blind stance by virtue of my Multiracial background, thinking, why can't we all just get along, intermarry and produce mixed offspring? But, what I have realized is that this stance is a smoke and mirrors facade clouding the real complexities associated with the acknowledgment of the reality of race. It is precisely because I am Multiracial that I feel it necessary to debunk the myth that Multiracial people represent the erasure of race. Indeed, if anything, Multiraciality exposes and magnifies the ways in which race matters. The present dilemma lies in how to discuss Multiraciality so as to not reinforce the myth of color-blindness. As Sedgwick (1990) states, albeit in the context of Queer Studies, "my fear is that there currently exists no framework in which to ask about the origins or development of individual gay identity that is not already structured by an implicit, trans-individual Western project or fantasy of eradicating that identity" (p.41). Similarly, my fear is that, in the context of Multiraciality, there currently exists no

framework which is distinct from hegemonic monoracial structures from which to effectively discuss issues that are relevant and important to those who identify as such.

Multiraciality has been co-opted by conservative think-tanks and even, self-professed liberals, to assert that Multiracial people present physical proof that race is merely a myth (Connerly, 2001; Spencer, 2006). I completely disagree with this assertion. This study builds upon the assumption that race is both a social construction and a lived experience, a central mantra of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Cho and Westley (2002) note that at the height of postmodernism's popularity,

Race was being retooled variously as a social construction, a dangerous trope, or a performance, in contrast to outdated and discredited notions of race as a biological fact of difference among groups. Thus, one of the most significant outcomes of the postmodern turn for Race-Crits was that "race," as a basis of antiracist consciousness and group identity, was put under pressure, even erasure. The political correctness rhetoric, coupled with the erasure of race facilitated by antiessentialism, was synergistic in its racist effects. (p.55)

Therefore, while I resist essentialism (the notion that there are set characteristics all of which any entity [in this case, race] must possess), I also understand that "conscientious essentialism" has grounded useful, even critical coalitions (such as student activism, civil rights groups, etc.). Cho and Westley (2002) explain the meaning of conscientious essentialism in their recounting the history of the development of Critical Race Theory, stating,

Anti-essentialist rhetoric is a useful critique when the categories within

which progressive politics takes place have become too rigid to ground useful coalitions. But anti-essentialist rhetoric represents a platitude already evident to and internalized by conscientious essentialists. For only by recognizing, addressing, and transforming differences into political solidarities could one hope to go forward with a successful movement. In light of the twin hazards of the political correctness charge and the identity politics critique, the fascination with anti-essentialism was a luxury available only to those who did not have to deal with the increasing difficulties of race-plus political organizing and coalition building in the face of 1990s backlash. Race-plus organizers, operating under the principle of ‘conscientious essentialism,’ already learned and applied the lessons of anti-essentialism and ‘strategic essentialism’ as suggested by the movement slogan, ‘unified, but not uniform.’

As we have seen, the coalitions that formed within the Boalt student diversity movement were based upon autonomously chosen racial or gender affiliations that nevertheless represented essentialist notions of community. To take one example, not every Black law student identified with or belonged to the BLSA, but every member was Black. Although BLSA students may have seen themselves as a coalition rather than as a community, it was an essentialist coalition. Moreover, this conscientious essentialism was not a deficit in the context of the diversity struggle. On the contrary, conscientious race and gender essentialisms were indispensable to the credibility of the diversity movement and its demands. A diversity movement in which principles and practice are not structurally bound together would either fail to mobilize change or bring change that disservices the interests of the diverse communities it purports to represent. (p.1421)

This study employs a race-conscious approach, not a colorblind one. However, as Appiah (1986) astutely notes, in an analysis of W.E.B. DuBois, “a sociohistorical concept of race is inextricably moored to its biological foundations in such a way that DuBois set for himself an impossible project and was unable to escape the notion of race he had explicitly rejected” (p.87). In other words, in the context of this study, I cannot escape the terminology of race nor its constructs in an effort to explicate Multiracial experiences. I acknowledge the intrinsic and contradictory

nature of discourses around race, specifically the seemingly contradictory yet real premise that race is both a social construct and a lived experience. The question might be asked, isn't this study just reifying harmful racial constructs by employing the term "Multiracial," as if to imply that race is a fixed entity and therefore, one can occupy multiple racial spaces? Again, while it is true that race is socially constructed, the lived experience is real, both in monoracial and Multiracial contexts. These limits do not diminish the importance of these discourses – they only serve to deepen the conversation about race. They make race a challenging topic to unravel, but one that is, and will continue to be, necessary to undertake. This study's race-conscious approach is grounded in the tenets of Critical Race Theory.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged in the mid-1970s with the work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman in the field of Critical Legal Studies (CLS), coupled with the impetus of the civil rights movement, specifically the student activism for diversity in higher education from the sixties to the nineties. CRT was sparked by a critique of the concept of liberalism as a flawed approach to current legal paradigms to serve as change agents and holds that whites have primarily benefited from civil rights legislation. Their work was followed by contributions from Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado, 1989; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller & Thomas, 1996; Matsuda, 1993; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; and other scholars that embrace the tenets of Critical Race Theory. Much of the CLS

work draws from the Gramscian notion of hegemony and critiques legal mainstream ideology for its portrayal of U.S. society as a meritocracy. CRT is a natural offshoot of CLS in that it acknowledges these oppressive structures but deals specifically with the ways that racism is present in our society in its different permutations. CRT also employs *counter-storytelling* and in this way, integrates experiential knowledge as a form of legitimate knowledge. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) define *counter-storytelling*,

as a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society). The counterstory is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform. (p.32)

CRT scholars (Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado, 1995; Gotanda, 1996; Matsuda, 1993; Peller, 1996; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000; Thomas, 1996; Williams, 1993) are committed to connecting their professional work to social struggle, specifically within the communities with which they interact. CRT scholars also emphasize what Crenshaw (1991) coined as “intersectionality”, that is, the dependent and interactive ways in which various socially and culturally constructed categories (such as race, class, sexuality, religion, gender, ability) interact on multiple levels to manifest themselves as inequality in society. Critical Race Theory is foundational to my study because it speaks powerfully to the significance of race and individual experiences and lends itself appropriately to

the narratives that Multiracial students want to relay. Critical Race Theory aims to advance a social justice framework and to challenge conventional accounts of educational and other institutions as well as the processes that shape them. My study, in looking at the members of an unconventional group (Multiracial college students), hopes to contribute to this body of critical race scholarship by studying an under-researched and perhaps, underserved, group. And while Critical Race theorists have centered their discussion around monoracial groups and individuals, the Multiracial population is emerging, providing yet another community and dimension to Critical Race scholarship.

#### The Multiracial Population – The 2000 Census: “Check One or More”

It is an understatement to assert that the demographics of the U.S. has changed and continues to do so. According to 2000 Census data, the Multiracial population comprised nearly seven million, or 2.4% of the U.S. population. Brackett et al. (2006) argue that “Multiracial persons are clearly a socially marginalized group” due to the lack of recognition of them as a group (as evidenced by the U.S. Census failure to recognize them until 2000) and as a result of their status as minorities. They note, that “Multiracial persons may experience discrimination from persons of their own race as well as other races” (p.439), in this way demonstrating a “unique standpoint or life experience,” (p.439) distinct from what monoracial individuals may experience.

This notion that Multiracial individuals undergo experiences that are distinct, in their own right, gave rise to what has come to be known as the Multiracial Movement, a quiet but influential movement of monoracial parents of Multiracial children and Multiracial individuals. These Multiracial activists responded passionately to what they perceived as a lack of inclusion of Multiracial individuals in the U.S. Census (since Census respondents were mandated to choose only one race before 2000). The majority of Multiracial activists advocated the addition of a single standing Multiracial category to the Census. In response to this criticism, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)<sup>8</sup> initiated a review of the Directive that included (1) organizing a workshop to address the issues by the National Academy of Science, (2) convening four public hearings, and (3) appointing an Interagency Committee for the Review of Racial and Ethnic Standards, which later developed a research agenda and conducted several research studies. The result of the Committee's efforts was a report describing recommended changes to the Directive. In 1997, the OMB accepted almost all of the recommendations of the Interagency Committee, resulting in changes to the standards. The OMB compromised with Multiracial activists by allowing Multiracial respondents to choose more than one race to identify themselves rather than the stand-alone Multiracial category.

For the first time in 80 years, the 2000 Federal Census allowed

---

<sup>8</sup> This information is in accordance with the Census 2000 special report, *We the people of more than one race in the United States*.

respondents to identify one or more races to indicate their racial identity. The racial categories for race were determined and listed as follows: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; and White. The Census 2000 questionnaires also included an interesting sixth racial category which was intended to capture responses such as Mulatto, Creole, and Mestizo: "Some Other Race". Additionally, the categories for ethnicity (separate from race) included: Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. According to the U.S. Census, Hispanics and Latinos may be of any race. For Census 2000, 63 possible combinations of the six basic racial categories were possible, including six categories for those who report exactly one race, and 57 categories for those who report two or more races.

This significant development shone light on previous texts about Multiracial experiences and gave rise to increased discussion, writing and thinking about the role and fate of Multiracial individuals (Bracket et al., 2006; DaCosta, 2007; Daniel, 1992; Hall, 1980; Harris & Sim, 2002; Harris & Thomas, 2002; Jimenez, 2004; Kich, 1992; Mencke, 1976; Nakashima, 1992; Nishimura, 1998; Phinney & Alipuria, 1996; Renn, 2000, 2003, 2004; Riley, 2006; Rockquemore & Brunisma, 2004; Ruebeck & Bodenhorn, 2008; Root, 1992, 1996; Saks, 1988; Spencer, 2000; Spencer et al., 2000; Spencer, 2006; Wallace, 2001, 2004; Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 1992; Williams et al., 1996; Williams & Nakashima, 2001; Winters & DeBose, 2002; Zack, 1993,1995). Put another way,

the question became, now that Multiracial individuals are “counted,” what impact will they have on society? As the Multiracial population continues to rise, they will continue to push and problematize the ways in which the U.S. sees race –

By 2050, 21% of Americans will be claiming mixed ancestry, according to projections in 1999 by demographers Jeffrey Passel of the Urban Institute and Barry Edmonston of Portland State University in Oregon. About 36% of Asian-Americans — who are currently intermarrying at rates nearing 90% in New England — will be Multiracial, as will 45% of Hispanics, 89% of Native Americans, 21% of whites and 15% of blacks. (Kasindorf & Nasser, 2001) (p.1)

Multiracial individuals will introduce a new set of issues, discourses and experiences. Yet it is important to note that the notion of Multiraciality in the U.S. is not new, per se, and that there are critical historical reasons as to why Multiraciality continues to be a fundamentally important issue in the discourses around race.

### Historical Origins of Multiraciality in the United States

In order to understand the experience of Multiracial individuals, a discussion around the meaning and construction of Multiraciality in a U.S. historical context is imperative. The concept of Multiraciality has been met with a mix of celebration, hesitation, frustration and rejection. Depending on your political orientation, the study of Multiraciality can be perceived as groundbreaking, redundant or subversive. The study of Multiraciality is groundbreaking in that it focuses on a largely unexamined group; redundant in

that it posits Multiracial people as if they were a new group which, of course, they are not; and subversive in that it has the potential to cause harm to ethnoracial advancement if further co-opted by the conservative right. In the introduction, I laid the foundation as to why this work is important. In this section, I present the complexity of discussing Multiraciality and try to give a balanced overview of the tensions that arise from a historical perspective. I do not attempt to provide an exhaustive history of Multiraciality – that is far beyond the breadth of this study. However, I aim to historicize the concept.

I draw a difference between historicization and providing a full history. A full history would account for a multi-pronged series of continuous, and/or chronological events as told by a scholar in that field, in detail and with appropriate historical boundaries. Historicization is used, here, as a brief but substantive understanding of significant past events that situate the specific scope and context of one theme (in this case, my dissertation study). I aim to historicize Multiraciality by explaining how the following topics frame and impact not only the discourse around Multiraciality, but the individual groups that are differentially affected by this discourse.

Historical and contemporary discourses regarding Multiraciality have morphed according to the sociopolitical climate and existing legislation of the time. However, two things that have remained consistent regardless of climate

and legislation. The notion that, to various degrees, Multiracial individuals are abnormal (Anzaldúa, 1987; Armelagos et al., 1982; Blumer, 1958; DaCosta, 2007; Davis, 1991; Harris & Sim, 2002; Mencke, 1976; Miler, 1992; Monatgu, 1942; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983; Nakashima, 1992; Reuter, 1918; Rockquemore & Brunnsma 2002; Root, 1992, 1996; Smedley, 1993; Williams, 1993; Williams & Nakashima, 2001; Zack, 1993) has persisted and most of the literature about Multiraciality focuses on Black/white relations and biracial identity. The primary focus on Black Multiracial individuals is based on the ugly historical legacy with respect to enslavement of Black people, systematic oppression and discrimination against them and the both explicitly and insidious sexual undertones, overtones and messages regarding both Black males and Black females. The experiences and history of Black Multiracial individuals is central to the discussion of all Multiracial individuals because these experiences and history underscore the complexity and intensity that racial mixing evoke. Unlike any other racial combination, the intensity and microscopic scrutiny with which such a combination is subjected to, is heavily laden with historical, legal, social and political rage, violence and taboo. The miscegenation of Blacks and whites threatened the entire foundation of apartheid (Kinder & Mendelberg, 1995; Marx, 1996; Martens, 2007; ), and in this way, Multiracial people embody a tension, rage and outcry that is not to be minimized.

While research has emerged with regard to other Multiracial combinations (Anzaldúa, 1987; Atkinson et al, 1993; Brunnsma, 2006; DaCosta, 2007; Espiritu, 1997; Fryer et al., 2008; Goldstein & Morning, 2000; Hall, 1980; Harris & Sim, 2002; Harris & Thomas, 2002; Jimenez, 2004; Kich, 1992; Moraga, 1983; Nakashima, 1992; Nishimura, 1998; Renn, 2004; Root, 1992, 1996; Smedley, 1993; Spina & Tai, 1998; Stephan, 1992; Wallace, 2001; Wijeyesinghe, 1992; Williams et al., 1996; Williams & Nakashima, 2001; Zack, 1993, 1995), U.S. history has treated Multiracial individuals of Black/white mixture particularly severely. This section addresses two dominant themes that have unfolded in the historical and contemporary discourses around Multiraciality: the tragic mulatto thesis in the context of the United States and the one-drop rule.

The *tragic mulatto* thesis is one that portrays the mulatto as one who is sad, tortured, even suicidal due to her inability to fit in with a monoracial group (such as an individual that is both Black and White). This stereotypical character or trope is framed as a victim of this racialized society and particularly vulnerable because of society's reluctance to acknowledge or validate ambiguity in racial classifications. Anyone who has "one-drop" of black blood is considered Black.

Arguably, the most influential notion that has pervaded the scholarly discourse around Multiraciality is that of the "one drop rule", "the belief that regardless of how distant a [Multiracial] person's Black ancestry might be,

regardless of how white he may appear to be physically, he nevertheless remained a Negro” (Mencke, 1976, p.37). The one-drop rule answers the question, who is Black, according to the United States judicial system and to a large extent, in the everyday understandings and experiences of Black identity. It is also important to note that the one-drop rule has primarily applied to Black people and not any other race. As Davis (1991) notes in his book, *Who is Black? One Nation's Definition*,

In the South this notion became known as the ‘one-drop rule,’ meaning that a single drop of ‘black blood’ makes a person a black. It is also known as the ‘one black ancestor rule,’ some courts have called it the ‘traceable amount rule,’ and anthropologists call it the ‘hypo-descent rule,’ meaning that racially mixed persons are assigned the status of the subordinate group. This definition emerged from the American South to become the nation's definition, generally accepted by whites and blacks. Blacks had no other choice. As we shall see, this American cultural definition of blacks is taken for granted as readily by judges, affirmative action officers, and black protesters as it is by Ku Klux Klansmen. (p.5)

In other words, the U.S. legal definition of Blackness is based on the “one-drop rule.” And while this definition originated in the American South as a means to further subordinate Blacks, it was adopted by the nation as a whole, without regard to its racist roots. This adoption of definitions (which leads to the further subjugation of Blacks) is also illustrated in the term, “mulatto.” As Davis (1991) explains,

We must also pay attention to the terms ‘mulatto’ and ‘colored.’ The term ‘mulatto’ was originally used to mean the offspring of a ‘pure African Negro’ and a ‘pure white.’ Although the root meaning of mulatto, in Spanish, is ‘hybrid,’ ‘mulatto’ came to include the children of unions

between whites and so-called 'mixed Negroes.' Mulattos are racially mixed, to whatever degree, while the terms black, Negro, African American, and colored include both Mulattos and unmixed blacks. (p.5)

As Davis (1991) alludes, the term "mulatto" has been co-opted from its original definition to include any person that may have a trace of Black ancestry, thereby increasing the pool of people to label as Black and to then discriminate against as Black. It is important to note that these definitions are specific to the United States and hold different meanings in different countries around the world (Krysan & Lewis, 2004). Davis (1991) reiterates the social constructivist view of race by asserting that the one-drop rule is rooted deeply in United States history. Davis (1991) explains,

It should now be apparent that the definition of a black person as one with any trace at all of black African ancestry is inextricably woven into the history of the United States. It incorporates beliefs once used to justify slavery and later used to buttress the caste like Jim Crow system of segregation. Developed in the South, the definition of 'Negro' (now black) spread and became the nation's social and legal definition. Because blacks are defined according to the one-drop rule, they are a socially constructed category in which there is wide variation in racial traits and therefore not a race group in the scientific sense. However, because that category has a definite status position in the society it has become a self-conscious social group with an ethnic identity. (p.15)

I deliberately address the unique role that the one-drop rule plays in the construction of Multiraciality in order to highlight the unique and complex nature of Multiraciality as it pertains to African Americans. As Daniel (2002) notes, the study of Multiraciality must affirm, not deny the politics, violence and inequities that the history of Blacks presents, asserting,

This is not to suggest that we should dismiss Afro-centric concerns about identity politics. Given the pervasiveness of white racism and supremacy, which have sought to prevent a radical African diasporic subjectivity, the strengths of Afrocentric discourse are undeniable: the fostering of group pride, solidarity, and self-respect among African-descent individuals; the challenging of the assimilationist strategy; and the perpetuation of differences in the manner of inegalitarian pluralism (apartheid). (p.9)

In other words, Multiraciality should not be used as a tool to dismiss the very real oppression that Blacks have faced nor should it minimize the importance of Black solidarity. Oftentimes, Multiracial identification is equated to othering one's Blackness by adopting a racial identity, that distances itself from identifying as Black alone (DaCosta, 2007).

As evidenced by the "one-drop rule", Multiraciality has remained a paradoxical marker of both racial superiority (as attributed to whiteness) and deviance (as attributed to Blackness) whereby a person with African ancestry was legally and socially classified as "colored"/Black. As Mencke (1976) describes, the one-drop rule was implemented to ensure that the children produced by the rape of Black enslaved women by white slave-owners in the South were not granted any rights as a result of their white mixture. These children were officially labeled as Mulattos, a term whose etymological origins reside in the Spanish/Portuguese term, *mulatto*, meaning a small mule, the hybrid offspring of a horse and a donkey. Some, though less common, date the term back to the Arabic word, *muwallad*, which means "a person of mixed ancestry." *Muwallad*

literally means, born, begotten, produced, generated; brought up, raised; born and raised among Arabs but not of pure Arab blood.

The status of the mulatto was classified as one of “improvement” from a monoracial Black person. Mulattos were granted certain privileges as a result. Because of their oftentimes lighter skin tone and the presumption that they were biologically superior, Mulattos were given preferential treatment to that of most Blacks – one of which came in the form of being appointed as house slaves. In part, this was due to the fact that whites considered them more physically attractive and more intelligent than un-mixed Blacks. It was assumed that Blacks were somehow improved by white intermixture. Mulattos were expected to act as bridges between Blacks and whites by pursuing leadership positions in government during the Reconstruction period. Mulattos, according to Reuter (1918, pp.98-99) were seen as both the “key to the Negro problem” and “the real and natural leaders” of the Negro race because of their access to limited forms of whiteness. The conclusion, then, regarding Mulattos was that their inbetweenness, while intellectually advantageous, was “never to the point of making the mixed-blood equal of the white man” (Mencke, 1976, p.40). The dynamics of America’s two-caste system demanded that Mulattos be relegated to the status of a Negro (Mencke, 1976).

Mulattos' treatment by whites and by the state grew complicated. About half a century after the Emancipation Proclamation, the status of the Mulatto declined. Mulattos began to be viewed as degenerate, by nature of their so-called animalistic hybridity. Mulattos were seen as sickly and lacking the strength and resiliency of their monoracial antecedents. Mencke explained,

The mulatto was generally perceived to be more intelligent than the Black, as well as physically more attractive because of the predominance of white rather than Black physical characteristics. In these terms, the mulatto was clearly superior to Blacks. At the same time, it was widely believed that the mulatto was constitutionally weak, prone to debilitating diseases, and like all hybrids, basically infertile – facts which indicated certain basic inferiorities to both parent races. (Mencke, 1976, p.38)

The above contradictions of mutual beauty and degeneracy underscore the peculiarity of being a Mulatto and/or a Multiracial. On the one hand, Multiracial people are often deemed exotic and beautiful. On the other hand, Multiracial people are often seen as deficient and incomplete, neither one or the other. The Mulatto and/or Multiracial pose a particular problem for those who seek to establish distinct racial categories.

According to one study, “the mulatto would not be able to stand the rigors of competitive life” (Mencke, 1976, p.39). This determination was made by a variety of “scientific studies” that included the qualification of “various dimensions of body dimensions, head size, vision, teeth, strength, respiration, and pulmonary capacity” (Mencke, 1976, p.39). Not surprisingly, these studies

concluded that whites were superior to Blacks. Therefore, the argument went, the mulatto was not a real remedy for the racial inferiority of the black man.

This notion was fed by the competing notions of polygenism and monogenism which had wide implications across disciplines and theories. Mencke (1976) explains the differences between the two theories. Monogenism was a traditional belief, derived from the Bible, that we are all one. Basic differences were perceived as environmentally and socially determined (such as the lack of a “normal” family life), rather than intrinsically established. Polygenism, on the other hand was a theory of multiple origins which embraced the idea that man originated in several places by several special acts of creation, and that from that time forward the various types had remained distinct. It was not until the turn of the century that such studies were discarded although they lingered and continue to linger (Baker, 1998). While the academic world was introduced to ideas such as Boas’ cultural relativism in the late 1800’s and the recognition of culture as distinct from race, most Americans clung to the older Darwinian ideas of survival of the fittest.

Hand in hand with the “scientific” assertions that were made regarding race, also known as eugenics (Black, 2008; Winfield, 2007; Pascoe, 2009; Stern, 2005), the notion of Multiraciality was not only rationalized, but felt on a visceral level. Multiraciality struck at the core of fears of “racial mixing”. To whites,

such a fusion was the ultimate act of racial betrayal. Even further, to engage in sexual encounters with a person from another race was the utmost threat to white supremacy and/or those who profess to value racial integrity (from any racial background) as such acts taint the so-called purity of the white race, specifically that of white women (Apel, 2004).

White women were thus considered naturally superior because of the purity of their whiteness and thus could not have such desire or any sexual desire at all. This form of purity was regarded as the embodiment of civilization by southern whites. The projection of sexuality onto dark races, as Sander Gilman has shown, is a means for whites to represent yet disassociate themselves from their own desires. But it is only the white male who struggles with a dual nature, tormented by sin in order to transcend it as Christ transcended the pain of the cross through resurrection. The white female is assigned a single, undivided nature; she is a vessel for reproduction who remains somehow untouched by sexual drives and who, should she discover such drives, falls from the pedestal of purity on which she has been placed by the southern white male. These views are particularly notable in the Klu Klux Klan discourse. The construction of white female purity was dependent upon two images of blacks: black men as bestial and black women as depraved. The black male as rapist was constructed as a 'black beast' or 'black brute' while black women were also regarded as 'lustful,' justifying their assault and rape by white men; moreover black women were commonly blamed for the supposed criminality of black men. (Apel, 2004, p.28)

The images of the Black male as bestial rapist and the Black woman as lascivious provided rationale for mass violence against Blacks and presented a stark contrast to the image of the white female as pure and virginal. In this way, Black bodies represented both the objectified taboo fetish for the white man and the embodiment of adulteration.

As evidenced during the post-Reconstruction period, in *Pace v. Alabama*, interracial fornication was deemed constitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the fourteenth amendment “because it punished black and white parts of the miscegenous body equally” (Saks, 1988). Such relations resulted in the systematic lynchings of and violence towards black men. Holden-Smith noted,

In their sexual frustration, Williamson argues, white men projected onto black men the sexual thoughts they themselves dared not acknowledge and ‘symbolically killed those thoughts by lynching a hapless black man . . . In effect, the black man lynched was the worst part of themselves. A function of lynching, if not indeed the primary function, was to offer up a sacrificial lamb for the sins of white men. (1996, p.33)

Again, Black bodies, and, in this example, Black male bodies come to represent the sins of the white man. The white man projects his own sexual deviance onto the Black male body and lynches it as a projected way of excising his sins. In sum, the Black body, male and female, is regarded as deviant. As Nakashima (1992) states, this construction as deviant serves the dual purpose of discouraging interracial unions and categorizing a group that creates “chaos” in a racially ordered society.

It is important to note that legal interracial marriage, in the eyes of the law, is a relatively recent occurrence. It was not until 1967 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that anti-miscegenation laws were unconstitutional with the *Loving v. Virginia* case. It was not until 2000, in a largely symbolic move, that “ a statewide ballot initiative was designed to remove the impotent prohibition on

interracial marriages from the Alabama Constitution of 1901” (Brackett et al., 2006, p.442). This legislation marked an emblematic turning point with regards to the viability of Multiracial as a racial identity. The legal determination of interracial legitimacy allowed interracial couples to form unions under the auspices of the law. This did not mean, however, that law translated into social acceptance of interracial relations. What did prove true is that both governmental laws and social norms were gravely interrupted with the presence of Multiracial people. The pervading social order, which classified individuals into clearly demarcated monoracial categories, with whites always holding the highest-ranking spot, was being complicated by racial mixture. Interracial unions and Multiracial people presented a clear threat to the pervading social order, both then and now.

With the overturning of U.S. anti-miscegenation laws in the late 1960s and a growing recognition of the unique experience of individuals that identify with more than one race, a Multiracial identity has, for many, taken on a new meaning. Some would argue that it has become both a badge of simultaneous stigma and pride. The stigma of a Multiracial person lies in the historical legacy of illegality, shame and lasciviousness that miscegenation has come to represent. The pride comes from the individual distinctiveness of claiming various racial identities – this type of pride (in contrast to the type of pride incited by feelings of racial

superiority, as with Mulattos and the one-drop rule), I would argue, is a relatively new phenomenon. As Brackett et al. (2006) note,

Within the last 10 years, the possibility of claiming ‘mixed race’ or ‘Multiracial’ as an identity has expanded rapidly. The changing of Census categories has ushered in a new concern by many different constituencies about the experiences of Multiracial persons. Corporate business and marketing executives (Wellner, 2002), leisure service providers (Hibbler & Shinew, 2002), and educators (Nishimura, 1998) have asked how to best serve this increasing segment of the population. Likewise, researchers want to know more about the attitudes and experiences of a group that does not fit readily into preexisting categories. (p.438)

As Brackett et al. (2006) note, the Multiracial population is quickly becoming a market segment, ripe for advertising and consumption. It begs the question, is the Multiracial population a racial group with shared experiences (as Brackett et al. suggest), in and of itself and if so, are their specific needs being ignored?

Specific to schooling, Nishimura (1998) raises the question of how to best serve the potential educational needs of the Multiracial population. In fact, Multiracial identification has become increasingly important to those who claim it either for themselves or their children. Two of the significant developments of this need, or right to claim, this identity are: 1) the advocacy for Multiracials to be recognized as an under-represented group and 2) the formation of the Multiracial Movement.

#### Multiracials as Underrepresented Group – One Step Forward or Backward?

Current research explores the formation and questioning of a “collective” identity for Multiracial people (DaCosta, 2007), the history of the Multiracial

Social Movement, specifically with respect to the changes in the 2000 census (Williams, 2006) and the new politics of “Multiracial identities in the color-blind era” (Brunnsma, 2006). DaCosta (2007) asserts that “there has been very little emphasis on how individuals’ interest in identifying as mixed race is related to *collective* projects of Multiracial identification” (p. 11), telling the story of how Multiracials were “made”. DaCosta (2007) concludes that “we need qualitative ethnographic work to understand meaning and process” (p. 186) as it pertains to Multiraciality. My study responds to this charge by further delving into the identity production of Multiracial college students through a qualitative study that focuses on the ways in which they come to understand and experience their racial identities.

Additional research further explores the Multiracial movement and the varying ways in which Multiraciality impacts the sociopolitical landscape. Williams (2006) details how the Multiracial movement, a seemingly meager activist group, impacted racial politics by complicating an already heated discourse around racial politics. Scholars have pointed to Multiraciality’s impact on political coalitions, group identity, media portrayal of minorities, racial consciousness, support for affirmative action policy, political behavior, partisanship and others (Alex-Assensoh & Hanks, 2000). Finally, Brunnsma accentuates the premise that “it has become increasingly clear that ‘race’ is not something one *is*, but rather an elaborate, lived experience and cultural ritual of

what one *does*” (Brunsma, 2006), echoing Mills (2000) notion of racial performativity. Drawing on this rich history and continued focus on the lived experience of Multiraciality, my study attempts to capture the voices of Multiracial college students as they perform race in varying contexts.

Multiracial activist groups<sup>9</sup> insist that, rather than just being a subset of monoracial groups, Multiracial individuals comprise a distinct group made of shared experiences and underlying understandings. Multiracial activists, accompanied by politically conservative efforts to capitalize on Multiraciality to downplay the effects of race in this county, have succeeded in introducing Multiracial people to the mainstream. A convergence of interests (Bell, 1980) between a self-proclaimed progressive Multiracial Movement has had an unlikely bedfellow, those conservative think tanks that deem issues of race, even the very concept of race, obsolete. Add to that dynamic of vocal resistance of civil rights groups such as the NAACP to the incorporation of a new Multiracial categorization and you have a perfect storm of identity politics, forcing varying political beliefs to collide. Some Multiracial activists claim to be politically progressive even post-racial (Wise, 2010). While some Multiracial activist groups advocate a movement away from rigid racial categorization, Black civil

---

<sup>9</sup> Multiracial Activist groups include but are not limited to the following: The Multiracial Activist, Project RACE, The Mavin Foundation, Mixed Heritage Center, Association of Multiethnic Americans, Biracial Family Network, Fusion, Hapa Issues Forum, Intermix, Swirl Inc., Multiethnic Education Program.

rights groups depend on such monoracial categorization in order to substantiate their efforts and calls for an end to racial inequality. Both of these groups claim that they are advancing civil rights for all but fiercely disagree on the means to achieve these rights and the political and social consequences of such an endeavor.

During the administration of the census in 2000, for example, the Congressional Black Caucus mounted a “check the black box” campaign on radio and television encouraging African Americans not to mark multiple boxes. Reminding listeners that African Americans were once counted as three fifths of a person, media personalities like Tom Joyner and Tavis Smiley suggested that checking multiple boxes amount to the same thing. (DaCosta, 2007, p. 36)

The fear of Black activist groups is that a Multiracial federal category or “box” would dilute and/or remove Black issues and needs from being counted. In other words, if a person is Multiracial, Black and white, for instance, and he/she decides to check off the Multiracial box rather than the Black or white box, then, in the collection of data, this would equate to one less Black person. By checking the Multiracial box, he/she does not check the Black box. So, then, even if this person has faced issues of racial discrimination because of her Black heritage, the Multiracial box does not necessarily reflect those struggles. Checking the Multiracial box becomes problematic because it positions Black activists against Multiracial activists as if one can only be one or the other. Additionally, it has serious consequences with regards to the collection of data and policy decisions based on that data. If every Multiracial person with Black heritage decided to

check Multiracial rather than the Black (or white) box, this would jeopardize the numbers of Blacks reported on any given matter. Consequently, this decrease in quantity could have negative implications for moving issues of social justice forward because the decrease could be interpreted as a lack of need in the Black community - a misrepresentation of Black reality with a host of ill consequences. The question then becomes, does checking the Multiracial box and/or identifying as Multiracial mean that you are choosing a certain political/social affiliation? Echoing Brunnsma, DaCosta (2007) astutely comments that, “racial identity, in other words, is understood as indicative of one’s political beliefs and group loyalty” (p. 43). The way in which one racially identifies is regarded as a manifestation of one’s adherence to or break from standards of racial authenticity.

Multiracial activism coupled with politically conservative attempts to downplay the importance of race led to the allowance of federal census-takers to “check more than one” race, a compromise made by incorporating the Multiracial movement activists’ desire to be all-inclusive (by advocating for a Multiracial category) and the desire from civil rights activists to continue to collect data on historically underrepresented groups. As discussed in an earlier section, this was the first time in eighty years that multiple reporting on an individual’s race was allowed for federal classification purposes, a major milestone for Multiracial activists and somewhat of a conundrum for those of us that have relied on monoracial identifications as personal self-identifiers, symbols of political

solidarity /resistance and instruments of policy-making. Multiracial as a recognized category, federally and otherwise, is a catch-22. If you are a Multiracial person who identifies as Black, are you not then a supporter of your Multiracial heritage? If you are a Multiracial person who identifies as Multiracial, are you not then a supporter of your Black heritage? This choice of self-identification is not only personal but political with real implications for interpersonal relationships and social policy. Scholars, such as Spencer (2006), have questioned the viability of the Multiracial category cause as a movement, as it has lacked overall cohesion and significant participation.

Adding to the viability of the Multiracial Movement as a legitimate cause, is the fact that it was white mothers with biracial (mainly Black and white) children who were the forerunners of Multiracial activism. The fact that white mothers led the charge of many Multiracial activist groups is problematic in that scholars, such as Spencer (2006) suggest that the movement may be more about obtaining access to white privilege rather than asserting a sense of pride in one's multiple identities. In other words, white mothers, in an effort to "pass down" the privileges of whiteness to their Multiracial children, advocate for Multiracial identification as a way of guising what they most fear, the internalized notion that the assertion of their child's Black identity will result in what they believe to be true – that Black individuals are at a heightened social disadvantage in every respect. Rather than white mothers explicitly stating the fear that their children

are Black and will be treated as such, white mothers use Multiracial identification as a proxy for “protecting” their children from a “Black” life and as a way to distance themselves from Blackness.

Spencer (2006) argues that the Multiracial movement bolsters, rather than subverts, traditional categories of race and critically assesses current scholarship in support of Multiracial identity. He goes on to assert that race needs to be problematized as a biological concept instead of operating from an assumption of race as a physical reality. Spencer claims that those groups that support Multiraciality as a category and/or collective group base their arguments on the latter, arguing,

Such a division [assigning human beings to racial groups] results generally in a branch that refutes the notions of race and multirace on the other. The former group [Multiracial activists] tends to operate from the assumption, necessitated by its fundamental position (whether admitted openly or not), that biological race exists as a physical reality, while the latter tends to engage in what I term a metatheoretical approach to analysis, an approach that seeks to problematize biological race and its various reifications but that is sometimes faulted as being unsympathetic to people’s emotional and psychological needs. (p.2)

Spencer suggests that those who advocate for Multiracial identification as a collective group/experience are not critical in their analysis of race as a biological reality and that such advocacy is detrimental to the efforts of those who seek to define race as a social construction. Spencer asserts that Multiracial activists only reinforce the notion that race is a physical reality rather than a socially constructed one.

In Spencer's (2000), *The New Colored People: The Mixed Race Movement in America*, he argues for the potential damage that Multiracial categorization may have. Spencer explains that Multiracial activists who advocate for a Multiracial category are moved by a refusal to allow Multiracial people to be ignored or rendered invisible. While understanding and even admiring this call for activism, Spencer questions its ultimate impact and implications on social policy. Specifically, Spencer draws our attention to how Multiracial categories have evolved in South Africa which have resulted in tragic consequences with respect to the former white South African government's classification of "mixed-race" people as Coloured (Adhikari, 2005). In South Africa, four distinct racial categories were created: Blacks, Whites, Coloured and Indians. Coloured people refers to a group of mixed race peoples who possessed sub-Saharan ancestry, but, in the government's eyes, not enough to be considered Black. Therefore, the Coloured class obtained certain privileges associated with whites that Blacks did not have access to. In this way, identifying as a Coloured person meant access to privilege. Spencer argues that, similarly in the U.S., if given a choice, Multiracials are unlikely to identify with the lesser status group, blacks and thus gain certain privileges from doing so. A Multiracial category, Spencer argues, could have equal if not worse consequences for Blacks and Multiracials alike in the United States by officiating an additional dimension of racial hierarchy within monoracial Blacks and Multiracial Blacks. In sum,

Spencer argues that Multiracial activism could weaken the sociopolitical power that Blacks have gained and stand to gain by pitting people of color into classifications of monoracial and Multiracial.

In Yang's (2000), *Ethnic Studies: Issues and Approaches*, he echoes some of Spencer's concerns,

People normally assume the race of mixed-race people based on how they look. A fourth rule is to designate a special category for mixed-race people. In Brazil, for example, 'mulatto' is the category for people with mixed races of black and white. South Africa uses 'coloured' to designate people with black and white ancestries.

In the United States, there is no such category. In the past several years, certain groups representing mixed-race Americans demanded the addition of a new category, 'mixed race' or 'Multiracial' to the race variable for the 2000 census. They argued that without the separate categories it will be difficult to chart their numbers and provide them with adequate protection from some forms of discrimination. However, this demand is not simply an issue of adding a category. It will have impact on the distribution of resources and power. A separate category could cause underrepresentation of minority groups, affect the number and location of minority voting districts that are based on numbers of people in different racial categories, and reduce government and private financing of minority programs that are tied to census figures. (p.58)

These issues are critical in the undertaking of any study of Multiracial individuals and their experiences because they underscore the consequential ways in which changing racial categorization is directly connected to accessing resources and power. Identifying as a certain race(s) is not simply an exercise in asserting a personal preference. Quite the opposite, whether consciously or subconsciously, the assuming of one's racial identity is a complex decision based on perceived racial advantages and disadvantages. A balance needs to be maintained where we

bring Multiracial voices to the table and, at the same time, take careful consideration of the real and consequential impact that Multiracial identity poses. If the approach to the study of Multiracial identity does not advance the civil rights struggles that have made this discussion possible, then it is a step backwards instead of forward.

In my study, the real and consequential impact that the assertion and promotion of Multiracial identity is always in the forefront of my mind. While I do not seek to question the lived experiences that Multiracial people claim to have, I am keenly cognizant of the ways in which Multiracial identity has been and can be manipulated to further detrimental beliefs, causes and policies. I focus on self-identified Multiracial college students at one institution, during a specific time period and under contextual circumstances. I am not concerned so much with challenging whether or not Multiraciality exists (this seems beside the point since racial constructs still operate in lived experiences) but rather with what those who identify as such, experience in their negotiation of multiple identities and in their self-construction and authoring of self<sup>10</sup> – all of which is encapsulated in a larger sociopolitical context. In order to understand the lived experiences of Multiracial individuals, I trace the origins of racial identity development theories in general, leading then to specific, contemporary theories of Multiracial identity

---

<sup>10</sup> The *authoring of self* refers to a continual inner dialog, where one is persistently addressed and in the process of answering (Holland et al., 1998). This concept is further explained in a later section of the dissertation.

development. The review of these theories is important because they point to the approaches and meanings associated with the impact of race on everyday lived experiences.

### Racial Identity Development Theories and Models – An Overview

Racial identity development theories were born out of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s where activists resisted white power structures and attention to issues of racial inequality became increasingly prevalent (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 1992). Racial identity development theories are not to be confused with theories of race such as eugenics, the so-called science dating back to the late 1800s which claimed the use of selective breeding to improve the human race but was actually an attempt to use science as a way of “objectively” supporting, maintaining and perpetuating white superiority. Racial identity development theories are a direct response to the detrimental repercussions that white supremacy has had on the development of a positive self-identity (especially for people of color but including whites as well). As Helms (1990) notes, “it is assumed that in a society where racial-group membership is emphasized, the development of a racial identity will occur in some form in everyone” (p.2). Racial identity and racial identity development theory are defined by Helms (1990) as

a sense of group or collective identity based on one's *perception* that he or

she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group... racial identity development theory concerns the psychological implications of racial-group membership, that is belief systems that evolve in reaction to perceived differential racial-group membership. (p.3)

Helms explains that racial identity is an affiliation with a group identity which can serve as a coping mechanism and tool of resistance and power to counteract racial differences and inequities. Helms goes on to emphasize the psychological implications of racial group membership and the ways in which racial identity development theories take these implications into account.

In this context, racial identity development has primarily been studied through specific theories, models, concepts, paradigms and ideologies involving a progression of stages which individuals (predominantly of monoracial backgrounds) undergo. These stages usually begin with a starting point and end with a final stage where either a compromise, acceptance, understanding or happy medium is achieved. As Datum (1992) observes, "it is assumed that a positive sense of one's self as a member of one's group (which is not based on any assumed superiority) is important for psychological health" (p.10). None of these stages are experienced easily, as struggles are endured and worked through at varying paces. Most often, these models present a visual representation/organizer which illustrate this stage progression in a linear fashion, usually running the spectrum of conscientiousness - from a minimal level of racial identity awareness to one which is not only heightened, but also brings a sense of

empowerment and self-understanding. In these models, individuals choose the way they racially identify after an often arduous and complex process.

The act of choosing one's identity is a central difference between the way in which my study approaches the identity production of Multiracial students. In my study, racial identity is viewed as something which is produced, both internally and externally, rather than chosen at an individual level alone. Racial identity production<sup>11</sup>, then, for the purposes of this study, is not framed as a self-orchestrated endeavor that follows a sequence. Racial identity production is regarded as a dynamic, multilayered, commodious and ongoing construct influenced and shaped by a variety of factors, contexts and positions – most of which are outside of the individual's realm of control or direction but with space for personal agency. As an example, a Multiracial person who is both Chinese and Black may have had an upbringing that primarily centered on Chinese language and culture and therefore, personally identifies as Chinese. However, due to her physical appearance, outsiders who do not know her, immediately assume that she is solely Black. Despite the fact that she identifies as Chinese, she has no control over how others perceive her racially. She can utilize personal agency by asserting her Chinese identity, her Black identity and/or her Multiracial identity. Simply stated, she has the space to take ownership of her own racial identity and define it in her terms, even while others may assign her a different

---

<sup>11</sup> I define racial identity production as the process through which individuals negotiate, position and construct their self-understanding of their racial selves.

racial identity. The utilization of her personal agency to take ownership of her own racial self-definition does not remove external perceptions of her racial identity, rather her personal agency allows her to respond to and navigate both the internal and external aspects of racial identity production.

In this section, I will summarize existing racial identity theories that offer varying ways of thinking about racial identity development from the aforementioned psychological perspective, which relies heavily on stage models. I review the literature on psychological theories for two reasons: 1) the fact that psychological models have been the dominant approach used to explain racial identity and 2) to illustrate how this approach contrasts with my dissertation's conceptual frameworks. The contrast between a psychological model approach and the approach that I use through my dissertation's conceptual framework will become evident in the linear ways in which these development theories are often presented (usually through visual models or in a sequential set of stages) – a strong deviation from the approach which this study takes, centered on identity production. I argue that this identity production approach is necessary because it accounts for the production of Multiracial identity in ways that past models have failed to do. The notion that identity is not solely a matter of choice, but rather something which is produced, both internally and externally, speaks more appropriately to Multiracial individuals as they navigate multiple racial identities. Because Multiracial individuals may find discrepancies between how they racially

identify and how outsiders may racially identify them, an identity production approach which takes both the internal and external racial perceptions into account is critical to understanding the ways in which Multiracial individuals experience their racial identity production. I will summarize the traditional theories as they have chronologically and thematically arisen: monoracial identity development, biracial identity development and Multiracial identity development.

Monoracial identity development theories refer to those theories that are particular to individuals who identify with only one race. The first of its kind emerged out of the African American experience in the civil rights movement and was the impetus for future models of racial identity development for other groups such as: Latinos/as, Asian Americans, Native Americans and Multiracials. These theories aim to present models of how people of color can achieve an affirming racial identity in response to the oppression of a white supremacist society. A major racial identity theorist at the precipice of this initiative was Cross (1978). Cross first published his “Nigrescence Model” in 1991. Bailey developed a Black Identity Model (BIM) theory in the early 1970s which was published in 1976.. Jackson was particularly influenced by the work of Erik H. Erikson, particularly his book *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (1968), which made a case for his eight stages in the development of personality: 1) Trust vs. Mistrust, 2) Autonomy vs. Shame, 3) Initiative vs. Guilt, 4) Industry vs. Inferiority, 5) Identity vs. Identity Confusion, 6) Intimacy vs. Isolation, 7) Generativity vs. Stagnation; and 8)

Integrity vs. Despair. Erikson (1968) asserted that “each stage becomes a crisis because incipient growth and awareness in a new part function go together with a shift in instinctual energy and yet also cause a specific vulnerability in that part” (p.95). While Erikson focused on personality, this perspective, according to Jackson, “led me to develop, and later confirm, the hypothesis that an individual Black person will move through stages in a developmental sequence” (p.12). He goes on to indicate that these stages are linear in nature and must be followed sequentially in order to become a healthy individual, explaining,

I further hypothesized that one cannot effectively skip a stage and that healthy individuals do not regress in their BID stage development. However, it is possible for a person to get stuck in a BID stage. (p.12)

This undeviating progression of stages is in stark contrast to the conceptual framework that my study plans to employ. Racial identity production, in the context of my study, allows for flexibility, ambiguity and indeterminate changes in one’s identity from situation to situation because it does not assume a beginning point or end point, nor does it make a value judgment on how far one has “progressed” or “regressed” in the timeline or order of stages. I am intrigued and impressed, however, in the efforts that Jackson (2001) takes to revisit his model as described below.

These theories described the nature of this lasting identity transformation, or conversion, experience for Black people in the 1960’s, as well as the identity development of Black people from a broader psychosocial, political, and historical perspective. I hoped that the results of my work would lead to a tool that, when coupled with the work of Erik Erikson (1968) and Paulo Freire (1970), might assist other applied behavioral

scientists and practitioners in their efforts to serve Black people and the Black community.

During the decades of the 1970's, 1980's, and 1990s Cross' Nigrescence model and my BID served as useful paradigms, or models, for understanding the so-called *Black Experience* and the Black identity development process or 'Nigrescence'. As we enter the third decade of evolution of BID theory, it is time to take a retrospective look at the way these theories have evolved as the theorist continue to refine their work. It is also time to rethink and recontextualize these theories and make appropriate adjustments and corrections in the BID. (p.9)

This desire to improve, hone and fine-tune the Black Identity Model (BIM) is particularly noteworthy because of the recognition that as times, demographics, and political landscapes change – so, too, must our theorizing on racial identity development. My study embraces this revisionist spirit of betterment and growth by engaging an unconventional, pliant and timely conceptual framework from which to illustrate and understand Multiracial identity. Other racial identity development models focus less on individual racial identities and explore minority identity development as a whole.

Atkinson, Morten & Sue, (1993) have proposed a *stage theory of minority identity development*. It shows that persons who recognize themselves as being othered from the dominant culture are likely to make attempts to assimilate to the larger dominant culture. Atkinson et al. offer a perspective that maintains that racial identity is embedded in one's consciousness and value system, the latter of which is socially developed. Their stage theory employs five stages: 1) conformity, 2) dissonance, 3) resistance and immersion, 4) introspection and 5)

synergy. These stages are based on Cross' (1991) model comprised of the following phases: an initial unexamined affiliation with the white dominant group based on a limited consciousness of self (pre-encounter), an inner conflictual stage which involves intense self-examination in response to racial oppression/ when the impact of categorization is felt (encounter), a strong affiliation with minority group culture/ a beginning of the search for positive identity (immersion/emersion) and finally, a negotiation of sorts which involves a broader acceptance of all racial groups and a certain centeredness around one's own place in this racialized society (or internalization stage which leads to internalization commitment). Cross' Nigrescence model is widely touted as a groundbreaking and highly useable racial identity model in helping to understand the experiences of people of color. The Nigrescence Model stages help name the different stages that people of color may go through in developing their racial identity. The naming of these stages alone is significant in that the naming affirms the often challenging and emotionally wrought process of acquiring a healthy racial identity. The problem with the Nigrescence model and many of the other identity models, is that they are prescriptive and linear in their stages. For example, if one is in the fourth stage of the Nigrescence model, immersion/emersion, one is strongly affiliated with minority group culture/a beginning of the search for positive identity. There is an assumption in the Nigrescence model that one must move past this strong affiliation to a calmer negotiation of sorts where there is a

broad acceptance of all racial groups. This internalization stage is considered the final stage where the individual is able to reconcile his/her own racial identity with those of the larger society. But, is there a “final” stage of identity development? I argue that there is not a final stage of identity development, nor a linear path of identity development which leads to a culminating sense of self. Rather, I argue that identity development is actually a production of identity which is in constant, dynamic movement, with the individual continuously asking and responding within herself and to her environment.

The most detailed analysis of Black identity during adolescence, according to Cross, Jr. and Fhagen-Smith (1997), has been constructed by Jean Phinney (1989). Phinney’s Ethnic Identity Development Model. According to Cross Jr. et al. (2001),

The Ethnic Identity Development Model assumes that the identity development experiences of different ethnic and racial groups parallel the stages of Erikson’s Model. According to Phinney, ethnic and racial minorities approach adolescence with poorly developed ethnic identities (diffused status), or with identities given to them by their parents or caregivers (foreclosed status). They may enter into an identity crisis (moratorium status), during which the challenges and conflicts associated with their minority or ethnic status are scrutinized. Should the person achieve a reasonable degree of resolution and clarity, his or her ethnic identity matures (achieved ethnicity). Phinney has developed a paper pencil scale (Multiple Ethnic Identity Measure or MEIM) that can be administered to a broad range of ethnic groups for the purpose of empirically positioning subjects into four categories: Persons who evidence negative ethnic identity (ethnic identity diffusion); persons who evidence a developed but unexamined ethnic identity (ethnic identity foreclosure); persons in the midst of exploring their ethnicity (ethnic identity moratorium); and persons who evidence a great deal of self-

criticality, self-reflection, self-acceptance, and resolution of identity conflicts (ethnic identity achieved). (p, 249)

While Phinney provides a valuable tool to “measure” ethnic identity which can certainly be utilized as a means for easier data collection, I question the viability of any instrument’s ability to measure something as dynamic and complex as identity. Additionally noteworthy of this model is the value-laden language attached to different stages. For example, what does it mean to have a “poorly developed” ethnic identity and who is the arbiter of such a designation? And, how does one quantify “a reasonable degree of resolution and clarity” to ethnic identity? What is meant by a “negative ethnic identity”? My point here is to critique the manner in which traditional racial identity development models can attach seemingly common sense meanings to stages, statuses, phases, vectors and the like, by qualifying them with descriptors that are theoretically quantifiable. In other words, these models are set up in an ordinal fashion with a clear ordering from low to high, bad to great, ignorant to aware, naïve to enlightened, undeveloped to developed, and so forth. My study’s conceptual framework retreats from this type of progression to illustrate that past approaches that rely on predetermined standards of identity development may be limiting and even, detrimental, to the examination of Multiracial identity because of the ways in which past approaches restrict the possibilities of multiple and ongoing processes involved in Multiracial identity production.

This is not to say that such models have not played a key significant role in the awareness and advancement of racial identity formation. Quite the contrary, these models have been groundbreaking and pivotal in this goal because they have provided language and a substantial points of reference from which to study and understand the challenges involved in racial identity development. Additionally, scholars such as Cross and Fhagen-Smith (1997) have reexamined different ecologies to adjust them in accordance to aspects of identity development that may have been overlooked. In their *Descriptive Model of the Relationship Between Ego Identity and Nigrescence: A Life Span Perspective*, Cross and Fhagen Smith share such efforts. They note,

Overall, we have tried to construct a life span perspective that a) gives repeated recognition to Black identity variability, which has been overlooked in the past in the search for a single type of Black identity; reveals both linear as well as nonlinear Black identity growth patterns across the life span; c) presents low race salience identity patterns as nonpathological; and d) shows internalized racism to be multidimensional. (p.268)

Cross and Fhagen Smith acknowledge and emphasize the importance of variability in Black identity and a move toward linear and non-linear patterns of Black identity growth that include the consideration of the impact of internalized racism on Black identity development. This acknowledgment and emphasis points to a further expanding of parameters about ways of conceptualizing racial identity development, a welcome change to the more rigid parameters of past models.

Sellers' (1997) Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) also illustrates a revision and re-examination of past identity models. Sellers' MIBI blazed new ground by introducing a model that acknowledged multiple identities within the individual. Derived from the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI), individuals can identify with multiple group memberships (such as race, class, sexuality, religion) with race being one of many, but not necessarily the most salient one. It breaks away from the former, more traditional models of identity development by not attributing behaviors and characteristics to one racial group. While these trailblazing models were based on African American experiences, additional models which examined other racial groups, such as Asian Americans, Latinos/as and Native Americans soon emerged.

Ferdman and Gallegos' (2001) Model of Latino Identity Development presents Latino and Latina racial identity orientations, based on the complex, heterogeneous, multifaceted and internal history and "dilemmas inherent in understanding Latinos and Latinas as a group, focusing in particular on how our identities relate (or do not relate) to racial constructs" (p.33). Because of the dynamic nature of Latino/a identity, Ferdman and Gallegos are clear to point out that their model does not represent a sequential set of stages but rather a description of patterns they have observed. They assert,

The reality of Latino identity, then, is precisely its labyrinthian nature. The difficulty in understanding Latinos is caused primarily by attempts to impose models from other racial groups onto Latinos, who defy easy

categorization. Here, we try to provide a guide through this meandering path with some thoughts about the types of identities Latinos may display, with particular reference to race and the racial order. We do not, however, intend this to be a model based on stages of development, but rather as a description of patterns we have observed. Stage models often imply that people move in a fairly sequential way through the various stages and build from one developmental step to the next. (p.48)

When Ferdman and Gallegos capture Latino identity as “labrynthian,” they are pointing out the fact that Latinos are highly diverse (including, but not limited to, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Central Americans, South Americans and the different regions within those areas). In their words,

A range of factors—including cultural, historical, sociological, political, and others—both contribute to this diversity and point to the development and existence in the United States of an overarching Latino identity. Thus, in many contexts, it can make sense to study Latinos/as as one group. Some (such as Quinones-Rosaldo, 1998) argue, for example, that it is the experience of colonialism that unites Latinos. Moreover, Latinos and Latinas can be strongly identified as such, especially in relation to non-Latinos. However, Latino/a as a category is best seen as panethnic and certainly very heterogeneous, in the sense that it encompasses a range of cultures, racial background, national origins, and their important dimension of diversity (Delgado and Stefancic, 1998). (p.35)

Delgado and Stefancic emphasize that intra-diversity within Latino identity is a key component in examining Latino identity. Additionally, they note that it can still make sense to study Latinos/as as one group as a mechanism to fight oppression by highlighting the fact that colonialism unites Latinos. The dilemma involved with the grouping of Latinos as a single community parallels the dilemma which Multiracial individuals encounter in attempting to establish a collective Multiracial community which represents such a diverse group

(DaCosta, 2008). So, it is appropriate that their model does not progress in stages and that a Multiracial identity production model, like the one I propose, would follow that lead.

The Asian American Identity Development Theory (Kim, 2001) follows the more traditional stage theories by presenting “five conceptually distinct, sequential, and progressive stages” (p.67): 1) ethnic awareness, 2) white identification, 3) awakening to social political consciousness, 4) redirection to Asian American consciousness and 5) incorporation. In describing the social context within which Asian Americans develop their racial identity, Kim (2001) emphasizes the ways in which Asian Americans are particularly influenced by their social environment.

One cultural trait that Americans of Asian heritage share and that distinguishes them from the majority White population is the group orientation through which they learn to be sensitive to the expectations of the group and their social environment. For example, Asian people’s view of themselves (the private self) is primarily influenced by what other people (the public), and particularly what a specific group of people (the collective) think of them. Consequently, the development of the self is largely influenced by messages that are external to Asian Americans in both collective and private environments. Given Asian Americans’ tendency to be externally rather than internally focused, their racial identity development is especially affected by the social environment. In particular, the impact of White racism and the attendant oppression of Asian Americans by European Americans are critical factors in Asian American identity development (Moritsugu and Sue, 1983; Smith, 1991; Chan and Hune, 1995). (p.68)

The Asian American Identity Development Theory occurs through five stages which are sequential in nature, although, as Kim (2001) claims, “the process is not

linear or automatic” (p.72). However, Kim (2001) quickly goes on to note, in a rather contradictory fashion, that “it is possible for an Asian American to get stuck in a certain stage and never move on to the next stage” (p.72), implying that getting “stuck” in a certain stage is a lack of progression. What I find problematic about such language and its implications (which was also echoed in the Black Identity Theory), is that there lies an assumption that one goes from a sort of infantile stage of identity development to a fully mature one. Another way of saying this might be that one begins at a less than desirable stage in the identity process and finally, if successful in passing through each stage, arrives at a culminating point of awareness although how this culminating could be assessed and by whom is another question. The reason this is problematic is because it places a value judgment on the various stages of identity development, assuming that somehow, individuals who reach the final stage are more evolved or progressive than those that may get “stuck” in other more primitive stages.

I was pleased, however, that Kim (2001) concedes that this model does not account for Multiracial experiences because it illustrates her understanding that Multiracial experiences are distinct from monoracial experiences and should be researched further. In her words,

The AAID as currently written does not account for the experiences of interracial and interethnic people. Therefore, future research needs to examine the kinds of identity conflict that arise for Asian Americans who are in interracial marriages, or who are children of interracial or interethnic marriages. How these conflicts are resolved by these

populations should also be studied. I believe the identity conflict issues are greatest for interracial people, especially if their background includes a blending of Asian and another race of color (that is, Black, Latino, or American Indian) because of their physical appearance. On the other hand, the mixed Asian ethnic families and children would probably have similar experiences as Asian Americans in general and would follow the AAID model because of the saliency of race over ethnicity that was discussed earlier. Additional research is needed to explore these topics more fully. (p.84)

To Kim's credit, my study is a response to this call for future research on Multiracial individuals. As Kim (2001) states, she believes that the issues that Multiracial individuals face are great. What is compelling to note is the way in which these types of models inadvertently essentialize experiences of monoracial individuals under the assumption that monoracial individuals are not as diverse or more diverse than Multiracial individuals are. So, while there is a summoning to further study Multiracial individuals, it might be wise to revisit the ways in which we categorize monoraciality. As monoracial identity stands and is defined now, it perhaps may be stripping its members of some of the complexities that are innate in monoracial identification.

Horse's (2001) *Paradigm of Indian Identity* takes a slightly different spin on identity development by focusing on consciousness. Horse thinks of identity development as "a process that occurs over time and goes through different stages," however, he adds to this notion by suggesting that "it is possible to consider such development in historical perspective through different eras" (p.95).

Specifically, Horse utilizes Reich's (1970) three levels of consciousness as it relates to Native Americans. Horse summarizes these levels as follows:

Consciousness I (C.I) focused on the individual, the self. It saw self in harsh and narrow terms, accepting self-repression and allowing one to be cut off from the larger community of man and from nature. Nature was defined as the enemy. Success in C.I was determined by character, morality, hard work, and self-denial. Reich calls this the Puritan Ethic. Up until the industrial revolution, the economy of the colonial era was agrarian. Much was made of the rugged individualist.

Consciousness II (C.II), according to Reich, created the corporate state. Under C.II, the organization was predominant and the individual had to make his or her way through a world directed by others. It was a turn away from individualism. At the heart of C.II was the insistence that the power of man's reasoning alone could overcome the intangible aspects of life. Under C.II the economy moved from agrarian dominance to industrial and corporate life. It seemed to rest on organizational interests, status, prestige, and power.

Consciousness III (C.III) took root in the mid-1960's with liberation from the corporate state as its ideal. It began to look at the world as a community instead of as a jungle with every person for him or herself. It rests on two integrated concepts, respect for the uniqueness of each individual and the idea expressed by the word. C.III rests on those interests which, in the view of many, the economic and organizational parts of American society have failed to supply.  
(pp.95-96)

Horse focuses on the factors that influence individual and group consciousness as either tribal people or as American Indians. He prefers "to couch Indian identity in terms of an overall ethic which informs our consciousness over time" (p.100). He claims that "contact with our native consciousness is often metaphorical, sometimes instinctive" (p.100). In other words, consciousness cannot be pinned

down or divided into phases. However, it can be influenced by several characteristics which Horse lists,

1. How well one is grounded in the native language and culture;
2. Whether one's genealogical heritage as an Indian is valid;
3. Whether one embraces a general philosophy or worldview that derives from the distinctly Indian ways, that is, old traditions.
4. The degree to which one thinks of him or herself in a certain way, that is, one's own idea of self as an Indian person; and
5. Whether one is officially recognized as a member of a tribe by the government of that tribe.

His attention to collective consciousness versus individual consciousness is distinct from the aforementioned racial identity models which seem to focus much more on the individual's identity formation, perhaps as it relates to larger communities, but, still separate from a collective sense of self. This approach is refreshing to me in that it raises interesting questions about the tendency to view racial identity production in individualistic and linear terms. By directing the treatment of identity development toward consciousness, rather than stages, a more fluid and less scripted model emerges.

A group that seemed ironically missing from an awakening of racial consciousness during the period when these models were appearing was the white dominant group. In fact, "white racial identity development models were developed after minority identity development models" (Ponterotto, 2006, p.88). While racial identity development models and theories were proposed for people of color, whites, because of their privileged status in society (Helms, 1995) had not been challenged or required to examine their own contributions and

responsibilities with regards to race relations in the United States (Sue et al., 1998). Sue et al. (1998) suggests that there are certain assumptions that must be made to lay the foundation for White racial identity models. Sue et al. (1998) detail these assumptions as follows:

- Racism is integral to U.S. life and permeates all aspects of our constitutions and culture.
- Whites are socialized into society and therefore inherit the biases, stereotypes and racist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the larger society.
- How Whites perceive themselves and process their reactions as racial beings follows an identifiable sequence that can occur in a progressive (linear) or nonprogressive (nonlinear) fashion.
- White racial identity status will affect an individual's interracial interactions and relationships.
- The desirable out come of the White racial identity development process is that individuals accept their status as White persons in a racist society and define their identity in a nonracist manner (p.56).

There was a sense among White identity theorists (Hardiman, 1994; Helms, 1984; Ponterotto, 1988; Sue, 2003) that it was imperative for White Americans to “take stock in, and responsibility for, their legacy of oppression and their ongoing participation in an oppressive society either directly or through passive acceptance of the racist status quo” (Sue, 2003).

The European American (White) Identity Development Model was developed by Hardiman (1994) although Black scholars such as DuBois (1903) urged Whites to look inwardly at the origins and evolution of white identity prior to its inception. The WID model, which has since undergone an update in 1992, consists of five stages. Hardiman (1982) summarizes them as follows:

The first stage is characterized by *No Social Consciousness* or *Naïveté* about race, marked by a lack of awareness of visible racial differences. Whites at this stage have no understanding of the social meaning of race or the value attached to one race over another. This naïve period, which ends in early childhood, is followed by a stage of *Acceptance*, whereupon the White person accepts or internalizes racism and a sense of himself as racially superior to people of color, although this sense of dominance, privilege, or entitlement is often unconscious.

The third stage, called *Resistance*, is marked by an individual questioning the dominant paradigm about race, and resisting or rejecting his racist programming. It is also a stage wherein Whites can become antiracist or active in efforts to reduce, eliminate, or challenge racism. In reference to the person's own race, this stage is often characterized by embarrassment about one's Whiteness, guilt, shame, and a need to distance oneself from the White group.

The fourth stage, *Redefinition*, occurs when the White person begins to clarify his own self-interest in working against racism, and begins to accept and take responsibility for his Whiteness. Rather than estrangement from Whiteness and their peers, Whites at this stage attempt to redefine themselves as 'new whites' (Terry 1975:22). They take ownership of their Whiteness rather than trying to deny it or embracing another racial identity, such as taking on the most visible elements of Black or Native American culture.

The fifth and final stage, *Internalization*, involves integrating or internalizing this increased consciousness regarding race and racism, and one's new White identity into all aspects of one's life. (pp.111-112)

Hardiman's White Identity Development Model was followed by Helms' 1984 model of White Racial Identity Development. Helms' 1984 model was developed as a result of her frustration (as a Black woman) of all the attention that was paid to the identity development of people of color (as if they held the burden of figuring themselves out within a white racist world) and not to whites (who were, after all, responsible for the proliferation and perpetuity of racism). Helms'

model consists of six racial identity ego statuses, each one building upon the other. They are: 1)*Contact*, 2)*Disintegration*, 3)*Reintegration*, 4)*Pseudoindependence*, 5)*Immersion/Emersion* and 6)*Autonomy*. In sum, whites are first oblivious of race and its repercussions. This is followed by a period of confusion and disorientation which one is put into a position of choosing group loyalty over humanism which then leads to intolerance of other races. Next, whites commit to their whiteness. Before the last stage, whites engage in an internal search for a redefinition of whiteness coupled with a new understanding of racism. Finally, whites renounce the privileges of racism.

Hardiman's (1982) and Helms' (1984) White Racial Identity Development models are similar to the racial identity development models that were developed for people of color in that the model follows a linear trajectory which begins at a stage of relative ignorance about race to an epiphanous arrival of increased consciousness of racism, ownership of one's personal identity and internalization of one's "new" realized racial identity. Most recently, however, more comprehensive models of white racial consciousness, although still identity conceptualizations with a beginning and end point, have emerged which arose out of "a dissatisfaction with the identity theory aspects of existing White race-based conceptualizations" (Ponterotto, 2006, p.99). Rowe et al. (1994, 1995) developed a model that "accurately classified commonly held racial attitudes that White people have towards persons of color" (Ponterotto, 2006) which consists of seven

types of racial attitudes grouped into two types, achieved and unachieved.

According to Ponterotto (2006), the achieved types “have both explored and committed to their racial attitudes” (p.99) while the unachieved types “lack personal exploration, commitment, or both” (p.99). The achieved types are summarized by Ponterotto (2006) as follows:

Dominative persons hold White ethnocentric attitudes, believe in the superiority of Whites, and may act out racist attitudes passively or directly. Conflictive individuals do not support obvious racism or inequality yet still value a Eurocentric worldview (e.g., individualism) over alternate worldviews (e.g., collectivism). Integrative persons hold positive racial attitudes, relate to a variety of racial and ethnic issues, and are rational and pragmatic in orientation. Reactive individuals hold strong prominity attitudes yet may be unaware of their personal responsibility in maintaining a racist status quo. (p.99)

Unachieved types are described as follows:

Avoidant persons have not explored racial issues and appear to ignore, deny, or minimize racial issues. Dependent types hold a narrow and limited understanding of racial issues that are heavily influenced by others. Dissonant individuals are conflicted between their racial beliefs and some contradictory experiences that call into question their belief system; they are wavering in their racial attitudes. (p.100)

In 2002, after further research of their model, Rowe et al. revised the White Racial Consciousness Conceptualization to include racial acceptance and racial justice as the two main constructs. The distinction between achieved and unachieved types was discontinued. According to Ponterotto (2006),

Instead, racial acceptance and racial justice are regarded as one’s orientation regarding racial attitudes, and statuses formerly labeled as unachieved measure simply the degree to which one admits to being unconcerned about racial issues (avoidant), being uncertain about such

issues (dissonant), or basing racial attitudes on the influence of others (dependent). (p.100-101)

Two teams of authors (Sabnani et al., 1991; Sue et al., 1998) further integrated and revised the multiple models of White racial identity and consciousness to formulate what they perceived to be as a more inclusive model. Sabnani et al.'s (1991) White Racial Identity Model consists of the following five stages: pre-exposure, conflict, prominority and antiracism, retreat into White culture, and redefinition and integration. Sue et al.'s (1998) model consists of the following five stages: conformity, dissonance, resistance and immersion, introspective, and integrative awareness. I will not go into detail regarding these revisions of the White racial identity and consciousness model as they draw directly from the previously described models. What I will point out is that these revisions suggest that identity development is not relegated to one prescriptive model and that, over time and subject to research, racial identity development is a complex, challenging and ever-changing process.

Theories of racial identity development serve an important role in understanding, affirming and analyzing the racial identity formation of individuals by providing a context, structure and language by which to name the reality and experiences of those who have been victimized and impacted by white racism. The theories of identity development that I have just detailed all rely on the

assumption that each of us is monoracial, that is, African American, Latino/a<sup>12</sup>, Asian American, Native American or White. However, these theories do not incorporate those who identify as “more than one” race, be it biracial or Multiracial, and hence, the creation of biracial/Multiracial identity development models followed.

Biracial identity development theories refer to those theories that are particular to individuals who identify with two races (usually Black and white). A critical question regarding the monoracial models is how applicable they are to biracial individuals. Beginning with Poston (1990), he proposed a five-stage biracial development model, suggesting that biracial individuals will endure some sort of maladjustment period. The five stages are: 1) personal identity (when the individual does not know they are biracial yet), 2) choice of group categorization, 3) enmeshment/denial, 4) appreciation and 5) integration. His biracial identity development model resulted after an examination of previous monoracial identity development models. Poston noted that such models did not address the unique ways in which biracial individuals developed racially. According to Benedetto and Olisky (2001), Poston “speculated that with the proper support and mastery of these stages, biracial individuals can develop a healthy racial identity and achieve

---

<sup>12</sup> The Latino/a Identity Development Model does highlight the cultural, historical, sociological, political and other factors that point to the diversity within an overarching Latino/a identity. However, such diversity is still captured under a larger monoracial Latino/a racial identity, albeit panethnic.

a sense of wholeness in their lives” (p.1). I summarize each of Poston’s (1990) stages of biracial development model.

According to Poston (1990), personal identity begins at childhood when the one is unaware that he/she is of multiple races. After initial socialization as a result of community influences (media, family, friends, larger society), the biracial individual chooses a group categorization. During the choice of group categorization stage the individual struggles but feels compelled to choose one racial or ethnic group identity over another, rather than identify as both. This struggle results in Enmeshment/denial guilty and disloyal for choosing one group over another. The individual attempts to reconcile this seeming discrepancy by denying the differences between the racial groups that he/she belongs to and identifies with both racial groups. During the fourth stage, appreciation, individuals learn to appreciate dual parts of their identity independently of one another and specifically are able to acknowledge if there is one racial group that they identify with most, without a sense of guilt. In the fifth stage of this model, integration, the individual accepts and values both of their racial identities even while he/she may still identify more strongly with one group.

Poston’s (1990) biracial identity development model follows a linear progression which begins at a stage of biracial ignorance and ending with an integration of both racial identities. Poston focuses on a maladjustment period where biracial individuals struggle with choosing one racial identity over the

other. Poston claims that, as a biracial individual, assuming that one possesses only one racial identification (the first stage in his biracial identity development model) is a state of racial ignorance. This state of racial ignorance can be overcome once the individual “learns to appreciate dual parts of their identity” and then follows this with choosing one’s racial identification (whether it includes both races or not). Poston’s attention to biracial individuals’ experiences with an inner racial identity tug of war is a very important addition to the monoracial identity development models because it validates biracial individuals’ experiences and creates a theoretical development model from which to understand biracial experiences. By incorporating biracial individuals’ experiences into a new biracial identity development model, Poston expands the racial identity development paradigm, creating space to view and discuss biracial experiences not heretofore included in the field of psychology and inviting new biracial identity development models.

Kich (1992), in an ethnographic study of fifteen biracial adults of white and Japanese heritage, proposed an identity development model consisting of the following three stages: initial awareness of difference, struggle for acceptance by others and biracial/bicultural identity. As Renn (2004) notes, “Kich’s model relies on the agency of the individual to overcome external restrictions imposed by societal ideas about biraciality” (p.17). Kich suggests that in order to adopt a healthy biracial identity, one must accept race as a social construction,

recognizing that biraciality is one among many other racial constructs. Once the individual arrives at this point of acknowledgment, the individual can utilize his/her agency to racially develop and identify as he/she wishes. Kich's focus on agency is particularly compelling in that an individual's racial identity becomes a tool of empowerment rather than a subject of deficiency, maladjustment or angst.

Kerwin and Ponteroto (1993) offer another model of biracial identity development based on a study that used age-based developmental markers to locate racial awareness. Different from Poston's (1990) theory, Kerwin and Ponteroto (1993) acknowledge a private and public dimension to identity formation. They also ascertain that biracial individuals may suffer from ostracization from other groups of color (in addition to ostracization from the dominant white group). The Biracial identity development theories were an important next step in the progression of identity development models, yet, still adhered to stage development models to illustrate racial identity development. Understandably, such visual representations were easier to understand and provided a step by step path of identity formation as well as a launching point for analyzing and understanding biracial experiences. I clearly appreciate and acknowledge the significance of visual models of racial identity development as tools for comprehending and affirming biracial identity. However, what seems lacking from these visual representations is a general flexibility, dynamism and uncertainty. In other words, while the visual ease and framework of racial

identity development models provide a substantive guide in the attempt to understand how biracial individuals understand and identify themselves, I argue that the visual representations of racial identity development miss a key element in understanding the complex process of identity development. This missing element in understanding racial identity development is unable to be clearly depicted in visual form because the missing element is the intangibility, amorphousness and grayness which is omnipresent in one's racial identity development, regardless of stage. In other words, while there is certainly value in assigning beginning and end points as well as labeling behaviors as healthy and unhealthy, I argue that it may be helpful to consider Multiracial identity from an identity production standpoint as well as a developmental standpoint. Identity production suggests an ongoing, dynamic process of asking and answering with regards to one's positionality as a Multiracial individual while development suggests a linear movement from one point to another.

While often, the terms biracial and Multiracial are conflated, the possibility of belonging to two races or even more races grew apparent as more and more people began to claim and assert a Multiracial identity. Multiracial came to mean belonging to two races only or more than two races. Multiracial identity development theories refer to those theories that are particular to individuals who identify with more than one race (oftentimes, more than two) and it is important to note that such theories have only arisen within the last twenty

years or so, with a significant development in the 1990s. Existing research on the subject of Multiracial identity has generally been framed from the lens of identity formation (Anzaldúa, 1987; Root, 1996; Goldstein & Morning, 2000; Nakashima, 1992; Wallace, 2001) and racial identity development/student development theory (models) (Daniel, 1992; Funderburg, 1994; Harris & Sim, 2002; Jimenez 2004; Kerwin-Ponteretto, 1993; Kich, 1992; Nakashima, 1992; Poston, 1990; Renn, 2004; Rockquemore and Brunsma, 2002; Root, 1992; Wallace, 2001; Wijeyesinghe, 1992; Williams, 1993). Research about Multiracial identity has primarily been done in the field of psychology and higher education, to a lesser degree, in sociology and cultural studies. While there are several racial identity development models that have emerged, there is not a sufficiently critical conceptual framework that addresses the identity production of Multiracial individuals.

In the field of psychology, Root (1996) was the forerunner of Multiracial identity development models and continues to reign as a passionate advocate for Multiracial individuals. Her pivotal books, *Racially Mixed People in America* (1992) and *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier* (1996), launched fresh discourses around the major theoretical, conceptual and sociopolitical issues around Multiraciality. Specifically, Root (1992) proposed a model that explored the inherited influences, traits and socialization agents on

resolution of racial identity for Multiracial individuals. Renn (2004) notes that similar to Kich (1992),

Root emphasized the importance of shifting from seeking approval from others to defining oneself. She proposed that healthy development for biracial children must include learning strategies for coping with the 'otherness' forced on them by a dichotomous, black-white society but noted that these children have few models available in this attempt to resolve 'other' status. (Renn, 2004, p.20)

Root's (1990) model consists of four strategies: accepting the identity society assigns, identification with both racial groups, identification with a single racial group and identification as a new racial group. Different from previous biracial identity models, Root's (1990) model did not assign stages, phases or benchmarks, rather Root proposes four strategies or outcomes that presented viable resolutions to feeling racially othered.

Root (1996) took her four strategies and further illustrated that Multiracial individuals may experience four types of "border-crossings." She describes these four borders in the following ways: 1) having both feet in both groups (or more) (Anzaldúa, 1987; Hall, 1992; Nakashima, 1992; Williams, 1992), 2) the shifting of foreground and background as one crosses between and among social contexts defined by race and ethnicity and interactions, in other words, identifying differently dependent upon situation, also known as situational identity (Anzaldúa, 1987; Butler, 1993; Kich, 1993; Lerner, 1986; Miller, 1992; Root, 1992; Stephan, 1992; Zack, 1995) 3) decisively sitting on the border (Anzaldúa,

1987; Nakashima, 1992) and 4) creating a home in one “camp” (Root, 1992, p.xxii) for an extended period of time and going back from camp to camp from time to time. Root challenges the assumption that a fully integrated biracial or Multiracial individual is the ultimate desired state by introducing a variety of ways in which identity is negotiated by Multiracial individuals.

The study of Multiracial individuals has grown substantially since 1990, and includes both quantitative and qualitative designs. Generally, the themes in these studies point to the dynamic nature, variability, fluidity and complex issues around Multiracial identity development by relying on identity development models, similar in structure and linearity as past models, albeit enriched by nuanced Multiracial experienced realities. Among these contributions is Wijeyesinghe’s (2001) *Factor Model of Multiracial Identity* which was developed from a qualitative study of African American/ European American Multiracial adults. This model centers on the choice of racial identity which Multiracial individuals take on and as illustrated by the model, indicates that this choice is impacted by the following factors: cultural attachment, early experience and socialization, political awareness and orientation, spirituality, social and historical context, physical appearance, racial ancestry and other social identities. Wijeyesinghe (2001) makes it a point to note that, “A Multiracial person’s choice of racial identity can be based on some, but usually not all, of these factors.

Although the factors are represented by distinct circles, many of them are interrelated” (p.138).

My primary critique of Wijeyesinghe’s (2001) *Factor Model of Multiracial Identity* (FMMI) is the lack of connections made to power, privilege and status when explaining the eight different factors. Although Wijeyesinghe does warn that the FMMI can also be misread or misused, primarily when certain factors are deemed more legitimate indicators of racial identity than others, she fails to provide an explanation and context under which these factors relate to one another and are negotiated among each other. While Wijeyesinghe (2001) accounts for the following eight factors of Multiracial identity, providing a framework which explains issues of power, privilege and status would enhance Wijeyesinghe’s (2001) *Factor Model of Multiracial Identity* by situating Multiracial identity in a complex and dynamic space. According to Wijeyesinghe , the FMMI “represents another contribution” to the already existing “mosaic” for “understanding various aspects of Multiracial identity” (2001, p.136-137). She goes further to say that,

Given that the literature on Multiracial identity is still fairly limited, it is questionable whether a model that accounts for the range of choices of identity and experiences found among Multiracial people can be developed at this time. (p.136)

The FMMI consists of eight factors, that, according to Wijeyesinghe (2000) contribute to the Multiracial individual’s choice of identity.

- Racial Ancestry
- Early Experiences and Socialization
- Cultural Attachment
- Physical Appearance
- Social and Historical Context
- Political Awareness and Orientation
- Other Social Identities
- Spirituality (p.137)

I do, however, appreciate the fact that this is not a stage-based developmental model, allowing for a more fluid and dynamic possibility for understanding Multiracial identity. The eight factors that she includes are definitely important, yet I still question how much of a “choice” Multiracial individuals really have when all of these factors are at play. In other words, as an example, if you are Multiracial and your background is Black, Asian and Latino but you are dark-skinned and possess phenotypical features that most people would translate as Black, you can certainly “choose” to identify as Asian, let’s say, Chinese. But, how does your phenotype (physical appearance), political awareness and other social identities play into that so called choice? Walking down the street, you may be treated as a Black person every day of your life, even though your primary cultural attachment is to your Chinese heritage. It raises the ever present question – how much of your racial identity is self-selected and how much of it is chosen by others’ perceptions of you? And, is there any meaning attached when one chooses to identify as a part of their identity which is not physically obvious to others? These are questions that the Wijeyesinghe’s (2001)

*Factor Model of Multiracial Identity* does not address but which I feel are critical in examining Multiracial identity.

To assume that a Multiracial person can choose their identity independent of others' perceptions of them seems optimistic but not necessarily realistic. As Wijeyesinghe (2001) indicates, we are in the infancy stages of the examination of Multiracial people. She explains,

Finally, it is important to note that a basic knowledge of Multiracial identity and Multiracial people is still being constructed. While questions focusing on future and evolving dynamics are a crucial component to this foundation, the fundamental questions of how a wide range of Multiracial people develop, make meaning of, and experience their racial identities remain relevant and pressing. (p.147)

My study aims to offer another way of arriving at this understanding of Multiracial identity by focusing, not on stages of development, but on the ways in which the complexity and engagement of every day interactions, as they happen, shape, recycle, change and define how Multiracial identity is produced. Identity production, within my study, takes into consideration both the personal agency in one's shaping of identity and the multiple factors that are outside of an individual's control. As much as we would prefer to be able to be the sole architects of our own identity, we cannot take for granted the powerful influence that the tools, environments, access to building materials and knowledge of construction, have on the building of the self.

## Multiracial College Students

What is clear is that the mixed race population is growing and will continue to grow rapidly in higher education. Mixed race students themselves know it and challenge educators and scholars to meet them in their multiple ways of identifying. Our preparedness for this challenge-in institutional practice, student support infrastructure, and theoretical flexibility-will be put to the test, a test we must pass in order to serve all of our students, regardless of their racial heritages. (Renn, 2004, p.258)

To date, there have been relatively few studies with regards to Multiracial college students or Multiracial students in general. Overall, the ones that have been conducted can be divided into two thematic categories: 1) the impact of Multiracial identity on Multiracial adolescent students, especially as it pertains to healthy psychological functioning and self-esteem (Nishimura, 1995; Nishimura & Bol, 1997; Root, 1990, 1996; Phinney, & Alipuria, 1996; Spencer, Icard, Harachi, Catalano, & Oxford, 2000; Phinney, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1996; Hall, 1992; Atkinson, Morton, & Sue, 1993; Cross, 1978, 1991; Wallace, 2001; Fryer, Kahn, Levitt, & Spenkuch, 2008), and 2) racial identity development and issues of Multiracial students on college campuses (Kerwin et al., 1993; Kich, 1992; Poston, 1990; Renn, 2000, 2003, 2004; Wallace, 1999; Williams, Nakashima, Kich, & Daniel, 1996; Nishimura, 1998). For the purposes of this study, I will concentrate on the latter theme since it best applies to my study's population, Multiracial college students.

Kristen Renn (2000, 2003, 2004) has written a series of articles and books around Multiracial college students, the most prominent of which is her book

entitled, *Mixed Race Students in College: The Ecology of Race, Identity and Community on Campus*. The book is based on her study of 56 Multiracial students from six predominately White institutions (PWIs) in the U.S. Midwest (Renn, 2004). Her choice of conducting this study in the Midwest lies in that most of the exploration of Multiracial identity has taken place in the Western region of the United States. In an effort to expand the scope of the pool of Multiracial students that have been studied (with respect to region), Renn focuses on the Midwest where, perhaps, Multiracial students face more isolation as a result of the region's overall smaller population (when compared to the Western region of the United States). Renn's work seeks to examine the experiences of Multiracial students within predominantly white institutions.

Renn (2004) presents study findings with the use of Bronfenbrenner's ecology model to examine campus peer cultures. Bronfenbrenner's ecology model Renn (2004) documents five patterns of Multiracial identity that illustrate possibilities for integrating notions of identity development and race: (a) monoracial identity, (b) multiple monoracial identities, (c) Multiracial identity, (d) extraracial identity, and (e) situational racial identity. Renn provides an opening for the discussion of this emerging student population by theorizing about Multiracial identity development through the use of an ecological model, and suggests that higher education institutions need to prepare for the needs that these students bring. Renn begins to capture the negotiation that unfolds as Multiracial

college students make meaning of their unique identities through the lens of an ecological development model. In the following section, I provide an overview of Bronfenbrenner's Ecology Model (1979) of human development to help situate Renn's (2004) Multiracial identity framework.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecology Model (1979) is based on two principles: "development is an evolving function of person-environment interaction" and "ultimately, this interaction must take place in the immediate, face-to-face setting in which the person exists" (1993, p.10). Renn (2004) claims that her attraction to Bronfenbrenner's Ecology Model is based on these two principles which lend themselves well to the study of Multiracial college students.

A model that also accounts for interactions among and between the various subenvironments an Individual encounters is even more useful, as it provides a means to examine the dynamic, fluid nature of college life, where students move from one setting to another, constructing and reconstructing identities in relationship with others and in reaction to the messages they receive from interacting environments. (p.28)

This "dynamic, fluid nature of college life" is captured in the key elements of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model: person, process, context and time (PPCT). PPCT stems from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development.

The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate setting in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these setting and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded. (p.21)

According to Renn (2004), “the PPCT framework is multidimensional, dynamic, context-bound and person specific” (p.30).

Each component of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model as it relates to Renn’s application of it to the study of Multiracial college students is worth exploring, especially in light of the conceptual framework that I later present. While I applaud Renn’s model for its focus on the dynamic and multidimensional aspects of studying Multiracial identity, I will later describe ways in which this model lacks explicit examination of power dynamics such as issues related to white privilege, self-reflexivity as researcher, phenotypical markers of status and personal agency. At this point, I will summarize the different components of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model as well as draw some connections between Renn (2004) and previous identity development model theorists.

The person component in the ecology model acknowledges the individual at the center in which developmental changes occur. Renn asserts that the person component of the ecology model

includes a student’s unique experiences and characteristics, including socially constructed identities (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, ability, etc.), prior academic performance and academic self-concept, political and social ideologies, and family background (p.30)

Renn embraces the “philosophy that identities are constructed and reconstructed in relationships across settings” (p.30). Renn (2004) shares this philosophy with Root (1990) – both concur that race is a social construction.

When race is constructed through the mechanics of racism, oppression chokes multiracial people from all sides (Root, 1992). This throttling and stifling takes many forms: forced to fit into just one category from school registration to U.S. Census surveys; affiliations forced with oppressive questions (e.g., “Which one are you?”); forced to “act right”, “think right,” and “do right” in order to belong: and forced to prove ethnic legitimacy in order to have an identity in an ethnically diverse society.” (Root, 1996, p.5)

Renn states that it is futile to insist on the permanence and stability of artificial race constructions (Renn, 2004). What both Renn (2004) and Root (2000) struggle with is the challenge which arises – how does one speak of race as a construct without using the term “race” and all its proxies? Linguistic choices are at the heart of this matter – the very language we use can imprison us within words that stifle us. Even the term, Multiraciality, only reaffirms the social construction of the term. Change often requires the presentation of extremely different realities and strategies (Freire, 1970) in order to break free from the rigidity of our existing vocabulary. As researchers, they appear somewhat apologetic and yet helpless given these parameters. In a nutshell, Root and Renn point to the fluidity and constant evolution of race. As Ibarra (2001) explains,

At one extreme the process of reification has made cultures into cohesive, hard-surfaced units, inside which we picture groups of people as living and thinking in separate worlds. This vision of culture lacks a certain interrelatedness with other cultures and ignores the fact that culture, ethnicity, and diversity are dynamic and changing concepts of human behavior, not pieces of iron. (p.29)

In the case of Multiracial people, Renn and Root emphasize the research that suggests that Multiracial people are variable to the degree to which they are

ethnically identified (Mass, 1992; Stephan, 1992). So long as race continues to be a marker of difference and a tool of dominance, the framing of “otherness” as it refers to multiracial people will continue to dominate the way in which we articulate our definitions and terminology. The blurring of racial boundaries begs the question, what is race? Perhaps, most threatening it “challenges long-held notions about the biological, moral and social meaning of race” (Root, 1992). Given the linguistic challenge of the term race itself, Renn (2004) finds Bronfenbrenner’s model, and specifically the person component particular appealing because the model “is compatible with the philosophy that identities [such as race] are constructed and reconstructed in relationships across settings” (p.30).

The second component in Bronfenbrenner’s ecology model (1995) is process, which she defines as “enduring forms of progressively more complex, reciprocal interactions between a developing person and the persons, objects and symbols in her or his environment” (p.620). Renn (2004) notes that “the idea that developmental processes are ongoing, enduring forms means that they comprise a dynamic, ever-changing system” (p.32). Critical to this system is the concept of reciprocity which refers to the “person-environment interaction” (Renn, 2004) which is in constant motion. In other words, Bronfenbrenner (1979) notes, “the developing person is viewed not merely as a tabula rasa on which the environment makes its impact, but as a growing, dynamic entity that

progressively moves into and restructures the milieu in which it resides” (pp.21-22). I find this concept of reciprocity particularly compelling because it moves away from a somewhat stationary stage process to one which acknowledges the variability and omnipresence of internal dialogue present in identity production.

Context, the third component in Bronfenbrenner’s ecology model, context is divided into four subcomponents: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems and macrosystems. These subcomponents are views as “a nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained within the next” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.22). Microsystems are the most basic unit of the model and are defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as follows.

A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment. (p.15)

Microsystems do not operate in a vacuum, rather they operate with one another in mesosystems. Mesosystems “comprise linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p.22) Renn (2004) notes that “a particular strength of the mesosystem is that it takes into account the unique—and unpredictable—nature of an individual’s relationship with interacting microsystems” (p.38). The exosystem refers to “the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events

occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives” (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p.24). The macrosystem is defined as

The overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristics of a given culture, subculture, or other extended social structure, with particular reference to the developmentally instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in such overarching systems. (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p.25)

According to Renn (2004), “the macrosystem thus includes sociocultural environment, made manifest in the proximal processes of student development” (p.40). Renn & Arnold (2003) point to examples of contributors to the macrosystem including “patterns of social stratification and mobility, the economic system and capitalist ideology, a belief in the ideal of meritocracy and achievement of individual potential, as well as cultural understandings of gender, race, and ethnicity” (Renn, 2004, p.40).

In sum, the ecology theory that Renn (2004) bases her model upon is an alternative to stage-based theories of identity development. Renn (2004) acknowledges that while stage-based models are appealing for a variety of reasons (e.g., the exploration of identity crises in adolescence (Erikson, 1968); the seven vectors of identity formation (Chickering & Reiser, 1993); and students’ cognitive and moral development (Perry, 1968),

they also tacitly assert a linear, stage approach to understanding development that often goes unquestioned in research and professional practice, laying the groundwork for unquestioned acceptance of other

linear theories, such as those related to racial, ethnic, gender and sexual orientation identities (e.g., Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1993; Cass, 1979; Cross, 1991, 1995; Gilligan, 1977; Helms, 1990). (p.49)

In a seminal work on multiracial identity, Harris and Sim (2002) argue that race is not only socially constructed, but also fluid. Additionally they maintain that data collection captures an individual's "true" race for a particular purpose, in a particular context, at a particular point in time (Telles and Lim, 1998). This position is far from the nineteenth and early twentieth century views on race which were dominated by the perspective that racial groups were biologically determined and imbued with distinctive physical, mental, and moral abilities (Spickard, 1992). The social constructionist perspective, which I espouse, asserts that the function of race is to reinforce and perpetuate social differences (Blauner 1972; Omi 2001). From this vantage point, it is no wonder why the issue of Multiraciality problematizes the monolithic categorizations of race which have been held as the longstanding norm of classification.

Multiracial students live on the borderline, in a borderland of sorts.

A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atrevasados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'." (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.25)

This borderland between racial identifications exists either internally and/or externally, dependent upon the manner in which he/she identifies. For many

multiracial people, the choice to check the monoracial box is a strategic move to circumvent the stigma of Multiraciality and historically, a way to avoid criminalization. It is this stinging stigmatization which further complicates the experiences that multiracial students face.

On a college campus, students are faced with a variety of interpersonal scenarios in a variety of settings including but not limited to social, co-curricular and academic settings. Inevitably, multiracial students will engage in arenas where they will be forced to self-identify. How are college campuses facilitating these interactions? Or, are higher education institutions and its faculty/staff solely perpetuating the monolithic view of race by either ignoring this student population through omission and/or action?

Most importantly, faculty and campus leaders must do more than acknowledge the presence of multiracial students on campus. They need to understand that these students' experiences exemplify the ambiguity and complexity of race in America today. While it is important to provide spaces, both inside and outside of the classroom, for students to explore their identities, their personal struggles need to be seen in the context of the larger struggle with the meaning of race in our society. If faculty members and campus leaders listen carefully, these students can provide important lessons for understanding how race works in America. They may even challenge others on campus to be more introspective about their own identities. (Alvarado, 1999, p.4)

Renn (2004) poses a series of questions that a higher education institution might ask in assessing the campus climate for multiracial students:

1. Are programs and services available for monoracial groups equally available to multiracial students? For example, if there is a staff person

for Asian student concerns, is there someone for mixed student concerns?  
If not, why?

2. Do multiracial students have equal access to resources such as scholarships, student organizations (meeting space, activities fee funding, campus services), and support?
3. If the institution measures student satisfaction, are multiracial students as satisfied with their campus experience overall and in specific areas (curriculum, cocurriculum, etc.) as other students and, in particular, students of color who are ostensibly monoracial?
4. In what ways do outcomes (e.g., retention, academic achievement, graduation rates, other measure of student learning and development) vary for multiracial students compared to the population as a whole and monoracial students?

(Renn, 2004, p.245)

Some college campuses have already established student-initiated organizations to address, at least, the sociocultural outcasting that commonly occurs among multiracial students.

Some of these "outcasts" have started forming new groups. Harvard now has ReMixed, a new multiracial organization on the campus. The University of California at Berkeley has a Mixed Student Union; then there is Brown University's Organization of Multiracial and Biracial Students and Bryn Mawr College's Half and Half. Several campuses have "Hapa" organizations for "half-Asian" students. (Riley, 2006)

On a grander scope, Jimenez (2004) alludes to the policy implications that multiracial students raise. Programs such as affirmative action, race-based scholarships/financial aid, organization affiliations and the accompanying problematic data collection, illustrate some of the larger issues that both institutions and individuals will have to grapple with. He points to one example to describe his point.

The dilemma that some respondents face with affirmative action illustrates this point. Affirmative action programs are generally designed to offset

the effects of discrimination. These programs reinforce discrimination as a central feature of the Mexican American narrative since anyone who is of Mexican descent qualifies for affirmative action. As multiethnic Mexican Americans choose their identity on forms or in their daily lives, they must consider the extent to which they have experienced racial or ethnic discrimination on the basis of their ethnic background. Often times it is other Mexican Americans who police the extent to which multiethnic Mexican Americans may claim membership in a Mexican American narrative. (Jimenez, 2004, p.87)

This leads me to discuss the politics of racial “authenticity” which involves an artificial assessment of the degree to which someone is genuinely representative of a particular race/ethnic group. Students of color face this “litmus-test” regularly and perhaps for the first time in college. Self-identifying multiracial students will certainly face this test of authenticity under an aura of suspicion. In fact, one of the commonly held beliefs is that multiracial students use their race opportunistically. Spivak, a deconstructivist researcher, coined the term, strategic essentialism, which speaks to this so-called opportunism (albeit in a different context).

This idea of strategic essentialism was introduced by Gayatri Spivak (1990) who argued that there are times when it might be advantageous for members of oppressed groups to essentialize themselves. For example, when sexists identify women by biology, then women should counteract this essentializing through an anti-sexist stance. Such universalizing is not intellectually justifiable because one enters the grounds of the essentializer and takes on the same qualities. But as long as one is vigilant and clear as to the provisionality of one's stance, theory can be normed by practice. It is better to give up theoretical purity than take an impossible position that has no advantages. (Kelly, 1999)

In other words, there is a strategy, some would argue, laden with privilege, involved in the multiracial college student's choice of racial identification.

They report numerous experiences in which they must negotiate boundaries between ethnic categories and the difficulty that they have crossing back and forth between them. It is through this process of negotiation that the respondents choose, assert, and sometimes shun a particular identity (Jimenez, 2004, p.84)

This is a complex issue, depending upon physical markers such as skin tone, physical appearance, internal racial identity (what an individual believes about his or her own and external racial identity (observer's beliefs about an individual) (Harris & Sim, 2002). Additionally, research suggests that one's multiracial combination determines levels of commitment to their multiracial identification.

The "one-drop" rule seems to remain a constant (Harris & Sim, 2002) with the adolescents in their study. The students who included black as a part of their racial identity had a strong commitment to identifying monoracially as such. By contrast, the two other largest racial combinative groups, American Indian/White and Asian/White had a lesser commitment to their non-white racial identification. Within this process of negotiation, multiracial college students are faced with the discomfort and rejection of their monoracial peers and accompanying student groups.

An article last semester in *The Harvard Crimson* detailed the complaints of a number of mixed-race students who said they felt uneasy attending the meetings of groups that were meant for only one of their multiple ethnicities. Paloma A. Zepeda, half-Mexican and half-Russian, said that when she came to meetings for the Mexican-American student group Raza, people would say, "Look, white people come to Raza." Ms. Zepeda protested, "I am a member of the Hispanic community, but I don't think that's the sum total of everything."

Then there was Yalun H. Tu. He told the *Crimson* reporter he felt uncomfortable at the Chinese-student gatherings: "They would talk about how Chinese mothers are overbearing and strict. But my mother is Caucasian and relaxed, so I couldn't empathize." He lamented, "I just didn't feel that communal bond that I think often binds these groups." (Riley, 2006)

Yet, even given such testimonies, there is a dearth of research regarding the psychosocial and academic development of multiracial students.

Renn (2004) questions and complicates the existing racial identity and student development theories as they apply (or don't apply) to multiracial students.

Neither student development theory nor multiracial identity development theory addresses how multiracial young people make sense of their identity in the context of the college environment. Early in my research, I learned that mixed race students faced the paradox of acknowledging the social construction of race (and wished to dismantle it as such) while also acknowledging the need to create and maintain a self-identified multiracial community on campus. (Renn, 2004, p.25)

How will higher education institutions come to understand the specific needs of this unique population?

Renn (2004) makes a very important and substantive contribution to the study of Multiracial individuals by proposing an ecological model that speaks to the dynamic and ongoing nature of racial identity development, highlighting the complexity of Multiracial identity specifically and departing from the stage-based models which "do not account simultaneously for person, process, context, time and the interactions among them" (p.52). Appealing in her treatment of

Multiracial college students in general, Renn's methodology and her own positionality as researcher raise interesting questions. Renn (2004) describes her research design as follows.

In short, I used ethnographic methods and grounded theory analysis to explore how college students with parents from more than one federally defined racial or ethnic background identified themselves and experienced the developmental influences of campus life. I conducted the study in four phases, on six campuses in three geographic regions, with a total of fifty-six undergraduate participants. (p.53)

The student sample is particularly problematic as it represents students from six different private Midwest and Northeast campuses. First, that region of the country is the least representative of self-identified Multiracial individuals and therefore may not capture a Multiracial experience that is collective. Secondly, the variety of campuses in different locations lacks a consistent context from which to draw findings. Renn also reports that her main inspiration for writing about these students was her role as a higher education student affairs administrator yet she fails to discuss her positionality in an in-depth way as both a white woman and a person in an authoritative role in a college setting in any in-depth, critical way. A crucial element in any effort that attempts to deconstruct race, racial identity and/or racial relations is the close examination of one's positionality because the same self-reflexivity that we demand from our study participants must be modeled and experienced by us as researchers. Why? Pedagogical soundness (Ladson-Billings, 1994), Davies' (1999) self-reflexivity,

Villenas' (1996) colonized Chicana, Delgado-Bernal's (1998) Chicana Feminist Epistemology, Urrieta (2003)

Have we contributed to making identity just another topic for our intellectual self-stimulation, without taking into account the human beings, not just the bodies, we are attempting to understand? Should we use identity and mold it in self-congratulatory ways when we publish articles and write books?

The answer is yes, we should explore identities, the work is necessary, but with a much greater responsibility than trying to create the next answer to the question, or to any question for that matter. There is the responsibility of self-reflection and self-awareness, the responsibility of questioning and realizing that identities are about human beings and not just about what can be told on paper. Identities also cry. What are our goals as scholars and researchers, especially indigenous researchers? How complicit have we become, and how aware are we of what we are doing when we study identity, especially indigenous identities? (p.165)

At issue is also the way that Renn (2003) defines Multiracial students and uses the words biracial, Multiracial, mixed race, and multiple heritage interchangeably. She defines Multiracial students as “those students whose parents are from more than one federally designated racial or ethnic category” (p.1). This definition inadvertently imposes a construction of Multiracial identity that college students may not find relevant. As an example, a student's self-identity may be comprised of racial/ethnic categories that are not federally designated. Renn provides the following rationale for using the words biracial, Multiracial, mixed race, and multiple heritage interchangeably – “my choices are designed to minimize to the extent possible the textual representation of racial categories as immutable entities” (p. 1). However, I think such interchangeability

ignores the historical differences and origins of these terms, some of which have pejorative roots (such as mixed race, which she predominantly uses and uses in the title of her book). As an example, the term “mixed-race,” to some, communicates the stereotypical “mixed-up” and so-called confused state of Multiracial youth.

My study narrows the scope of research on Multiracial college students to examine how Multiracial identities are produced in the context of one predominantly white institution that often requires students to identify monoracially. Rather than creating another model of identity development or ecology of student development, the focus of my research lies predominantly on the close examination of individual Multiracial experiences and how these “othered” spaces are used or not used as tools of agency by Multiracial college students within an educational context. My research explores Multiracial college students’ experiences as sites of potential resistance, empowerment and disillusion in the contexts of internal, external and historical/political perceptions. Unlike most of the literature which focuses on patterns and representations of development (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1993; Kich, 1992; Poston, 1990; Renn, 2000, 2003, 2004; Wallace, 1999; Williams, Nakashima, Kich, & Daniel, 1996; Nishimura, 1998), this study unveils counter-narratives to those of monoracially framed stories. These stories aim to reveal the fluid, dynamic and improvisational nature of their identities.

Researchers such as Wijeyesinghe (1992), Poston (1990), Kerwin and Ponteroto (1993) independently developed a variation of pivotal Multiracial identity development models which include visual representations of either development stages or representation of Multiracial identity as a concept. These models effectively represent the complex nature and intersectionality of Multiracial identity formation and set the stage for the counter-narratives that Multiracial college students share. Nakashima (1992) and Brunsma (2006) apply more political and theoretical notions in their contributions to the field by situating Multiraciality in a sociopolitical context by exploring the ways in which the social existence of being Multiracial interacts with the political landscape of race. While their work provides a crucial backdrop to the history-in-person<sup>13</sup> narratives (Holland et al., 1998), that Multiracial college students draw from, they do not effectively handle the ways in which these students use their identities to either enact personal agency or retreat from empowerment. As Holland et al. (2008) describe, “one’s history-in-person is the sediment of past experiences upon which one improvises, using the cultural resource available, in response to the subject positions afforded one in the present” (p.18). My study takes a critical, theoretical look at the ways in which Multiracial college students understand their identities as expressions of self-affirmation, hegemonic resistance and struggle.

---

Research focusing on Multiracial individuals, and particularly students, is limited. Varying studies have been conducted on a variety of Multiracial groups. Among these groups are: multiethnic Mexican-American adults (Jimenez, 2004), Multiracial adolescents (Harris & Sim, 2002), Multiracial children and educational outcomes (Harris & Thomas, 2002), biracial Asian and African American youth and psychological difficulties (Kao, 1999), Multiracial college students and the role of higher education faculty and staff in their development (Alvarado, 1999) and Multiracial college students' challenges (Nishimura, 1998). These studies suggest that Multiracial students are likely to encounter parallel, yet distinct challenges to their racial "authenticity" as their monoracial counterparts. These challenges involve an artificial assessment of the degree to which someone is genuinely representative of a particular race/ethnic group. As Bracket et al. (2006) indicate,

Being not "fully" a particular race, places Multiracial persons in a social grouping different from that of either parent. Although Multiracial persons usually are assimilated into the identity or heritage of one parent (Wardle, 2000), they nevertheless face issues not experienced by their monoracial peers. These include potential discrimination and rejection by monoracials, possessing physical features that clearly indicate difference, and pressure to ignore or repress part of their identity (Nishimura, 1998). (p.439)

Bracket et al. (2006) relay the "discrimination and rejection" that Multiracial students face solely based on physical differences. Multiracial students face a similar challenge to monoracial students of color. Both

Multiracial and monoracial students of color face a litmus-test of racial authenticity (DaCosta, 2007) regularly and perhaps for the first time in college. Self-identifying Multiracial students, however, will certainly face this test of authenticity under an aura of suspicion. In fact, one of the commonly held beliefs is that Multiracial students use their race opportunistically, strategically essentializing their identities when necessary. This notion of strategic essentialism was introduced by Gayatri Spivak (1990) who argued that there are times when it might be advantageous for members of oppressed groups to essentialize themselves in the interest of a greater cause. In other words, there is a strategy, some would argue, oftentimes laden with privilege, involved in the Multiracial college student's choice of racial identification. This is a complex issue, depending upon physical markers such as skin tone, physical appearance, internal racial identity (what an individual believes about his or her own racial identity) and external racial identity (observer's beliefs about an individual's racial identity). Issues of phenotype are central to the identity construction, negotiation and production of Multiracial identity because physical appearance deeply influences the ways in which Multiracial see themselves and the ways in which others view Multiracials.

The whiter or lighter you are, the more privilege you have access to and the more privileged you may be perceived as within communities of color. Not only is it a liability for Multiracial students to appear or be white, especially

among students of color, but also to “look” white (again, regardless of whether or not their racial background includes whiteness) creates a danger zone of immediate repercussions because the perceived desire to be white equates to possessing an air of superiority. A Multiracial student might ask, how will I be perceived? Will I be seen as the enemy? Will I be seen as the sell-out, the opportunist, the one who can pass? Multiracial students who identify or are perceived as partly white may grapple with how to account for their mixed history of privilege and oppression and with the accompanying pressure they feel to assert their lack of connection to or rejection of whiteness.

There are the intragroup judgments, as a result of internalized oppression<sup>14</sup>, that are ever present and which can also be attributed to the backdrop of whiteness for as I stated earlier, even within communities of color, we separate each other by skin tone, thus replicating the oppressive structure which engages in the same practice (Urrieta, 2003). Foucault’s notion of power echoes - one may constrain his slaves with iron chains, but a true politician binds them even more strongly by the chain of their own ideas (1979). In other words, it could be argued that Multiracial students are bound by the “chain of their own [racialized] ideas.” An aspect of these racialized ideas is the need to “choose only

---

<sup>14</sup> Suzanne Lipsky (1995) uses the term 'internalized oppression,' and defines it as this turning upon ourselves, upon our families, and upon our own people the distress patterns that result from the racism and oppression of the majority society.

one” race to identify with. As Brackett et al. (2006) state in their quantitative study of 496 students enrolled in a small Southern University,

The pressure to choose a racial identity often begins at home (Nishimura, 1998). Recent evidence suggests that Multiracial or multiethnic persons often see themselves as unique and different from either of their parents (Hall, 2000). Nishimura (1998) found that a primary concern of Multiracial college students was lack of empathy from loved ones. In addition, these students indicated that participation in minority organizations or campus activities (e.g., the African American Student Alliance) was not satisfying because of subtle pressure to choose a racial identity. (p.438)

Bracket et al. (2006) underscore the notion of racial uniqueness that Multiracial college students see in themselves and the subsequent ways in which this uniqueness can isolate them from family members and produce feelings of dissatisfaction in their participation in monoracial campus groups. Multiracial college students, in an attempt to be understood, may sense further isolation, or lack of empathy, from loved ones who either do not acknowledge Multiracial as a racial identity or simply can not empathized with the experiences associated with Multiraciality. As I will later discuss in detail, the assertion of a Multiracial identity has been critiqued as an active declaration of separateness, even one of superiority, with regards to one’s community of color. In other words, why choose to identify as Multiracial, say, if you are Black and white? Some would claim that privilege and status lies at the heart of this identification. But, suppose one’s racial background does not include whiteness, such as a person that is Asian and Latino – which racial identity would suggest more privilege? I would assert

that neither of them does because neither of these racial identities alone are Black and/or white. My point is that the conversation around Multiraciality remains centered on issues as they pertain to White superiority, both as they relate to phenotype and racial affiliation.

In Paul Spickard's (2003), *Does Multiraciality Lighten? Me-Too Ethnicity and the Whiteness Trap*, he draws parallels and connections between the study of whiteness and Multiraciality. Among the commonalities that he outlines are, that both: 1) have been put forth of expressions of anti-racism, 2) have been accused of being sell-outs with regards to the interests of people of color, 3) depend on a constructivist concept of identity, 4) have said that they interrogate and therefore undermine White privilege. So, Spickard argues that "the dangers are greater in Whiteness studies than in the Multiracial idea. Critics' fears to the contrary, the acknowledgment of Multiraciality, even the assertion of Multiracial identity, is not necessarily an indicator that one is abandoning one's community of color and seeking Whiteness" (p.289). What is interesting to note here, is that Spickard makes the assumption (as does the reader) that the Multiracial person(s) in question must be, in some way, able to access whiteness (which is not necessarily the case if your racial background does not include whiteness, but, rather, only includes two or more communities of color). Otherwise the commonalities he outlines would not fully apply.

As I have explained, Multiracial students encounter a variety of complex issues. For Multiracial students, their consciousness may be heightened because they understand, at perhaps a more complex level than a monoracial individual, the consequences of identifying as “either” “or” versus “and” or “both (or more)”. While others may assume their racial positioning to be advantageous due to white privilege, for the Multiracial students, it may act as both a blessing and a curse in that privilege may be bestowed upon them initially but is suspended once their “true” Multiracial identities are known. This creates a certain inner tension that is both amorphous and real.

I argue that this reality, that is, Multiracial college students’ construction and negotiation of their identities, affect their schooling experiences. One of the underlying concepts this study rests on is the idea that the social and academic aspects of a college student’s experience are inextricably connected and that, therefore, both must be addressed in conjunction with one another in order for a student to have a positive college experience. And, yet, Multiracial college students are currently present on university campuses and seem to show no halt in comprising a larger portion of the university population.

What is clear is that the mixed race population is growing and will continue to grow rapidly in higher education. Mixed race students themselves know it and challenge educators and scholars to meet them in their multiple ways of identifying. Our preparedness for this challenge-in institutional practice, student support infrastructure, and theoretical flexibility-will be put to the test, a test we must pass in order to serve all of our students, regardless of their racial heritages. (Renn, 2004, p.258)

The Multiracial population, as Renn (2004) notes is growing and shows no signs of stopping. As additional research continues to shed light on the unique issues and needs of Multiracial students, educators will encounter these issues and needs. Whether or not educators and educational institutions do the work of assessing and addressing the needs of Multiracial students is questionable. What we do know is that “our preparedness for this challenge” (Renn, 2004, p.258) will be tested.

In the previous section, I discussed Racial Identity Development Theories and Models. Now, I will present several studies that have been conducted about Multiracial youth (not yet college age), offer my critiques and situate the particularities of my study in the context of this research. I include a brief examination of studies about Multiracial youth to enrich the existing literature about Multiracial college students. In addition to the fact that there are few studies specific to Multiracial college students, the examination of studies about Multiracial youth presents an important dimension to the basis of my study. Multiracial youth represent a growing population that necessitates further study and Multiracial youth are also the precursor to Multiracial college students, providing a window into issues and needs that may arise if and when they make the transition to a higher education institution. Following this section, I will return to a discussion about Multiracial college students, specifically as it pertains to student development and campus climate.

Using 20 in-depth interviews with multiethnic Mexican Americans in California, Jiménez (2004) examined the ethnic identity of the offspring of Mexican/white (non-Hispanic) intermarriages, or multiethnic Mexican Americans. His exploratory research shows that multiethnic Mexican Americans encounter ethnic boundaries in many aspects of their lives. He draws a relationship between the dilemma that his subjects experience filling out forms (checking the boxes) to their daily life experience when choosing identities in different contexts that involve interaction. Jiménez claims that they respond to this dilemma in differing ways according to what they deem appropriate in specific contexts. This malleability or situational identity seems to be a critical factor across various research studies. In this way, Jimenez' research is informative. However, his limited focus on Mexican American/White participants lends itself to a restrained and perhaps, myopic definition of Multiracial identity.

Jimenez' findings are echoed in Harris' and Sim's (2002) study of Multiracial adolescents where depending on the interview location/context (school, home, parents' race), the subjects would identify differently. Their study examined patterns and processes of racial classification for a nationally representative sample of self-identified Multiracial youth (from all different racial combinations). Their data analysis indicated that for their sample, race proved to be not only socially constructed but also fluid. They identify two primary social

factors for understanding patterns of racial fluidity. The first is that shifting racial regimes exert a significant influence on racial classification patterns. Whereas the one-drop rule more predominantly dominated thinking about race, today's youth are being raised in a society that is arguably more open to values of diversity and that has made real efforts (as mentioned earlier) to stress the legitimacy of Multiracial identity. The second is that patterns of racial classification vary because Multiracial groups comprise socially distinct monoracial groups. As an example, they found that White/American Indian youth emerged as the largest Multiracial group but the one least committed to claiming that identity. This finding supports other work that suggests white/Native American identity is often expressed by whites who have little ancestral, phenotypical or cultural connection to Native Americans, but who nevertheless wish to appeal to popular norms of multiculturalism by presenting a diverse portrait of themselves (Eschbach 1995; Harris 1993). These studies suggest that whites who express their cultural connection to their Native American heritage, as small as it may be, do so in an attempt to appear ethnic and/or claim certain reparations entitled to Native Americans as a result of the Native American genocide.

Harris and Thomas (2002) focus on educational outcomes such as GPA, grade repetition, and test scores, generally finding that Multiracial black-white children have outcomes that fall between those of blacks and whites, but in some cases closer to and not statistically distinguishable from whites. They arrived at

this conclusion by using an extremely dated assimilationist theory (1937) to support their findings. They argue that the “marginal man” hypothesis would predict that “mixed” children should have educational outcomes closer to blacks than to whites, which leads them to reject this hypothesis. The marginal man hypothesis is an early sociological concept that was first defined as “one whose fate has condemned to live in two societies and in two, not merely different but antagonistic” (Park, 1928). The marginal man hypothesis suggests that a marginal man experiences a neurosis of sorts as a result of his dualism which presents itself in an emotional and cultural strain, calling to mind the tragic mulatto.

In a separate study, Fryer et al. (2008) employed the Add Health (National Survey of Adolescent Health) data set in their study of Multiracial youth and concluded that as a result of their not having a natural peer group, they need to engage in more risky behaviors to be socially accepted. Fryer et al. suggest that this personal maladjustment leads to a spectrum of internal strain to mental disorders and criminal activity. They also argue that these behaviors are consistent with the “marginal man” hypothesis. This pathologizing of Multiracial youth seems over simplistic and based on a theoretical premise which has been critiqued as diluting the concept of marginality. To inappropriately assert that Multiracial youth are somehow “risky” and “maladjusted” recalls language used to unjustifiably describe other groups of color (such as Blacks and Latinas/os)

undercuts the holistic nature of Multiracial experiences and irresponsibly makes speculations that could prove damaging. Park (1937) argued that "The marginal man...is one whom fate has condemned to live in two societies and in two, not merely different but antagonistic cultures....his mind is the crucible in which two different and refractory cultures may be said to melt and, either wholly or in part, fuse." Studies that rely on this pathological notion that Multiracial individuals are subjected to a state of constant trial and tribulation with regards to their identity (hence, the "crucible" analogy) are archaic and lack substantive research and analysis. However, as I will describe, it is hopeful to note that other scholars are moving away from this stereotype of Multiracial psychological distress.

In her study of biracial Asian and African American youth, Kao (1999) uses a nationally representative data set of youth (the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988) to examine whether biracial youths encounter greater psychological difficulties as previous theorists, such as those discussed earlier, suggest. She also examines whether the school outcomes of biracials more closely resemble that of their minority or white counterparts. Kao argued that the evidence is contrary to the notion that biracial youth disproportionately suffer from social psychological stress relative to other youth suggesting that the stigma once attached to Multiracials may be decreasing for both biracial Asians and Blacks. As Kao recounts, Multiracial youth are often depicted as confused or in the consistent midst of an identity crisis. I focus on these two particular studies to

illustrate the contrast regarding the ways in which Multiracial individuals, and, specifically, youth are subjected to this label of confused, mixed up and/or tortured with regards to their self-identity.

On a college campus, students are faced with stereotypes and engage in a variety of interpersonal scenarios in a variety of settings including but not limited to social, co-curricular and academic settings. Inevitably, Multiracial students will engage in arenas where they will be forced to self-identify. How are college campuses facilitating interactions around race? Or, are higher education institutions and its faculty/staff solely perpetuating the monolithic view of race by either ignoring this student population through omission and/or action? Alvarado (1999) states that “faculty and campus leaders must do more than acknowledge the presence of Multiracial students on campus. They need to understand that these students’ experiences exemplify the ambiguity and complexity of race in America today” (p. 4). She goes on to say that their personal struggles need to be seen in the context of the larger struggle within the meaning of race in our society. Alvarado goes a step further by asserting that Multiracial students can provide important lessons for understanding how race works in America and may even challenge others on campus to be more introspective about their own identities.

#### Student Development Theory and Campus Climate

In order to discuss Multiracial college students, it is important to provide a

context for the ways in which student development and campus climate play a role in the lives of college students in general and students of color, specifically. Campus climate is defined as “the current perceptions, attitudes and expectations that define the institution and its members” (Peterson and Spencer, 1990). In other words, there is a connection between the perceptions that students hold regarding quality of campus climate and the behavioral dimensions of student involvement, intergroup relations, classroom environment, curricular change, campus race relations, social interactions, and participation in racial/ethnic student organizations and minority support programs (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen, 1999). One key to understanding the experiences of Multiracial college students is to review and reflect upon the existing research on campus climate as it relates to racial/ethnic diversity. As Hurtado et al. note, “campuses can no longer speak about changes in the number of diverse students without recognizing how this change affects the psychological climate or opportunities for interaction across different groups on campus—and ultimately changes in educational outcomes for students” (p.6). How do Multiracial students’ perceptions of campus climate impact their college experience and subsequent educational outcomes? My study hopes to direct more attention to this important question, which, up to now, remains unanswered.

According to Hurtado et al. (1999), increasing the racial/ethnic diversity on campuses alone does not, in itself, positively impact racial climate. Rather, active

and ongoing efforts to attend to racial climate (such as meaningful, substantial and sustainable programming, policies, curricula, cross-racial interaction) is necessary in order to improve campus climate and enhance learning. Hurtado et al. document how different racial/ethnic groups can experience difficulties as a result of a poor racial climate,

This research shows that individuals' and particular groups' perceptions of the environment are not inconsequential or intangible, but have tangible and real effects on the transition to college and on educational outcomes. Second, many studies indicate the importance of having diverse peers in the learning environment for important outcomes, such as improvement in students' ability to engage in more complex thinking about problems and to consider multiple perspectives, and improvement in intergroup relations and understanding. Harnessing the learning that can be achieved through contact in student peer groups is key. Third, additional empirical studies reveal that, under certain optimal conditions, racial conflict can be minimized and learning environments enhanced by diversity. Much of this work suggests that providing opportunities for quality interaction and an overall climate of support results in a better racial climate but also in important learning outcomes for students. In many ways, racial/ethnic diversity is linked with institutional goals for learning and teaching. (p.7)

How have Multiracial students been included or engaged in the discussion of campus climate? Hurtado et al. (1999) suggest that "research on specific racial/ethnic groups helps inform our understanding of communities that experience the campus environment differently" (p.101) and suggests that "more research is needed on Asian Americans and Native Americans" (p.101). I would add Multiracial students to that list of groups to be researched as they also add another layer of diversity to the campus community.

Loo and Rolison (1986) claim that "No matter how outstanding the

academic institution, ethnic minority students can feel alienated if their ethnic representation on campus is small” (p.72). If there are students who identify as Multiracial, and we know that there are based on the various research studies based on Multiracially-identified college students, one can comfortably conclude that they may feel alienated. Multiracial college students feel alienated for reasons of small group representation (or lack of critical mass) and simply because Multiracial identity is unacknowledged or treated with disdain (via student groups, admissions forms, culturally relevant curricula, role models such as faculty, administration, staff and the like).

Surely, if, as Hurtado et al. (1999) claim, “The psychological dimension of the climate for diversity involves individuals’ views of group relations, institutional responses to diversity, perceptions of discrimination or racial conflict, and attitudes held toward other from different racial/ethnic backgrounds” (p.25), it is imperative that we solicit the views of all students, including Multiracial students. Their academic and social experiences may be affected by their perceptions of discrimination, as one study found in relation to minority students’ persistence in college (Cabrera and Nora, 1994). Or, perhaps, as Tracey and Sedlacek (1987) found in their study of African American undergraduates, “it may be that some of the more academically confident students of color continue to feel marginalized in college but learn how to deal with instances of personal discrimination” (Hurtado et al., 1999, p.26). The issue remains that we do not

know if and how Multiracial students may be affected and that is why my study and others that came before and will follow it are important steps in finding out.

The assessment of campus climate is based on what factors affect and impact students' college lives. With regards to peer groups, particularly Astin's theory of the effects of peer groups (1993), campus climate discussions are often framed around the importance of peer group's influence on individual student attitudes. Astin defines peer groups as "a collection of individuals with whom the individual identifies and affiliates and from whom the individual seeks acceptance or approval" (p.400). For monoracial students, the "certain set of characteristics that qualify them for membership in the [respective] group [and] which is also accompanied by a sense of how well the individual's values and behaviors conform to the expectations of the other group members" (Hurtado et al., 1999, p.31) may be more apparent and accessible than for Multiracial students. This is because Multiracial students may have navigated different peer groups based on their multiple race background while monoracial students may not have felt the need to do so. This is not to say that only Multiracial students navigate this maze of peer groups nor that only monoracial students remain within their own racial peer group at all times. However, it would be compelling to examine ways in which Multiracial students identify and affiliate with their respective racial groups and how they manage to conform or not conform to acquiring or validating the "ethnic credentials" (DaCosta, 2007) that are required for group acceptance and

approval. My study will begin to draw from Multiracial college students' experiences in an effort to examine these strategies that they may employ in finding their social niche.

A growing body of research (Chang, Denson, Sáenz & Misa, 2006; Chang, Witt, Jones, & Hakuta, 2003; Hurtado, Dey, Gurin, & Gurin, 2003; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998, 1999; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Smith, Gerbick, Figueroa, Watkins, Levitan, Moore, et al., 1997) addresses the importance of diversity both as it relates to student development, academic acclimation and campus climate. This growing body of research has focused primarily on African American, Latina/o and Native American youth, groups that are considered traditionally under-represented in higher education institutions. Specifically, some studies (Antonio, 2001; Astin, 1993; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Chang, 1999; Chang et al., 2003; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hurtado, 2001; Milem, 1994; Orfield & Kurlaender, 2001; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996; Sax & Astin, 1997) have shown that "campus communities that are more racially diverse tend to create more richly varied educational experiences that help students learn and prepare them better for participation in a democratic society" (Chang, Denson, Sáenz & Misa, 2006; p.431).

As Datum (1992) notes in her piece, *Talking About Race, Learning About Racism: 'The Application of Racial Identity Development Theory in the Classroom,*

As many educational institutions struggle to become more multicultural in terms of their students, faculty, and staff, they also begin to examine issues of cultural representation within their curriculum. This examination has evoked a growing number of courses that give specific consideration to the effect of variables such as race, class, and gender on human experience—an important trend that is reflected and supported by the increasing availability of resource manuals for the modification of course content (Bronstein & Quina, 1988; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982; Schuster & Van Dyne; 1985). Unfortunately, less attention has been given to the issues of process that inevitably emerge in the classroom when attention is focused on race, class, and/or gender. It is very difficult to talk about these concepts in a meaningful way without also talking and learning about racism, classism, and sexism.' The introduction of these issues of oppression often generates powerful emotional responses in students that range from guilt and shame to anger and despair. If not addressed, these emotional responses can result in student resistance to oppression-related content areas. Such resistance can ultimately interfere with the cognitive understanding and mastery of the material. (p.2)

As Datum asserts, issues of identity are particularly challenging to address and evoke strong emotions, educational institutions, at all levels, need to engage in personal and professional development that allows teachers to most effectively create a learning environment that nurtures open dialogue and fierce conversations. College student identity development theories help us understand the dynamics around racial experiences and discussions about race and may shed light on the experiences of Multiracial college students. Additionally, the way in

which college students personally and socially develop is inextricably connected to academic achievement.

Academic achievement and social well being can impact a student's academic success, particularly for traditionally underrepresented college students. The level of success that students have in negotiating the social system of college is key to their overall success. As Tinto (1975), a forerunner in the study of the connection between the social system of college and academic success notes,

It is the levels of goal and institutional commitment, in periods of stable market conditions, as they are affected and modified by individuals' experiences in the academic and social systems of college that determine a student's decision to remain in college. Given sufficiently low goal commitment, individuals tend to withdraw not so much because of poor grade performance as because of insufficient rewards gained from the social system of college. (p.117)

Tinto highlights the critical relationship between a college's commitment to a diverse student body and student retention for traditionally underrepresented students. According to Tinto, a college's commitment to a diverse student body refers to the campus' efforts to address diverse student populations through engaging curricula, event programming, inclusive student organizations, safe spaces, themed residential housing, faculty role models, student mentorship and additional factors that contribute to a student's overall learning experience. If the college's commitment to a diverse student body is sufficiently low, the student's feelings of social dissatisfaction are equally low and subsequently lead to student attrition. By creating the conditions for a safe and effective social system for

students, academic institutions provide fertile ground for academic and personal success. Treisman (1985) further supports the importance of an effective social system. Treisman states that,

The process of becoming socially integrated into the fabric of the university has also been found to be both a cumulative and compounding process, and the level of social integration within a given year of study is part of a cumulative experience that continues to build throughout one's college experience. The establishment of peer relations and the development of role models and mentors have been defined in the literature as important factors in student integration, both academically and socially.

Treisman points to the significance of peer relations and role models/mentors in healthy student integration in college life. Treisman also calls attention to the cumulative process of this social and academic integration. In other words, all of the minute social interactions and academic instances establish and shape a college student's perception of self and of schooling. Given this crucial connection between the social and academic experiences, my study will explore the ways in which this connection impacts and plays out in the educational lives of Multiracial college students. As an example, Multiracial students may have more challenges in establishing peer relations and in finding role models because they may alternate between one racial group to another and that may prove to be a less than consistent experience. My study complicates the traditional discourse regarding socioacademic integration by looking at Multiracial students in particular, rather than first generation monoracial students of color. My study adds a more comprehensive understanding of what social well being means for

Multiracial college students' marginal status within the marginal status of traditionally underrepresented monoracial college students.

### Education and Multiracial Students

Like all children, Multiracial children benefit from seeing a reflection of themselves in all aspects of education including the backgrounds of their teachers, the diversity and depth of culturally responsive (Ladson-Billings, 1994) curricula and a general climate of mutual respect, safety and intellectual rigor. Multiracial children need to be affirmed in their Multiracial identity and not be seen as peripheral or abnormal. Oftentimes, Multiracial students are depicted as racial harmonizers, appreciative of differences and drawn toward higher levels of tolerance than monoracial people (Thornton, 1996). They are also pathologized as confused, struggling and alone. In the recent article, *The Plight of Mixed-Race Students*, Fryer et al. (2008) claim that "Mixed race adolescents – not having a natural peer group – need to engage in more risky behaviors to be accepted" (p.2).

Multiracial students encounter racism like other monoracial individuals. They also experience a specific type of racism from those that oppose or are disgusted by intermarriage (Miller & Rotheram-Borus, 1994; Pinderhughes, 1995). Multiracial individuals disrupt the "purity" of white privilege by nature of their background. This is particularly true of African Americans who are Multiracial, who express the heaviest racism as a result of the historical legacy of

discrimination and violence toward Blacks (Okun, 1996). One researcher claims that “[Multiracial] students are more sensitized to race than their monoracial peers” (Brackett et al., 206, p.442).

Indeed, educators have a particularly influential role in the shaping of Multiracial students’ experiences. The campus climate, school policies, classroom curricula and particularly, hidden curriculum (Giroux et al., 1983), play major roles in their development and self-perception. Necessarily, this study aims to contribute to the knowledge, strategies and resources in order to better serve this student population.

In the digest, *The Schooling of Multiracial Students*, Schwartz (1998) references several suggestions to educators on how to foster respect and appreciation for Multiracial students. One of the many suggestions she points to is the development and sharing of family trees as a strategy for community-building and educational tool. She also notes that parents or other relatives can be invited to talk to the class or participate in a group activity (Wardle, 1987). In addition, schools (at all levels) can enrich the curricula by including (Morrison & Rodgers, 1996; Wardle, 1987, 1992) texts, lessons and activities that represent Multiracial individuals and groups. Certainly, the theme of curricula as it pertains to Multiracial students is one that has much room for growth and creativity. Hurtado et al. (1999) offers the following advice with regards to university

campuses but her main points are transferable across the educational spectrum.

They explain,

Faculty might also draw from approaches identified in postsecondary and K-12 research for guidance in developing curricular and pedagogical interventions that contribute to a more positive campus climate for diversity. A meta-analysis of research found that using role playing and antiracist teaching can reduce levels of prejudice in students (McGregor, 1993). The degree of relative impact is greater for students in primary and secondary classrooms than it is for college and university students, but the effect is generally positive nonetheless. In addition, interracial interaction can be encouraged by aligning assignments with multicultural cocurricular activities on campus sponsored by student affairs [or administration]. Specifically, more campuses are experimenting with three to six week and semester length dialogue groups designed to encourage frank discussions among students about beliefs and stereotypes. (p.43)

Hurtado et al. recommend that postsecondary institutions look to research in developing pedagogical approaches to curriculum that enhance a positive campus climate for increasing diverse student populations. Specifically, Hurtado et al. point to research that has used interactive strategies, antiracist teaching and integration of in-class and out of class activities to reduce levels of prejudice among students. They advocate for the implementation of dialogue groups that are designed to have difficult, honest discussions among students about difference.

Suggestions have also been made with regards to increasing collaborative and cooperative approaches to learning (Treisman, 1985) and simultaneously increasing self-esteem. Incorporating issues of diversity into course content has also proven effective (MacPhee, Kreutzer, & Frtiz, 1994; Adams & Zhou-

McGovern, 1994; Ortiz, 1995; Smith et al., 1997) especially when process issues are taken into consideration (Tatum, 1995), given that topics that deal with diverse identities are often triggers challenging emotions and dispositions in students. In short, educational outcomes are clearly connected with campus climate and student development issues. This study hopes to contribute to discussions, research and classroom practices that aim to explore this connection with regards to Multiracial students. In order to situate the experiences of Multiracial college students, I present a conceptual framework that serves as the foundation from which to analyze them.

### Conceptual Framework

#### *Introduction to Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual framework of this study is not simple because it draws from varying theoretical bodies of thought. My desire to illustrate the dynamic, multivocal ways in which Multiracial students improvise and find spaces to re-describe themselves within socially imposed positions demanded a rich and complex approach. Multiracial students' process of re-creating their cultural worlds, in an effort to understand and experience their identities, is not simple. The conceptual framework of this study reflects the multidimensional, complicated ways in which Multiracial students engage their identity production. I draw from Social Practice Theory of Self and Identity, Chicana Feminist Theory

and Queer Theory to develop a Racial Queer Conceptual Framework from which to analyze the experiences of Multiracial college students. In the following sections, I will independently outline and describe the above theoretical bodies of thought as each of them stands alone in meaning and weight. The purpose of independently describing each theoretical body of thought before explaining the *Racial Queer* framework is to clearly present their richness and autonomy in and of themselves. Certainly, I could have relied on only one or perhaps two of these theoretical approaches to frame this study. In retrospect, this may have been an easier strategy to complete the dissertation. However, easier is not better.

As I explored appropriate and substantive theories from which to draw upon, I was convinced that the study could only thrive if I combined tenets from the Social Practice Theory of Self and Identity, Chicana Feminist Theory and Queer Theory. Intuitively, my approach to interrupt and problematize straightforward and seemingly more comfortable ways of approaching my research resonated with my facultad. In other words, I challenged myself by not acquiescing to one single approach that would have been more comfortable, less vulnerable to question and compliant with more traditional, safer suggestions to keep my approach more contained and less audacious. Internally, I struggled with my daring to introduce uncharted territory. Who was I to come up with something new? Who was I to arrogantly overstep my boundaries as a graduate student? Indeed, I questioned my ability, my entitlement and my perceived

disregard for other scholars' work that had come before me. The more I contemplated these issues, the more I realized that my positionality as (a once) Undocumented, Immigrant, First-language learning, Brown, Multiracial, Queer, Female, Atheist was playing a direct role in my overall sense of unworthiness. All of these positionalities were ones that historically and currently are seen as less than, oppressed and unfitting to exert such power or command. I decided to challenge such inequities by asserting myself. I took a risk by developing the *Racial Queer* framework because I believe that I overstepped traditional bounds of roles and expectations and yet, this is exactly what I intended – to queer, not only, the concept of the monoracial but to queer the approach in which I engaged the study of Multiraciality. I entered into this academic escapade with trepidation but ended it with a stronger, humbler sense of self. My hope is that in struggling through this process, I will articulate a useful and empowering conceptual framework in understanding otherwise invisible experiences.

I present three mechanisms for explaining the *Racial Queer* framework in order to address the diverse learning styles of individual readers and to formulate varying presentations of the framework. I do not expect that all readers will engage with all of these mechanisms. Rather, I present choices from which readers can best comprehend and utilize the frameworks. It is up to the reader to decide what mechanism(s) to focus upon. Pedagogically, I believe that offering a kinesthetic-like, visual and written representation of the conceptual framework is

both engaging and sound practice. Following the independent descriptions of the different theories, I will weave them together in a cohesive fabric to develop the *Racial Queer* framework. There, I will describe each of the three aforementioned mechanisms: a metaphor of the body (kinesthetic-like), a visual representation in the form of a flow chart (visual) and written analysis (written/verbal) to contextualize and envision the ways in which Social Practice Theory of Self and Identity, Chicana Feminist Theory and Queer Theory work together in forming the *Racial Queer* Framework.

#### *Social Practice Theory of Self and Identity*

I begin by utilizing Holland, Lacichotte, Skinner & Cain's (1998) social practice theory of self and identity to address the thesis of my dissertation and its sub-questions, each examined from their perspective that one has the capability of actively participating in different cultural worlds within one's socially constructed and scripted social position. This sociohistoric view of the self is meant to "extend, through concepts drawn from Bakhtin and Vygotsky, the lessons learned from anthropological encounters with self and identity to a cultural studies of the person" (p.32). Particularly, Holland et al. (1998) draw from one of Bakhtin's most "significant explorations of personhood – one that is socially and historically construed, yet creative" (p.34). Additionally, they conceptualize their theory in a Vygotskian way – "in opposition to the stimulus-response psychology of his day"

(p.35). As Holland et al. (1998) point out, “for him the key to human existence was the ability of humans to escape enslavement to whatever stimuli they happened to encounter. And the way they did this was (broadly) linguistic, that is, through the active construction and use of symbols” (p.35). This “active control” (p.36) is at the heart of what Holland et al. (1998) refer to as “improvisation.” Improvisation, according to Holland et al. (1998) refer to those “responses to social and cultural openings and impositions” (p.270) which allow for the elaboration of identities “on intimate terrain” (p.270), that is, that space which is somewhat maneuverable “even as these identities are worked and reworked on the social landscape” (p.270). In this theory, “position is not fate,” (p.45) nor is it “impossible for people to figure and remake the conditions of their lives” (p.45).

Holland et al. (1998) also refer to Leontiev’s (1978) (often associated with the sociohistorical school) notion of culture. “Culture, for Leontiev, becomes a ‘reading,’ a conceptual figuration, of the environment” (p.39). He also claims that “people respond to what they find in the environment in the context of a historically, socially and culturally constructed form of social (inter)action that he called an *activity*” (p.39). Holland et al.’s (1998) concept of *figured worlds* draw upon this notion of activity.

Figured worlds, according to Holland et al. (1998), are imagined communities that operate dialectically and dialogically in “as if” worlds. These

“as if” worlds are both social realities defined by power dynamics and spaces of agency and improvisation. They are defined by the ways in which individuals participate in and with these *figured worlds* on a daily basis. Figured worlds consist of four traits. First, figured worlds are,

historical phenomena, to which we are recruited or into which we enter, which themselves develop through the works of their participants. Figured worlds, like activities, are not so much things or objects to be apprehended, as processes or traditions of apprehension which gather us up and give us form as our lives intersect them. (p.41)

Secondly, they are “social encounters in which participants’ positions matter” (p.41). Third, they are “socially organized and reproduced” (p.41). In other

words, they depend on interaction and subjectivities in order to perpetuate.

Finally, “Figured worlds distribute ‘us’, not only by relating actors to landscapes of action (as personae) and spreading our senses of self across many different fields of activity, but also by giving the landscape human voice and tone” (p.41).

In other words, figured worlds are an integral part of humans and society. They can be characterized as metanarratives that develop over history and time, forming over in continual practice. Holland et al.’s (1998) theory of identity production is critical in conceptualizing the agency that Multiracial students enact within their own figured world of Multiraciality because it provides a powerful alternative to psychological models as an approach to viewing identity production. This theory also takes into account the daily lived moments of Multiracial students rather than broad stages throughout a life span. Accounting

for the daily lived moments of Multiracial students is important because it allows us to reveal sites of agency within daily interactions which emphasizes the agentic potential in the everyday, and in this way, highlighting the complexity, positioning and negotiation of the lived experiences of Multiracial individuals.

Figured worlds, according to Holland et al. (1998) “rest upon people’s abilities to form and be formed in collectively realized ‘as if’ realms” (p.49). So, what if racial identification was defined, not just by the individual, but also by others around you, and what if, in order to be deemed racially authentic, one had to pass a series of qualifying litmus “tests”? Or, what if we lived in a world where there was an ideal image of beauty and this image was so powerful, that people who matched its characteristics received more power and privilege? These questions might define one of many *figured worlds* for Multiracial students, where they both exist within certain parameters (outside of their control) and where they can find ways to creatively assert their own agency through improvisation. As Holland et. al (1998) note, “people’s identities and agency are formed dialectically and dialogically in these ‘as if’ worlds” (p.49). A figured world, according to Holland et al., is a narrative which includes a standard plot as well as “figures, characters, and types who carry out its tasks and who also have styles of interacting within distinguishable perspectives on, and orientation toward it” (p.51). Figured worlds also rely upon artifacts. Holland et al. (1998) define artifacts as “the means by which figured worlds are evoked, collectively

developed, individually learned, and made socially and personally powerful”

(p.61). These are both instrument and collective remembrance.

Bourdieu’s (1985a) notion of habitus and field closely parallel Holland et al.’s notion of figured world. He uses the term, field, to refer to “a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy” (p.58). According to Holland et al. (1998), “the concept of field directed attention to the aspects of the collectively defined activities that make up the arts and the academy that relate to what Weber (1978) would have called ‘status’” (p.59). The concept of figured world extends beyond Bourdieu’s notion of field which “were directed toward the prominent men and women of the system” to “a field analysis [that] is relevant to any figured world” (p.59) within everyday relations. Figured worlds, therefore, supply “the contexts of meaning for actions, cultural productions, performances, disputes, for the understandings that people develop to direct their own behavior in these worlds” (p.60).

Other critical facets of these lived worlds is that of “power, status, relative privilege, and their negotiation and that of one’s self as entitled or disqualified and inappropriate” (Holland et al., 1998, p.125). Holland et al. (1998) refer to these facets as relational and positional identities. Relational identities “have to do with behavior as indexical of claims to social relationships with others. They have to do with how one identifies one’s position relative to others, mediated through the ways one feels comfortable or constrained” (p.127). Positional

identities “have to do with the day-to-day and on-the-ground relations of power, deference and entitlement, social affiliation and distance—with the social- interactional, social-relational structures of the lived world” (p.127). In other words, Holland et al. (1998) claim that positional identity is “a person’s apprehension of her social position in a lived world” (p.128) depending on the contextual circumstances including, but not limited to, other people present, access to spaces and activities and authoritative voices, or any voice at all.

From the vantage point of *positional/relational identities*, the experiences of Multiracial students’ identities can be defined by their position, relative to others. In other words, based on their comfort level in situational contexts, Multiracial students negotiate their identities. These negotiations allow Multiracial students to operate in dynamic, fluid and ever-changing modes of strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1990), not as fixed beings achieving a variety of identity model benchmarks. Holland et al. (1998) note,

People tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves who they are and then try to act as though they are who they say they are. These self-understandings, especially those with strong emotional resonance for the teller, are what we refer to as identities. (p. 3)

This approach disrupts the perception that there is an end stage to identity development. As identities change based on the relational nature of specific situations, there is no way to essentialize Multiracial identity – this analysis

invites new ways of thinking about identity development that are both flexible and purposive.

The *space of authoring* speaks to this flexibility and purpose as it refers to a continual inner dialog, where one is persistently addressed and in the process of answering. In other words, “people coexist, always in mutual orientation moving to action; there is no human action which is singularly expressive” (p.169).

Holland et al. (1998) base this concept of Bakhtin’s vision of self-fashioning which allows them to articulate “an alternative vision, organized around the conflictual, continuing dialogic of an inner speech where active identities are ever forming” (p.169). In the making of identity, “the ‘I’ is by no means a freewheeling agent” (p.170), rather the ‘I’ builds upon that which is already there, what has been built over history and time. The authoring of self is also “invisible to itself” (p.173). This is because, the self is a continuing activity and cannot be finalized. Indeed, according to Bakhtin, self-authoring “is an orchestration of such voices” (p.178), or “heteroglossia” (p.182), “a cacophony of different languages and perspectives” (p.182).

In studying Multiracial students, this notion resonates with the ways in which they may or may not feel constantly relocated in addressing their racial identity and answering to it, both within themselves and in interactions with others. Such interfaces are laden with opportunities to seize, confiscate and/or brush with power and privilege. This *space of authoring* is not immune from the

hegemonic norms and structures which insidiously permeate all of our actions, and, is, in fact, never fixed. It is a space where, in that precise moment, an identity is asserted—partially self-orchestrated but only within the parameters and sites which constrain and provide the limited language/expression to devise it. It is within this space of authoring, where the “space of play” resides – that is, “the form of activity that proceeds in ignorance of any constitutive condition other than a cultural and conventional design” (p.236).

Play is also “the medium of mastery, indeed of creation of ourselves as human actors. Without the capacity to formulate other social scenes in imagination, there can be little force to a sense of self, little agency” (p.236). Precisely within this play, is where this study situates the compelling site of the production of Multiracial identity. It is through this play that “new figured worlds may come about” (p.272). Improvisation, then, becomes the predominant form of agency for Multiracial students to contribute to their identity production. In order to fuel this improvisational play, I argue that Multiracial students draw from a certain history-in-person, facultad, cultural intuition and/or oppositional consciousness, concepts drawn from Chicana Feminist Theory, as tools for survival and action in a monoracially framed world. I begin by relaying the history of Chicana Feminist Theory, then transition into the ways in which these Chicana Feminist concepts apply to the production of Multiracial identity.

### *Chicana Feminist Theory*

The Chicana Feminist Movement of the 1970's emerged as a response to both the Chicano Movement and the Feminist Movement, both struggles that Chicanas participated actively in. The two primary sources of the origins of the Chicana Feminist movement were the result of: "the dynamics within the Chicano movement" (Garcia, 1989, p.218) which, lacking in an analysis of sexism, led Chicana feminists to reassess the benefits and drawbacks of their role within the movement, and their lack of representation in the white feminist middle-class movement.

Castillo (1995) describes the gendered dynamics of the Chicano movement this way:

By the beginning of the new decade [1970], however, many Chicana/Latina activists, disenchanted, if not simply worn down, by male-dominated Chicano/Latino politics, began to develop our own theories of oppression. Compounding our social dilemmas related to class and race were gender and sexuality. For the brown woman the term feminism was and continues to be inseparably linked with white women of middle-and upper-class background. (This is also the case, by and large, in México.) Feminism, therefore, is perhaps not a term embraced by most women who might be inclined to define themselves as Chicanas and who, in practice, have goals and beliefs found in feminist politics. Therefore, I use the term *conscientización* as it has been applied among Spanish-speaking women activists. (p.10-11)

Chicana feminists began to reconceptualize their roles as activists by expanding the definition of the Chicana/o feminist movement. To identify as Chicana no longer meant to abide by sexist standards, deferring to the Chicanos in the

community nor did it mean to cast Chicanos aside as machistas. Rather, the identity involved a melding of female strength and a collaborative spirit that took the entire Chicana familia, males and females, into consideration in their struggles for social justice. As Garcia (1989) states,

They understood that their movement needed to go beyond women's rights and include the men in their group, who also faced racial subordination (hooks, 1989). Chicanas believed that feminism involved more than an analysis of gender because, as women of color, they were affected by both race and class in their everyday lives. Thus, Chicana feminism, as a social movement to improve the position of Chicanas in American society, represented a struggle that was both nationalist and feminist. (p.229)

Chicana feminists sought unity within the overall Chicano/a movement with the caveat that all struggles of oppression (including race, sexuality and gender) must be fought mutually. Mirta Vidal (1972) explains,

While it is true that the unity of La Raza is the basic foundation of the Chicano Movement, when Chicano men talk about maintaining La Familia and the 'cultural heritage' of La Raza, they are in fact talking about maintaining the age-old concept of keeping the woman barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen. On the basis of subordination of women, there can be no real unity.....The only real unity between men and women is the unity forged in the course of struggle against their oppression. And it is by supporting, rather than opposing, the struggles of women, that Chicano and Chicanas can genuinely unite. (pp.31-32)

In other words, the struggle for social justice must be fought on all fronts, otherwise the struggle is incomplete and ineffectual. The sexism and racism which Chicanas faced was not just a Chicana issue but also a Chicano issue. The

mantra, “no one is free until we are all free” was ringing truer and truer, not just within the Chicano/a movement but reverberating across racial and ethnic lines.

Parallel movements also arose with Black and Asian American feminists who were all confronted with the issue of engaging in a feminist struggle to end sexist oppression within a broader nationalist struggle to end racist oppression. Unlike the white feminist movement, feminists of color advocated for a communal struggle which would both advance women and men of color. Rincon (1971) argued that “a Chicana feminist movement that sought equality and justice for Chicanas would strengthen the Chicano movement. Yet in the process, Chicana feminists challenged the traditional gender roles because they limited their participation and acceptance within the Chicano movement” (Garcia, 1989, p.221). This was a complex task, as Chicanas fought against the differing interpretations of *machismo*. On the one hand, machismo, according to Riddell (1974), was a myth “propagated by subjugators and colonizers, which created damaging stereotypes of Mexican/Chicano males” (p.21). On the other, other Chicanas disagreed with the culturalist nationalist view of machismo.

Drawing on an analysis that distinguished between the machismo that oppressed both men and women and the sexism in Chicano communities in general (Garcia, 1989), Chicana feminists adamantly disagreed that machismo was a form of cultural resistance to racial discrimination. Nieto (1974) concluded

that the term, machismo, “does a great disservice to both men and women. Chicano and Chicana alike must be free to seek their own individual fulfillment” (p.4). Such a stance was seen as a threat to the Chicano movement as a whole. Loyalists accused Chicana feminists of undermining the values of Chicanismo, thereby undermining the unity of the Chicano movement (Nieto-Gomez, 1974). Chicana feminists, and, in particular, Chicana feminist lesbians, were perceived as a distraction from the movement, even seen as “selling out” by melting into the white society and norms (Garcia, 1989).

Cherrie Moraga’s writings from the 1970’s reflected this struggle of Chicana feminist lesbians as extreme derivations from the “real” movement. The “real” movement focused primarily on heterosexual males. While heterosexual Chicanas were making inroads into the movement, Chicana lesbians were hardly, if ever, on the radar screen. Rather than view Chicana lesbians’ issues as separate and mutually exclusive from the “real” Chicano movement, Moraga (1983) advocated for an authentic, non-hierarchical approach to addressing oppression in all of its iterations, an approach that goes beyond theory. Moraga (1983) astutely stated, however, that ranking oppressions was a dangerous and intolerable exercise. She noted,

In this country, lesbianism is a poverty-as is being brown, as is being a woman, as is being just plain poor. The danger lies in ranking the oppressions. The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression. The danger lies in attempting to deal with oppression purely from a theoretical base. Without an emotional, heartfelt grappling

with the source of our own oppression, without naming the enemy within ourselves and outside of us, no authentic, non-hierarchical connection among oppressed groups can take place. (p.52-53)

Moraga points to the crucial significance of “naming the enemy within ourselves and outside of us” with the clear knowledge that “an emotional, heartfelt grappling with the source of our own oppression.” In other words, both liberation and danger exist simultaneously when naming the grappling and/or suffering of individual oppression. The liberation of naming our individual oppression lies in the power of appointing a name, a word, and language to a painful experience that was once invisible. The danger of naming our individual oppression lies in treating it in a vacuum, separate from the other individual oppression. The compartmentalization of oppressions, without acceptance and appreciation of how individual oppressions are deeply interwoven, can lead to the fallacious sense that we must struggle alone and against one another. This tendency to feel alone in our fight against oppression calls to mind the adage, who needs enemies when we have ourselves and each other? In other words, we waste time and energy by pitting oppressed groups against each other. A sense of communal, global struggle is absolutely necessary in fostering the “non-hierarchical oppression among oppressed groups” against the larger systematic oppressor that subjugates us all.

Certainly, a similar argument could be made regarding Multiracial individuals. In this country, the danger lies in considering Multiraciality as a

racial afterthought, ranking the identity as one that is irrelevant, not as important and/or detrimental to monoracial causes for civil rights and social justice.

Multiracial people are not the enemies of monoracial people of color. Together, we are up against the same foe of racism, white supremacy and injustice. The first battlefront with regards to genuine inclusion and resistance against all forms of exclusion and injustice is acknowledging that there are no ranks in the conception of oppression – suffering can not be measured nor can the specificities of oppression.

The second battlefront with regards to establishing an inclusive Chicana Feminist movement was with respect to the white middle-class feminist movement. As Nieto-Gomez (1974) explains,

The Chicana's socio-economic class as a non-Anglo, Spanish-speaking, low-income Chicana woman determines her need and therefore her political position. The low-income Anglo woman does not have to deal with this racism nor is she punished because she speaks another language. The middle-class Anglo woman only shares with the Chicana the fact they are both women. But they are women of different ethnic, cultural, and class status. All these factors determine the different socio-economic needs and therefore determine the different political positions of these women. (p.39)

Nieto-Gomez highlights the ways in which Chicanas' issues differ from the low-income Anglo woman. Among these differences are the Chicana's world of racism and language barriers, two issues that Anglo women are not forced to confront. Nieto-Gomez claims that the only commonality that Chicanas share with Anglo woman is the fact that they are biologically women. Aside from that,

the different socioeconomic factors that Chicanas face position them in a completely different political space. So, when discussing the feminist movement, one must ask the question—whose feminist movement?

The struggle to differentiate the Chicana Feminist movement from the middle-class white feminist movement embodied what is known as the second wave of the women's movement or, U.S. Third World Feminism (Sandoval, 1991), which Sandoval describes as a "kind of kinetic and self-conscious mobility of consciousness . . . as they identify oppositional subject positions and enact them differentially" (p.2-3, 10-11). As Fregoso (1993) puts it, she "embraces the rebel spirits of U.S. Third World feminists who reside between and among subject positions and critical cultural discourses" (p.21). Anzaldúa (1987) captures this location as the *borderlands*. As she explains, to reside in the borderland may not be comfortable, but it is home.

Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an "alien" element. There is an exhilaration in being a participant in the further evolution of humankind, in being "worked" on. I have the sense that certain 'faculties'-not just in me but in every border resident, colored or non-colored-and dormant areas of consciousness are being activated, awakened. Strange, huh? And yes, the 'alien' element has become familiar-never comfortable, not with society's clamor to uphold the old, to rejoin the flock, to go with the herd. No, not comfortable but home.  
(preface)

Anzaldúa describes living on borders and in margins as both uncomfortable and as home. She compares this residence to "swimming in a new element," one that

is “alien” and “exhilarating” at the same time. I interpret this comparison to mean that the alien feeling, while uncomfortable because of its undefinability, is scary and exciting. The ability to survive, to stay afloat, amidst these “familiar-never comfortable” waters is a special “faculty,” an intangible power and competency to inhabit the unknown and not drown. Residing in a borderland means that you are constantly being “worked on,” an active participant in “the further evolution of mankind.” Indeed, the borderland is a dwelling which requires tolerance in ambiguity and a certain faith or facultad in locating bearings where there may be none.

I argue that Multiracial individuals also reside in a borderland of sorts. It is a space of gray. This borderland is not defined within the traditional monoracial categories, nor within the field of cultural studies. Within the academy, we are limited by set terminologies, theories and frameworks which divide and create supremacist ideologies. In other words, ideologies are created around oppressed groups (such as Chicanas, Blacks, Poor, Muslims, Disabled, LGBTQ<sup>15</sup>), that, rather than coalescing around a greater interconnected social cause, are rendered as more or less important than the other, creating frictions within a general movement of social progressiveness. This notion echoes Anzaldúa’s (1987) analysis of borderlands. As Sandoval (2000) notes,

---

<sup>15</sup> LGBTQ stands for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/Questioning community(ies).

The connection that links each of the racialized, genderized, sexualized, in short, divided, theoretical domains in the academy to one another is that each is grappling with the hope—or despair—of globalizing postmodern first world cultural conditions by seeking, willing, or celebrating some aspect of the meaning or operation of a differential form of oppositional consciousness, whether this be in the form of the “hybrid,” the “mobile,” the “nomad,” or any “radical *mestizaje*” form of “situated subjectivities.” (p. 71)

This division of terminologies/oppressions which describes the growing frictions between activists along lines of sexual orientation, gender, race, class, nation or other differences produces “horizontal hostility” (p. 74). Sandoval (2000) proposes that “a shared theory and method of oppositional consciousness [be employed] to solve the problematics of the disciplinization and apartheid of academic knowledges in the human and social sciences” (p. 77). I suggest that discussions around Multiraciality may provide a cross-disciplinary space to consider and even activate such oppositional consciousness by deconstructing monoracial vocabularies and ideologies. This cross-disciplinary space allows us to explore the multidimensionality which captures that quality of Multiracial identity which can not be essentialized or boxed. As Torres (2003) recognizes in her cross-disciplinary approach in the introduction to *Chicana without Apology/Chicana sin Verguenza: The New Chicana Cultural Studies*, this approach should “broaden the scope of cultural studies” (p.2). It is “an unapologetic challenge to the traditions and systems that have tried to silence Chicanas and so many others” (p.2).

This accessible and transdisciplinary approach to the study of Multiraciality can also be utilized as an act of coalition-building between and among different racial groups, an “alliance and affection across the lines of difference that intersect both in and out of the body” (Sandoval, 2000, p.170). The collaborative spirit and movement across academic, geopolitical and personal borders is a negotiation, position(s) and construction of self-understanding from which individuals and communities enact agency. It is an unapologetic act of prophetic love (Walker, 1982) which as Sandoval (2000) clarifies, “undoes the ‘one’ that gathers the narrative, the couple, the race, into a singularity. Instead, prophetic love gathers up the *mezcla*, the mixture, that lives through *differential movement* between possibilities of being” (p.169).

This *mezcla* resists essentialist categorizations and sketches a space where those of Multiracial identities can “stand and claim my space, making a new cultura—*una cultura mestiza*—with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.44). I argue that Multiracial college students are also active, although not sole, architects of their own racial identity. At times, they are strategic – at others, playful and even, *malcreados* (something close to mischievous). They travel borderland terrain where the map is always changing and the internal compass spins wildly. Anzaldúa (1987) states,

The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'. (p. 25)

As Anzaldúa (1987) argues, most societies try to get rid of their “deviants.”

Those that are classified as “*mita' y mita*” (p. 41), half and half, deviate from nature – they are deformed. But she also points to the “magic aspect” in abnormality and this so-called deformity. While Multiracial college students may suffer ostracization, they also, at certain points in their identity development, may embrace the uniqueness of their racial/cultural fusion and gain a certain competency or as Anzaldúa (1987) more aptly puts it, *la facultad*. According to Anzaldúa (1989), *la facultad* is

the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an instant ‘sensing,’ a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning. It is an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings, that is, behind which feelings reside/hide. The one possessing this sensitivity is excruciatingly alive to the world. (p.60)

*La facultad* is a survival mechanism, a sixth sense that develops as a response to others’ racism, homophobia, sexual violence, and general intolerance. For those who dwell in a borderland, caught between and amongst worlds, *la facultad* is a well of empowerment, a spiritual haven, that is ever-present. Emma Pérez (2005), in recounting a visit with Gloria Anzaldúa, describes the way she employs *la facultad* to reach a *coatlicue* state. Pérez explains,

Like *la facultad*, which is the interpretive tool, the *coatlicue* state is that

space in which we dwell when we plunge into the abyss of self-pity, of *borracheras* without alcohol or drugs. The *coatlicue* state is the alternate consciousness that we delve into, feeling sorry for ourselves until *coatlicue* kicks our butt and says, "Ya. *Parale*." Time to move on, to get through this, to learn from all you have experienced in your material and psychic worlds. It's that crucial time when we're haunted by the shadow beast, our inner selves, that part that won't let us rest, that part that says, you're never going to meet the ideal expected of you. I call my own shadow beast that ego-driven, maniacal, Eurocentric-minded part of me immersed in inner battle. When I'm so exhausted by my own inner demons, I call upon *la facultad* to assist me so that I may delve into the *coatlicue* state to recover a sense of humility, to recover a sense of cultural, psychic identity. There is a kind of self-therapy that is so much a part of Gloria's concepts, but her theories are more than self-therapy. Gloria's theories, when applied, call upon us to transform not only ourselves but also our many communities. (p.4)

As Pérez passionately illustrates, *la facultad* emerges from a place of exhaustion, fear, demonism, battle and resistance. When *la facultad* emerges or is called upon, it is a "crucial time" to "recover a sense of cultural, psychic identity" that goes beyond "self-therapy" and extends to a larger "call" of community transformation. Anzaldúa (1989) asserts that *la facultad* is present, whether we are aware of it or not:

When we're up against the wall, when we have all sorts of oppressions coming at us, we are forced to develop this faculty so that we'll know when the next person is going to slap us or lock us away. We'll sense the rapist when he's five blocks down the street. Pain makes us acutely anxious to avoid more of it, so we hone that radar. It's a kind of survival tactic that people, caught between the worlds, unknowingly cultivate. It is latent in all of us. (p.60)

Stated even more succinctly, "confronting anything that tears the fabric of our everyday mode of consciousness and that thrusts us into a less literal and more psychic sense of reality increases awareness and *la facultad*" (p.60) And, it is

those that are persistently marginalized that are more attuned to this sense.

Anzaldúa depicts them as,

Those who are pushed out of the tribe for being different are likely to become more sensitized (when not brutalized into insensitivity). Those who do not feel psychologically or physically safe in the world are more apt to develop this sense. Those who are pounced on the most have it the strongest—the females, the homosexuals of all races, the dark-skinned, the outcast, the persecuted, the marginalized, the foreign. (p.60)

I see *la facultad* as a parallel concept reflected in a variation on Delgado-Bernal's (1998) concept of *cultural intuition*. In her well-cited piece, *Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research*, Delgado-Bernal introduces the concept of *cultural intuition* to highlight the distinctive perspectives that Chicana scholars bring to the research process. Multiracial researchers, as well as other Multiracial communities, can and do bring a unique perspective to this process. So, too, the study of Multiraciality can be utilized as a tool of resistance, even a subversive instrument, in solidarity with traditional monoracial narratives and against discourses that fail to capture Multiracial experiences.

It is here that Anzaldúa (1987) and Sandoval (2000) provide a safe space to invite both a *mestiza* consciousness and oppositional/differential consciousness, where othered individuals, in this case, Multiracial college students, can emerge from the crevices and interstices (Alarcón, 1990) of third spaces. Indeed, this safe space is one where unyielding categories and

expectations are disavowed of their power and a more holistic sense of self is nurtured and developed. In Anzaldúa's words,

Rigidity means death. Only by remaining flexible is she able to stretch the psyche horizontally and vertically. *La mestiza* constantly has to shift out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move towards a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and towards a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes. (p.50-51)

Anzaldúa stresses the importance of flexibility in *la mestiza*'s psyche which moves away from a Western mode of rigid thinking to more "divergent thinking" which is holistic and inclusive. Expressed a different way, continuing to categorize one another in unyielding boxes and labels is the equivalent to death—"rigidity means death" because such categorizations destroy the wherewithal to expand our thinking with regards to identity. If rigid categorizations are maintained, what does this mean for those who do not fit into them? I believe that Anzaldúa is saying that these rigid categorizations mean that those who do not fit into them are classified as "deviant," ostracized and/or eliminated.

Mestiza consciousness is a state where the borders between identities are deconstructed. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands, a site which is in constant movement, contradiction and ambiguity. The new mestiza is multiple identities – she does not have to choose. She is everything and everyone within her body. According to Anzaldúa (1989),

The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a

tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode --nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else.

This assembly is not one where severed or separated pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness -- a *mestiza* consciousness-- and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm.

The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war. (pp. 101-102)

The new *mestiza*'s coping mechanisms speak powerfully to the experiences of Multiracial individuals by the ways in which she "learns to juggle cultures" and possesses a "plural personality." What I believe speaks loudest to the experiences of Multiracial individuals is Anzaldúa's assertion that "she [la Mestiza] turns the ambivalence into something else," something I would label as personal agency. So, this "third element" that Anzaldúa terms as a *mestiza consciousness* breaks down the "subject-object duality" that keeps *la mestiza* a prisoner within the

duality of rigid classifications. I argue that personal agency<sup>16</sup> is medicinal in “healing the split” that is at the foundation of our lives and at the heart of our struggles with identity and oppression.

Similarly, oppositional/differential consciousness is also an “alternative”, additional force which is practiced and developed already by third world feminists and interconnects all of oppositional ideologies held by feminists of color. Sandoval (2000) argues that none of them are mutually exclusive. Instead, each is used strategically to enact agency, depending on the situation and context. Sandoval (1991) problematizes the canon of feminist theory and calls for "a new theory and method of oppositional consciousness, a theory only visible when U.S. third world feminist praxis is recognized" (p. 16). In the words of Sandoval (2004), this consciousness is "like the clutch of an automobile, [it's] the mechanism that permits the driver to select, engage and disengage gears in a system for the transmission of power" (p.203). Oppositional consciousness is a mapping of consciousness, a new cognitive map whose "specific methodology can be used as a compass for self-consciously organizing resistance, identity, praxis and coalition under contemporary U.S. late-capitalist cultural conditions" (Sandoval, 2000, p.62).

---

<sup>16</sup> I define personal agency as conscious or subconscious improvisational activity, individual and/or collective, that responds to particular situations, as a form of positioning within hegemonic structures.

Such concepts allow for new terminology, “thus a crossing network of consciousness, a trans-consciousness that occurs in a register permitting the networks themselves to be appropriated as ideological weaponry” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 180). Sandoval’s (1991) notion of differential consciousness,

requires grace, flexibility, and strength: enough strength to confidently commit to a well-defined structure of identity for one hour, day, week, month, year; enough flexibility to self-consciously transform that identity according to the requisites of another oppositional ideological tactic if reading of power’s formation require it. (p.15)

Differential consciousness is particularly applicable to Multiracial students who undergo identity shifts depending on their specific contexts. For example, a woman who is Multiracial – Black, White and Japanese – may present herself as “Black” to her paternal family members, “Japanese” to her biracial (Japanese and White) maternal family members and “White” to her friends in her suburban community. Through a lens of oppositional consciousness, this Multiracial woman uses her *facultad* as a strategic tool for survival. In order to survive in one context, she must lose, albeit temporarily, an aspect of her identity. However, this act is both a loss and a gain. *La facultad* makes part of her identity invisible in the interest of operating as an “emotional and intellectual skill which is developed amidst hegemonic powers” (Sandoval, 1991, p.22).

Chicana Feminist Theory “inhabits a proactive space that does not seek approval, acceptance, or intellectual legitimacy from exterior sources and domains” (Davalos, 2008, p.155). Chicana Feminist thought also, in Davalos’

(2008) words, “offers possibility for breaking additional silences, particularly on queer experiences” (p.155). It is fearless, passionate and raw. It is within Chicana Feminist thought that Multiraciality can occupy a space that follows in this solidarity of third world feminism that moves with, between and beyond artificial racial, cultural, physical, gendered and political divides. It is the location of the misfit, the *malcreada*, the abnormal, the revolutionary, the twisted, the genuine - the queer. Davalos (2008) concedes,

The development of queer Chicana studies is not only a matter of including queer literature, histories, *rancheras* (a genre of traditional Mexican music), art, or cartographies; conceptual and discursive (linear) progress can also include theoretical deconstructions that queer the social norm. (p.169)

Davalos highlights the broader ways in which queer Chicana studies, and queer studies in general, queer the social norm. Queer theorizing is not limited to the GLBTQ community, rather, “theoretical deconstructions” that disrupt the social norm by abiding by the tenets of queerness. So, too, Multiracial identity, I claim, queers monoracial normativity. To explain this concept, I relay a brief history of the origins of Queer Theory, the evolution of the term, queer, as bases for developing the concept of racial queer and my overall *Racial Queer Conceptual Framework*.

#### *Tenets of Queer Theory*

Jagose (1996) notes that, “It is difficult to specify with any accuracy the historical origin of anything as nebulous as the gay liberation and lesbian feminist

movements” (p.22). However, “Stonewall,” the event (June 28, 1969) in which police who raided a New York gay and drag bar called “The Stonewall Inn” were met with resistance, is a general emblematic marker in the gay rights movement. Stonewall is significant because it has come to represent the GLBTQ community’s resistance to a government-sponsored system that systematically persecuted them, both in the U.S. and on a global level. Consequently, Stonewall is commemorated annually through Gay Pride parades and events. As Jagose (1996) explains,

Stonewall functioned in a symbolic register as a convenient if somewhat spurious marker of an important cultural shift away from assimilationist policies and quietist tactics, a significant if mythological date for the origin of the gay liberation movement.

Jagose (1996) goes on to say that “Stonewall did not literally initiate the movement which came to be known as gay liberation. Yet its fortuitous and dramatic illustration of a break with homophile politics often causes it to stand in as the origin of the gay liberation movement” (p.31).

The Gay Liberation Movement, however did not operate in a vacuum. It rode on the heels other powerful activist movements (such as Black and Chicano militants, student radicals, feminists, anti-war activists) that defined the sixties. As D’Emilio (1983) writes, “By the late 1960’s, a distinctively new culture of protest had taken shape in the United States, with which the reform orientation of the gay movement contrasted oddly” (p.33). While parallel counter-culture

movements employed confrontational tactics, the Gay Liberation Movement was still continuing “to work for transformation through rational discussion and persuasion” (Jagose, p.34). Soon, however, the gay liberation movement began to adopt these “new” tactics. Allen Young (1992) notes that,

Gay liberation also has a perspective for revolution based on the unity of all oppressed people-that is, there can be no freedom for gays in a society which enslaves others through male supremacy, racism, and economic exploitation (capitalism)” (p.25-26).

Jagose (1996) concludes that “the new form of gay liberation was an effect not only of the limitations of homophile politics but also of a new cluster of cultural movements, which collectively articulated a formidable critique of centralized power and dominant ideologies” (p.34). This new form of gay liberation took form in gay activists’ discrediting of so-called “professional” psychiatric opinions of homosexuality as pathological to a focus on their personal experiences as the authoritative voice. The critique of centralized power and dominant ideologies also lent itself to a much more aggressive and less conciliatory strategy.

The beginnings of Queer Theory, although not named as such until the late eighties, emerged out of what is now known as the gay liberation movement of the 1970’s where gay scholars of the United States and Great Britain (McIntosh, 1968; Katz, 1975; Weeks, 1977; D’Emilio, 1983) published a series of foundational studies which changed the focus of sexuality in a radical way. As Corber & Valocchi (2003) state,

Following the footsteps of British sociologist Mary McIntosh whose pioneering work on ‘the homosexual role’ in the 1960’s shifted the focus of sociological inquiry from deviance to the ways in which the stigmatized category of the homosexual served to maintain the boundaries between the normal and the abnormal, these studies, which included Jonathan Ned Katz’s *Gay American History* (1975), Jeffrey Weeks’s *Coming Out* (1977), and John D’Emilio’s *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (1983) challenged the assumption that sexuality is a natural or a biological instinct existing outside of social institutions.

While there is no critical consensus on the definitional limits of queer-indeterminacy being one of its widely promoted charms-its general outlines are frequently sketched and debated. Broadly speaking, queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatize incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and desire. (p.2)

Valocchi notes that there is “no critical consensus on the definitional limits of queer” and that the term, queer, is particularly appealing because of its “indeterminacy.” While Valochi indicates that “queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatize incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and desire,” I would argue, along with previously noted theorists, that queerness describes those gestures and models which dramatize the binary and the absolutes even beyond the realm of sexuality and desire and into the realm of all social norms and societally prescribed expectations. Mary McIntosh proposed that the homosexual should be seen as playing a social role rather than as having a condition. This was an early iteration of Foucault’s (1981) constructionist position of sexuality which argues that homosexuality is a modern formation, a social construction. In Foucault’s words,

We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized- Westphal's famous article of 1870 on 'contrary sexual sensations' can stand as its date of birth-less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and feminine on oneself.  
(Foucault, 1981, p.43)

Although "there is no critical consensus on the historical circumstances that gave rise to the modern homosexual," some scholars (Foucault, 1981; Bray, 1982; D'Emilio, 1983; Faderman, 1985; Traub, 1995; Weeks, 1972; Halperin, 1995) have attempted to place a fixed date or time when homosexual became a species and/or explain the differing ways in which different societies at different times have regarded homosexuals. The labeling or terminology attached to the GLBTQ community has undergone various iterations. Perhaps the most obvious of those name changes has been the move from "homosexual" to "gay"—a move meant to depart from the stigmatized and medicalized association of homosexual as a physical and/or mental disorder to one of personal and political validation. More recently, the term "queer" has broadened the definition of gay to become a more inclusive term to describe the GLBTQ community at large.

The term queer has undergone significant change in terms of meaning. Initially, a term of derogation, it has relatively recently been used as a synonym for the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning (GLBTQ) community. Its usage has incited controversy as it still holds negative, offensive connotations while being re-appropriated by others as a term of self-empowerment. Jagose

(1996) asserts that the term “queer has provoked exuberance in some quarter, but anxiety and outrage in others. The various contestations of the term demonstrate the implications and investments of queer, clarifying its ambitions and implications” (p.101) The exuberance stems from the potential inclusivity and strength generated from the openness of the term. The anxiety is rooted in “queer’s totalizing gesture as having the potential to work against lesbian and gay specificity, and to devalue those analyses of homophobia and heterocentrism developed largely by lesbian and gay critics” and that the boundlessness of the term has the danger of “connect[ing] lesbians and gay men with others whose commitment to anti-homophobic politics is disputed” (p.112).

Jagose (1996) notes that “Queer has tended to occupy a predominantly sexual register” (p.99), however, its definition has increasingly expanded in “an effort to speak from and to the differences and silences that have been suppressed by the homo-hetero binary, an effort to unpack the monolithic identities ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay’, including the intricate ways lesbian and gay sexualities are inflected by heterosexuality, race, gender and ethnicity” (Hennessy, 1994, p.86-87). Sedgwick (1993) extends the parameters of queer further by including “*other* identity-constituting” such as intellectuals and artists of color whose self-identification includes queer “in an effort to do a new kind of justice to the fractal intricacies of language, skin, migration and state” (p.9). Queer has been broadly defined to include that which is in opposition to societal heteronormativity and more

narrowly to include specific GLBTQ communities and/or political ideology. Queerness becomes a way to simultaneously make a political move against heteronormativity while simultaneously refusing to engage in traditional essentialist identity politics.

Rather than represent queer as unequivocally gay/lesbian, progressive/reactionary, normative/alternative, I use the term queer, in the context of this study, to underscore the broad possibilities and power which the act of queering embodies in disrupting the essentialist modus operandi of racial identity and any identity category. Most importantly, my use of the term queer is careful to acknowledge the significance of honoring and respecting the history, symbolism and integrity of queer as a term and further honoring its evolution by assigning it a broader meaning. Jagose's (1996) notion of the future of queer resonates with this approach. He explains,

Queer is not a conspiracy to discredit lesbian and gay; it does not seek to devalue the indisputable gains made in their name. Its principal achievement is to draw attention to the assumptions that-intentionally or otherwise-inhere in the mobilization of any identity category, including itself. (p.126)

Jagose's claim that "queer is not a conspiracy to discredit lesbian and gay" calls to mind Sandoval's (2000) critique of rigid terminologies and theoretical domains in academia. Stated another way, the flexible sometimes more inclusive and cross-disciplinary use of terminologies, allows us to explore further possibilities of expanding important social justice discourses. The political impact of

terminologies, such as the term queer, can heighten when the term symbolizes a cross-section of socially active causes. As Jagose adds, the term queer can extend one step beyond the practical implications of politics by questioning queerness itself as a term—“its principal achievement is to draw attention to the assumptions that intentionally or otherwise inhere in the mobilization of any identity category, including itself.”

In Moraga’s (1993), *Queer Aztlan*, she imagines a “Chicano homeland that could embrace *all* of its people, including its *jotería*” (p.147). She desires to “expand it [Chicano Nationalism] to meet a broader and wiser revolution” that embraces the “full range of racial diversities, human sexualities, and expressions of gender” (p.150, 164). Moraga’s broader conceptualization of queer leads me to question, what is Queer Theory exactly? What is meant by the use of the term *queer*? Defining *queer*, as Sullivan (2003) puts it, “would be a decidedly un-queer thing to do” (p.43). For Berry and Jagose (1996), “*queer*” is an ongoing and necessarily unfixed site of engagement and contestation” (p.11). Halperin (1995), in his book, *Saint Foucault*, resists an essentialist definition of *queer*, stating,

Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence. ‘Queer’ then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative . . . [Queer] describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance. (p.62)

*Queer*, however, does function as an identity for some. Historically, it has been used, first, as a derogatory term for those that were non-heterosexual, and then as a reclaiming umbrella term for those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex and/or questioning (GLBTQ). It has been used to signify a collective GLBTQ community and has also been critiqued, as Anzaldúa (1981) says, for the way that the term “homogenizes, erases our differences” (p.250). At the end of the *queer* continuum, groups such as Queercore, a radical anarchist group of punk *queers*, claim that being gay or lesbian is as antithetical as it gets to their definition of *queer*. As Sullivan (2003) notes, “these ‘radical’ queers claim what they presume to be an outsider status; they do not want to be assimilated into heteronormative culture which is what they see as being advocated by lesbians and gays” (p.45). What all these definitions seem to share in common is that “whilst queer is not an essential identity, it is nevertheless according to [these accounts], a provisional political one” (Sullivan, 2003, p.44).

I use the term, *racial queer*, to frame the unconventional, politicized space of the Multiracial individual. I use this term not to convey sexuality (although I do see certain inexact similarities between the two), but to convey the parallels of queerness (both as a term of empowerment and derogation) as they pertain to being Multiracial. As Edwards (2009) notes,

many self-identified queer people share the ‘gay’ ambition to be taken on their own terms, making honorific a formerly pejorative term and stigmatized form of identity. However, where the word ‘gay’ emphasizes happiness, ‘queer’ suggests a continuing although a possibly transformed experience of stigma and shame. (p.63)

Edwards points to the reclaiming of a formerly pejorative term in an effort to redefine it as a term of empowerment. Edwards also highlights the emotive associations with words—where the words, gay and queer suggest happiness and a possibly transformed experience of stigma and shame (respectively). I think the term queer is particularly powerful specifically because it is a constant reminder of the painful and instructive history of the GLBTQ community (which involved stigma and shame) while co-opting the term and making it our own.

I draw from two primary definitions of what it means *to queer*.

Specifically, I draw from these two primary definitions because of their socially progressive problematization of “common sense” (Apple, 2000). By reclaiming queer as a term of mutual past stigmatization, discriminatory history and self-empowerment and community pride, queer takes on a multidimensional meaning.

The first definition of queer is described by Sullivan (2003),

To queer – to make strange, to frustrate, to counteract, to delegitimize, to camp up heteronormative knowledges and institutions, and the subjectivities and socialities that are (in)formed by them and that (in)form them. (p. vi)

In other words, queerness extends beyond its origins in sexuality to all acts of counterhegemony. The second definition stems from Anzaldúa’s (1987) *borderlands* theory, which notes,

A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal.” (p.25)

Anzaldúa explains that among the inhabitants of the borderland are “the queer” and other “atrevesados”, those that dare to cross (usually in reference to inappropriately bold behavior) the line of normalcy. The inhabitants are “prohibited and forbidden,” unnatural and perverse. Their delinquency from the norm binds them together as a collective. And, although Anzaldúa does not explicitly use the term queer to collectively label “los atravesados” she alludes to the synonymity that exists among them.

Anzaldúa (1987) goes on to reference a muchacha who lived in her town who they called *mita' y mita'* (half and half) because of her intersexual anatomy. She insists that there is something compelling, even supernatural, about being both male and female as I believe there is for being both one race and another (or more). Queerness, then, for the Multiracial individual, may denote a unique individuality and power, comprised of a constant negotiation and supernal *loqueria*, an admirable craziness, as well as a delinquency from the norm. Multiracial college students occupy a queer space which can not be easily captured in a single category because their experiences cross disciplinary fields,

possess multiple dimensions and navigate diverse social spaces. I argue that the queer space of Multiraciality is ripe for agency,

Sullivan (2003) refers to Barnard (1999), in his article, *Queer Race*, where he argues that cultural categories do not exist independently of one another, rather, they operate, he claims, as interlocking systems. He further advocates for an opening up of queer theory. He notes that “the project of queer theory may be precisely to bring an end to a specifically queer theory” (Barnard, 1999, p.209). In other words, Barnard points to the “contradictions” and “irreconcilabilities,” that which is unanswerable, in all identities that remains at the heart of queerness. It does not search for an absolute definition, a neatly tied box and/or an essentialist notion. Quite the contrary, it brings these tensions to life and allows them to float auspiciously. It is precisely the lack of form that lends itself to an interdisciplinary, multidimensional space of social activism and queering. It is from this location of queerness that this study is situated.

Researchers have touched on linkages between queerness and Multiraciality, but have not expanded its possibilities with regards to Multiraciality as a potential site of queerness. Williams-Leon (2001) discusses the “convergence of passing zones” of Multiracial gays, lesbians and bisexuals of Asian descent while DaCosta (2007) briefly refers to two of her study Participants who described their public claiming of a Multiracial identity as a “coming out” process. In other words, where once Multiracial individuals would

pass as monoracial or as ethnically ambiguous, they describe their public/open declaration of their Multiracial identity as an often complex, thoughtful process of identity divulgement. While the phrase, “coming out” has been generally relegated to the GLBTQ community to describe the process of disclosing one’s sexuality, I use the phrase similarly to describe Multiracial individuals’ closing of one’s full racial identity.

I use the term *racial queer* as a lens from which to further this parallel. In many ways, I argue that some Multiracial individuals remain “closeted” with regards to their Multiracial background due to the high stakes which this identification may raise. As prominent queer theorist, Sedgwick (1990) says, in her piece, *Epistemology of the Closet*, “‘closetedness’ itself is a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence-not a particular silence, but a silence that accrues particularity by fits and starts, in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it” (p.3).

The queering of monoracial categories challenges and disrupts monoracial normativity in the same spirit that “the deconstruction and criticism of heteronormativity became a key goal and rallying cry of queer studies” (Warner, 1993). So, Multiracial identification not only addresses the experiences of Multiracial individuals but, more broadly, challenges and confuses the rigid monoracial classifications as absolute racial identifiers. As Gamson (2000) asserts, according to the poststructuralist queer critique, the subject does not

precede his/her recognition as a subject, but is created through discursive processes-such as social research- and the continually bodily repetition or performance, of gender and sexuality, in this context, the continually prescribed repetition of various representations in the performance of race. The queering of race is part of the larger deconstruction and criticism of hegemonic structures that would prefer to classify us as one dimensional – facilitating further subjugation. The queering of race is an important contribution to the discursive processes which progressively define language and subsequent meaning to our lived experiences.

### *Racial Queer*

Clearly, the three theoretical bodies of thought described above are each complex and meaningful in their own regard. So, how do Identity Production Theory, Chicana Feminist Theory and Queer Theory come together as the larger *Racial Queer* conceptual framework from which to analyze the ways in which Multiracial college students understand and experience their racialized identities<sup>17</sup>? Simply stated, these theoretical bodies serve the following purposes in setting the conceptual framework for this study:

1. **Identity Production Theory** is the dynamic process of asking and answering which occurs on a moment to moment basis. This process

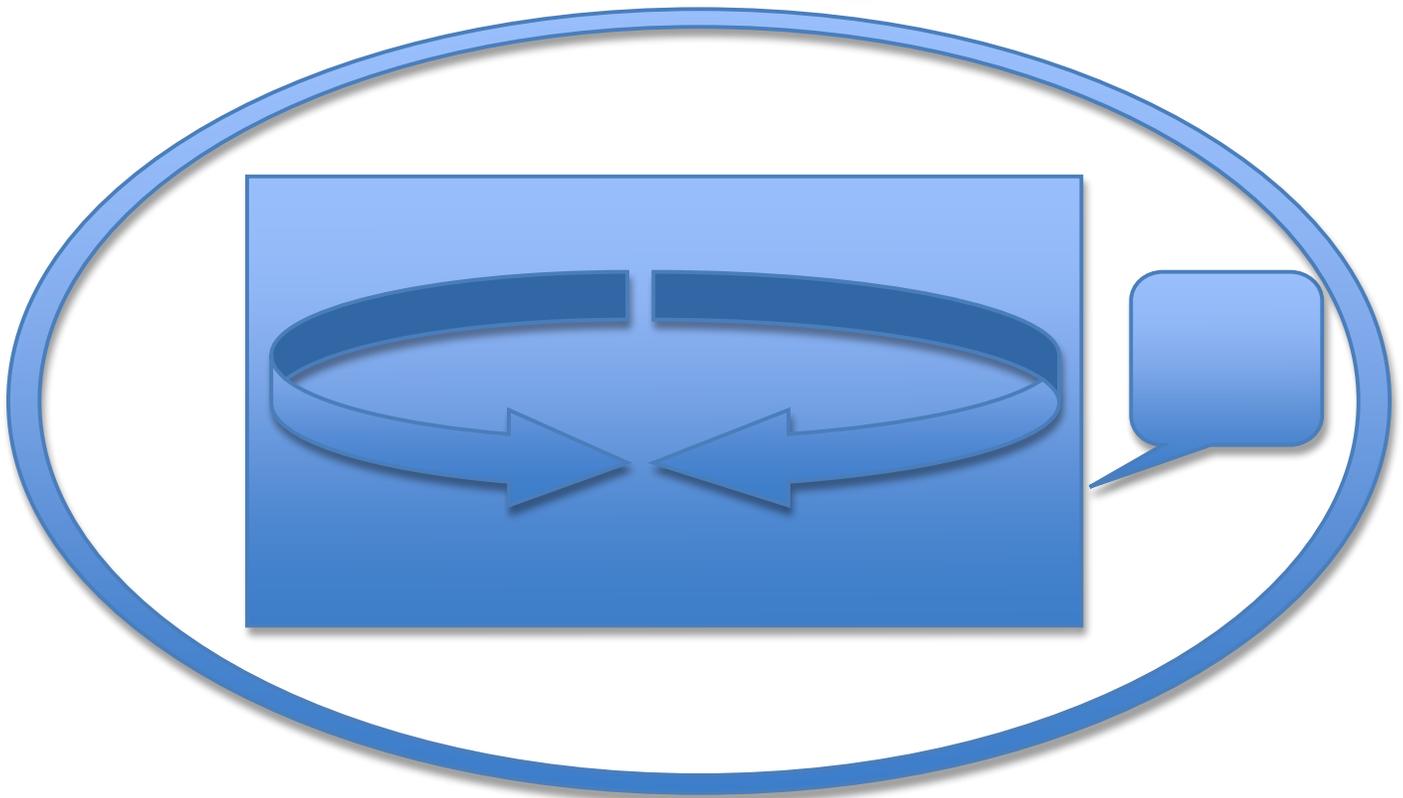
---

<sup>17</sup> Refer to visual representation of Racial Queer Conceptual Framework at the end of this section.

which Participants undergo is in constant motion within a space where experiential knowledge is both produced for them by external factors outside of their control (race, gender, class, etc.) and produced by them with a space for improvisational agency.

2. **Chicana Feminist Theory** provides the facultad/intuition informs this process in the moment of agency. Facultad can be likened to a behavioral compass, or barometer for agentic action which interrupts and/or intercedes in the Participants' identity production process to inform improvisational activity.
3. **Queer Theory** frames the Participants' space of deviance by queering monoracial categorization and providing a framework from which Participants' agentic acts can be both empowering and derogatory. Queer Theory problematizes traditional notions of race and the ways in which Participants' respond to situations that rely on racial perceptions. Queer Theory is the backdrop which canvasses Participants' Multiracial experiences.

## Queer Theory



**How Identity Production Theory, Chicana Feminist Theory and Queer Theory interact with one another to form the Racial Queer Conceptual Framework**

It is important to name this framework, *Racial Queer*, because, in naming it, we also affirm the Participants to which it refers. Why this name? As detailed in the literature review, Multiracial students are perceived as both deviant from the monoracial norm and unique in their Multiracial combination. This double perception echoes the definition and notion of queerness – that is, that 1) queerness has been used as both a term of derogation and empowerment (Sullivan, 2003), and 2) that queer has been broadly defined to include that which is in opposition to societal heteronormativity and more narrowly to include specific GLBTQ communities and/or political ideology (Warner, 1993). Queerness becomes a way to simultaneously pose a political challenge to heteronormativity while simultaneously refusing to engage in traditional essentialist identity politics.

Rather than represent queer as unequivocally gay/lesbian, progressive/reactionary, normative/alternative, I use the term queer, in the context of this study, to underscore the broad possibilities and power which the act of queering embodies in disrupting the essentialist modus operandi of racial identity and any identity category. My use of the term queer is careful to acknowledge the significance of honoring and respecting the history, symbolism and integrity of queer as a term. Because the concept of queerness seems to so capture the lived experiences of Multiracial students and parallels some of the controversy around

Multiracial identity, I think it is an appropriate and provocative notion to center the complexities of Multiracial identity as a whole.

To provide an analogy and visual image, the Racial Queer conceptual framework can be likened to a human body. Racial queerness serves as the skeletal framework for this study. The naming of the framework, Racial Queer, provides structure for the study and is a depository for the study's different components or body parts. Then, Holland et al.'s (2000) theory of identity production constitutes the flesh, blood and nervous system of the study. As such, Holland et al.'s theory of identity production carries and transports the daily experiences and activities which are felt viscerally and responded to on a continual basis. Finally, Chicana Feminist Theory represent the organs, particularly the heart and mind, which provides the blood supply for agency to be enacted. Chicana Feminist Theory guides the body in what to do—the cognition, learning, memory, stimuli response—particularly through intuitive measures such as *la facultad* and cultural intuition.

There are monoracial storylines and Multiracial storylines which exist and are continually reproduced. Monoracial storylines consist of narratives that are based on monoracial experiences such as the African American experience, the Latino/a experience, the Asian American experience, the Native American experience and so on. Multiracial storylines are based on what it means to identify as Multiracial within a monoracial structure. Each of these narratives is

predicated upon a series of figured worlds that operate dialectically and dialogically which are developed over history and time, forming over continual practice. These storylines may “work” for most monoracially identified people. In other words, these practices are familiar and performed on a daily basis. So, the question (and the primary thesis of my dissertation) becomes, how do Multiracial students understand and experience their racialized identities within Central University (also enveloped in monoracial normativity)?

Enter Multiracial individuals, college students in the case of this study. As depicted in the Racial Queer Framework<sup>18</sup>, the figured world of Multiraciality perforates the monoracial storyline (a figured identity) since it does not “fit” the traditional monoracial script. Instead, the Multiracial figured world operates within a racial borderland and/or third space, an alternate, marginal world where play is critical to survival. The Multiracial figured world both draws from multiple monoracial figured worlds and situates itself in a unique space which has the potential to harness oppositional consciousness in Sandoval’s (2000) terms – as a source of coalition building between and among different racial groups. How might this occur?

The Racial Queer framework suggests that this collaborative spirit and movement across boundaries (oppositional consciousness) is fostered with each agentic act within the figured world of Multiraciality. How do Multiracial

---

<sup>18</sup> Refer to Visual Representation of Racial Queer Framework in Appendix.

students' positional identities, as they relate to power, privilege, phenotype and status, guide their behavior in the different contexts and situations which present themselves throughout each day? Multiracial colleges students interact with others within different situational contexts (in classrooms, dorms, social events, conversations, romance). Within each of these contexts, Multiracial students assume a relational identity which stems from social relationships where "one identifies one's position relative to others, mediated through the way one feels comfortable or constrained" (Holland et al., 1998, p.127). They also assume a positional identity, which, differing from the relational identity, is connected to the power, privilege and status afforded to the Multiracial student in that given context and her/his "apprehension of her social position in a lived world" (Holland et al., 1998, p.128).

The Multiracial student asserts her identity by engaging in improvisational activity, the predominant form of agency in one's identity production. Some examples of this improvisational activity are: identifying as only one of their multiple racial backgrounds (relational identity); taking on a "Multiracial" identity (figured identity); creating a new "category" (positional identity) such as Cablinasian (Tiger Woods coined this term to include his Caucasian, Black, Indian and Thai/Asian background), Blaxican (Black and Mexican) or Hapa (native Hawaiian term used to refer to anyone who is part Asian); performing cultural markers of authenticity (identity artifacts) in order to fit in to the

monoracial group, such as speaking a certain language/ dialectic/ register; wearing certain clothes that signal group membership (such as saris, dashikis, rebozos, huipiles); and/or claiming a kind of racelessness, that is, that race is solely a social construction that should have nothing to do with her sense of self.

Such various assertions of racial identity are referred to by Holland et al. (1998) as the space of authoring. In other words, it is within this space of authoring, in that precise moment, that an identity is asserted. Within the space of authoring, Multiracial individuals engage in improvisational play. What Holland et al. (1998) make clear is that “I” (self) making is in no way entirely self-orchestrated. Rather, it “is an orchestration of voices” (p.178) which amalgamates that which is already there (built over history and time) and the continuing activity of improvisation through daily interaction. What the improvisational activity can do is break through the parameters of monoracial figured worlds and create space for new figured worlds in the process.

So, how do Multiracial college students experience their racialized identities in their everyday interactions with others, in relation to their own self-perceptions and in response to the way others perceive them to be? The Racial Queer framework posits that Multiracial students draw from the well of *la facultad*, cultural intuition and oppositional consciousness in order to reside in that “space of play.” Multiracial students utilize *la facultad*, “an instant sensing” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.60), to navigate the figured world of monoraciality and then to

decide what action to take. While this may appear to be a thoughtful and lengthy process, it is actually “an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings reside/hidden” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.60). This *facultad* parallels Delgado-Bernal’s (1998) concept of cultural intuition. The Racial Queer framework proposes that Multiracial college students’ cultural intuition is not only a survival mechanism within the figured world of monoraciality and Multiraciality but also this cultural intuition brings a distinctive perspective into the discourse around race. Improvisational activity is likened to a Multiracial common sense (Apple, 2000), in that it operates unconsciously to some level. It is a survival mechanism that responds to others’ intolerance and/or exoticization. A version of *la facultad*, it is present whether we are aware of it or not. It can be used agentially as a tool of resistance against the white supremacy which underlies the fact that there are monoracial storylines to begin with, where whiteness remains the referent.

The figured world of Multiraciality can, indeed, be considered a space of *mestiza* consciousness, where unyielding categories and their boundaries are deconstructed. It is a place of ambiguity, tolerance and flexibility. The figured world of Multiraciality can be considered a space where oppositional consciousness is exercised--“like the clutch of an automobile, [it’s] the mechanism that permits the driver to select, engage and disengage gears in a system for the transmission of power” (Sandoval, 2000, p.203). Sandoval (2000)

claims that this oppositional consciousness “can be used as a compass for self-consciously organizing resistance, identity, praxis and coalition” (p.62). This compass can guide Multiracial college students in a variety of directions. The Racial Queer framework suggests that Multiracial students may:

1. Reside in a Multiracial figured world that perforates monoracial figured worlds.
2. Act agentially within the third space of the Multiracial figured world.
3. Inform their behaviors by a complex negotiation of positional and relational identities.
4. Use *la facultad* to guide this complex negotiation.
5. Create a space of authoring from moment to moment within their daily lived experiences through improvisational activity.

This framework does not intend to explain behaviors in a psychological fashion. Rather, the Racial Queer framework aims to provide a lens from which to make sense of the daily lived interaction of through relational, positional and figured identities. Multiracial college students within the context of this study. My hope is that this framework will also be useful in framing future work around Multiracial identities and experiences.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### Reflections of a Multiracial Researcher

Oftentimes, I wonder about how other people see me, not only in general day to day life interactions, but in academia. In this journey to doctor-hood, I have had to operate in varying monoracial figured worlds, each with its own set of ethnic credentials to present and be judged by. In the figured world of Latina identity, my fluency in Spanish, my roots in Richmond, California (notorious for crime) and my ability to cook up platanos fritos and frijoles negros for my family and friends – these are all cultural markers. In the figured world of Asian/Chinese identity, my attendance at Chinese school, celebration of Chinese New Year’s and longing for dim sum on Sundays – these account for my cultural authenticity. In the figured world of whiteness, I have been disowned in a sense. The fact that I am a person of color immediately disqualifies me from participating in that world. Since I cannot “pass” as white in any phenotypical way, my experience is “tainted”. I suppose we could call it an iteration of the one-drop rule (where one drop of black blood makes you black, or, in this case, where one drop of color makes you not white). This all makes perfect sense to me, having grown up in a racialized United States of America, especially in terms of social circles. However, even though I should have predicted it, my experiences in academic circles have mirrored my social experiences.

My legitimacy as an “ethnic” person is questioned, both personally and academically. I know that fellow colleagues have quietly, even openly wondered – who do you align yourself most with? Am I a “native” researcher to the Latino community, the Asian community, the White community, none of the above? As much as I would like to believe that my Multiracial identity is not inextricably connected to my racial credibility, I would be naïve and blind to assume such a fantastic notion. Can I be a “real” scholar of racial identity in the eyes of my monoracial colleagues? Or am I a racial novelty, whose ethnic credibility is measured by rigid standards that perpetuate a static idea of what it means to be genuinely of a certain race? In this chapter, I will address my process and positionality as a researcher while providing the nuts and bolts of the research methodology.

### Genealogy of Methodology

The scariest, most intimidating aspect of deciding to enter a doctoral program was thinking about methodology. Why? Because it sounded “scientific” in the intimidating, positivistic and masculine/sexist sense of the word. I lacked the confidence to see myself as a “scientist.” After all, how many female professionals of color (professors, doctors, businesswomen, lawyers, etc.) had I ever seen, or met? To me, methodology equaled science. This frightened me because I felt like a square peg in a round hole – only important, distinguished

and super smart people talk about methodology. I saw myself more as a practitioner-type, not a researcher type. Already, I had been trained to believe that these two roles were mutually exclusive.

Yet, when deconstructing such limited yet socially engrained views of what research really is, I had to make sense of it for myself. And, it was precisely this preconceived notion, laden with stereotypes, insecurity and internalized “isms” that helped me to understand that one’s methodology must be in line with one’s positionality. To me, this seemed the only way to produce “authentic” work, that is, writing that would honor both the study participants and my own personal history. How I did my study needed to align with how I did everything else in my life. This alignment meant that the methodology had to possess certain elements: passion, intensity, storytelling, honesty, rigor and a lens of critical thinking and social justice. Would it go too far to say that it needed to have an element of distrust and cynicism in the way things have been and currently are? From a very young age, I have, for better and worse, treated information with a certain level of suspicion with regards to its origin, meaning and intent. Perhaps my deep-seated doubts in knowledge are rooted in the many fundamental experiences when things that have been sold to me as absolute “truths” have betrayed my credence in such “facts.” But as far as “scientific research” was concerned, this notion always seemed distant from my own experience and was presented as unbiased, untainted and absolute.

Prior to graduate school, educators, media and texts trained me to understand research as something that embodied purity, objectivity, and in some ways, infallibility. Like a well-oiled, perfectly programmed robot, the researcher would collect data, input it into a methodical formula and output a valid, meaningful and new deliverable, which somehow would produce or enhance an original understanding that was previously unknown. Research was also consistently portrayed in a white, male context – a context which felt cold, alienating and foreign to me. In one of my first doctoral courses, *Systems of Inquiry*, I quickly ascertained that what I knew about research was severely flawed. It was a true relief to learn about and redefine research in a holistic way. The exposure to the various research paradigms, the strengths and weaknesses of each of them and the relevant terminology transformed and laid the foundation for my own identity as a researcher. It was validating to know that, in fact, research could be an especially personal passage which possesses, at its core, the very things that I once thought were the antithesis of research – the experiential knowledge that has shaped who I am today.

It is our very inquiry into human experience and action that sends us this far afield. The long journey we are embarking upon arises out of awareness on our past that, at every point in our research—in our observing, our interpreting, our reporting and everything else we do as researchers – we inject a host of assumptions. (Crotty, 2005, p.17)

Prior to this class, my definition of research was narrow and uninformed. As I further engaged with this class, that characterization proved no longer suitable. I

began to see research as something much more personal, varied and complex. I started to understand that I could not start off with an epistemology as the point of origin for my research, rather, I would allow myself to use my research questions as the location from which to launch and explore the most applicable methodology. It became increasingly clear to me that research required a firm understanding and grounding of one's own lens and a certain loyalty to that stance in order for it to command credibility, both for the researcher and for the scrutinizing audience.

The integrity of the research process itself is at the heart of reaching this goal. Crotty asserts that “we need to be concerned about the process we have engaged in,” (Crotty, 2005, p.13) to the point where we will “defend that process as a form of inquiry that should be taken seriously” (Crotty, 2005, p.13). We are schooled to believe that there is always one, right way to do things and, so, in establishing my identity as a researcher, I needed to deconstruct that learning. I was intrigued by how I arrived at my original definition of research. As Crotty might ask, how did I know what I knew? I believe that many of my fears in conducting research were rooted in confronting and then, perhaps, defying the construction of knowledge. In the practice of unlearning, I had to face, understand and articulate my own worldview and how that view informed my work. Much of what I previously derived about research was dichotomous.

I believed in the great divide between qualitative and quantitative. I viewed quantitative research as most probably do: rigorous, accurate and widely acknowledged as scientifically correct. Not that I did not assign value or meaning to qualitative research, but I was trained to believe that qualitative research was lax, emotional, unfounded and widely viewed as “suspect,” relative to its validity. I was taught that, at the core of legitimate research was a removal of self. In other words, a true researcher is neutral and does everything possible to remove any personal bias or interaction between the researcher and the subject/participant of the research.

This loss of self, that is, the futile desire to be perceived as objective by sifting out my personal experiences, positionalities and intuition from the research process, is what terrified me as I entered the world of academia before applying to graduate school. Would the price of successful, legitimate research require a loss of my identity(ies)? Would I have to strip away my experiences and context only to replace them with the constructs of a mythological objectivity, which for most, represent the hegemonic white male heterosexual standard? Valuable research, I learned, is not devoid of personal experience (quite the opposite).

We should accept that, whatever research we engage in, it is possible for either qualitative methods or quantitative methods, or both, to serve our purposes. Our research can be qualitative or quantitative, or both qualitative and quantitative, without this being in any way problematic.” (Crotty, 2005, p.15)

Research is not truly research without one's explicit assumptions, agendas and limitations and this is both astonishing on some level and equally a relief to me. Sadly, it took a book, a professor, an institution for me to feel "authorized" to give power and sustenance to that which is tied to my human experience. As my own worldview changes and evolves, this experience inadvertently drives me to situate myself both in my personal development and in my identity as a researcher, or, perhaps, as Crotty seems to allude to, they are one in the same struggle. I enter the analysis of my research with the humility and knowledge that I will continue to grow as a person/researcher.

### Research Overview

This qualitative study highlights four major points which are reviewed in Chapter 2 and which are the bases for the overarching and sub research questions:

#### **How do Multiracial students understand and experience their racialized identities within a large, public, tier-one research institution in Texas?**

- How do Multiracial students experience their racialized identities in their everyday interactions with others, in relation to their own self-perceptions and in response to the way others perceive them to be?

- How do Multiracial students' positionalities, as they relate to power, privilege, phenotype and status, guide their behavior in different contexts and situations?

These questions seek to explore the ways in which Multiracial college students come to understand and experienced their racialized identities in the context of a highly selective predominantly white research institution in Texas. I entered the study with the following assumptions and understandings, based on the literature review in Chapter 2.

1. That a figured world of Multiraciality exists.
2. That this figured world of Multiraciality challenges, distinguishes itself from and perforates the figured worlds of monoraciality, and, in this way, carves out a racial third space/borderland.
3. That within this figured world of Multiraciality, actors are able to enact agency through improvisational activity, drawing from a well of facultad, cultural intuition and oppositional consciousness.
4. That these daily lived acts of agency have the potential to expand the parameters of the Multiracial figured world and to queer the monoracial figured world.

Grounded in these four tenets, I explored the rationale behind my choice of qualitative methods, my positionality as researcher with specific attention to native anthropology dilemmas (Narayan, 1993), reflexive practices (Davies,

1999) and, finally, the data analysis conducted for the research process. The methods utilized in this qualitative study draw primarily from Critical Race Methodology and Feminist Thought and while it draws on tenets of Critical Ethnography, this study is not a Critical Ethnography. The methods include: 1) 25 semi-structured interviews of Multiracial Participants, 2) of which 5 will be expanded into case studies, 3) 3 focus groups, 4) observations of the sole registered Multiracial student organization on Central University's campus, 5) field notes and 6) document analysis. The following chart illustrates the methods and accompanying data that will be used to address each research question.

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Method(s)</b>	<b>Data</b>
How do Multiracial students understand and experience their racialized identities within a large, public, tier-one research university in Texas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 semi-structured individual interviews</li> <li>• 5 case studies</li> <li>• 3 focus group interviews</li> <li>• ongoing observations of Multiracial student organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transcribed audio of individual and focus group interviews</li> <li>• field notes</li> <li>• student biographical writings</li> </ul>

<p>How do Multiracial students experience their racialized identities in their everyday interactions with others, in relation to their own self-perceptions and in response to the way others perceive them to be?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 semi-structured individual interviews</li> <li>• 5 case studies</li> <li>• 3 focus group interviews</li> <li>• ongoing observations of Multiracial student organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transcribed audio of individual and focus group interviews</li> <li>• field notes</li> <li>• student biographical writings</li> </ul>
<p>How do Multiracial students' positionalities, as they relate to power, privilege, phenotype and status, guide their behavior in different contexts and situations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 semi-structured individual interviews</li> <li>• 5 case studies</li> <li>• 3 focus group interviews</li> <li>• ongoing observations of Multiracial student organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transcribed audio of individual and focus group interviews</li> <li>• field notes</li> <li>• student biographical writings</li> </ul>

Why Qualitative Research?

My choice to utilize qualitative methods to gather data is based on my paradigmatic stance rather than what is oftentimes construed as a “qualitative” study versus a “quantitative” study, assuming a rigid division between these approaches. This artificial division tends to position quantitative data as

somehow more objective (affording it less scrutiny) and qualitative data as subjective (bearing the brunt of more skeptical examination). As I have come to learn, methods are techniques which one uses to employ one's paradigmatic stance, rather than paradigms themselves. Because my paradigmatic stance relies heavily on bringing silenced voices of Multiracial individuals to the fore, it is critical to me that the audience hears these voices, in their words. Quantitative data will not provide the kind of in-depth narration that this study desires. Furthermore, previous studies on Multiracial students have relied mainly on quantitative analysis. I want to contribute to add another important dimension of this research which involves the gathering and analysis of qualitative data.

An overview of the major research paradigms will reveal which paradigm(s) is best suited to the aforementioned approach. A paradigm is significant because it defines or provides a conceptual framework for making sense of the social world (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It shapes how the researcher perceives the world and elucidates the filters through which we see research. In many ways, it also aligns the researcher with a larger, contextualized body of research within his/her field. This recognition of one's worldview and admission of its inevitable influence on one's research allows the researcher to be upfront, honest and conscientious with regards to the ways she confronts research, how she collects and analyzes data and how research results are presented. The four major research paradigms are positivist/post-positivist, interpretivist

(constructionist), critical and deconstructivist (post-modern) (Patton, 1990). I will briefly describe each paradigm and provide a critique of each which informs my location within and/or outside of them.

Positivism embraces an ontology (nature of reality) of absolutism (Crotty, 2005). That is to say, positivists believe that there is one truth, one reality and that through a positivist, objectivist epistemology (nature of knowledge), such notions can be found and measured. Comte, considered, to some, the first sociologist, is considered the father of positivist thought. Heavily reliant on the scientific method, positivism is the view that all knowledge is “scientific” and measurable. Positivism has been largely critiqued for its assumption of the universality of knowledge and for its lack of consideration of multiple viewpoints and self-scrutiny (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Oftentimes, positivism is directly connected with quantitative methods and depending on the academic field, is perceived as more rigorous and accurate than research that is born from other paradigms, particularly those that employ qualitative methods. The problem with positivistic research is twofold. It ignores the notion that knowledge is constructed according to the observer and, in this way, reifies dominant social structures rather than challenging them. Secondly, its negation of reflection, both as researcher and as it concerns absolute facts in society is dangerously narrow and capable of much damage in its potential to reproduce hegemonic institutions.

Interpretivists’ ontological approach is not one of discovery of “facts” and

“reality”, as embraced by positivists, but one of construction that is produced in a relational manner, via consensus (Lincoln and Guba, 2008). Epistemologically, realities are represented symbolically through an understanding resulting from interactions. All knowledge is a matter of interpretation, according to the interpretivist paradigm. Another way of capturing it is that all knowledge is relative, in direct opposition to objectivism. The issue with interpretivism is that rather than critiquing the status quo, interpretivists seek to understand experiences, meanings and “realities”.

Epistemologically, criticalists also believe that knowledge is constructed, yet, ontologically, such knowledge is not neutral or necessarily shared. Rather it is devised in a hegemonic context which affords some knowledges, and their subsequent group affiliations, more power than others. Knowledge, according to criticalists, does not operate in a vacuum – there are real and oftentimes, severe, consequences to knowledge production (Apple, 2000) and its reproduction. Scholars such as Marx, Gramsci, Freire, Apple, hooks, Anzaldúa and Butler are among some of those who are considered as part of this paradigmatic community. In this view, the goals are the empowerment of the disenfranchised, the queering of the norm, the eradication of oppression, the challenging of the privileged and the ultimate pursuit of social justice. These goals are directly aligned with both my positionality as a Multiracial Queer Feminist and with the intent of the study – to bring otherwise ignored and/or silenced Multiracial voices to the fore.

Deconstructivists (also known as post-modernists) question the very existence of reality and are epistemologically subjective, questioning that which is, as something that may not be at all (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). This is a subjectivist paradigm in which the individual negotiates knowledge through regimes of truth and total institutions. Deconstructivism could best be described as interruptive and illustrated by scholars such as Foucault and Nietzsche. It concentrates on finding ruptures, crevices or inconsistencies which enable one to deconstruct realities themselves. Such deconstruction consists of asserting an interpretation without claiming that any text or interpretation has objective truth or meaning.

My research fits appropriately within the critical paradigm as it focuses on the power relationships between, among and with self-identity, others' perceptions of that identity and the relational activity between these relationships. The study's foci on issues of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), self and community empowerment, challenging dominant monoracial constructs, and critiquing of racial discourses as they pertain to or ignore Multiracial individuals, aptly fits this body of thought and analysis. This paradigm is linked with specific methods which most effectively flesh out a critical conscientiousness and heighten awareness of societal inequities.

In alignment with the critical paradigm, this study draws on tenets of Critical Ethnography (Anderson, 1989; Delgado, 1989; Emerson et al., 1995;

Foley and Valenzuela, 2005; Hayman and Levit, 2002; Landman, 2006; Lassiter, 2005; Lather, 2007; Parker et al., 1998; Reinhartz, 1992; Scheurich and Young, 1997; Stanfield, 1985; Valdes et al., 2002; Werner and Schoepfle, 1987). Critical Ethnography can be captured in the words of Marc Manganaro (1990).

No anthropology is apolitical, removed from ideology and hence from the capacity to be affected by or, as crucially, to effect social formations. The question ought not to be if an anthropological text is political, but rather, what kind of sociopolitical affiliations are tied to particular anthropological texts. (p.35)

Manganaro plainly states that “no anthropology is apolitical,” somehow removed from subjectivities and positionalities. He reminds us that while the question of a certain mythological objectivity continues to be debated, the real question should revolve around “what kind of sociopolitical affiliations are tied to particular anthropological texts.” I concur with Manganaro’s statement and recognize that my study is both political and personal specifically within the factional field of education. And, while this study is not a critical ethnography, the study embraces critical ethnographic orientations around sociopolitical affiliations and its ties to personal subjectivities and their impact on carrying out research.

In Anderson’s (1989), *Critical Ethnography in Education: Origins, Current Status and New Directions*, he reviews the development of Critical Ethnography within the field of education. Anderson frames his discussion of Critical Ethnography within education in the following way.

Critical ethnography in the field of education is the result of the following dialectic: On one hand, critical ethnography has grown out of dissatisfaction with social accounts of 'structures' like class, patriarchy, and racism in which real human actors never appear. On the other hand, it has grown out of dissatisfaction with cultural accounts of human actors in which broad structural constraints like, class, patriarch, and racism never appear. Critical theorists in education have tended to view ethnographers as too atheoretical and neutral in their approach to research. Ethnographers have tended to view critical theorists as too theory driven and biased in their research. (p.249)

The tension with Critical Ethnography, as Anderson notes, lies in critical theorists viewing ethnographies as too anecdotal while ethnographers view critical theorists as too theory driven and biased in their research. And, it is this very tension that makes this orientation so compelling, alive and dynamic. The theoretical space in between what is perceived as atheoretical and too theoretical, allows for an exploration of varying intellectual traditions.

The current situation, although chaotic, is also full of opportunity. Current theoretical and methodological dissatisfaction has led to a resurgence of interest in intellectual traditions such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, feminism, and Marxism. Critical ethnography as a form of representation and interpretation of social reality is one of the many methodological experiments that have grown out of this ferment. (p.250)

Yet, this dialectic of representation is not the only source of tension when conducting research that embraces a critical ethnographic approach. Anderson notes that validity is a concern both within and outside of the ethnographic tradition. He says, "they are often viewed with skepticism not only by the educational research establishment, but also by fellow ethnographers who have taken care to build procedures for 'objectivity' into their work" (p.253). As I

conducted my study, the issues of validity and trustworthiness were crucial factors in ensuring credible, sound and defensible research. As Olesen (2000) notes,

Related to the question of objectivity is the old question of the degree to which the account reflects or depicts what the researcher is looking at. Feminist qualitative researchers address or worry about the validity, also known in more recent incarnations as ‘trustworthiness,’ in different ways depending on how they frame their approaches (Denzin, 1997, pp.1-4). For those who work in a traditional vein reflecting the positivist origins of social science (reality is there to be discovered), the search for validity will involve well-established techniques. Those who disdain the positivistic origins of such techniques but nevertheless believe that there are ways of achieving validity that reflect the nature of qualitative work will seek out ways to establish credibility through such strategies as audit trails and member ‘validation,’ techniques that reflect their post-positivist views but that do not involve hard-and-fast criteria for according ‘authenticity’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Manning, 1997). (p.230)

Olesen (2000) points out the challenge in establishing trustworthiness and addressing validity within a post-positivist paradigm. While there aren’t techniques that guarantee validity, there are techniques that can help establish credibility. “Member validation,” or member checking, is a primary technique which I employed in my study in order to ensure validity and trustworthiness.

Member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is a common tool utilized among qualitative researchers to assess “whether or not the explanation [of the data] fits the description” (Janesick, 2000, p. 393). She describes member checking as a general rule of qualitative research.

By applying the suggestions of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and others, we may cross-check our work through member checks and audit trails. As a rule, in writing up the narrative, the qualitative researcher must decide what form the member check will take. For example, quite often,

participants in a study move, leave the area, or request that they omit being part of the member check. The researcher needs to find a way to allow for the participants to review the material one way or another. (Janesick, 2000, p.393)

Janesick notes that “the qualitative researcher must decide what form the member check will take.” In my study, member checks took on an important role in ensuring open communication between myself and my study’s participants. Janesick (2000) also challenges the idea that we must use psychometric or psychometric-like language and tools to suggest validity. She “hopes that we can move beyond this trinity of psychometrics and get on with the discussion of powerful statements from carefully done, rigorous long-term studies that uncover the meaning of events in individuals’ lives” (p.394). Janesick (2000) also stresses the importance of passion in research which she claims is the contribution of qualitative research in that it allows us to communicate with and better understand people. In my study, I employed member checking throughout the research process. During the one-to-one interviews, I established rapport to ensure a comfortable space for talking, summarized what I heard the Participants say and then ask them if I interpreted/heard them correctly.

In order to establish rapport, I approached the students as casually as possible. In other words, when I would suggest that potential Participants engage in this research, I would use language such as “let’s talk,” “I want to learn more about you,” “You have a perspective that is unique and I’d like to hear it,” “this is

not a formal interview, it's more of a conversation," and "I am not an expert in anything except my own experience and so are you." I meant what I said and, while I clearly had an authoritative position insofar as researcher-to-participant positionality, Participants responded to my interview requests with ease and eagerness. At times, Participants would relay their nervousness about saying the "wrong thing" during the interview and I was quick to dismiss this idea as impossible. Again, I reiterated the notion that there were not any "right answers" and that, together, we were just trying to get a handle on what it meant to be Multiracial, if anything at all.

Aside from using verbal accommodations, I also ensured that the Participant either chose the location of the interview and/or expressed preference/comfort with the location that I suggested. Generally, the interviews were held in a private, reservable space in the large Central University library. The space was generally warm, empty (but for a table and chairs) – a clean slate. The space felt intimate and safe because while it was just the two of us occupying the space, there was also the knowledge that we were surrounded by other students. From an outsider's perspective, we likely appeared to be in the midst of a study group. In other words, the set-up felt appropriate and comfortable for a campus-type meeting. Following these individual meetings, I would follow up as needed via email message, text message or phone call. The types of communications which I chose depended upon my sense of what would be most

comfortable for the Participants and/or what he/she expressed was more convenient. I followed a similar protocol with the focus groups.

During the focus groups, I shared my findings verbally to the Participants and conducted a group session that had credibility as its goal. Finally, I shared the written narrative with each of the Participants, followed by requests for feedback. Such techniques allow for verification of facts, Participants' confirmation or challenging of proposed information, validates the Participants' intent regarding specific phrasing and/or commentary.

This study is proactively political, subjective and self-interested. As Anderson (1989) notes,

The cultural construction of meaning is inherently a matter of political and economic interests. According to critical ethnographers, the ideological nature of knowledge resides in the embeddedness of commonsense knowledge (and social science knowledge as well) in political and economic interests. (p.254)

So, the question lied in how I would conduct valid research when adopting self-reflexive practices which were both critical of dominant social constructions and sufficiently rigorous to warrant what Lather (1986) defines as "catalytic validity," or "the degree to which the research process re-orientes, focuses, and energizes participants in what Freire (1970) terms 'conscientization'" (p. 67).

In this study, I applied a Freirian approach by embracing the notion that "Subjects' are those who know and act: 'objects' are those that are known and

acted upon.” (Freire, 1970) In other words, the participants’ narratives became the source, the center and the energy which directed, guided and sustained the integrity of the research. Critical Ethnography gives special credence to the life experiences and the ways in which participants enact agency within their educational context and general lives. According to Resistance Theory (Willis, 1981), individuals are rational social actors who use tools of resistance to hegemonic structures to enact agency. According to Anderson (1989)

Ethnography allowed Willis to view the working-class adolescents who were his cultural informants as more than victims of "false consciousness": He viewed them as rational social actors who understood or "penetrated" the structural constraints on their social class but who nevertheless, through their very resistance to the dominant school culture, adopted the attitudes that condemned them to a life of factory labor. The resulting theory of resistance or cultural production and the emphasis on human "agency" or "praxis" is echoed by critical feminists. (p.251)

In my study, I was particularly cognizant of the ways in which participants may position themselves as resisters to imposed monoracial social constructions by behaving in ways that may be construed as deviant or abnormal. This sensitivity to participants’ positionalities was important because it sensitized me to their actions, based on a critical lens.

According to Madison, “representation has consequences” (p.4). In other words, researchers must be held accountable for their representations of others and self as researcher. This accountability involves a deep concern for positionality or in Davies’ (1999) words, “reflexive ethnography,” a “turning

back” on ourselves. As Hall (1997) claims, how people are represented are how people are treated. Madison points to five central questions that a researcher must take into account regarding the study, revelation and representation of participants’ stories:

1. How do we reflect upon and evaluate our own purpose, intentions, and frames of analysis as researchers?
2. How do we predict consequences or evaluate our own potential to do harm?
3. How do we create and maintain a dialogue of collaboration in our research projects between ourselves and Others?
4. How is the specificity of the local story relevant to the broader meanings and operations of the human condition?
5. How—in what location or through what intervention—will our work make the greatest contribution to equity, freedom, and justice?

These questions were vital to my research process because the responses they evoked became informal tenets of my own reflexivity as a researcher—serving as guides in the study’s direction and purpose. Because this study contains an ethnographic component, issues of revelation and representation are especially relevant and meaningful because of the study’s focus on identity production.

Because the college campus is a ripe site of identity development and general openness to learning and change, I chose Central University (pseudonym) as my desired study site. As Hurtado (1999) notes,

It is during the college years that students may exhibit greater openness to change in social and political attitudes. Researchers have indicated that late adolescence and early adulthood are the ‘impressionable years,’ a period during the life cycle when individuals may be particularly

vulnerable to the formation of attitudes and change (Alwin, Cohen, and Newcomb, 1991). (p.28)

For these reasons and the fact that students become increasingly aware of their racial identity, as well as other dimensions of their identity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), during this period of their lives, the college campus presented the ideal environment for exploring the experiences of Multiracial students.

### Setting

The research study was conducted with Multiracial college students on the Central University campus. Central University is a major research university which is home to more than 48,000 students, 2,700 faculty and 19,000 staff members. It is one of the largest public universities in the United States. The Central University undergraduate student population is comprised of approximately 60.6% White, 0.4% American Indian, 3.6% African American, 17% Asian American, 14.3% Hispanic and 3.5% Foreign. The Multiracial population is unknown since the university does not include a Multiracial category in its admissions application. It allows applicants to choose one racial identification from one of the five choices from the drop-down menu: White/Non-Hispanic, Black/Non-Hispanic, Hispanic or Latino, Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native. Beginning 2010, however, as a result of recent changes to the U.S. Department of Education's data collection standards,

all educational institutions will be required to allow students to check as many racial identification boxes as apply. Certainly, this new approach to data collection will present new challenges and opportunities for campuses all over the country with regards to their commitments to diverse student populations. The federal guideline/allowance to check more than one box will affect the ways in which students are categorized for data gathering and analyses purposes. As an example, how will a campus official interpret the race of a Multiracial student that checks Black, Asian and white? Is that Multiracial student Black, Asian, white, Blasian (Black and Asian), Hapa (half white, half Asian), biracial Black and white, or another identification? It begs the question, how will Multiracial students be counted and who will get to decided how they are counted?

There are historical reasons for this lack of attention to Multiracial identity. Mainly, I would argue, that to look at Multiraciality, one must somehow reconcile a history of racism among monoracial groups that has yet to be resolved. One might say that the monoracial tensions that have existed within Central, Texas have been strategically absent from textbooks and the general community knowledge of this city (Goldstone, 2006). Central University students, faculty and administration are quick to note its “priority on diversity” (Duval et al., 2008) and yet, few are even aware of the long, deep-seeded history of racial segregation, tension and inequality within the city of Central and its flagship university. Goldstone (2006) argues that these issues continue, albeit in different

iterations, throughout history. Whereas in the past, issues of racial strife were arguably more explicit than the present time (de jure segregation), racism continues to pervade in both explicitly and insidious subtle ways (de facto segregation).

This history is important to note as it laid the foundation for the ways in which both students and community members feel about the campus itself. The “lingering feelings of mistrust” (Goldstone, 2006, p.152), particularly among African Americans and Latinos, is still present in many students’ perceptions of the university’s negative racial climate (caused by both explicit and subtle actions). Critical legal cases stated supported and challenged the notion that “achieving a diverse student body, whether as a proxy for permissible characteristics, simply cannot be a state interest compelling enough under the Fourteenth amendment” (Goldstone, 2006, p.151). These cases only exacerbated an already precarious campus climate. The Texas Attorney General at the time, Dan Morales, advised Texas colleges and university to operate on a race-neutral basis, resulting in the dismantling of several recruitment and retention programs for students, faculty and staff. This further had a strong reverberation with regards to campus climate for students of color – it was less than welcoming. As Goldstone (2006) astutely notes, “Formerly segregated and forced to integrate by a 1950 U.S. Supreme Court decision, the Central University was now, forty-seven years later, forbidden from considering race in its admissions decisions” (p.151).

Given the history of Central University, I decided to choose this site as fertile ground for studying the issues of Multiracial identities. It is this history that provides a complex backdrop to the experiences of Multiracial college students. I have gained entry into the site because of my various professional positions at Central University. In my various roles, I have worked directly with students and other faculty, staff and external constituents of the campus community. In these roles, I have been fortunate to work with very thoughtful, critical and intellectually curious students. These interactions with students led me to choose Multiracial college students at Central University as participants for this study.

Participants

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Racial Self-Identification</b>
DeeDee	Black, White
Jonathan	Asian American, Jewish, Indian, Filipino & Cape Malays

May	Mexican, Thai, Italian, Chinese
Solomon	Mexican, White, Irish, Armenian
Melissa	Chinese, White
Ladybug	Nigerian, White
Marie	Mexican American, Chicana, Italian
Carolyn	Mexican, Black
Mohinder	Thai, Indian
Amber	Black, White
Lizzy	Mexican, White
Betty	Mexican, White, American
August	Black, Filipina
Kamina	Mexican, Algerian
Jodi	Black, Native American, Italian, Portuguese, French
Robert	Mexican, White
Heather	Black, Filipina
Marissa	Black, White, Native American, Creole
Alison	Asian, White
Mandy	Asian, White
Steff	Mexican, Chinese
Xochi	Mexican, White
Taylor	Black, White
Luz	Mexican, Chinese
Katrina	Japanese, Black

Participants were selected through a form of theoretical/purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) known as snowballing. Snowballing is the strategy that identifies cases of interest from people who know other people who could participate as participants, that is, good examples for study. In other words, already-participating participants recruited or referred future participants from among their own social and academic networks. In this way, the data builds like that of a snowball, increasing in quantity as more participants participate in the research. This technique is particularly helpful for Multiracial college students because they can be difficult to access in that there is not an obvious site of socializing, studying or the like among them. This type of participant-driven pool allows researchers insight into the social networks of “hidden populations” (Heckathorn, 1997), such as this one. Unlike monoracial communities, it is much more challenging to find actual spaces where Multiracial people meet (if they do at all). Ethnographic immersion (Emerson et al., 1995) becomes implausible since there is no location, per se, where Multiracial individuals live or congregate. Snowball sampling therefore provided a strategy that can most effectively rely on the social contacts of Multiracial individuals (rather than social locations) to recruit participants for the study.

The rationale for choosing college students, as opposed to other sub-populations, as the participants for the study, is two-fold. The first involves choosing a site where race is a salient issue. The second involves the relationship

between increased diversity within the campus and a more complex, enriched and meaningful learning environment. To support the first reason, Emerson et al.’

(1995) note that,

At the most basic level, the ethnographer with strong interests in gender, ethnicity, and/or class should carefully select a site for field research where he expects one or more of these processes to be particularly salient. In choosing a site, the researcher should look for a setting where gender, ethnic, or class diversity not only seems clearly highlighted but also where these issues concern the members. (p.134)

As Emerson notes, it is important to select a site where issues such as Multiraciality, race and cross-racial interaction would be salient. Such is my intent with this study – to select Central University as the research site since it meets these conditions.

Participants were recruited via email which were sent to a variety of student organizations (including race-based organizations, fraternities/sororities, community list serves, student leader groups). Additionally, I recruited participants from the sole registered Multiracial student organization on campus, from students whom I knew from my role as a university administrator at Central University and finally through a variety of courses (including my own course on the construction and negotiation of Multiracial identity). My own identity as a Multiracial person also allowed me access to Multiracial students as they would seek me out upon learning of our potential shared experiences. Multiracial students tended to relate to my positionality as a Multiracial individual and were

thus more open to discussing their experiences with me. The participants fell at every point of the phenotypical, socioeconomic, political, religious and academic spectrum.

The second reason for the selection of this site involved the important relationship between a diverse campus and a heightened learning environment. In the words of Chang, Denson, Sáenz and Misa (2006),

In short, because of the persistent power of race to shape life experiences, racial and ethnic compositional diversity can create a rich and complex social and learning environment that can subsequently be applied as an educational tool to promote students' learning and development. (p.432)

Because of the educational benefits of campus diversity, scholars (Chang, Witt, Jones & Hakuta, 2003; Hurtado, Dey, Gurin, & Gurin, 2003; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998, 1999; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Smith, Gerbick, Figueroa, Watkins, Levitan, Moore, et al., 1997) agree that diversity-related benefits (especially as they relate to race and ethnicity at predominantly white institutions) are far-ranging and that campuses that are more racially diverse tend to create improved educational experiences that help students learn and prepare them for an increasingly diverse and connected global society (Antonio, 2001; Astin, 1993; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Chang, 1999; Chang et al., 2003; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hurtado, 2001; Milem, 1994; Orfield & Kurlaender, 2001; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996; Sax & Astin, 1997). Given this line of argument, Multiracial college students, as members of a

diverse group, likely have much to contribute to the racial/ethnic diversity which results in such educational advantages. This study seeks to ignite further study of this likelihood.

### Selection Criteria

Participants were or are current or recent (within one year of graduation) undergraduates of Central University who identify as Multiracial or any variation of that term (such as mixed, Hapa, biracial, multiethnic, multicultural) at the time of the study. Because of the changing nature of racial identity development, the participants consistently identified as Multiracial, sometimes identified as Multiracial or at one point in time identified as such. This selection criteria was used so that my own definition of the term Multiracial would not impede anyone from participating in the study and to honor the integrity and respect of the ways in which the participant chose to define him/her self. The participants were informed of the study through the consent form<sup>19</sup> which apprised them of the purpose and duration of the study as well as the measures that were taken to ensure confidentiality. Participants were required to sign this written consent form.

The careful and respectful treatment of this study's participants and their personal narratives was paramount. Because their stories regarding their

---

<sup>19</sup> Refer to Appendix to view consent form.

Multiracial identity are generally unsolicited and often taboo subjects (Ifekwunigwe, 2004) within monoracial normativity (the notion that the context in which we interact and live is prevalently dominated by monoracial categorization and therefore deemed “normal”), it was reasonable to assume that they may either feel reticent about sharing and/or a certain eagerness to do so. Either disposition (and those dispositions which fell in between) presented a situation that must be handled with care. I enter this research process with the clear acknowledgment that I, as researcher, will position these stories in a specific way—narrating my participants’ narratives through my own personal and professional filters. I am explicitly aware that I hold more power in the researcher/participant relationship with regards to manipulation of information/data, the perception that I am somehow an expert in both academic areas and life experience, advanced educational background, and age advantage, to name a few.

In order to genuinely take these positionalities and those of my participants into account, I drew from Critical Race Theory and Feminist Thought in making thoughtful and analytical choices with regards to the methods that I employed. I was fully aware that the methods I employed and the manner in which I employed them would ultimately influence the rapport I developed with my participants. Their receptivity and candidness regarding the information they chose to share depended on this rapport. So, at the heart of the rationale behind my methodological choices is a firm belief in the power of individual story(ies),

cultural intuition, transparency, political exposure, researcher/participant reciprocity and overall frankness as relayed by concepts of Critical Race Theory and Feminist Theory. I framed my methodological choices using both Critical Race Theory and Feminist Thought, followed by a description of the actual methods. In framing my methodological choices, I adopted counter storytelling as an approach to understanding and relaying the experiences of this study's participants.

### Counter Storytelling

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) define Critical Race Methodology as a theoretically grounded approach to research that considers race and racism as the central themes in all aspects of the research process. As such, Critical Race Methodology challenges traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color and places significant value on the intersectionality of multiple oppressions. Central to Critical Race Methodology is its interdisciplinary approach to better understand the experiences of students of color accompanied by the recognition of experiential knowledge, the challenge to dominant ideologies and a steadfast commitment to social justice. Storytelling, “a tool to ‘counter’ deficit storytelling offers space to conduct and present research grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of color” (Solórzano and Yosso, p. 2002), is used to counter “monovocal” stories that become “master

narratives” or “majoritarian stories” which we all participate in. According to Solórzano and Yosso (2002), these stories can be used as theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical tools to challenge racism, sexism, and classism and work toward social justice. These counter-stories offer a challenge to a legacy of racial privilege where dominant stories are presented so that– “racial privilege seems ‘natural’” (p.28).

Within this study, the monovocal stories are monoracial ones and the majoritarian story is one of whiteness and racial authenticity. So, stories in which monoracial identities are the norm seem natural while Multiracial ones are seen as disruptions to this master narrative. Using Critical Race Methodology allowed me to analyze “new” Multiracial counter-stories by focusing on the ever-present salience of race, challenging the monoracial paradigm as the sole vehicle for racial identification, and by placing significant value on the multiple oppressions that are specific to Multiracial students.

Counter-stories are defined as a method of telling the stories of marginalized peoples. They disrupt the otherwise dominant discourse. These counter-stories are a response to the question of whose stories are privileged and silenced in educational contexts, drawing from the strength of communities of color. Through the use of Strauss and Corbin’s theoretical sensitivity (1990) and Delgado Bernal’s cultural intuition (1998), counter-stories are constructed through research data, existing literature (both traditional and non-traditional

texts), the researcher's professional and personal experiences (including multiple voices of family and friends). Critical Race Theorists employ storytelling to "analyze myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render Blacks and other minorities one-down" (Delgado, 1995, p.xiv). As such, Critical Race Theorists also integrate their own experiential knowledge, drawn from a larger sense of marginalization in the production and co-authoring of these stories. These stories run counter to otherwise hegemonic narratives that impose stories on those that have been othered. The value of counter-storytelling lies in the power of "naming one's own reality" (Delgado, 1995), rather than having it designated and told from the perspective of another, a likely dominant other. The role as research or co-storyteller, is representative of much more than an individual narrator. The co-storyteller can relay a community experience. As Williams (1995) notes,

To be a Storyteller . . . is to assume the awesome burden of remembrance for a people, and to perform this paramount role with laughter and tears, joy and sadness, melancholy and passion, as the occasion demands. The Storyteller never wholly belongs to himself or herself. The Storyteller is the one who sacrifices everything in the tellings and retellings of the stories belonging to the tribe. (pp.xi-xii)

This study used the methodological tools of story construction and telling to relay Multiracial narratives. Specifically (as detailed above), Delgado Bernal (1995) points out the sources of cultural intuition in educational research: research data, existing literature (both traditional and non-traditional texts), the researcher's

professional and personal experiences (including multiple voices of family and friends).

In my mind, such narratives serve three purposes in research – to provide in-depth data about the participants in the study that quantitative data fails to provide (the “new” knowledge that the researcher gains in order to conduct the study), to fulfill the researcher’s “need to know” (Reinharz, 1992) about some intangibility (what the researcher desires to know), and to empower the study participants by providing a voice-space, a location from which to hear their own stories and craft their own self-perception (what the participant conscientiously and inadvertently gains). The researcher’s desire to fulfill a personal need of understanding one’s own positionality, as defined by one’s personal experiences, coupled with a strong orientation toward the political power that can result from using this desire to inspire and solicit the stories of others (and, in this way, perhaps, fulfilling a personal need to share this story) is grounded in feminist concepts.

### Methods Rooted in Feminist Thought

Feminist thought/inquiry emerges from feminism which, at its core, is a personal experiential journey, an intellectual body of knowledge and a political movement that seeks justice for women and advancement of women’s rights and issues in all forms. (Sullivan, 2003) However, feminism is defined and interpreted

in various ways (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 1986; Madriz, 2000) and the common strand that holds these definitions together is that feminists, regardless of theoretical orientation, disagree. Among these areas of contention and debate are: what sexism consists of, what should be done in response to it, what it means to be a woman, what sociopolitical implications gender has or should have and the social, cultural, and political phenomena most responsible for perpetuating inequality (Butler, 1990). Amidst these various versions of feminism, common themes that arise in feminist thought include: the body, class, work, disability, the family, globalization, human rights, popular culture, race, reproduction, science, the self and sexuality (hooks, 1989). And although, one could argue that feminism has no point of origin (since it has always existed to some extent in different contexts), current literature around feminism is generally broken up into three historical waves (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2005).

The first-wave of feminism arose in the context of industrial society and is connected to both the liberal women's rights movement and early socialist feminism in the late 19th and early 20th century in the United States and Europe (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2005). Mainly centered on *de jure* issues, the first wave continued to influence feminism in both Western and Eastern societies throughout the 20th century. The second wave of feminism, which emerged in the 1960s to 1970s in postwar Western welfare societies, mainly dealt with *de facto* issues, as othered, oppressed groups such as GLBTQ communities and communities of

color, were gaining acknowledgment by the middle class, white feminist movement (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2005). Second-wave feminism, during the 1980s to 1990s, is rooted in the radical voices of female empowerment, equal rights, women of color and third-world women. The third feminist wave, from the mid-1990s onward, emanated from the emergence of a new postcolonial and postsocialist world order (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2005). Third-wave feminism challenges the notion of “universal womanhood” and embraces ambiguity, diversity, and multiplicity in transversal theory and politics. Third-wave feminisms are defined not by common theoretical and political standpoint(s), but rather by the use of performance, mimicry, and subversion as rhetorical strategies (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2005).

The 1980s signaled a challenge against white middle-class feminists' homogenizing discourses that erased the voices of women who varied in backgrounds by race, class, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Black feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins (1986), Beverly Guy-Sheftall (1995) and bell hooks (1989) initiated powerful opposition and demands for incorporation of their experiences, followed by other women of color including Chicanas, Latinas, Asian Americans. Among them, the writings of Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989), Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Cherrie Moraga (1983), and Gayatri Spivak (1990) powerfully critiqued white women's hegemony in conceptualizations of feminism and feminist struggles.

The groundbreaking texts which these feminists of color produced on the

intersecting issues of race, ethnicity, region, sexuality, and class forced reconceptualizations of feminism on a global level. Including the experiences of women of color within a feminist paradigm was an important entree but continues to lack inclusivity. A more inclusive feminism continues to be strengthened by reinforcing the notion that identity politics cannot be separated from other aspects of liberation. As bell hooks (1989) argues,

Feminism, as liberation struggle, must exist apart from and as a part of the larger struggle to eradicate domination in all its forms. We must understand that patriarchal domination shares an ideological foundation with racism and other forms of group oppression, and that there is no hope that it can be eradicated while these systems remain intact. This knowledge should consistently inform the direction of feminist theory and practice. (p.22)

Feminism has specific issues deserving of attention and exists apart from the larger struggle for social justice and hooks astutely points out that feminism does not operate alone as a liberation struggle. In other words, different forms of oppression operate in tandem with each other—to think that we can address social justice issues individually in vacuums is not only misleading but futile. hooks' suggests that if feminism's objective is to end sexism because of its relation to other forms of oppression, this will require efforts to end other forms of oppression as well.

Third-wave feminism aims to establish a new critical global perspective which forges alliances between marginalized communities. According to the postsocialist scholar Nancy Fraser (1997), in order to avoid the pitfalls of identity

politics, it is necessary to introduce a concept of justice that simultaneously acknowledges and counters the claims of difference. Issues such as race, sexuality, class, and ethnicity have served to debunk the idea of an essential woman. Feminism has grown beyond an ideology to an influential academic discipline.

Some of the methodological principles of Critical Race Theory overlap, intersect and communicate with those of feminist thought. I employ general guiding principles that cut across the differing branches of feminist thought within this study to further emphasize the importance of the relationship between knowledge (which is always partial) and power, consciousness- raising, reflexivity and reciprocity of and between both researcher and researched, and research as a political activity. These guiding principles for conducting research draw from Stanley & Wise' (2000) four sites for feminism in the research process: 1)the recognition of emotion as a research experience; 2)the intellectual autobiography of researchers, who bring values and particular dispositions to the research experience; 3)the management of the differing realities and understandings of the researcher and participants; and 4)the complex question of power in research and writing, including questions of who owns the data and to what extent respondent validation should influence publication and dissemination. These feminist principles were foundational in the approach to this study and were employed in the construction of the study participants' narratives.

I believe that the combination of Critical Race theory and Feminist Theory enact the notion of intersectionality by employing a multi-faceted approach to a multi-faceted experience (Multiraciality). In order to fully understand the experiences of Multiracial students, I investigated and examined the ways in which racializing structures, social processes, and social representations are shaped by race, gender, class, sexuality, etc.. For purposes of this study, the underlying tenets of Feminist Thought offer a rich framework from which to identify issues specific to Multiracial women and to the participant pool at large.

Critical Race Theory and Feminist Theory provided guidance for my study's methodological tools and choices by providing theories and tools that minimize hierarchical positioning as researcher, increase consciousness-raising, foster self-empowerment, work toward social justice and, in summary, as a way to "talk back" (DeVault, 1996), with and within past and contemporary discourses about Multiraciality.

## Observations

### *Organization Observation*

Observations of the Multiracial Student Organization (MSO) were also conducted throughout the study. The MSO is the only registered student organization on the Central University campus (out of 900+) that focuses on students that identify as Multiracial. I observed this group because it addressed

one of the main challenges that observations present in this study - the desire to conduct fieldwork in more “naturalistic” settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This desire presented a challenge, as, unlike most monoracial groups, who have physical social locations where they hang out or race-affiliated campus groups and organizations, there is not a natural space where Multiracial college students congregate. Instead, they are interspersed among different groups, locations and dimensions. For this reason, I observed and participated in a Multiracial student organization on campus, since it specifically committed to the issues facing Multiracial students and provided a space where Multiracial students will definitely be in attendance. The MSO meetings provided a space to observe interactions among Multiracial college students that otherwise can’t be had. I sat in and observed bi-weekly meetings of the Mixed Student Union<sup>20</sup>. I acted as an observer participant and pseudo-advisor of sorts, interjecting when asked and staying silent otherwise. I observed for the following: student to student interactions within the meetings, topics of conversation, body language, consistent themes that emerged, my own reactions, attendance and participation levels, issues of contention and agreement, and other behaviors and topics that emerged as I recorded fieldnotes.

### Field Notes

---

<sup>20</sup> The MSO is the only registered student organization aimed specifically at Multiracially-identified individuals on the campus site.

Through the use of field notes, I recorded the interactions between group members, the format used to conduct the meetings, the topics covered, the recruitment of members and general discussions that took place in the course of the meeting. The field notes alternated between both hand written journal-like entries to computer-based notes. When I had my laptop available, I would utilize it to avoid transcription of written fieldnotes onto the computer at a later point. When I did not have access to a laptop, I wrote in a journal. Both approaches proved equally efficient. Fieldnotes were divided into the following categories: 1) descriptive notes, 2) analytical notes, and 3) self-reflective notes. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), “field notes are data that may contain some conceptualization and analytic remarks, but are limited in terms of depth of analysis” (p.123).

Notes recorded on-the-spot observations of student interactions (descriptive), words, body language and the like (items which may not be fully captured in a tape recording). Memo writing (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), which took place after leaving the MSC meeting, fulfilled that role of deeper analysis (analytical). In other words, writing in the field as activities occurred did not allow me to instantly reflect on my observations. Memo writing was based on my field notes but took the analysis one step further by connecting theoretical concepts, personal reflections and lingering questions. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), memos are lengthier and more in-depth thoughts about an event,

usually written in conceptual form after leaving the field” (p. 124). These memos included textual citations which applied concepts or theories onto observational notes and also served as brainstorming sessions for fleshing out certain questions or issues. This is not to say, however, that I did not jot down analytic ideas as they arose. As Patton (1990) notes, “Repressing analytical insights may mean losing them forever, for there’s no guarantee they’ll return” (p, 406). Finally, I wrote separate notes that reflected upon my own reactions, behaviors and feelings (self-reflexive) that occurred before, during and after the observations had been conducted. These notes proved critical in my overall analysis of my observations because they provided a map of my thought process.

Observations are a way of recording different aspects of the social world that a researcher seeks to study. Adler and Adler (1994) state that “observation has been characterized as ‘the fundamental base of all research methods’ in the social and behavioral sciences” (p.389) while Werner and Schoepfle (1987) define observation as “the mainstay of the ethnographic enterprise (p.257).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe the role of the observer in the following way:

Observers now function as collaborative participants in action inquiry settings. It is shaped by shifts in gendered identity as well as by existing structures of power. As relationships unfold, participants validate the cues generated by others in the setting. Finally, during the observational process people assume situational identities that may not be socially or culturally normative. (p.634)

It is in this spirit of collaboration and dialogue between researcher and participant that I approached such observations, maintaining the knowledge that power

dynamics, positionalities and subjectivities are all engaged and scrutinized in the process of meaning making. In other words, observation is in no way objective, since it is performed through my own eyes, filtered by everything that goes into perception. Quickly, it became clear that this study would benefit, not only from field observations of the MSO but also from the individual testimonies of the MSO members and other Multiracial college students at Central University.

### Interviews

I chose to conduct interviews because I felt strongly that face-to-face interaction was key to engaging participants' narratives. I felt that an ethnographic approach to interviewing best suited my epistemological orientation of critical inquiry—an ethnographic approach to interviewing really spoke to “how we know what we know” (Crotty, 2005, p.8). In this study, how we know what we know refers to how participants know what they know. I felt very strongly that the methodological tools I used needed to align with the tenet that there must be a mutual respect and appreciation for participant and researcher, all within the context of social justice efforts. As Crotty (2005) notes,

Critical forms of research call current ideology into question, and initiate action, in the cause of social justice. In the type of inquiry spawned by the critical spirit, researchers find themselves interrogating commonly held values and assumptions, challenging conventional social structures, and engaging in social action.

Fueling this enterprise is an abiding concern with issues of power and oppression. Critical inquiry keeps the spotlight on power relationships within society so as to expose the forces of hegemony and injustice. It is at all time alive to the contribution that false consciousness makes to oppression and manipulation and invites researchers and participants (ideally one and the same) to discard false consciousness, open themselves to new ways of understanding, and take effective action for change. (p.157)

As Crotty highlights, “fueling this enterprise is an abiding concerns with issues of power and oppression,” concerns which can be addressed, discussed and brought to light in a face to face interview(s). During the interview process, I attempted to be cognizant of the unequal power dynamics between myself and my interviewee. Some of the specific ways that I brought the knowledge of such inequality to the surface were: arriving to the interview early enough so I could have enough time to be silent and prepare mentally for the interview which allowed me to be fully present; following my intuition as the interview went on by stopping or continuing the conversation according to what I considered its natural flow; and setting time aside at the end of the interview so that, alone, I could debrief and jot down my thoughts as a way to exercise reflexivity. Given the power dynamics that exist between researcher and participant, I chose an approach which would allow me to explicitly present my own identity while asking the same of the participant.

I employed Oakley’s (1981) feminist approach to ethnographic interviews. In this approach, the researcher presents her own identity in the process, not only

by asking questions, but also by sharing knowledge. This reciprocity invites an intimacy that encourages revelations from the researched relating to her material reality. The interviewer also develops a participatory model of research that both acknowledges the unequal power dynamic between the researcher and the participant and challenges that power imbalance by explicitly stating the nature of the relationship. An outcome of this approach is that it produces work that challenges prevailing stereotypes of the researcher and the participant.

I conducted 25 semi-structured interviews in my study in order to draw out the experiences of Multiracial college students. The interviews were holistically approached and informal in their setting. Everything from “small talk” to lengthier interviews were conducted at the location of the participant’s choice. If participants were unsure of an interview location, I suggested one of the reservable study rooms on campus, which are available to university students, faculty and staff. The interviews were dialogic in that I attempted to establish a continual dialogue. As Bakhtin (1981) suggests, interviews should operate in a dynamic, relational fashion, contextualized by history. In other words, these interviews do not operate in a bubble, immune from all that which affects utterances and experiences (such as context and history). Rather, it is a reiteration, even a reconstruction of one’s knowledge. These types of interviews provided an opportunity for participants to more comfortably share their experiences in an honest and forthright manner.

Through the use of focused semi-structured interviews, I engaged my participants with general questions that were consistent throughout the interview as well as with questions that were spontaneous or fitting to that particular interviewee. Semi-structured interviewing (Fontana and Frey, 2000), also known as the open-ended ethnographic interview, lends itself particularly well to such an ambience of trust and ease. As Fontana and Frey (2000) note, “gaining trust is essential to the success of the interviews and, once gained, trust can still be very fragile” (p. 655). A crucial part of gaining trust involves establishing rapport, that is, “the researcher must be able to take the role of the respondents and attempt to see the situation from their viewpoint, rather than superimpose his or her world of academia and perceptions upon them” (p.655). This element of trust is important to my work because its establishment and maintenance is critical to the integrity of the research and in respecting the experiences of the students.

While I identified potential guiding questions, I relied on the flow of the interview for direction. This list of questions is neither exhaustive nor were all questions necessarily addressed.

- How do you racially/ethnically/culturally identify?
- How do your parents/family members identify?
- Do you currently identify in a specific way as it pertains to your racial/ethnic/cultural background?
- Do you identify yourself differently in different situations or with different people? Why or why not?
- How do you think others perceive/have perceived you?
- What racial categorization box(es) do you check on forms? How do you make that decision?

- Do you feel a stronger affiliation with one particular race? Why or why not?

The length of the interviews varied from 45 minutes to one hour and a half (or longer), dependent on the comfort level of the participants and/or how much he/she was interested in sharing. All interviews were digitally recorded with participant permission and pseudonyms were used in documenting the data.

As I interviewed the twenty five participants, certain narratives rose to the surface. That is to say, the stories that all the participants relayed had individual sections or chapters that were illuminating and/or powerful. However, there were some stories that comprehensively resonated with me in a visceral way and represented, to some extent, other similar experiences that were shared within the participant pool. My process in choosing the case studies consisted predominantly of my intuitive response to their storytelling. Within this response, I was particularly drawn to those cases where participants relayed epiphanous moments while they were being interviewed. So, as an example, if a student would pause in the interview to share that he/she had never thought about and/or realized this before, referring to something he/she had just said, I felt particularly compelled to choose that participant's narrative over another. My rationale, as far as I can understand it now, was that these insightful moments might trigger similar revelations in others that read the study. Case studies seemed the most appropriate methodological tool for this study as they oftentimes represented

specific contextual conditions across the twenty five interviewed participants and simultaneously illustrated an especially gripping or telling story.

### Case Studies

A case study, according to Yin (2003), is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.13). To clarify, Yin goes on to state that “you would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions—believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study” (p.13). He views case studies as a “research strategy” which is comprehensive, not solely a data collection tactic or merely a design feature. This study drew on Yin’s definition of a case study as well as Kincheloe and McLaren’s (1994) assumptions about criticalist work, mainly that criticalists “use their work as a form of social or cultural criticism” (p.157). By presenting five substantive and compelling case studies, I aimed to present portraits of *racial queers* that challenge social norms of racial representation. However, at times, these compelling case studies resulted from our (participant and researcher) shared ability to spend significant time together, not necessarily because one case study was more interesting than the other per se. As Stake (2000) thoughtfully states,

The researcher examines various interests in the phenomenon, selecting a case of some typicality, but leaning toward those cases that seem to offer *opportunity to learn*. My choice would be to examine that case from which we feel we can learn the most. That may mean taking the one most accessible, the one we can spend the most time with. Potential for learning is a different and sometimes superior criterion to representativeness. (p.446)

So, if there was a mutual accessibility between myself and the participant, it gave us a richer opportunity to interact with, engage and learn from one another. This generally led to a greater facility in constructing the participant's narrative.

I selected five case studies from my participant pool. I decided to focus on case studies in order to provide an in-depth look at several cases rather than draw larger conclusions from a larger sample because I believe that it in the single cases that we can gain more substantial insight into the everyday lives of Multiracial college students at Central University by examining their particular contexts, situations and interactions. I conducted informal follow-up interviews with each case study and spent time with each of them in their own daily setting through ethnographic observation and participant observation. I utilized multiple sources of evidence (through students' writings, such as papers they have written for classes that are autobiographical in nature; interviews that are targeted on participants' life histories; direct observations of the participants' activities; and any physical artifacts, such as childhood memorabilia, photographs, locations and the like). As I individually interviewed each participant, I saw a need for the participants to speak not only to me, but to one another. This need originated

from a common concern that participants expressed about feeling either isolated and/or unique in their Multiracial experiences at Central University. Additionally, I thought that it was important, from a researcher's standpoint, to observe interactions between Multiracial college students (as peers), including the raising of issues that might not be raised in a one to one interview setting (with an authority-like figure).

### Focus Groups

I conducted three focus groups in order to provide participants with a venue for discussion about Multiracial identity. Focus groups were open to all participants but separate from the actual interviews. I sent an email invitation to participants with the focus group time and location and asked that they bring at least one question regarding Multiracial identity that they would like to pose to the group. The focus groups lasted between one hour and one hour and a half. I served as the facilitator of the focus groups (beginning the conversation, ensuring equitable participation among participants, asking my own questions) primarily using questions produced by participants. I chose to facilitate the group because, on some level, I felt obligated to define the parameters and climate of the discussion space. In retrospect, my intervention as a facilitator could have had both positive and negative impacts because not intervening could have revealed

issues of privilege including those pertaining to race, gender, class and sexuality.

These focus groups were digitally recorded and transcribed.

According to Denzin (1986), Fontana and Frey (2000), it is believed that the group situation may reduce the influence of the researcher on participants by tilting the balance of power toward the group. Focus groups can be seen as a combination of observation and individual interview techniques. They are yet another way of listening to people and learning from people, albeit in a different setting. Focus groups, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005),

allow access to research participants who may find one-to-one, face-to-face interaction 'scary' or 'intimidating'. By creating multiple lines of communication, the group interview offers participants a safe environment where they can share ideas, beliefs, and attitudes in the company of people from the same socioeconomic, ethnic, and gender backgrounds. (p.835)

Latina feminist, Madriz (2000), states the importance of focus groups as representative of a methodology that is consistent with the particularities and everyday experiences of women of color. She also points out that women have historically used conversation with one another to deal with their oppression. Black feminists (e.g., Collins, 1986; hooks, 1990), Latina feminists (e.g., Benmayor, 1991; Delgado Bernal, 1998; Garcia, 1989; Madriz, 1997), and Asian feminists (e.g., Chow, 1987; Espiritu, 1997) remind us that women of color experience a triple subjugation on the basis of class, race and gender oppression. Because Multiracial individuals also experience a multiple subjugation (based on multiple races, class, sexual orientation and so on), focus groups encourage

communication based on shared experience. These feminist tenets are also applicable to the study of Multiracial individuals.

Benmayor (1991) describes the transformative experience of collective oral history which can result from participation in focus groups. Focus groups can serve as collective group testimonies, outward professions of a group's story, for oppressed groups. As she clearly states, "social empowerment enables people to speak and speaking empowers" (p.40). On the other hand, I am also cautious and purposeful in using both focus groups and interviews as some instances may require one method over the other. As Madriz (2000) warns, there may be situations where bringing certain people together causes discomfort (such as interpersonal dynamics, historical tensions, mixed-gender settings) while the sharing of intimate details of a person's life, should they arise, is more appropriate to an interview setting. I also believe that it is crucial to provide this type of cathartic space for Multiracial students to be able to interact with one another and validate one another's experiences. In this way, the methodology served to empower the participants as well as provide the data for the study. At Central University, there was already a cathartic-like space where Multiracial college students gathered – this space was the only registered Multiracial student organization on campus, the Multiracial Student Organization.

#### Data Management and Analysis

I collected data over the course of nine months. This amount of time allowed me to carry out my methods in a sustained and adequately in-depth manner. As a result of a pilot study that I conducted beginning in March 2008, I was able to begin the data collection process. During this pilot study, a variety of themes began to emerge but I was not recording them in any systematic fashion. All of the themes were running through my head but without an organizational tool to sort them, I began to become overwhelmed with the amount of data and the amount of analysis that I could realistically store by memory alone. I explored a variety of different options to organize the data including written thematic tables which listed themes in columns and respective quotes below them. This handwritten tool was then followed by a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with a similar layout. The benefit to using this software program was that I could easily sort data by Participants, themes, phrases, number of occurrences of experiences, and so forth. While the spreadsheet technique was far more advanced and streamlined than a handwritten method, it, too, became tedious and unmanageable. The data was simply too much for the spreadsheet to adequately handle and visualize. I liked the idea of using a visual organizer so I then attempted to actually draw wall-size thematic tables where I would use the large post-it boards to visually track data themes, using color coding and different shapes to refer to commonalities and differences that I drew from the data. Eventually, I turned to computer software specific to qualitative data collection.

Through the use of ATLAS<sub>t</sub>i software, I managed to keep my current data organized and stored. ATLAS<sub>t</sub>i is a workbench that assists in the organization and layout of large bodies of qualitative research information. The central feature of ATLAS<sub>t</sub>i is what is called, “the hermeneutic unit,” which can be described as the primary database and storage unit. This hermeneutic unit allows you to enter primary data such as interview transcriptions, audio and visual text and written memos or field notes. All of the data that is utilized in a qualitative study can be incorporated into this unit, allowing for greater ease in locating information, coding of data and fairly simple coordination and management of both data and analytical write-ups. At first, I was weary of a computer program as it triggered thoughts of quantitative analysis and pseudo-objectivity in the name of technological advancement. However, as I actually engaged with the software, it proved refreshingly practical, especially in that it provided one sole location to refer to in the research process.

Charmaz (1983) states that “no matter how helpful computer programs may prove for managing the parts, we can see only their fragments on the screen” (p.521). Within these fragments, she claims, there is a danger that they can take on an existence of their own, “as if objective and removed from their contextual origins and from our constructs and interpretations” (p.521). In other words, the emphasis on coding seems to, on the surface, promote a removed, positivistic approach to data analysis. As a researcher, I am well aware of these potential

pitfalls, however, I believe that technology can allow for the queering of traditional, “normal” modes of data analysis, not by replacing the nuances of interpretive analysis, but by providing yet another dimension of complexity to this analysis. It seems that some researchers shy away from technology, essentializing it as a disengaged approach taken over by a machine. This seems problematic, especially given the relatively new and ever-emerging intimate public space of technological communication, among them, email, chats, facebook, myspace, blogs and distance learning. It is my belief that it is more positivistic to assume that technology is archaic and cold. In this generation of technological advancement, it seems almost unwise to not utilize these tools that are at our disposal. Again, it is important to emphasize that programs such as ATLAS*t*i do not claim to have analytical capabilities comparable to the human capacity to analyze, rather, as a powerful utility to aid in the organization, storage and aesthetic presentation of research data.

While some argue that the use of technology is rigid and even positivistic, Weitzman (2000) notes that it is important to emphasize that software is not new, if it ever was, something that is relevant only to positivist or quasi-positivist approaches to qualitative research. Whitman further emphasizes that ATLAS*t*i, in particular, allows for dynamic and complex data analysis by allowing posting of project databases, with analytic mark-ups, links and memos, all initiated and managed by the researcher. It is yet another way to engage the data, but, as

always, the researcher has ultimate control and responsibility over how that data is managed and engaged.

Data analysis continued throughout the data collection process. The goal was for theories to emerge from the data rather than imposing my own conclusions prematurely. Data analysis consisted of inductive analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that, "Inductive analysis . . . begins not with theories or hypotheses but with the data themselves, from which theoretical categories and relational propositions may be arrived at by inductive reasoning processes" (p. 333). Lincoln and Guba go on to explain inductive analysis as having two main components: unitizing and categorizing. A researcher unitizes his or her data by searching for an element (phrase, sentence, paragraph) that is "heuristic" or "aimed at some understanding or some action that the inquirer needs to have or to take" (p. 345).

I reviewed each category and compared them to make sure each was relatively unique. The goal was to have categories that were "internally as homogeneous as possible and externally as heterogeneous as possible" (p. 349). Once the categories were developed, they were shared with participants for the purpose of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This sharing took place during focus groups and one to one meetings. I utilized this approach to develop theories and analysis in response to what the data revealed. Both commonalities and variations among the data were sought and analyzed. In order to track student

information, I followed a table<sup>21</sup> which includes pseudonyms and racial self-identifications as stated by the participants. Every effort was made to protect the confidentiality of the participants by using pseudonyms and discarding of any data that was no longer relevant. The data analysis allowed me to bridge theory and research methodology.

Having the functionality of ATLAS.ti was certainly helpful but, in no way, did it replace my process in chunking data, capturing emerging themes and/or in considering what data led me in different directions. For the purpose of this dissertation my units of analyses consisted of Participants' sharing of their experiences as Multiracial college students in the form of quotations. I recorded each interview and focus group with a digital recorder which allowed me to then download the conversations onto my computer as a music file. Upon downloading each file, I would then transcribe each recording onto a word document. In this way, I had both an audio and written account of the interviews and focus groups.

Once each transcription was completed, I used the function, "track changes" on Microsoft Word to insert comments that I had in response to what I had just heard. For example, I would insert a comment that seemed to pick up on a theme (for example, racial disclosure), evoked a strong emotion in me (for example, when I could personally relate to a struggle that a Participant had

---

<sup>21</sup> Refer to table in the section on participants.

mentioned) and/or called to mind academic concepts (such as aspects of the my conceptual framework, scholars' words, an article/book I had read and/or a professor's/fellow student's remark that had inspired me).

Once data were coded, units that relate to the same content are grouped together in "provisional categories" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 347) or codes. Categorizing or coding was achieved through the use of the constant comparative method. Themes were compared to each other to establish whether they were similar and should be put in the same code, or different and should be put into different codes. I then attempted to "put into a propositional statement the properties that seem to characterize" (p. 348) the code. Through this process, I established a loose but consistent rule for further inclusion of themes into the code. I would undertake this process directly after each Participant interaction (not allowing more than 24 hours to lapse after the interaction) so that the ideas, emotions and questions that I had would continue to be fresh in my memory. These documents were converted to text files, uploaded and stored onto ATLAS<sub>t</sub>i, where I would title them according to the Participant's pseudonym.

All files were read and coded using ATLAS<sub>t</sub>i which was capable of performing a variety of functions such as textual searches, text based queries, identification of comparable themes, establishment and organization of coding schemas. These coding schemas were divided into super codes, sub codes and

times coded. For example, one super code I utilized was Racial Disclosure. Some sub codes of racial disclosure were moments of racial disclosure, reasons for racial disclosure, need/pressure for racial disclosure, the role of phenotype in racial disclosure. According to the number of entries I recorded per sub code, ATLAS.ti would keep a running tally of times coded. This coding schema allowed me to keep the data organized and to analyze it in a relatively simple and straightforward fashion.

Upon coding, I actively looked for emerging code patterns and dominant themes. I was particularly interested in identifying code patterns and themes which were consistently raised by the study Participants, unique to specific aspects of identity connected to race (such as gender, sexuality and class), particularly resonant and emotive for the individual Participant, and similar narratives that weaved through the interviews and focus groups. The identification of emerging code patterns and dominant themes, I was able to capture central key narratives that rose to the surface. The themes primarily emerged from the exact language that Participants' used so that I entitled some of the themes verbatim. This allowed for powerful assignment of codes which seemed to breathe life into them.

Once the coding process was completed, I grouped super codes into even larger super codes for the purposes of capturing consistent themes across

Participants' narratives. This was not an easy task. At times, I veered back and forth. I worried that I might sacrifice important themes for the sake of quantity of references to those themes that has more "tallies". I employed a balanced approach in choosing larger super codes by re-reading transcripts, member checking and drawing from the existing literature on Multiracial identity to select the most fitting and pertinent themes. Certainly, such decisions were filtered through my own sense of what fitting and pertinent meant but I trusted that instinct as part of my respect for my own facultad. From there, I chunked the super codes and sub codes under the appropriate larger super codes. ATLAS.ti was particularly helpful in this regard because of the facility of sorting and rearranging documents and coding elements. In the end, the larger super codes served as my primary units of analyses.

#### The Researcher's Positionality

Central to my methodological approach is an underlying self-reflexivity and the critical consideration of my own positionality as a Multiracially identified researcher. Reflexivity, according to Davies (1999), is broadly defined as,

a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference. In the context of social research, reflexivity at its most immediately obvious level refers to the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personal and process of doing research. These effects are to be found in all phases of the research process from initial selection of topic to final reporting of results. While relevant for social research in general, issues of reflexivity are particularly salient for ethnographic research in which the involvement of the researcher in the society and culture of those being studied is particularly close. (p.4)

Because this is a topic that is close to my own personal experience, Davies' words particularly resonate with me. In order to engage the topic of Multiraciality, I had to "turn back on myself" and go through a "process of self-reference." I both immersed myself in the world of Central University Multiracial college students while also being a member of the Multiracial world. As Davies (1999) notes, issues of reflexivity are critical when the research is intimately involved in the culture of those being studied. As Emerson et al. (1995) also note,

The reflexive lens helps us see and appreciate how our own renderings of others' worlds are not and can never be descriptions from outside those worlds. Rather, they are informed by and constructed in and through those relationships under our study. Hence, in training the reflexive lens on ourselves, we understand our own enterprise in much the same terms that we understand those we study. (p.216)

Student stories evoked strong emotions in me because I heard my own story in theirs. At times, the participants' stories triggered an incident or emotion that had occurred in my own life. This triggering made me reflect on my own experiences and took me back to a place of isolation as well as a place of connectedness. The isolation stemmed from feelings of loneliness that I experienced not fitting into a proscribed racial group. The connectedness resulted from a newer feeling of participating in a group that seemed to experience what I experienced and understood me in ways that other could not. As a result, I explicitly sought proactive ways of setting appropriate professional boundaries while respecting and honoring the participants' words and experiences, taking care of my own

personal needs in accordance with my reactions and subsequent emotions. I practiced meditative techniques, peer debriefing, “timeouts” (where I temporarily removed myself entirely from the research to gain perspective and space) and interaction with texts that examined both content of the study and strategies for successfully completing one’s dissertation and graduate school journey.

Similarly, participants faced similar reactions and emotions as I did. I approached my questioning and interactions cautiously and carefully by gauging body language, respecting boundaries and by recognizing my own limitations as a researcher and human being with regards to my participants’ well being. When I felt ill-equipped to handle a particularly disturbing, inappropriate or overwhelming incident or set of circumstances, I did not hesitate to considerably refer my participants to appropriate support resources. Among these resources are the University’s Center for Mental Health and Counseling, the Dean of Students’ Office, the Gender and Sexuality Center as well as various other student-centered organizations with which I am familiar. I thoughtfully employed the above stated approach and strategic techniques to ensure participants’ overall protection, trustworthiness and sustainability of the study.

I started out designing this research project because I have a personal stake in this work. As a self-identified Multiracial person, I have always existed in an ambiguous world of racial identification. As a Chinese-Italian-Guatemalteca, I inhabit multiple worlds, yet others operate by their monoracial perceptions of me

and therefore, I negotiate in a space of gray. If I am perceived as Asian, perhaps I am intelligent. If I am perceived as Latina, perhaps I am bilingual in Spanish. If I am perceived as other, perhaps I am invisible, complicated, confused.

This fusion of identity and positionality informed my research interests and even allowed a certain level of accessibility to my dissertation topic and its participants. It simultaneously situated me as an outsider. Villenas (1996) captures this seeming irony in her own questioning, explaining,

I needed first to ask myself, how am I, as a Chicana researcher, damaged by my own marginality? Furthermore, how am I complicit in the manipulation of my identities such that I participate in my own colonization and marginalization and, by extension, that of my own people – those with whom I feel a cultural and collective connectedness and commitment? (p. 721)

I reflected upon my own experiences as a result of oppression and how they are inseparable from the very issues of oppression which I attempt to examine. There is always the fear that as I learn in the very institutions that perpetuate the oppression which I grapple with, my success will somehow be determined by the degree to which I can reproduce those same oppressive tools under a guise of critical consciousness. I needed to ask myself, how do I perceive myself or do I perceive myself differently at varying times, unconsciously and consciously strategically essentializing myself at times? How am I, as a Multiracial researcher, influenced, trapped, privileged, damaged and manipulated by my own marginality?

Part of my journey as researcher is understanding my own self-concept while exploring ways in which students that are “outside the box” (with regards to any part of their identity) navigate their journey. As Cary (2006) notes in detailing *Curriculum Spaces Research Theory*,

Basically, it’s all about knowing others and how that ‘getting to know’ is informed by the subject position we assumed the other inhabits and knowing ourselves (research positionality that is more than a confession). It is most important that we understand how we know Others—those who are considered deviant, less than, abnormal and are excluded by the dominant society. Often this knowing is shaped by race, class, gender and sexuality discourses. It is also influenced by historical, social and cultural knowledges. (p.3)

In other words, how do I, as researcher, know what I know? Basically, I can only fully understand myself and others when I understand how it is that I come to that understanding. My knowledge of self and others is deeply informed by the different dimensions and facets of my identity such as race, class, gender, sexuality, spirituality, age and national origin. While I tried to make sense of these racial “defectors” through the filter of my own self-understanding, I needed to step back and realize that I count myself among these outlaws. I needed to consistently conduct “self-checks” where I didn’t remove my experience but utilize it as yet another analytic tool. I acknowledge that there is an appropriate balance between personal rapport, study validity and the potential power dynamics that reside in such relationships. I proceeded with skillful caution and utmost respect toward both the study itself and mainly, the participants with whom I worked.

Finally, I understood that I write for a particular audience – an academic audience. With that knowledge came a tempered sensitivity to how the work would be received by that audience. What Emerson et al. (1995) point out regarding field notes is also transferable to the writing of any research documentation. They argue,

The effects of envisioned audiences on how field notes are written are more subtle and complex than those of actual readers. The ethnographer's stance in writing field notes involves trying to convey something about the world she has observed to outside audiences made up of those who are unfamiliar to that world. Field notes are not merely the personal reactions of the writer, intended to heighten self-awareness and self-insight; they are more fundamentally accounts framed and organized to be read by some other, wider audience. (p.45)

In other words, I was cognizant of the fact that my training and knowledge of the field of cultural studies and my positionality pushed me, at times consciously and at others not, to make textual choices, emphasize certain field observations and craft the accounting of my data. My own internalized experiences and fears as a Multiracial woman played themselves out in the process of data collection, analysis and writing. I carefully orchestrated my writing in an attempt to balance my most accurate representation of the expression of the participants' multiple truths with the articulation of these representations in a manner which, while maintaining integrity, did not exile me from the work of scholars who have primarily researched ethnoracial populations.

In other words, my own personal experiences of ostracization and being called out as racially “inauthentic” became part and parcel of the way in which

my research unfolded. As Emerson et al. (1995) note, “*what* the ethnographer finds out is inherently connected with *how* she finds it out” (p.11). The exercise of exploring how I found out what I did would have been a convenient facet of the research process to exclude – I would feel less vulnerable and, yet, it is in this vulnerability that I found “the very source of that consequential presence in the field] learning and observation” (Clarke, 1975, p.99). Rather than this admission “contaminating” my work, it added the dimension of substance and standpoint that I find necessary to be connected and transparent in my process, important characteristics of the oftentimes seemingly detached world of research.

### Making Sense of Methods

Bridging theory and research methodology can feel unnatural and challenging at times. As I have come to learn, this process is a continuous and vitally important one. Anyon (2009) notes that “the process of coming to appropriate theory and theory questions is not complete when the dissertation proposal is done, but operates dialectically with fieldwork, as the researcher reflects on interviews, archival and other data, or quantitative results in light of the theorists that have been read and contemplated” (p.11). This respect for and trust in the research process is important in the conception and design of this study because this study is consistently informed by theory, both formal (as presented in academic literature) and experiential (as learned from my upbringing

and socio-political context as well as the input of my participants). My positionality as a Multiracial woman and new researcher deeply informed my choice of research methods by providing lenses filtered and enriched through my own experiences.

I made a conscious decision to conduct my research in a large, predominantly white public research university because it held personal resonance for me and fulfilled a sense of longing for a Multiracial community. This research site mirrored my own undergraduate experience in terms of size, location relative to the larger community, demographics of the student population and level of academic rigor. This choice was convenient and cathartic. I was able to access Multiracial college students more easily as a result of my established work history at the university. Most importantly, however, the college campus was a location where I personally became aware of my own identity production. This allowed me to focus my study from a location of personal resonance and meaning which gave me the confidence I needed to explore the topic of Multiracial college students.

The choice to work with Multiracial college students was an easy one. It fulfilled a sense of longing for self-knowledge and provided me with a community of Multiracial others like me, something I had never experienced before but yearned to encounter. As much as I fantasize about treating the participants of my study as “co-intellectuals” (Lassiter, 2005), having equal

footing and input into the study and encouraging the kind of activism which empowers, I have come to know that this may be an impossible undertaking. I have arrived at an understanding that this is a naïve, idealistic and simply well-meaning but dishonest notion because we cannot escape hegemonic power structures, especially in the imperialist exercise of research. I am laden with privilege and power as a researcher which comes with an inevitable authority and weight which my participants simply do not have access to. I shape the questions to ask. I direct the line of discussion. My personal filter is ever-present. I have had to come to an understanding that such a position is not an impediment to the value of the research, but a way of adding richness and value. As Lather (2007) points out, “if we say we are going to study so-and-so then let’s make sure that the focus is on so-and-so, not to leave our stories out, but to contain them and milk them for what they can add to the depth of analysis” (p.30). In other words, there is no value in pretending to be “objective” by artificially devoting our research of our experience. Indeed, part of our process as activist researchers is the acknowledgment and nourishment of our own lived experiences as “expert” text.

Equally important was an attempt to make the writing of the study rigorous, accessible and utilitarian because if the research can not be translated from theory to practice, it is useless. So much of what I have been exposed to in graduate school has been densely written and articulated in academese, requiring

an understanding of specific vocabulary and familiarity with academic concepts. After taking a Chicana Feminist Theory course and re-reading Anzaldúa, I realized the importance of relaying the more accessible and genuine *cuento* and *testimonio* as counter-stories. In narrating these *cuentos* and *testimonios*, I, as researcher, take the risk of combining both academese with “lay” language in an effort to construct the study “with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.44), all the while understanding that this ethnography is “writing carried out by a woman author who is always aware that she is a woman writing” (Behar, 2003, p.40). In including *testimonio and cuento*, the writing process itself “problematizes Western notions of truth/fiction, individual/collective, and memory/history” (Davalos, 2008, p.162). If I am successful, I will write a text that is “both responsive and relevant to the public with whom [I] work” (Lassiter, 2005, p.6).

All of the literature I have read in graduate school has informed my study in critical ways, but it was the material in courses like the one aforementioned, which resonated with me and that served as an oasis in a desert of traditional whitestream texts. It also exposed me to a distinctive honesty in research which was demonstrated by the forthcoming nature of the intersubjective processes of both fieldwork and writing. As Rosaldo (1989) recounts, writing about one’s experience as an ethnographer is not writing about Self at the expense of the Other. It is about elaborating the intersubjective contexts in which co-

understandings emerge. This study about Multiracial college students hopes to contribute to this intellectual refuge by valuing self-knowledge and empowering others to do the same.

#### **Chapter Four: Portraits of Racial Queers**

Memo: April 17, 2008

I just met with Luis about my project proposal for my qualitative course and got a tremendous amount of feedback. Some questions and thoughts that I am left with.

- How much have I thought about my own positionality as a person who identifies as Multiracial? Am I wanting to hear certain things from the study participants, perhaps drowning out things they might be saying?
- I need to revisit the readings from Urrieta's class as part of my lit review as well as the handout he gave me at the end of the meeting with a reading list.
- The psychological development theories are helpful but it is my job to deconstruct these models (western sense of being, medicalized, pathologizing, creating a deficit) so that I am writing from them but also against them
- Journal every day and live and breathe your data. Make sure to give yourself time to really analyze it and know it.
- Remember that identity is not a free for all. There are durable aspects of ourselves and there is authorship as well.
- Consciousness is an activity.
- Decide on terms for your work. Problematize the term "Multiraciality",
- All of this discussion is embedded within a context of whiteness. You need to discuss this context as you proceed forward.

There is a part of me that wants to hear resonance in the students' words and experiences, something that validates that which I feel, that which I continue to feel. It is a longing sense to fit simultaneously wedded to a sort of rebellion against labels and boxes and categories. This tug of war is so present. I feel that the pressure is now on since I will be taking exams in the early Fall and then defending late Fall. Have I really done this, taken all the classes, written all the papers, spoken at all the discussions, wrestled with myself in agony at times with the luxury and tediousness of this PhD path? Is part of this privilege connected to my Multiracial identification? Have I been racially opportunistic? Is this dissertation topic an illustration of that? Am I co-opting my own experience in an effort to fit in to academia and be an "expert" in something?

As I delve further into this process, I am more isolated than ever. I retreat to silent spaces whenever possible. I avoid interaction with large groups. I prefer to read alone than to engage in an everyday talkback. So much of my life, I have been positioned to be the speechmaker, the ambitious one, the pillar, the giver of community, the problem-solver. Now, as I try to delve into a dialogic space with Multiracial students, I find myself involved in an internal conversation with myself – one that is more thoughtful, less hurried, more patient. I hear people but I am not easily swayed by maleness, femininity, success, accolades. I can live in my cave and understand myself better without the loud noises and shuffling of papers and voices of authority. The fearlessness is grounding itself. My two feet are like cement onto the cold refreshing earth. My head is turned forward and backward at once and I adorn myself with color, shiny things and musical notes.

I separate myself from the television, a once comforting mechanism, lulling and creating dissonance between who I am and who I want to become. Instead, I find myself under a small dim light in the open den, writing to students, thinking about what to do in class the next time I teach and adding more fodder to the dissertation idea fire. The intensity I once knew grows within me. It feels so primal and true. I find myself blazing my own path, making my own priorities and telling other women – don't let folks step on you, stop giving so damn much to others, get out of that abusive relationship, start becoming. I am often angry and inspired with a deep understanding that my work is that, mine and mine alone. Who gives a shit what anyone else thinks? I'm past seeking approval from others. I want approval from myself and my standards are damn high.

I am floored by two students that I spoke with. A part of me wanted to reach out to them beyond their stories and the part of me who used to jump right in, instead watched and enjoyed the observation, the experience of working through something and not expecting myself to solve it. There is a natural flow which, if left uninterrupted, is a gentle stream with the most beautiful landscape, both violent and pristine. Isn't that what research is – a sort of violent intrusion into lives and a pristine gathering of those acts into something neater, something aesthetic?

Memo: May 1, 2008

The study participants eagerly share their stories, stories which are being recreated with themselves positioned at different points as we discuss their identities. They contradict themselves, make strong cases for new ideas that feel recently espoused (like within the last minute of answering my question). Jonathan says that studying Multiraciality within an educational context is literally in its infancy. They talk about it as if it were a new concept – why is that? In schools, we are never taught through a lens of multiple possibilities. It is always a binary fixation on black and white. In this educational paradigm, how have Multiracial students positioned themselves and has this positioning been a true matter of survival albeit they disclose their true multiplicity and be questioned, ridiculed, tested and/or deemed invisible.

And what of the meaning that I am making as I embark in this process? It is so hard to capture this process in words or do I just fear that writing these sentiments down will somehow create a permanence that I can not handle? If I am to be honest with myself, I would have to say that this is the most intensely lonely, intellectually draining, emotionally wearing and narcissistic process I could have never imagined. There is a certain guilt that I feel – having this ability to write quietly under a sole lamp, blanket on legs, Berkeley sweatshirt, unmanageable hair, trip-taking, luxuriating in my thinking. Is this worthwhile or worthless? How do I understand this undertaking and what of the participants – are they being used? My head throbs and my eyes are heavy as I ponder many nights of writing and not understanding the outcome or purpose. Like Foucault would say, I trap myself through my own thoughts. I don't need an outsider telling me that Multiraciality is merely a commodity, a bothersome thorn on the side of "real" activists, a further social construction that can do nothing more than create more divisions and dilute the work that has already been done? I don't need an outsider telling me this because my internal tape player goes on and on in a rapid stream of circles in my mind and circulating through my veins. I feel suspect, "interesting" – this work is "exotic" to my monoracially inclined counterparts. They think I am lucky to have found a niche not knowing that this is not so much a niche so much as a crevice allowing for shallow breaths from those who have held their breaths for too long, a small opening that has nothing do with publishing or career. Instead, it has everything to do with a reconciliation of the many identities that I bring to the table.

Yes, I have been asked on many occasions whether or not I feel that my own identity as a Multiracial person will somehow taint my data? Of

course it will – it will not only taint, it will color in broad background strokes and create accented shades where there were once monochromatic designs. This is the way I make meaning in this hegemonic box we dwell in. No one can tell me that we come into research as robots in white robes. I would never have chosen to follow this path if I didn't want to enmesh myself messily, purposefully and loudly onto a topic. Should I be apologetic? Should I further divorce myself from who I am in order to fit an academic mold? Should I continuously self-monitor obsessively ensuring that no part of me drips onto these pages, staining the pure white words? Would that make this project more suitable, more publishable?

### Introduction to Participant Narratives

This chapter focuses on five case studies of Multiracial college students. Each narrative has been condensed from a much larger set of data, however, in the interest of providing an engaging, personal and more realistic presentation of their stories, I have reconstructed the participants' narratives so as to breathe life into their transmission. Certainly, I could have interjected participants' verbatim quotes separated by my commentary/analysis, however I feel strongly that this will detract from the humanity and lived experiences which I intend to relay and somehow imply the false notion that the participants' words are separate from my own interpretation of them. Additionally, it is crucial that the participants' expressive styles are, to the extent possible, captured in the redaction of their personal accounts. Each participant possesses such a unique voice, one that I will attempt to recreate into the written narrative. I have chosen words carefully but I do not pretend to be objective for no recounting is ever that.

In this chapter, the narratives are autonomous and free of explicit analysis in this chapter because I feel strongly, via my own cultural intuition, that the participants' voices need and deserve to be heard in an engaging manner. These narratives illustrate the embedded analysis within the participants' space of authoring. The narratives stand alone as an "orchestration of such voices" (Holland et al. 1998, p.178) which articulate the "cacophony of different languages and perspectives" (Holland et al., 1998, p.182) engaging simultaneously in the continuing activity of identity production. The participants' narratives represent the participants' own cultural intuition and history-in-person, the borderland space in which they reside. I felt that leaving the narratives intact preserved the integrity of the borderland space, based on the use of their own lumber, their own bricks and mortar and their own architecture (Anzaldúa, 1987). Any additional commentary on my part as researcher would only serve to interrupt the flow of the participants' facultad. I wanted to respect the participants' special sense, this cultural intuition which shapes their identity production process and their "coming out" stories as racial queers. I attempt to highlight the participants' improvisational activity and to provide a reverential venue to the figured world of Multiraciality. In chapter five, separate from the narratives, I draw out verbatim themes from the case study narratives.

My own identity as a Multiracial female informs my work. The purpose of including old memos in the introduction is to illustrate the ways in which my

positionality constantly permeates my thoughts and the way in which they are woven or haphazardly interjected into my self-reflexive process. From the very beginning of this study, I have struggled and embraced this contemplative activity of research. Having said that, I have made sincere efforts to ensure that I have represented the participants in ways that, in my mind, represent them fairly. These narratives can be read through a critical ethnographic lens which, at its core, “takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the *status quo*, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control” (Madison, 2005, p.5).

I am cognizant of the risk and challenges of reconstructing narratives – whose story is really coming to life? Certainly, I am embedded in each of these tellings. The participants are, of course, the characters, but can I claim that I am conveying their voices? That is exactly what I attempt to do. Narratives are, in fact, a written/oral account of events as constructed by one entity, changing meaning and impact with each revision and each new read. Angie, one of the study participants, in sharing her insecurity about the quality of her interview responses and feeling “tongue-tied,” articulates what I am trying to convey best.

And when I recall moments, facts are constructed. They are reconstructed from your point of view. It’s not what actually happens – it’s what you want them to be. That’s how memory works, right? How do we reconstruct identities so that they make sense to us? This is an incredible journey – you appreciate things more when you know what struggle is. You can feel happy when you have felt sadness. You know you are on the right path when stones are constantly thrown at you. If you know it’s

right, then whatever challenges lay ahead, you know you're on the right path.

How do we reconstruct identities so that they make sense to us? Angie asks an astute question. My answer is, we reconstruct them in the way that is *common sense* (Apple, 2000) to us. In other words, we reconstruct identities based on how we make sense of our social world. According to the common sense that I have developed up to now, I present to you five narratives – portraits of racial queers.

### Participant Narratives

#### Dee-Dee Johnson

Dee-Dee commands attention. A confident, outgoing, tall young woman, she was in her final year of undergraduate studies at Central University when I first met her. Black and white, she possessed what might be considered typical biracial features: light, curly brown hair (tight curls but still with movement), hazel eyes, café-au-lait complexion with a Romanesque nose and full lips. As the co-president of the Mixed Student Union, she took pride in her initiative and was passionate about racial issues, specifically those that related to racial performativity. At her suggestion, the MSC (Mixed Student Union) had hosted a student-run conference on racial performativity which had become an annual event. The event drew over 200 students, quite a feat for any conference, not to mention, one run and led by students with a minimal budget. Dee-Dee was very

eager to share her experiences with me and because she was older than most participants, we share a lot in common. We went out for lunch, talked about her career goals (which included graduate school in psychology) and were about as close to friends as could be in the nature of our relationship.

#### Dee-Dee's Narrative

I don't remember anyone ever telling me that I was "Multiracial." You know when you have an understanding of something but not a word for it? I always knew I was Multiracial because I grew up with a white mom and a Black dad. I do remember my dad always telling me, though, that despite being Multiracial, the world would always see me as Black only. And I would say, but I'm not! I'm half-black. I would listen to him but I still felt strongly that I was both. Before I would always tell people I was Black and white and now people ask me "What are you?" all the time, especially men. They see that I am not the typical looking person so they think I'm exotic – they can't put their finger on it. I usually have big, crazy hair and light skin. Most African American men automatically know that I am biracial, black and white so I think they ask to hit on me because it is seen as a complement to be "mixed." Saying black and white doesn't really define who I am. It's definitely my racial background but it's not what I am.

I am technically a senior at Central University, but I plan to stay for one more year. I am majoring in African American Studies but am adding Psychology as a second major – I feel like they go hand-in-hand. My image of myself changes a lot from day to day. Sometimes I think I am a capable hard-worker, well put together and that I have good core values. Other days I feel that my ideas about the world are not that positive. I am very social, energetic, social and I tend to see the cup half-full. I am limitedly adventurous. By that I mean that I am willing to take risks, but not go crazy. I am also both an extrovert and an introvert. I need to be around people but I do need my own time to think. I would describe myself depending on who I am talking to about myself. It's not that I am readjusting for other people. Race is a big part of my identity, but it is not WHO I am. I just feel that sometimes it is relevant to reveal certain characteristics about myself and other times it's not – it really does depend on the audience.

Let me provide an example. When I am around my African American friends, I tend to talk about things that relate to my understandings and experiences of what it means to be African American. On the other hand, when I am around my mom's side of the family (they are white), I don't necessarily talk about that side of myself, or I keep it in very general terms because they just don't understand. My mother's family views race from a very skewed lens. They don't tend to see race as underlying issue because they haven't had to deal with it on a

regular basis, or, at least, not the way I have. So, talking with them is difficult because I feel that, oftentimes, they think I am making these issues up, jumping to conclusions or reading into things – they think I am being dramatic. These types of situations frustrate me because I want to be open but they silence me because any conversation about race makes them uncomfortable. In the interest of remaining in their bubble, these conversations don't happen or get shut down. In a way, I resent them for living in this bubble – the privilege of being able to live in this bubble. I want them to come out of their bubble, but it can be a weight. It's not always black and white, either. My openness is not always related to race but more about how open I think others will be to my biraciality and progressive politics and socioeconomic status.

When I came to CU, I was shocked but not for the same reasons that most African Americans initially feel this way. Most African Americans who come to a predominantly white institution feel isolated because they are forced into a white culture and community. I had the opposite problem. Because I grew up in a predominantly white community, I felt shocked when I saw people of color. My friends from back home were white with long, blond hair, skinny, popular, sheltered, fun – so when they came to UT, they were doing the sorority thing. So, I quickly learned, after observing all of these sorority girls that we did not look the same. I knew I was no longer going to be popular in this setting. I was really uncomfortable around African American students because I had not grown up in

an African American environment. So, when walking down the halls of the Central Dormitory, I would literally avoid contact by looking down, which was completely against my nature, but I didn't know how to interact with African Americans outside of my family. More than that, I was afraid that I was not going to be received well, that, other black students would attach the "acting white" label on me. I thought that I would not be seen as a "genuine" black person – dress, language, how close you are to the community. I wanted to be with my white friends because that was what I was used to. Then, my sophomore year, things changed. I began to get involved in my community. People began to approach me and invite me to African-American events –they saw that I was actually very social. At these events, though, something was missing. I wasn't be able to bring my complete self to the forefront. My peers just considered me black and that didn't offend me in any way but I felt that I had the right to claim both my racial identities. I felt like I wasn't being true to my complete experience.

No one was preventing me from being complete, but it was the labels that were being pushed on to me. My peers would forcibly say, "You are black, Dee-Dee!" And I would respond, have you seen my mom? I might be black in your opinion but I had a black AND white experience growing up. Then, people asked me and urged me to join AKA, an African American sorority, because I fit the stereotype – "positive" attributes like good hair, articulate, scholarly, attractive.

Before coming to UT I had no notion what it meant to have “good hair” or to be “bright-skinned.” “Good hair” means curly, long hair, manageable, if it grows quickly. The more European ancestry you have, the “better” your hair gets.

I am a talker and when I started joining different African American groups and associations, I didn’t feel as if I could talk about being Multiracial. I feel like I wasn’t going to be heard or that people would think it was a unique experience. I felt that people would judge me as wanting to claim that I was black and white so as to separate myself from being black and connect myself to being white. This was not my intention. Getting access to white privilege did not align with being black. Generally, people think that the further away you get from African American features, the better you are. That’s just the way it is. I didn’t feel like I could speak from the platform of being Multiracial and it pained me, also, to see others in the group who were also Multiracial. I could sense their desire to talk about this aspect of their identity too, but also felt like they didn’t have the room to do that.

Then, by the grace of God, I had a crisis. It was complicated because I was dealing with a variety of issues in my life, including body image and career decisions. I grew up with predominantly white friends, an athlete, a perfectionist. I was always comparing my physical body to my friends. I developed an eating disorder my junior year in high school and each year it worsened. So, my freshman year in college, I got very sick. So, instead of dealing with the eating

disorder, I focused on my major, deluding myself. This made me sicker and I had to go away somewhere. When I came back, I began to realize that my friends who had also grown up in white suburban communities and were the only person of color, had similar issues. But, this is connected to my racial identity, and I've realized that, now that I can talk about it, I have tried to achieve a middle-class, white, suburban, female image, stature, and body at any cost. There is so much pressure to achieve and I fell into the trap.

Between being Multiracial and the development of an eating disorder, I think there is a connection. Growing up I was slim and athletic but as I got older, I became thicker and that's just from my dad's genetics. So I went from having my mom's side body types to my dad's. At the time, I was negotiating what it meant to be Multiracial in a physical way – was I supposed to be the ideal middle ground between Black and White? Appearance was so, so important to me and I had these gorgeous white friends and I had to align myself with that standard and it was costly, very costly. Now, appearance is less important to me. It's no longer a game the way it was in high school. I actually began to focus on other things that were more important to me.

I decided to major in African American Studies instead of pre-med, as illogical as my parents would think that was. And, as luck would have it, a course on Multiracial identity in the media was being offered, so I jumped at the opportunity. Every day, I was the most talkative person in that class. We were

learning about history but more than that, I could see how emotional all the students in that class got when discussing their identity. I thought to myself, there is a real need to talk about Multiracial identity, so I decided to start a campus organization that dealt with this issue.

With women, particularly since I've been wearing my hair big, African American women tell me how lucky I am to have this hair. Or, how did you get this hair? I love your hair. With men, they say that I am beautiful or different – always related to my physical appearance. I don't see these as complements – I see them as comments that hurt my heart – it comes from being oppressed when one values European features. Skin politics arise often. Sometimes I positively reassure people that what they think is beautiful is not necessarily so, like being light-skinned. I have friends who consider themselves dark-skinned and I tell them, your skin color is beautiful. It is a lot to deal with on a daily basis. At the same time, I have other things to think about like studying and what I need to do next.

I struggle with anything that has the word race in it – I still don't know what that really means. What is race? Does race have any validity? Sometimes I use terms but then I think, but I learned that race is not a really biological concept. Race is confusing, fluid, dynamic – I pin the word, Multiracial – I guess I am describing that my father has darker skin and my mother has lighter skin. I am constantly thinking about language – why don't we have words to describe

who we are? I see race as an issues of color (melanin that is expressed) but I also recognize that race involves specific experiences and histories. I see the phenotypical aspect of race but I don't see race as inherent. I think that color politics are very real and that if I was darker, I don't think people would ask me what I was. I am not sure how it would impact my relationships with non-Blacks. I have a feeling, though, that white males would not be as attracted to me. I would no longer be the exotic, mixed-race person which is seen as cool or hip. The color of my skins would impact perceptions of my physical beauty both by others and by me. I am not proud of this but I am definitely privileged for being a lighter-skinned girl.

Here, at Central University, I am part of a group that is considered the light-skinned girls. People make comments on it all of the time, especially in facebook. Other girls have formed this page where they call themselves the "darkies" and it's almost as if they are obsessed with this separation based on this color line. It feels so high school. There has been some very real tension between these two groups. Skin color comes up a lot. In the same way that people talk about sports or news, we are always talking about race. It always comes up in some form. I also have white friends and white family members who realize that it is important or they are curious and so they ask me questions.

This is a theory that I have. Every single person for the most part that I've met that hasn't tried to blend completely with one single community and right

now I'm talking mostly black and white right now because they contrast the most and that has been my experience. Every Multiracial person that I have met that has managed to balance both worlds and hasn't completely claimed that they were African American or white is always really interesting to me and really eclectic and quirky and so that's something that I attribute to people who are balancing things. And I think there is a lesson to be learned in that for every community because we've been put in this place where we're neither one or the other we've formed whatever we've wanted to form. We've created whatever we've wanted to create. I don't have a rubric to follow so I've just been sort of creative as far as how I am going to be as a person. What I mean by racial rubric is that there are racial markers. My African American friends seem to think that they have to wear their hair a certain way, or dress conservative preppy or they think that black people can't swim. That's one thing that's supposed to be on that list or that black people don't like to be outside. The white rubric might be not talking about race, being more free-spirited. There are markers of blackness and whiteness. When people feel like I'm violating those markers, they'll be very quick to tell me that particularly in my family with my dad's side, all the time. And with my dad too when I developed my eating disorder, and I informed him about it four years later, he said, you can't have an eating disorder. And I was like this is the problem – that was something that was on the white rubric. Only this type of thing can develop in white people. One of my uncles thinks I'm a complete hippie because

I do some of the things on the white rubric and so that's weird. And with some of the things I eat, this is going to be a complete stereotype, I don't eat fried foods, I eat leafy greens and that's a white thing you know.

I see that all the time and I remember recognizing that as a young person – man, these Multiracial people are cool! There's a lesson to be learned because everyone in the world is so constantly trying to put themselves in a box and sometimes when you don't have a box to put yourself in, you just use the materials you have and people come up with crazy things. So, I attribute this to people who don't fit anywhere to be genuinely unique. And I know everyone is unique but I mean genuinely unique.

I consider myself one of those unique people. I don't let people externally tell me that I am unique or different but I know anytime I am hanging out with my white friends or my black friends they always say you are really different Dee-Dee you are definitely one of a kind because when I'm doing stuff I don't think is this acceptable and that's not true for everything but I do have these thoughts a lot. I just kind of go with the flow when I do things and when I put on clothes in the morning, I think, I don't have to look this way. I can look any way I want to. I can listen to country music. I can listen to folk music and I do. I can listen to NPR, I can listen to hard-core rock. I can participate in anything. I can go hike

and climb rocks or I can go out to the club and dance with my friends and I do all of those things and I don't limit myself.

Once I got to school and I had the opportunity to meet other Multiracial students that was another truly big turning point in my life because up until that point even though I grew up in a military community where there is a good amount of Multiracial people, all I had was my sister really to talk to about these things. And so when I had an opportunity to be in an environment where there were other people who had similar experiences as me it was eye opening and it's really changed my views on how the world works and it is so important for people who have had similar experiences to be able to talk about it and realize that other people are experiencing some of the same things. And it's not just negative things, it's the little things like how the heck am I supposed to do my hair now? What kind of hair product? Where are the mixed race people? I feel bad for others who don't have that opportunity and there are lots of people who don't have that opportunity.

### Solomon

Solomon is easy-going with an affinity for making friends and acting as a peacemaker of sorts in difficult situations. Measuring about six feet tall with light skin, hazel eyes, light brown, wavy hair and a baby face, one would guess that he

is a typical white young man. However, he identifies as Mexican and white. A first-generation college student from the Rio Grande Valley, Solomon attended a summer bridge program at Central University which targets traditionally underrepresented students who would benefit from strategies to better acclimate to a highly selective university.

#### Solomon Hoffman's Narrative

I currently identify as Multiracial although many people don't consider Hispanic as a race. I identify as half-Hispanic, a quarter Irish and a quarter Armenian. I was raised on my mother's Hispanic side of the family. So, I identify as being Hispanic more in my hometown in the Valley than up here at Central University. I've never really asked my father about his racial identity but from what I can see I think he just identifies as American, his version of American, and my mother she identifies as 100% Hispanic. My grandparents died when I was really young but my mother is the seventh daughter of the seventh daughter of the seventh daughter so we have a huge family. And so I was raised with all my aunts. My dad's parents divorced and I've only seen my paternal grandmother a few times in my life. I've always asked my grandfather about his history but he'd always just talk about WWII. My grandmother, McBee, was never very fond of my mom and to this day she still holds a grudge because she is Mexican. I've also seen little instances where condescending statements towards

my mom about being Mexican were made. My mom would also share these struggles with me. I never knew my grandmother very much – maybe she didn't want to know me. I've never really hung around my dad's family – they've just dispersed. My uncle lives in Brownsville but I never see him. My aunt, my dad's sister – she lived in El Paso and in California. The last I heard, she was changing her religion – she wanted to be Muslim now or something. I don't know my father's side of the family – the white side. Whereas on my mom's side, we have traditions that we count on and look forward to. Every Christmas, we go over to my aunt's house and everybody is there. Every holiday, I would celebrate with my mom's side of the family. My dad would just tag along. I have never raised the question of race to my dad because most of my cultural knowledge came from my grandfather.

At home, I'm not really questioned as to whether or not I speak Spanish. Up here at Central U, though, when anyone finds out that I'm half-Hispanic, they either get shocked or they'll ask me something in Spanish or be shocked that I can actually say something in Spanish. See, I've always had a problem speaking Spanish because I was ridiculed for it when I was younger. This is because I don't look Hispanic, I look very white. So when I would try to speak Spanish, it was broken and embarrassing. There was this one friend of mine. He was a good guy but he wasn't all there. He was just learning history about the Klu Klux Klan and he asked me if I was a member. I had to remind my friends that I am

Hispanic. I didn't used to think that my Multiracial identity impacted my everyday life, but when I stop to think about it, it really does.

So, for my little sister and I, our skin color and look has brought us lots of grief. My sister is at the stage where I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. She's barely in middle school. That's when I would get made fun of the most. And I remember, she asked my mother (I went down there when I was on Christmas break) a question. School was in session and we picked her up and she asked my mother, "Why are the kids in history class asking me why I took their land?" And she didn't know, but I did. She's physically – she looks white. In fact, she looks really white. My mother says she tends to look like my grandmother who is Irish. She has a lot of freckles and other defining features that are stereotypically Irish. So, in history class that day, the other Mexican students assumed she was white and were accusing her of stealing their history. She is still in that process of defining herself – I think we all are.

To this day, I don't even have a consistent way in which I identify on forms. When they say to only check one, I check Hispanic partly because I'm more Hispanic than anything else and I just feel closer to that. But if they allow me to check more than one I will. And sometimes I might even check "other". For an internship, I checked other and wrote down Hispanic and white in the line that allowed me to do that - because it was available. Sometimes I don't have an option. It's just Black, Hispanic, white or Asian. And I'll always check Hispanic

but if there's "other" than I'll check other and I write in white and Hispanic.

Identifying consistently as the same race has remained a constant challenge.

But it hasn't always been up to me to identify racially. I remember that in elementary school, my teacher would check off white in the box because I was told to do that in elementary school by my teachers. We would take the TAKS test and everybody would have their little scantrons and, like most standardized tests, you have the first page which asks you personal information and inevitably, there's always the race question. In elementary school, the students didn't do the checking. The administrators would already have it ready for us. So when I would get the test, I would already be checked off as white. So I would leave it - I never really questioned it. At the time, I was pretty apathetic to it but now when I think of it, I wish I could have corrected my teacher.

I had a history teacher. It was my sophomore year and she was a strong advocate of women's rights. When she got married she didn't want to change her last name because she wanted to keep her own last name. As she was sharing this story with the class, she went on to say that she didn't want her husband's name. She was ranting on and on about how unequal everything was and then she inserted, "Hispanic men wouldn't dare to go to the kitchen and clean." She was just lashing out at our entire class. Just when I thought it was bad enough, she said, "Of all the guys here in this class, I only see Solomon as worthy enough to clean my house." That really embarrassed me. She was saying that I would be a

good catch. At the time, I didn't care much about , but after class, I started thinking how weird that was. In her eyes, I was the worthy white kid in the class. It wasn't until parents' night when she met my mom that she realized I was Mexican.

Before I got to college, I knew that I was mixed but I never – the term wasn't coined to me. I would always identify as a Hispanic person who looks predominantly white. And that's just how I went about it. Like at my high school, the majority of my class knew that I was both. By that time I had gone to middle school with them so they knew as I progressed because I would speak up about it when I was made fun of as the white guy. To the point where I was included in some jokes about Hispanics, you know. But the term, "Multiracial," I really didn't know about the term until college. In public schools, I was always getting challenged because I didn't look the part of Hispanic. I mean my hometown in the Valley is so secluded from the world, it's isolated. 98% Hispanic, 2% White. I never saw any Asians or African-Americans until I came up here or when I'd leave to go visit family in California or Chicago. But we didn't have them there – it was just so close-minded. Whereas here at Central U, it's different. The first night of my college life, all of us were just hanging out and Juan said something in Spanish and I responded and he was shocked. Then I told him about being Multiracial, then everybody kind of just knew and didn't ask questions. That made me feel unique whereas in middle school, being Multiracial

was torment. In middle school I felt like the odd man out but here I feel like a unique individual.

I like having a racial label I can identify with. At one of the Central U summer bridge activities, we participated in a fishbowl exercise, where we were in the fishbowl when our racial identity was called out while the other students looked into the bowl. I walked into the Hispanic group and everybody talked about something and I could relate. I walked into the white group and I could relate. Then I walked into the Multiracial group and I liked that one a lot more because that was the one time during the activity where I actually spoke. I felt like I had the right to say something. When I was in the other racial identity groups, I just stood around, waiting.

One college incident where my Multiraciality really hit home was during a simple interaction with a classmate. I'll never forget this girl's face. She was in my Freshman Seminar and we were standing outside waiting for our Calculus test and we were talking about our hometowns. She was from El Paso – I was from Laredo. She didn't know where Laredo was. She had said she had went up to El Paso to go to a quinceañera and she said, "I bet you don't know what that is." I said, "Nah, of course I do, I've come out in some, my sister might end up having one." She was completely shocked that I had known about it. It's just little instances like that. My racial identity has changed substantially, like here right now in college. There is another incident I can recall. I had gone to about three or

four meetings of the Latino Students United at Central U. I hadn't been too active in that student group because I really wanted to focus in on my grades. And there was something else that limited my engagement - every time I went to a meeting, I would get that, "oh yeah, we allow ALL races," as if they were making a special exception for the white boy – me. I was usually pretty passive about these kinds of comments, but one day, in an Economics class, a similar comment was made where someone assumed I was totally white. At that moment, I couldn't be passive about it anymore. I surprised myself and just told this girl, "No! I am Hispanic!" I got upset. All of these incidents add up and made me really long for my Hispanic side. When I go back home I miss everything so much more. This feeling makes me more a part of my Hispanic culture. And just coming up here to Central U and meeting other Hispanics from different cities and being able to relate, it is so comforting. After people get past the fact that, yeah, he's Hispanic, then we actually just start having a conversation and it just feels good.

One time in my History class we were talking about Creoles in Louisiana. The professor asked if anyone was Creole but nobody raised their hand. She talked about having to laws and stuff related to having this mix. It occurred to me that there was a racial middle, not just white and black. In another class, I remember reading a book that really spoke to me. It was about checking boxes on forms and how leaving a space on forms to fill out rather than checking one box would save us from having to check "other." I think if we could specify our

racial/ethnic background, we would get a broader, better picture. I'm pretty sure that if they did that back home, where I live, it wouldn't be 95 or 98 per cent Hispanic. It would probably be more like 75% and you'd have a huge mix. I can think of another reading that I related to – it was about Multiracial identity. I remember I hadn't read the book yet but Ana had read it first and was commenting about how much she could relate to the chapter on Multiraciality even though she is not multi ethnic, racial. Ana is one hundred percent Mexican. But everyone always thinks that she's Asian because of her typically Asian facial features. I remember she was telling Vu, our Vietnamese friend, that she could relate to her because everyone thinks that she is Asian. And I was excited when I heard her say that, so I skipped over the first chapters and went straight to that one. The part that I liked the most was when the author was forced to choose between the Black group and the white group in her college experience. She said if she could go back in time she wouldn't choose at all. Instead, she would make her own group. I liked that a lot.

For example, I have a friend whose name is Jonathan Mitchell, very white name, but if you look at him, you would have never known that was his name. He's very Mexicanish – he's dark. But with me you can't tell that I'm both Mexican and white, just white. On of my friends Aliah, you can tell she is Multiracial. When I first saw Aliah, I knew she was more than one race. But, others you can't tell sometimes. Aliah's skin tone and her eyes give it away.

And, also, she told me she was Multiracial, but even before that, I just had a feeling. I'll never forget this one time we were hanging out outside of my dorm and we ended up meeting this guy Miguel who later on would become our friend. Anyway, he had just dropped acid. We were talking to him saying, why did you do that or what are you doing? And then he looked at me and said, you're Mexican right? I was like, what? I said yeah I'm like half. And he said, yeah I can tell. And I thought, it's probably the acid. Whatever the case, I just thought that was very cool. When I think about it, the only time I remember knowing about a cool Multiracial, or a celebrity or star before I actually looked them up myself was Tiger Woods. His name is Tiger. He's great at golf. That was the only one I knew about. They don't really talk about that at all and I think they should.

I'm not Mexican enough I'm not white enough. I don't mean to compare myself to Obama, but that's what they said about him - that he was not black enough or he's not white enough. I think there is a fear – people are too afraid to admit to being one race or another. I remember for a long time remembering that I didn't want to admit that I was half-white, just because I would always get made fun of about it. I mean what is race, what is culture? For a while, I thought, maybe I am not Multiracial, maybe I am multiethnic. It's tricky. I usually say I am Multiracial and then I follow that up with I'm half Hispanic and half-white. Usually I leave it at that. I don't go into detail, oh I'm a quarter Irish and a

quarter Armenian. The only time I ever did that was when we had a foreign exchange student come and she had the last name Hoffman too but it was spelled straight up like German. My last name is German but it also has Armenian roots.

Growing up in the valley, I have been challenged a lot. I like to say if you've lived in one (small valley) town, you've lived in them all. They're all the same – you can throw a rock into Mexico from your backyard. All throughout the valley I was perceived and treated as if I were white which is understandable because it is just so closed-minded down there. If that's what you grow up with, that's what you're always going to think. Up here in college, I never really have been challenged. I mean I've had to challenge other people's traditional views. That it's not just black and white, there is a gray area. So when I mentioned the incident with the HBSA girl - I don't even know her name, I wish I did. I was talking to my roommate and we just happened to have the same class and I remember telling him that I attended an HBSA meeting and he said, since when did they allow white people in HBSA? And this girl said yeah they allow ALL races and looked at me, like expecting me to agree with her. I challenged her views. I probably will have to do it over and over again but I won't have to ever repeat it after the first time again like I had to when I was in the valley. You know I would remind someone that I was half and half and they would forget immediately. Whereas up here, they are more open-minded to the idea.

And yet, Fresas, ok, those were like the rich, white, no not white, the rich lighter skinned Mexicans that would come from Monterrey and they would most likely go to St. Jude's High School which is a private high school, very expensive to get in and it's kind of funny. There are six high schools in Brownsville. There's more young kids in that town than in the entire population. I'll never forget how the paper said we had more students in BISD – Brownsville Independent School district than New Orleans did when Katrina hit. My high school had like 2800 kids. And the other high school, Hanna had 3100. But it was sad and funny at the same time that each high school had its own ranking. If somebody said, I'm from this high school, you already knew what they were like. So, there was St. Ju and that's where a lot of the fresas went. Now there were fresas at every school but the majority went to St. Ju and they would wear pumas and you know very expensive clothing. They'd basically dress up like Mexican pop stars all the time. Then you had Monroe which was where anyone who couldn't go to St. Ju would go. And that's why Monroe had so many kids and then there was Pace right after that which is where I went which was moderate in the amount of fresas but had a lot of gangs at the same time. And then there were Placid, Rio and Lonora. Lonora being the worst of the worst. Lonora was terrible and so were Rio and Lonora and all of them.

A lot of the white kids went to St. Ju or Monroe whereas the more darker toned went to Placid, Rio or Lonora. And, in fact, Placid and Lonora had a little

dual called Battle of the South. It was like a football game thing because they were in the most southern part of town. And, Rio, Rio was just bad. It had a lot of - come to think of it there was a stabbing recently last week at my school and then a drug cartel member - I mean it was just really bad down there. Each school had its own little distinctive trait but there's the fresas then there's the chongs, which are the Mexican gangsters. Chongs - that's what I grow up knowing that they were called. I'm trying to think if there is a Spanish related word. They would always wear greased back hair with the hairnets. Oh maybe like chongos [hair buns]. Yeah, but they called them chongs. I'm not totally sure why. They would also wear wife beaters with a huge rosary around their neck. Then they'd make tattoos with pens. And then there were your "average" people I guess you could say. But then the majority fell into fresas, normal and chong. And it was very easy to become a fresa. All you had to do was dress up like a Mexican pop star, speak Spanish at a million miles per hour, Spanglish, and always talk on a Nextel phone - I mean always Nextel it was so weird. It was these weird specific traits that each group had. So, even though they are all Hispanic, they would still all want segregation. I remember in certain hallways, even subgroups would divide further into smaller sub sub-groups. There was the jock hallway. There were the lighter skinned jocks and then the dark skinned jocks. I never really thought of it until now.

I can't think of too much more to say about my identity because I've said a lot. What I will end with is the fact that it's more open minded up here at Central U than down there in the valley – significantly. I mean I don't want to generalize, but campuses, you know, are usually, supposed to be, liberal places.

### May Kongsangchai

May possesses a subdued assertiveness which is illustrated by her measured comments and thoughtfulness. It would be easy to confuse her introversion as shyness. Far from it, May has a strong sense of self and is clearly open to learning more about her identity. May identifies as Mexican, Chinese, Thai and Italian or, in one word, Multiracial. She also vocalizes her struggle with the intersection of race and gender, probably more than any of the other participants that I spoke with. In our relationship, May became like a younger sister to me.

### May's Narrative

During orientation at Central University, I participated in an activity called "True Colors." I got paired with the "blue" personality which meant that I got paired up with the so-called caring group. And we are very emotional – it is also known as the teacher category. One of the traits of belonging to the blue group is that we don't like to be categorized. I'm not very religious but I try to be a good

person. That's where I'm trying to get at with my majors, education and psychology. I'm not totally sure how to capture it, but I would say that I am angelic? I like to put everyone else before me but sometimes I don't. I'd like to be the kind of person that doesn't put myself as the center of attention all the time. I want to automatically be the kind of person who puts everyone before her. Not that I want to ignore myself, just that I don't want to be selfish.

I grew up in the bad part of town, the west side of San Antonio – the gangster, hear gun shots on the street at night. If I hear a gunshot, I don't freak out at night which is weird to some of my friends. I'm just used to it. In my neighborhood, the houses are very small, very shabby looking. Dogs are running everywhere. Kids are playing on the street just hanging around in their diapers. It's very much home to me but very dirty to others. There's this main street called Zazamora. I live on the left side. My friend, Tara lives on the right side. The right side is the better side and the left side is the worst side. Tara's house is made out of brick and mine is made out of wood. The brick is more prestigious, it looks nicer. Those are just some of the differences. The north side is rich. The south side is almost as bad as the west side –I don't know how to explain it. And the east side is the African American side of town. I remember there was a recent big controversy about the south side because it had absolutely no book stores, absolutely none. A bookstore wanted to open up but apparently no one reads on

that side, according to the newspaper. But they never talked about anything in the west side. The suggestion of a book store would be ridiculous.

I went to the neighborhood elementary school down the street so that wasn't a big shock. I could walk to my friends' houses, everybody went there. When I went to middle school, I went to a multilingual school which was farther away. And I started noticing, wow, Tara has a beautiful house and I don't. I was ashamed of my house. I didn't want to bring people home. I didn't want to show them that my room was half the size or less than half the size of their bathroom. It took me until high school to stop worrying about what people thought. My aunt used to pick me up in this huge continental, old, gold car and they used to call it the "pimp car." I was just ashamed of a lot of things. I don't know what triggered it but I thought then it was ridiculous to be ashamed of a small house – who cares? It's just mine. Who cares if my aunt drives that? In high school, I kind of grew up I guess. I saw that other people had it worse than me. Even though I don't have that huge house I have a mom that cares for me at home and an aunt who picks me up from school. I'm not there until 9:00pm waiting.

Racially, I was always the Asian kid in my school even though I wasn't fully Asian. Of course no one else was Asian and of course I was different from the Hispanics so I guess the easiest thing was for people to classify me this way. And my last name. My last name gave my racial identity away. When they saw

me they just knew something was different but they couldn't pin point it. Some people could – they would say are you Asian and I would say yes. Other than that my last name was weird it wasn't Ramirez or anything like that. Or even my first name which isn't Asian but sounds Asianney.

My first name is Sanskrit which is a dead Indian language. My mother found it from a book that she liked. My middle name is Italian and my last name is Thai – nothing Hispanic in there. No one ever thought I was Hispanic until I told them my mom's from Mexico even though I knew more Spanish than the Hispanic kids. That kind of helped them accept me more as a Hispanic person but once it came down to it, I was Asian because of my slanted eyes and my last name. A lot of it was the food too because I enjoyed rice and ate Asian cuisine. I knew what sushi was – that kind of thing. They kind of considered that foreign, weird – Asian. I can't even think of one other Asian person that I knew from elementary to high school. I was the Asian loner. I remember in elementary school I used to hate my name – I absolutely hated it. I remember this boy used to break my name up into syllables making fun of it but when I got to high school, I got you're name is unique, your name is beautiful. I started thinking I'm different but I like being different.

I was always really close to my teachers. I was always trying to do well. It was my work ethic and that I helped whenever I needed it. When my dad used

to come pick me up at school, then the whole issue of my Asianness – no one would ever see my dad and he was this Asian guy. People would of course ask me, am I Asian and it would come up again. I became indifferent. I'm still indifferent because I've heard it so much, I still hear it so much. It's just something I do – it's nothing special to me.

One of the special questions I did get was, was I Multiracial – which is a question I never get. This happened here at Central, I went to the psychology building and the advisor was able to identify me as Multiracial. It was a stranger – she said I had really unique qualities in my face and it made me feel really good that she could identify that. I wasn't categorized right away by her into one group. To actually be seen as who I am and not be categorized as Asian or Mexican on first sight. This meant a lot to me because people don't usually bother to look closely beyond physical markers. It depends on who I'm with as to how I am categorized. When I'm with Songa and Delilah [both Asian], I am categorized as Mexican automatically but when I'm with Tara [Mexican], I'm the Asian. It's apparent that I'm different in each group. If they're talking about something Asian, I can bring in something Latina and then automatically, I'm separated. Or I don't speak their language – I don't speak Chinese or Vietnamese or Thai. And I speak Spanish.

Language plays a huge role in my identity. I know I feel more out of place going to Thailand than to Mexico. Even in Mexico I feel out of place. I speak Spanish there, but I get nervous. I get ashamed that I have a Texan accent. Language helps – it's the basis for communicating to that culture. So if I don't have that, I don't deserve to be part of that culture. I'm going to Thailand and I'm freaking out because the family is so critical. The first time I went to Thailand, my aunt referred to me as chunky because I guess I had a little stomach and I was skinnier then than I am now. I don't consider myself chubby or fat or anything now but she did. That totally broke my whole self-esteem issue on that. She grabbed my waist and pulled on it and said something along the lines of you're gaining some weight, you should lose it. You're not going to be beautiful kind of thing. I would replay it in my head. I would choose to wear things that didn't show my body fat when I was around her. Even though I know it shouldn't affect me now, I am exercising now before I go back so I won't have to deal with it. It pisses me off that I'm doing that but what can you do?

On the other side of my family, Hispanics in Mexico – they're more about face pretty they're more about . . . facial beauty. Weight's not a huge issue there unless you are severely overweight. But how I am now is pretty thin. I just came back from Mexico. I really noticed that they value beauty so much. Two of my male cousins have girlfriends. One of them is considered beautiful and the other one is okay-looking. The beautiful one was modelesque – I could see her in a

magazine. Her personality was very strong. She had big eyes, long flowy hair, smooth skin, her nose was not tiny but regular size, plump lips, huge breasts – she was a little heavier but she fit it well. The other one was average. I thought she was very pretty but they thought she was average. She was a little plumper, her eyes didn't light up the room, a little shorter.

I always feel out of place in Mexico. People can tell I'm American. It might be the Asian thing – I look different. I am considered more reserved. My cousins invited me out but everyone was so surprised I stayed home to do homework – I chose education over fun. They are very gossipy – look at her, look at her dress, she's pretty. I was just observing that – I was thinking about psychology, how the mind works. I was thinking about things I had never thought of before – superficial things that they value so much that I think are so ridiculous but I sort of follow along with that too. I'm pretty shaky about my body image, especially as a result of the interactions I have had with family on my dad's side because growing up I didn't have much contact with him. I got the weight thing and the submissiveness thing – it makes me really sad. When I went to Mexico, I feel that women are more protected. They dote on me more in Mexico. In Thailand, they didn't give a crap – they focused on my brother. It's their culture. Asian women should discreetly find a man whose father thinks is suitable. In Mexico, they're more outspoken. It sounds similar but so different.

I consider myself Thai and Chinese but I don't really have any cultural ties to that. My mom's Italian and Mexican. I do consider myself Italian and Mexican. Part of my family is still in Italy and some of them moved to San Antonio, they always cook Italian food. And other than my nose, nothing else about me seems Italian. Growing up in the Mexican culture every year and going to Mexico every year, that connects me. And I pride myself in being American. I consider the person who immigrated here yesterday and is working here American. I don't know where to draw the line. We're all immigrants basically. I overheard a conversation where a girl was saying that immigration is taking over "our" American culture and our language. I shut up. I didn't say anything because I could offend her. It offended me when she said that. Who cares I guess? I don't think immigration is a problem. I think we should help them – who are we to kick them out? I say I'm an American when I'm in other countries. In Mexico, my family values that I'm an American more than if I was born in Mexico. I'm up on that pedestal when in Mexico.

When I'm in Thailand, being an American excuses me from a lot of things. For example, I'm more outspoken I don't have to be submissive. I embrace that I'm American in that way. They understand what the term American means. American represents power, money, success. They see it as a way to provide for the family, gain power, that sort of thing. Me being from here – they want it. I know with me it's more comfort for them to know that I don't

need to fit perfectly into their culture – they cant understand me because I’m American, it’s a protection. So if I do something weird or un-Mexican or un-Thai they cant judge me for it. They are in the wrong and I am in the right. It protects me from them judging me, them making me feel bad about myself. It mentally puts me in a box.

I barely started doing the whole Multiracial thing until I got to college, but before then I identified with Asian American because my mom emphasized it – it was on my birth certificate. She said I would get more money for college. I used to not care but because of that, I checked off Asian American or Pacific Islander. I try to do “other” when they have it but when they don’t I am very reluctant to check Asian American but what can I do? I wouldn’t mind having a Multiracial box – so ambiguous. I wouldn’t mind other or check more than one. There are so many cultures, so many races. I think race has always existed – I just didn’t know how to label it. I knew it was there – I just never labeled it Multiracial but I always had the effects of it. Now that I know about it, I can talk to others about it.

People get affected by my name and they off the bat analyze me. They look at me and are confused – big nose, straight hair, brown, slanted eyes. Some people ask or I give them a shortened version of my background. I think it’s battling with yourself. I would ask myself which one am I more like? I can say Mexican but that would cut off the whole Asian side of me and I think they

interlink. Like religion, my mom's Catholic and my dad's Buddhist and this mix affected me not to choose. In the middle, if I chose one side no one would judge me for it. The important people in my life don't care. In my family, we don't talk about race much. For example, my brother kept to himself and he was going through finding his sexuality which is something I recently found out about. So, that's why he was not family oriented. Just me and my mom know so far. If my family found out about him, they wouldn't be able to take it. My Mexican side would call gays joto and make fun of them relentlessly. In Thailand, they are very male dominated – the man should be ahead of the female.

Once in a college class, we had to do our final project on identity. My friend, Tara, told me she was Multiracial too because she found some distant French relative. I was angry because she didn't go through what I went through. I don't know if it's bad that I want to close off the Multiracial category but I don't consider her Multiracial at all. I guess I think of it this way. If an Italian lived in Thailand, would he be Thai and I guess the answer is yes because its part of his culture but with Tara its not part of her culture. She never experienced racism or judgment because of her distant French relative. I think experiencing racism is part of the Multiracial experience. I am Chinese but I don't really claim that term because I am not familiar with the culture at all. This is weird. Like my dad is half Chinese and half Thai but I have had the Thai experience. It's complicated – race is complicated. To me, Tara was trying to claim this term that I barely found

out about, that helps me describe myself and what I've been through my whole life. Multiraciality is something she felt she could only claim through her lineage rather than her experience, her exposure. I felt more entitled to the label than she was. That's what my thought was. I didn't say you're not Multiracial.

So, are you Multiracial just because you think you are? I am trying to understand it all. I feel like it shouldn't matter but it matters so much. It affects my daily life – I don't think about it everyday but this whole series of questions of puzzles of who am I come up. I don't think she's been through that.

### Jonathan Mubarak

I met Jonathan at my first Mixed Student Union meeting at Central University. Tall, lanky, tan-skinned with dark hair and eyes, he stood out as one of the few males in the group. From the moment I met him, it was clear that I was in the presence of a successful politician. Almost near graduation, Jonathan was heavily involved in the Democratic Student Organization as well as a Texas delegate for the national democratic convention. Highly opinionated, energetic and hopeful about the future of society in general, Jonathan was more than eager to share his thoughts on any topic. When he spoke, people listened, especially his fellow peers. Jonathan possessed an aura of credibility, intelligence and sincerity.

### Jonathan's Narrative

For all federal and/or governmental purposes, I identify as an Asian American. But for my own personal purposes I identify as a person of Jewish ethnicity, Indian ethnicity, Filipino ethnicity and another group called the Cape Malays. Many are unfamiliar with them. The Cape Malays are a group of Indonesians who were brought to South Africa by the British as political prisoners and they ended up establishing their own ethnic community in Cape Town. And so I identify with those one, two, three, four groups.

I feel that my Jewish parts my Filipino ancestry there's Spanish there's well I could claim "other". Well my father was born in Africa so he's African but he's an Indian-African and he's really not a black African. I'm an ideological person. I'm a politically ideological person. And I believe for programs for which race/ethnicity are used – federal aid, affirmative action in particular. These programs are set up to help out certain groups of people. And I don't feel it's my place to make these choices – if I only check one on the race form, I'm not planning on undermining any system or gaming any system. I'm pretty consistent about that. I'll continue to check Asian American if I have to check one.

It's interesting because most people who don't know me actually think I'm Latino. I speak Spanish and I look Spanish – I look like a Latino. And so people will come up to me and start talking to me in Spanish without any prompting on my part. I'm probably perceived as some sort of white too. My

skins relatively light and maybe people perceive me as maybe Latino half of something. They don't quite know but I definitely wouldn't say that I am an obvious person of color. Unless I tell people that I am a person of color I don't think people treat me as such. For all intents and purposes, I am a white person. I look like a white person so I get all of those privileges.

My family – we have a very strong ethnic identity among ourselves so I know who I am. And a box is a box on a form. It doesn't change who I think I am. My father primarily identifies as a South African and that's more so a national identity. He identifies as American, obviously he's here, he's a citizen, and he's an American. He identifies as an American but his other strong identity is as a South African of Indian descent and that has to do with his work in the anti-apartheid movement. My mother very strongly identifies with being Jewish. And my brother he's in high school right now. I believe he is still searching through his identities.

I have never used the term Multiracial to identify myself although I do embrace my mixture – I don't like the term Multiracial because I feel that race is a very loaded term and there's all kinds of things that connote to race. I think multiethnic is calmer; it's a much less aggressive word. I think race can become an aggressive term with the wrong people. I've always been told that I have a multiethnic background. That's just what I've been told since I was a child. Both my parents have this worldview. It's definitely been something that I've grown

up with. But probably my own understanding of my identity and my outreach to other people regarding a mixed racial identity probably happened two or three years ago.

A culmination of things prompted this activity. I had my bah mitzvah at thirteen and so I entered as a Jewish male into the community and I definitely embraced that and thought about what that means to me. But at the same time, I realized that I needed to look at the other parts. My grandmother was still alive at that time and she's Indian and Cape Malays and so that began another series into looking into what that means. Several years ago, I went to the Philippines to celebrate my grandmother's sister's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. And so that was a nice trip to Cebu to see that part of my family. I still haven't made a trip out to India which I plan to do – I graduated a year early from high school and I plan on graduating a year early from college. And I plan to use some of that extra time to travel and see people around the world.

And so, even though, I feel pretty balanced as far as which groups I identify with, I would identify as an Asian American for public policy purposes. But personally I don't identify more strongly with one group or another. I feel very strongly about all the communities I am involved in. Within my family, I think that there was a very good and honest effort made to have all communities represented equally. Any discrepancies that anyone would find might just be accidental. My father is actually Muslim and my mother is Jewish. And so that

added another level of interfaith, interreligious dynamic into our household. And so there was always an attempt at all points to give every point of view and every position and to know where every family member is located. I like to think this perspective gives me an opportunity to see more than one side of an issue and I'd like to think it makes me very aware of my privilege and where I am. That's partly why I want to go back to India – my grandfather is from a village in India and so he was from the village and here I am in the second top public university in the United States. It's a big gap and it could make you forget, it could make someone forget where he or she comes from. That's not something I plan on doing.

In terms of when I knew I was Multiethnic, it's been something that has always been said and impressed upon me, but I guess the first realization was sometime during high school. And it came about just because of my appearance. I don't come off as fill in the blank, whatever you want it to be. I come off as very white so I've been in the situation where people say things about certain groups of people that I am affiliated with and that's when I realized that I wasn't the same as everybody else. So, when people make ignorant racial comments in my presence, generally and until today, depending on what it is, I can either address it or just let it go. Then I make a mental note of so and so said this. So I don't bring up this stuff, or I realize that so and so is an asshole and I just don't deal with that person. If I know the person well, I let them slide a bit more. For example, I

have a very good friend of mine and he was born in the United States. He's a really good person, he's a really good friend of mine, and we talk a lot. But on race issues, I think sometimes he doesn't get it. And there's a lot of good faith, there's never any malice. There's never any bad sense so with him I can actually address the issue so I say, look, there's not so much jokes with him as much as there are perceptions that he may or may not have so there's some discussion that can take place. But I know a different person who is very myopic and doesn't see, can't see the bigger picture. It would be wasted energy.

By the time people become comfortable asking about my racial background, I generally become comfortable in responding appropriately. I don't have any qualms telling people who I am – I don't have to justify who or what I am. I know who I am. A lot of people will tell me that you have to choose one race. You can't be all of it. And at times it can get frustrating but you just shrug it off. And you interact with people who do accept you for who you are. And there are people like that in all communities.

There are people in the Jewish community that understand that you are Indian. There are people in the Indian community that understand that you are Jewish. There are people who understand that your are Filipino. It's – very few people know who the Cape Malays are so that's not one that's brought up much but generally Indian and Jewish and Indian and Filipino. It's very incongruous – people don't seem to make the connection between the two. But if you explain it

to people, and people are generally open and understanding, then it's not an issue.

Its something that's always interesting and then the conversation moves on.

I have strong feelings however about the way the federal government handles race. I haven't had to fill out a census form but if the government is going to try and accurately collect data on race/ethnicity, which is fine, people should be allowed to show who they are. The only concern I have is abuse - people trying to mess with the system, checking everything that they want to check. So, to illustrate, there is this popular mythology that we're all from Africa. Because that's where life started so we're all really African Americans. There may be truth to this but should a white person be able to claim African ancestry? So my point is, as long as the census data doesn't lead to any type of abuse as long as its used responsibly for public policy issues I see no issues with changing the census – it's probably a good thing.

I think if you have to choose one race, it forces people to think about themselves and - if I have to pick this, well it's so far from where I am. I think there's also a fear that someone will catch me because it's such an obvious mistake. But with checking more than one it would be like you couldn't really prove it or now I can list all these reasons as to why I check multiple boxes or this and that. As long as there are no abuses I think it's a good thing and we should move forward with it. Even with the potential of abuses, it is probably a good move.

There are different analyses that need to be conducted. I generally come across the dilution argument, the idea that if a mixed person checks more than one race thereby diluting one of their racial identities, in terms of society and cultural norms. For instance, when people don't want interracial or interethnic marriages or relations going on - I don't agree with that at all. I believe that if you understand what you are doing, love the other person and you can think about it and make sure to be fair to all parties involved. From a policy standpoint, I don't have an answer. It's an interesting problem that's taking place and my initial reaction is that. Actually I don't have an initial reaction. I'm not sure what to say to that. It's an interesting problem and it seems that the folks that are worried that minority numbers may be shifting a lot and it shifts the focus of which groups are disproportionately hurt. And that may be so but perhaps what needs to happen is that new databases need to be made that correlate ethnicity with income. I'm in favor of affirmative action by ethnicity and race and by income. You weren't enslaved because you were poor - it happened because you were black - that's why it obviously happened. So there is no need to do it solely by income but if you correlate the two then, you may limit the damage that is done to those numbers. That's just a first impression I'd need to digest that a little bit more.

I think that my identity has changed throughout my life and that while all the parts of my identity have been explored or rather shown to me and explained to me and given their fair time by my parents, I think as I've grown up I've slowly

become comfortable with each one of them. I've never denied who I was but slowly with time you become more comfortable with each one.

I actually think my Multiracial identity allows me to see racism and discrimination much more. Because lots of groups will think if you're not part of them then you're not part of the rest of them. And so you can say whatever you want amongst your group and you know it's safe. You can look around and know that it's safe, that everyone's on the same page as you. I think ethnicity is one factor in identity but I personally have decided that what needs to be worked on are issues not just about race and ethnicity but issues like gender and sexual orientation. I think these are other issues of discrimination that are out there and that need to be addressed. There's little way of being able to separate all of those identities out. I think as we can all see in the presidential race this year you really cant separate things out.

Barack Obama is a black straight man. Hillary Clinton is a white straight woman. Barack Obama may not represent all men just because he is a man and Hillary Clinton does not represent all women just because she is a woman. Historically, there has been a separation between white women and black women and so to claim that all women should vote for Hillary or to claim that all black people should vote for Barack Obama on the basis of that thing alone is not workable. Sexual orientation comes into play and it is much more of a complicated issue in this country. It just adds more layers that you'll have to deal

with. Which is why I feel that the best way to combat these issues is for me to go to school and get an education and make a lot of money, because the damage and disrespect that people can give you both physically and through indirect causes is very much limited by how much more money they have than you. In this capitalist society, if you have money, you can protect yourself from people who are out to take advantage of you.

I suppose there are other ways to keep protected, even here at Central U. This campus doesn't oppose multiethnic students. This campus is not in any way against multiethnic students but I'm not sure this campus does much to promote multiethnic students either. And that's not to the detriment of the campus either; it's a relatively new idea, a relatively new group of people that are coming out. It's a relatively new idea. There are a lot of studies being done. I think it needs to be given time. I think lots of educational institutions need to be given time in examining this issues and examining ways in which they want to move forward with this issue of trying to help multiethnic students. If in 20 or 30 years nothing's happened, then we can talk again and we can figure out how they need to shape up their act. The group that I'm a part of, Mixed Student Union, does well in addressing types of multiethnic issues. And moreover race and perception issues and stereotypical issues. The only issues with clubs like this and I found that as I tried to organize one of these groups back at my high school is that there are very few people. The group is still relatively small. Multiethnic students are

very few and even those that are multiethnic may not identify as multiethnic. And so when they see groups like this they don't think it is for them. The group of people as a whole is globally growing obviously but for example our group has seven or eight people. It's very very small so we'll see what the university does. We'll give it some time.

I think there are societal pressures to not necessarily accept that you are mixed race. Not in a negative way like its bad to be mixed but – that comes out in rare occasions when people use words like mutt or mixed breed or things like that to make people seem like animals, but I think there is positive action or will generated at people who are part of one group. It is sort of like a clan mentality - you're part of our group you are one of us. So I think that if people establish multiple loyalties then there's a fear that they will always be like a spy. By claiming one race, you lose it all because you are always seen as suspect in one. I think that if you're diplomatic about it you can make it so that it doesn't happen. I think you can make it so it doesn't necessarily work out that way. But I definitely think that's a fear that people have.

I think that being mixed race can develop a certain skill. It depends on how you perceive yourself. If you've gone through a process and maybe you're, not at the end stage, but a later stage of development where you look at your identities altogether, then there is probably a skill set that has been learned along the way in mediating between multiple, different groups of people. It's probably

an area of diplomacy that people may be able to have. As a multiethnic person, you're exposed to a lot more different things. You're exposed to a lot more different cultures. You'll have to know from an early point where the push and pull is from different things because obviously different cultures don't always have the same ideas and you may have to decide that on some things, some cultures are better than others. I don't subscribe to this idea – I think this idea is very fluid across campuses nowadays of intellectual relativism or cultural relativism and I think there are certain things that are great about certain cultures. We can look at all sorts of different cultures and see the wonders that humanity has produced but there are certain ideas, politically I'm on the left, I'm a left-winger. I think there are certain things like democracy, rights for all people, simple ideas, human rights that if your culture doesn't necessarily have, I'm not going to discount your culture, I won't say it's a bad culture but you as a person may not want to take the opposing side on those issues. It's not good for the country; it's not good for the world to not take in those views. I mean there are certain cultures; I mean the U.S. is a culture all on its own. Many people who are first generation here have to go through multiethnic or multicultural understandings in just relating to different cultures. And if you want to wear a sari and not a dress, or you want to wear jeans or your hijab? These are not really big issues I think.

I mean we know that Keith Ellison was the first Muslim elected to Congress from Minnesota and he wanted to be sworn in using the Qur'an. That's really not a big deal – these aren't the big issues of our time. The big issues of our time are issues of ensuring that there is no sexism rampant, and not sexism in that you are forcing someone to wear certain kinds of clothes – sexism in that in your hiring practices, you seem to only be hiring these people, these men and there's no reason why a woman couldn't do this job. Or you seem to persecute and ostracize people of this sexual orientation and there's no reason to do that. So these are the stronger issues that need to be taking place. Or this colorblind racism – that's the new flavor of racism that is out there now. These are the issues that we need to look at and I think that people of mixed race, Multiethnicity have a better ability to look at. The cons to being mixed are you do have to be able to prove yourself. There are always allegations of proving yourself one way or the other. And you have to definitely be strong and be able to fight back. I think if you're a good person and you observe a code of ethics, morals and honor that irrespective of what culture you come from everyone will understand that you are a fair person. When you say something you mean it – you are an honorable person. And there's a certain level of respect and then once people see that you are an honorable person, they can say, yes, he is one of us.

Multiethnicity can do two things. Just that if people see that you on a societal level say oh everyone's mixing, everyone's producing this new beige

color everyone's going to be beige, we aren't going to have any racism at all and so it gives you a false sense of, well, now we're past this and we can now start the race and everyone is at the same starting line. In that way, it can be damaging but it's good in the sense that it fights colorblind racism because you have people who have one parent as white and another that is black – that person can look and say well my white family does all of this and my black family does all of this. In my case, I don't think I've been able to do that because both of my parents were immigrants and so we don't have a connection to the established position here in the U.S. but if you have one parent who is in the established group and one who isn't, you can definitely draw a distinction between how one group is treated and the other.

In terms of Multiracial stereotypes, some people think, I know I've gotten this, you can check every box so you can get in wherever you want. I got that once so, Multiracial people can be seen as very opportunistic you can go out and get whatever you want. Or the one you run into is mixed people are very beautiful which is good and bad depending on how you want to look at it. I have an issue with it because it's like we're objects – they're interested in these objects for a moment and now I'm not interested anymore and then you're just tossed to the side. It's an exotic fetish type of thing. I haven't run into too many. People are usually very confused though when you explain it to them. There's always questions about how did that happen, how did you get made?

My parents self-identify very strongly both in terms of ethnicity in terms of religion and in terms of political ideology. And so for me there was never much of an exploration it was more of an ask a question and get an answer. I had to think about it for a bit but I never had to go searching for an answer and go through other types of experiences – the database was already there. My mother was multiethnic and my father was multiethnic both my grandmothers were multiethnic and so in our family it wasn't said it wasn't studied much but there was definitely some sort of understanding that these types of issues were taking place. It [parent involvement] will shift one's racial identity from one of discovery and growth to more of teaching. There's no independent discovery, no independent growth. There's a sense of continuity, of familial continuity in knowledge that is being passed down.

Multiethnicity in an educational setting is at its infant stages. It'll be interesting to see where it goes. I'm about to turn 19 – it'll be interesting in eighty or ninety years – God willing, knock on wood. It'll be interesting to see what happens.

### Melissa Armstrong

Melissa is strong-willed, eccentric and outgoing. Very fair-skinned with freckles on her round face, she has dark flowing hair, full lips, a small nose and

light brown eyes that are somewhat slanted. One of the first noticeable things about Melissa is her vintage style clothing and her quick walking pace. Self-described as a “type-A” personality, Melissa enjoys winning a heated argument and is unabashedly feminist in her stances. Pursuing law school, Melissa is always worried about the next step in the application process and her overall appeal for admission. Melissa eagerly volunteered to talk about her life as an Asian and white woman.

#### Melissa’s Narrative

I am biracial – my mother is Chinese and my father is white and I identify as biracial but for statistical purposes, I have always had to identify as Asian American. I guess there is this illusion that being a minority is more beneficial in certain systems than being just white. In the days of post-affirmative action, it doesn’t seem to be truly beneficial to identify as a minority but admissions officers give minorities the benefit of the doubt more than a white person from a middle class background. I don’t feel that I am just white in terms of my personal side so identifying as white wouldn’t be completely accurate.

I grew up in Dallas, east of the lake, which is the nice area. I lived in the bohemian part of town which is literally across the railroad tracks from where

lawyers and doctors live. So, that's where the Linney liberals lived which means that they are people who have plenty of money but have liberal guilt and send their kids to public schools, vote democratically and so on. I think it's actually quite conservative but there is an effrontery of liberalism. I went to a Montessori school from kindergarten to the eighth grade and it was quite ethnically diverse – about forty to fifty-five percent of the any given class was of color. My class was really small – there were two Asians, two Black people, two Hispanics – which was six of the total thirteen. I have always grown up around minorities. Going to a Montessori school was really free-range – we weren't broken up by grades. We got a lot of independence. The school system was great but not the people who were running it.

I remember when I was in first or second grade; the principal would always show prospective parents and students a tour of the school and show them around the classrooms. We would just act normally. She would pull me out of my entire class. She would say, "This is our little half-Chinese girl." And it was really embarrassing! First, I wasn't far removed from when the kids would make fun of me for being half Chinese and secondly, I felt like an animal in the zoo. It was like she was saying, "look, not only do we have ethnic diversity, as proven by our obviously ethnic faces but by our mixed race kids." That was the roughest period for me – that's when kids began to notice that we were different for reasons that were beyond physical. We looked different and that was connected

to traits – the utopia stopped. The white kids wanted to know why we were Asian. For me, the kids were confused – “why don’t you look like one? Why do you kind of look like another thing?” One kid of course, has not so great of an upbringing, so he starts pulling his eyes back, so then all the kids starting pulling their eyes back when they would see me. I cried. I went home and cried.

My parents tried really hard, in the beginning, to make sure that I wasn’t alone and I knew that. We went to a Multiracial Families Group on weekends so I knew I wasn’t the only mixed kid out there. We never talked about being Multiracial in that group. I believe that the point of the group was to make the kids feel like they weren’t the only ones in Dallas or in the world. It made me feel less alone but it really didn’t help with the day-to-day stuff. I could see that other people’s families looked like my family. But it didn’t really help when no one else in my school was Multiracial. That was a double negative – nobody else in my school was Multiracial. When I was faced with racism, it didn’t help because those kids weren’t there. They all lived in the suburbs. They didn’t go to my school. They didn’t even go to my Chinese school. They were there, I know they were there but that didn’t help in the context of schooling. We didn’t talk about race in Montessori. After third grade, it just stopped. Our focus was less social and more academic, based on the standardized test that we had to take.

I went to an arts magnet high school. That was a controversial thing about me in the ninth grade – my choice not to attend a private school anymore. I knew that my family couldn't afford it. Twelve thousand dollars a year for tuition and you had to buy a laptop which made it thirteen thousand. It was really expensive and my mom had just been laid off. So that was part of the decision, but I genuinely knew that I did not want to attend private school. I skipped my entrance exam for one of the private schools; I skipped the interview for another one. My Montessori principle pulled strings even though she was upset with me for doing that. I just didn't want to go, so I went to public school. We were the last class to be admitted under a racial quota.

We had thirty percent black, thirty percent Hispanic, thirty percent white and the remainder were Asian Pacific Islander and/or Native American. The whole school was that way because everyone had been admitted that way. There were more white people. But just as Central University is technically supposed to be not using affirmative action, our school technically was not using it either but our school was the same way. If somebody dropped out, he or she would have to be replaced with a person of that minority status. There were quite a few Multiracial students. I knew girls that were Black and Hispanic. I knew another girl who was a quarter French and Asian, so she was this Chinese girl with red hair. Everyone thought she was so weird looking. About fifteen of us in a school of seven hundred. Our school was so small that I felt that we were all friends.

My best friend was Black and white and her clique was kind of mean. I was, too – I was sort of a bully in high school. Still, our clique was very ethnically well represented. We had full Hispanics, full Blacks, white girl, half white/ half Asian girl, Asian guy – they came to be know as the multicultural mafia. That got shortened to the Mafia because they were vindictive and ethnically diverse. We were ethnically diverse.

My experiences with my racial identity depended a lot upon whether or not there was a conflict situation. I have always had a very advocate-like personality – that is why I am pursuing law. So, if we were in a social studies class, and I was advocating against a lot of the arguments made about racial situations in history or geography, I was one of the minorities. Generally, I had the minority status which meant that I could racially float and I had the automatic respect of the minority community but if I were having an argument with someone who was a minority, I became white. And I was speaking from a white person’s perspective. It was like, “well, white girl, you can’t say this because of blah, blah, blah. You’re just saying this because you have all this privilege.” Granted these were people who got into stupid fights for different reasons with anybody, not just white people. Like Jalia Johnson, she would tell me that I was white and that I wouldn’t understand but I was never called out as the model minority. In an urban school that was seventy percent minority, if you were minority, you were automatically cool unless the minority groups called you out

otherwise. So, I guess I wasn't called out on being the model minority because pointing out my minority status would remind people that I was a person of color and that I was entitled to that respect.

I think Asian and white tends to be a pretty common mix. There's not a lot of tension between those groups. But, let's say East L.A., you are going to have a problem when you are of Hispanic and Black descent because there is racial tension between those groups in East L.A. In general, Asians and whites tend to get along really well. I attribute that to colonialism – the ways in which white countries such as England, France and the U.S. have colonized Asian countries more often. So, over the years, these interracial marriages have become more common. There seems to be acceptability from both the Asian side and the white side. My family is from Hong Kong, which was a port city of a British colony. We are probably more mixed than we admit. I mean we say that we are full Cantonese but my mom looks relatively non-mainlander. This is going to sound bad. The closer you get to the mainland, where no one's left and on one's mixed, and no one left to be conquered, the closer you are to the original bodily and facial phenotype you are. It's not necessarily unattractive but it's obvious. You can tell the difference between a Chinese person whose third generation in America and a Chinese person whose family ancestry is almost ninety nine percent Chinese. There's a different phenotype even if there is only one person who mixed racially within the family – you can tell the difference.

There are distinguishable features. For example, my mom has the eye flap. Most of my family has the eye flap. That is something that a lot of Chinese girls would rather have than not. Like when I went to Mandarin school, my mom was the only mom who had the eye flap. All the girls would talk about how their eyelids didn't hold eye shadow well – we were only seven years old, it was kind of creepy. I think the obsession with the eye flap goes back to our colonization. We are so used to being colonized and we are so used to white people having high status and to look like that, even mixed with that, or to be that, is considered better. Less flat nose, thinner lips – these are some of the markers.

My face has always been fine except for the fact that my uncles make fun of my freckles but my mom has freckles. I look a lot like my mother, a longer face, but very close. If it weren't for the skin tone, she would look pretty white, in my opinion. Other than my face, my body is unlike any other body in my family. My mom and I had a really hard time with that. I was okay with the fact that I was a C cup in the ninth grade. My mom wasn't. My mom is a hypochondriac. She would read up on things and decide I was obese. I didn't look like anyone in my family. Anyone with boobs in my family is fat, genuinely fat, overweight. I had developed boobs and she saw early signs that I was going to get hips. She was constantly trying to put me on a diet, telling me to watch what I ate. I mean I guess I could understand, but at the time it was painful and hard to understand. I remember one time we got into a screaming match in the car on the way to my

friend's house. My mom decided I was fat and I was telling her, "I am not fat." She kicked me out of the car because I didn't agree with her. When we hit puberty, that was the beginning of the end. This is no longer an issue in the family because as she started looking back at old pictures of my maternal grandmother, she began to realize that I was not abnormal. This was just the way I was going to be – whether fit or not fit. She's seen me at my fittest which was when I hit Central U and I was just exercising like crazy. I've forgiven her because I had to. I don't accept her diagnosis – it's her problem, not mine.

I don't think that there has been a time when I have dated based on race. I've dated mostly white guys with the exception of a half Chicano/ half white guy. The weirdest part is when they joke about how they have yellow fever. Yellow fever is when white guys lust largely after Asian women – they are small, submissive, cute, and exotic. I've gotten that comment a lot – that I am exotic. My features are more interesting as a combination than the average brown-eyed white girl. I don't fit the body expectations of an Asian, quite the opposite. I consider it kind of a complement but I don't think my combination is that unique. It is usually not part of the conversation. Boys have not been prejudiced against me. When I date white guys, I don't feel as if I am in an interracial relationship because I'm not really part of the Asian community. I don't fit into the Asian community even though I identify as not completely white. It's because I pass as

white. I'm mostly knowledgeable of a white culture even if it's a white urban culture with strong minority influence.

To me, this is the opposite of misogyny. Most of the guys who fall into the yellow fever category are pedophilic and use Asian women as a way to deal with whatever they have to deal with. They need someone to push around. Then, there's the type that's just not very confident with women to begin with and because Asian women are kind of unthreatening, submissive and small, they feel that they can relate to those qualities. Like my friend, Seth, he says that he does not feel confident and he has said that he likes shy women, Asian women. My personality does not fit with small, submissive or easy to push around. If anything, I push people around. I have very few filters, save for funerals and weddings. I think with me, it's a physical thing. Guys think that I am attractive. I get told that I am attractive all the time. I'll be walking down the mall looking really cute one day. I was trying to avoid people. This guy jumps in my path to give me an invitation to go to a party. I've been attractive for a long time and I'm used to it. The females on my dad's side of the family are attractive. My mother got lucky in terms of attractiveness. I think if my parents had another child, he or she could be ugly. My stepbrother is attractive but not as attractive as I am. He looks more Asian and he is actually white, but people think he is racially mixed. On both sides, I've gotten some good genetics. My dad's nose is so awful. It

looks like a muppet face – the oval nose. It’s been broken three times. Any sibling of mine could have had that nose.

I don’t think teachers have treated me any differently because of my racial mixture because they could only go by what I offered. So, when I went to school, they had information sheets on each student. They would have an attendance log with all of our basic information and my racial category was “C”. I don’t know if that stood for Chinese or Caucasian. My school was heavily minority and all minorities were performing well. My teachers did not call me out on my race. My high school experience was really utopian – what every white liberal would wish upon public schools. For an urban high school in a bankrupt district, we were well resourced. We had tutoring, reduced fees on AP tests, and a bunch of services. Once they realized that you were at a certain school, teachers would tell your counselor to place you in advanced placement courses. There may have been a handful of uninterested students, but very small. My AP English teacher was the best AP English teacher in the state of Texas. They invested so much in us and we were very competitive about grades. We knew that we were not at a regular public school so we got a great academic experience.

Up until this semester, I have had a lot of requirements out of the way so I haven’t had the chance to take ethnic studies. I just changed my major to American Studies. I am taking Orientalism and U.S. Pop Culture. I am a patriot

of strange choices. I am obsessed with this country and with law and so my course choices feed that obsession. I just love how our constitution is a living document. It takes on all of these meanings based on the necessities. It is convoluted and not expeditious but I love how one law is able to make change. It is amazing to me that one document can mean so much to so many different people by not allowing things or by allowing things. I find it so amazing how much this document impacts our life – our democratic morality. This is a blessing that we all take for granted.

My Multiraciality has forced me to confront a lot of stereotypes about my independent races, separate and autonomous from each other. Asian people think that white people are lazy, over privileged and fat. White people think that Asians are obsessed with grades, are cold and skinny. I think that living the gray zone between those two I've been able to see from a minority perspective and I think this is a blessing. I have been able to see how ignorance is bliss. People who have lived the white life do not even understand how much more different others' realities are from their own. I mean technically we are all rooted in democratic morality but the extent to which democratic morality is applied has a lot to do with how limited your viewpoint is. And if you don't even know how limited your viewpoint is, then you are doing everyone a great disservice. And I feel that I need to be evaluated as a mixed race person not as an Asian American but I

won't get that luxury in the current educational system, at least, not until I graduate from law school.

### Conclusion

The one consistent sentiment that wove through each of the interviews (both case studies and general interviews) was that of gratitude. In the course of data collection, each participant shared their appreciation and satisfaction in having a venue where they could share their Multiracial experiences. Many noted that no one had ever asked them to relay their stories as they pertained to their Multiracial identities. I believe that this sentiment is illustrated in the rich, varied and intersecting ways in which the participants wove their narratives. What impressed me most was the almost seamless manner in which the participants articulated their stories, as if the words were always on the tips of their tongues, developing with each interaction and emotion, ready to be shared but never given the opportunity to do so. Once I gave a commencement speech at a graduation and after my comments, an audience member said to me, "You've been waiting to tell this story since you were in kindergarten, haven't you?" It was so obvious that I urgently needed to tell my story and, given the venue, that desire would reveal itself. Similarly, the participants in this study gave me the same impression

– they had a need to tell their *testimonios*. What a privilege for me to provide that platform – the stage for their narratives to be put forward.

Having said that, these case studies are not meant to illustrate a “typical” Multiracial experience because, as illustrated by each of the individual narratives, each case study is unique. Each of the narratives detailed in this chapter is meant to introduce and highlight some of the primary emerging themes that arose during the course of data collection for all of the interviews I conducted. The next chapter will detail these themes.

## **Chapter Five: Themes – Understanding and Experiencing Multiracial Identity**

### Introduction

Following the five case studies in Chapter Four, this chapter will focus on the overall themes that emerged from the entire dataset, as expressed by the study participants. The truth is that I could have done a case study on each of the participants and in some ways, it saddens me that I can't give all of my participants equal time and due attention. The case studies I chose weren't more important than the others but stood out for me for different reasons – the main one being, a gut feeling or intuition. My facultad guided and informed my choice of case studies. I was able to see below the surface of these particular case studies' narratives and was drawn to them in conscious and unconscious ways.

The case study narratives possessed a magical aspect that illustrated both their so-called racial abnormality and Multiracial uniqueness. My sensitivity to these narratives was heightened by my own connection with the narratives as a Multiracial researcher and by an intangible sense of knowing that these narratives captured a larger reality and resonance that dwelled in the borders of race and culture. This borderland seemed to act as a haven for Multiracial college students, a place where crises could be solved, spaces of gray could be embraced, and difference could be honored. The borderland space activated a survival defense mechanism which led to a consciousness of self-identity. When

participants spoke to the notion of living in a borderland of sorts, I was reminded of Anzaldúa's assertion that "those who do not feel psychologically or physically safe in the world are more apt to develop this sense" (1987, p.60). The borderland space allows students the flexibility to improvise and release the iron hold of rigid racial categorizations. In a state of constant movement, the borderland site is an empowering space, albeit unsettling and amorphous. Chicana Feminist Theory holds that it "inhabits a proactive space that does not seek approval, acceptance or intellectual legitimacy from exterior sources and domains" (Davalos, 2008, p.155). The case studies I chose followed this Chicana Feminist theoretical tenet by evoking a certain boldness, riskiness and honesty in the relaying of the narrative.

I preface this chapter with this explanation because I want to relay the value of each interview, each interaction and each shared moment that transpired between the participants and I. By allowing me a glimpse into their lives and identity production, I had the privilege of becoming part of this process too. And, as I listened, re-listened, coded and re-coded, I started to hear echoes of the participants' voices, ideas and wonderings resonate throughout their stories. This chapter is a portal into these motifs. The chapter is divided into five thematic sections: 1)Racial Rubric, 2)Racial Disclosure, 3)Racial Floating, 4)Identity Fusion and 5)Multiracial Entitlement. These themes were developed directly from a combination of the participants' words and similar, reoccurring

experiences that seemed to capture moments of racial queerness.

### Racial Rubric

“I don’t have a racial rubric to follow.”

Cultural and/or racial authenticity is an issue that arises in any discussion of identity production. Questions like: how Black are you, are you Mexican enough, why are you acting white, and similar taunts/judgments assign meaning to the participants’ actions, behaviors, linguistic style, dress, attitudes, affiliations (personal, political, social, professional), and translate such meanings into the participants’ level of racial loyalties and understandings. In the figured worlds of monoraciality, the aforementioned artifacts are instruments which measure worthiness and acceptability in respective monoracial figured worlds. Of course, the question becomes – who sets the racial standards, who makes the rules about being “down” enough? And what happens when you are assessed as unworthy or lacking in ethnic credentials (DaCosta, 2008)? Yet, even that question is quite simplistic. Is one’s racial authenticity really measured in such a dualistic fashion – either you are authentic or you are not? I argue that in a Multiracial figured world begins to form as these dialectical and dialogical activities occur with Multiracial students - a new set of markers and artifacts are produced.

In my conversations with Dee-Dee, she introduced a concept that I believe queers the notion of monoracial figured worlds, adding depth and nuance to such

dualistic perceptions of authenticity. Dee-Dee claims that, because of her Multiracial background, “I don’t have a racial rubric to follow.” Because she doesn’t have a monoracial rubric to follow, Dee-Dee is allowed to improvise with her racial identity. The space of improvisational play is a borderland where mestiza consciousness is aroused. Albeit an uncomfortable, ambiguous place, this borderland is where Dee-Dee resides and where borders between monoracial identities are deconstructed and perhaps, built anew. This space is a proactive one that does not seek to fit a certain mold. Rather, as Dee-Dee attests to, this borderland space does not seek approval, acceptance or legitimacy (Anzaldúa, 1998). In the context of my analysis, I define a racial rubric as a tool, which uses categorical markers, for measuring and assessing one’s racial legitimacy, genuineness, loyalty and trustworthiness. Here is the context in which Dee-Dee lays out her notion of racial rubric.

This is a theory that I have. Every single person for the most part that I’ve met that hasn’t tried to blend completely with one single community and right now I’m talking mostly black and white right now because they contrast the most and that has been my experience. Every Multiracial person that I have met that has managed to balance both worlds and hasn’t completely claimed that they were African American or white is always really interesting to me and really eclectic and quirky and so that’s something that I attribute to people who are balancing things. And I think there is a lesson to be learned in that for every community because we’ve been put in this place where we’re neither one or the other we’ve formed whatever we’ve wanted to form. We’ve created whatever we’ve wanted to create. I don’t have a racial rubric to follow so I’ve just been sort of creative as far as how I am going to be as a person.

The creativity or space of improvisational play which Dee-Dee refers to suggests

that by identifying as Multiracial, she agentically takes on a certain less-inhibited freedom “as far as how I am going to be as a person.” Another way of phrasing that might be that she does not succumb to the boxes of the typical racial rubric. Rather, she sees herself as within, outside of and creating something new relative to that rubric. Dee-Dee is not alone in her ideas regarding the racial rubric. Other participants shared a similar notion, albeit in different terms and contexts.

Marie, a self-identified Chicana and White woman, discussed her Multiracial identity in the following way, “I think it’s going to be hard to get out of these columns – it’s more like a border space, an amorphous space.” The columns she refers could be likened to boxes on Dee-Dee’s racial rubric. Marie goes on to note, “I kind of see myself as ambiguous, adaptable, but still a Chicana through and through. I am definitely more aware of the different facets of my identity.” In this instance, Marie places herself on the Chicana racial rubric, “still a Chicana through and through,” yet “adaptable.” This adaptability to adjust to new identities and contexts echoes Dee-Dee’s feeling of racial versatility. Rather than seeing this “ambiguity” as a watering-down of one’s racial authenticity or even, as a marker of shame or embarrassment, Marie envisions a melding that embodies her struggle with her identity but also her desire to accept its contradictions with open arms. Marie primarily identifies as Chicana (she is Mexican and Italian), however, her phenotypical features are light-skin, Italian-like facial features (as she perceives them) and thin-build. Therefore, as she

claims, her Mexican identity is not immediately discernible to others as she describes in the following example.

It's still kind of ongoing recognition that outsiders don't recognize that Chicano identity is my identity. I think I remember even during my freshman year, my mentor had just had my email address so they could only see my name which was chicanapower@cuniv.net and when my mentor saw me it caught him off guard. All throughout I grappled with that, kind of not comfortable with my own skin in a way. It's just coming to terms with the Multiracial identity. I would be in tears in high school and even before, with the "who am I?" essential dilemma. And now it's about embracing the contradiction of it.

Marie must make concerted efforts to assert her Chicana identity, as it is complicated and interrupted (contradicted) by her European features.

Nicole similarly describes the ways in which her phenotype doesn't quite fit with the Black racial rubric. Identifying as Mexican and Black, Nicole discusses her sense of being perceived as "not fully black" by her peers. In the following excerpt, she relays the first time she attended a Black student group meeting on campus and the type of reception she received. This is an example of the ways in which relational and positional identities impact Nicole's behavior. At this precise moment in her life, she asserts an identity, whether publicly or privately, according to the ways in which power, status and privilege play into this space of authoring. This activity is not pre-meditated nor carefully orchestrated rather it is part of a process which involves a lifetime of social encounters and inner dialogs where one is persistently addressed and in the process of answering (Holland et al., 1998).

I wouldn't necessarily say there are issues on campus in the black community around Multiraciality. I know I went to an AASA meeting, an African American Student Alliance meeting, and I didn't like it. Personally, I didn't like it because I felt like they were saying, "she's bright, what is she doing here, she is not fully black." And it's not like, "she's just not black, she's bright –but- she's mixed." Some of the officers – I just always got looks from them, like, "what are you doing here?" That was just me – I might just be paranoid but that's just how I felt about it.

Nicole gets the sense that because of her noticeably light skin (bright), she is seen as only partially Black. And, although she makes it a point to say that she "might just be paranoid," she is not alone in this sentiment. Many of the participants revealed their feelings of either outright suspicion/rejection from fellow students who saw them as racially deficient because of their Multiracial identity. Nicole points to the fact that she is seen as different and as one who doesn't belong precisely because of her Multiracial background. In the Black racial rubric, one could say that Nicole falls into a clear category – the bright, mixed Black girl. For some, however, this categorization is not necessarily as clear-cut.

Betty Gutierrez identifies as Mexican and White. She expresses that she does not fall squarely within the Mexican or white rubric but feels "resentful" toward her father for not emphasizing her Mexican background. She tells it this way.

I think people think I may be Mexican but they are not sure. People think that if they ask about it, it will be offensive. No one really talks about ethnicity except in the classroom. I wish they would ask. One guy thought I was Filipina. There was a lot of confusion. The people who know me say I look white but people who don't know me tend to guess I

am Mexican. I think my friends think I have a very Anglo lifestyle. Being middle class, living in the suburbs, watching MTV and VH1. I know I am Anglicized. Since I don't fit the Mexican stereotype, they don't perceive me as being Mexican. I feel guilty about being Anglicized. I was resentful toward my dad for a while because he never talked about being Mexican nor did he pass anything on.

There is a difference, according to her, between the way that strangers perceive her and the way in which people she knows understand her. In other words, without knowing her behaviors outright, she claims that people will classify her as Mexican based on her physical features, whereas, those who are familiar with her "Anglo lifestyle" see her as white. She falls in differing places within the racial rubrics, dependent upon a person's level of knowledge regarding her mores. Her behavior is indexical of claims in relationships with others (relational identities) as is her apprehension to share her racial identity fully (positional identities) (Holland et al., 1998). This difference in perceptions is useful in understanding the complex ways in which Multiracial students experience their racial identity because it illustrates that the participants' identities has many dimensions and respective consequences. The concept of the racial rubric allows Multiracial students to place themselves on a continuum that, though not necessarily accurate, is still a validation of their experiences. The act of naming one's experience and/or situating oneself on a continuum, for good or bad, legitimizes the experience as real and tangible. The identification of language and location is an act or authorization; as long as the experience can be named and located, the experience is certified.

August Tolley, who identifies as Black and Filipina, echoes Betty's varying classifications in differing racial rubrics. In the Black community, she feels that she is perceived "as a white girl." Within her Filipino community, she is perceived as Black which is equated to being American. This ambiguity with regards to where she falls on the racial rubric, she claims, gives her "a bit more freedom" with her personality. This bit of freedom calls to mind the notion of improvisational play as it relates to her racial identity. The freedom to not follow any particular racial standard is agency in action – August is aware of the scrutiny that she receives for not "acting black." At the same time, she embraces this difference and feels that she has "a bit more freedom because of [her] biraciality."

In her words,

Black folks will say that I sound like a white girl. I get put off because I don't act Black and talk Black. I am not your stereotypical Black person. I just see that stuff as stereotypes of Black people. The majority of Blacks act a certain way so we are all expected to act that way. Every now and then. My dad once told me on the phone that I sound like a white girl and I was like okay. Once a friend of mine called the house and told me the same thing. I don't like that stereotype. It's dumb. I usually brush it off. I don't follow any particular stereotype. I just like that I am different. I don't follow the stereotype of listening to Black music – I actually like rock music. For a lot of my actions, I think I have a bit more freedom because of my biraciality.

In recollecting her childhood in the Philippines, she goes on to say that she never quite fit in within the schooling environment there because of her phenotypically black skin. Her fellow students would equate this to Americanness. This perception was predominantly due to the U.S. military presence in the Philippines

– the fact that many of the soldiers were African American and oftentimes fathered biracial children there contributed to this notion.

How do you know there is a racial rubric? Who authors the racial rubric? Where do you fall in the racial rubric? Can you move within and among different categories in the racial rubric? These are the questions that Dee-Dee's concept of the racial rubric raise for the study participants. The racial rubric exists because we recognize, through our approaches to racial labeling and differentiation that our phenotype, customs, movements, linguistic characteristics, class, sexuality, religion/spiritual beliefs, eating habits, schooling, interests, hobbies, educational background, family relationships, choices and nuances position us in distinct, often separate, boxes in the continuum of racial authenticity. No single person or group authors the racial rubric, rather it is a product of an evolution of markers of racial identification that can change over time and ebb and flow within one's life. The way in which we interact with others accompanied by the ways in which others respond to our interactions determine where we fall in the racial rubric. Racial rubrics are not absolute. Racial rubrics can take on different forms and meanings depending on the person who utilizes it to place others. What may be one person's racial rubric maybe completely opposed to another's, slightly vary or align in some areas while not in others. The point here is that racial rubrics are utilized in an attempt to determine one another's racial authenticity, political affiliation, cultural loyalties. Subsequently where one falls in a racial rubric

determines the extent of a Multiracial student's trustworthiness, genuineness and integrity.

It is important to note that while some Multiracial students are automatically situated in a racial rubric, there are other Multiracial students that, due to their ability to pass as white, are not immediately subjected to such scrutiny. Multiracial students who pass as white generally have a choice with regards to their racial identity. They can choose to pass as white and take advantage of all of the privileges bestowed upon them through whiteness and/or they can disclose the non-white aspect of their racial identity. The act of racial disclosure by a Multiracial student was often precipitated by an incident of frustration where the Multiracial student was offput by a fellow classmate's ignorant, presumptuous and/or inappropriate comment with regards to the participant's racial identity.

#### Racial Disclosure

"I couldn't be passive about it. And I just told this girl, No! I am Hispanic!" -  
Solomon

Participants who pass as white have the option of keeping their racial identity hidden, whether in its entirety or partially. Due to their ambiguous or unidentifiable phenotypical traits or racial markers, they are either instantly

presumed to be a certain race or left raceless (which often is equated to whiteness) until further disclosed. Solomon Hoffman, one of the case studies for example, has very light white skin and hazel eyes. Most assume that he is simply white; however, he is Mexican, Armenian and Irish and grew up in a predominantly Latino community. He “passes” as white, however while this passing ability has its undeniable privileges, those associated with white superiority, it also presents an inaccurate representation of the participant. Solomon wants to maintain his strong Latino cultural ties but his whiteness, per se, prohibits him from being considered as an authentic Latino within Latino social circles. Or, as this scenario illustrates, the assumption that Solomon is white is interrupted by his own agentic proclamation that he is, in fact, a person of color as well.

There is another incident I can recall. I had gone to about three or four meetings of the Latino Economics Coalition at Central U. I hadn't been too active in that student group because I really wanted to focus in on my grades. And there was something else that limited my engagement – every time I went to a meeting, I would get that, ‘oh yeah, we allow ALL races,’ as if they were making a special exception for the white boy – me. I was usually pretty passive about these kinds of comments, but one day, in an Economics class, a similar comment was made where someone assumed I was totally white. At that moment, I couldn't be passive about it anymore. I surprised myself and just told this girl, ‘No! I am Hispanic!’ I got upset.

Solomon first acknowledges that this incident of racial disclosure stands out prominently in his life as an undergraduate at Central University. He also points out that other club members' assumptions of his solely white racial identity “limited my engagement” in the co-curricular group. Feeling like “the exception”

as “the white boy” was not an extraordinary occurrence. Solomon alludes to the fact that this was a usual predicament that he found himself in. Usually, Solomon was “pretty passive about these kinds of comments” but, as he recounts a pivotal moment in his Economics class, he surprises himself by declaring, “No, I am Hispanic!” A surge of anger and frustration which he can no longer suppress takes over his body. Solomon expressed that he was tired of the neglect of his Latino identity. More than Latinos were obviously phenotypically Latino, he shared that he had to exert special efforts to assert his Latino identity. The consistent negligence of his Latino identity caused him great pain and irritation. Within the Latino racial rubric, he might be considered less than authentic. As a response to this assignment by others, he consciously shifted his place in the racial rubric by publicly vocalizing what he considered his rightful place within it. This moment of racial disclosure is one that weaves throughout the experiences of the participants I interviewed.

Racial disclosure is defined as the revelation of one’s racial identity, either in its entirety or partially. In the context of the Central University Multiracial participants, these moments of racial disclosure or “coming out” as a racial queer involved risk. As Solomon says,

I think there is a fear – people are too afraid to admit to being one race or another. I remember for a long time remembering that I didn’t want to admit that I was half-white, just because I would always get made fun of about it.

Whether it is teasing, taunting or an admittance that may be interpreted as a lack of loyalty to a given racial group or a superiority complex (attributed to feeling entitled or expressing the need to disclose that one is not “fully” one race or another), coming out as a racial queer can threaten one’s social position within a monoracial group or with monoracially identified individuals. Nicole describes her experiences when disclosing her racial queerness.

But I make it a point to let people know that I am biracial or mixed or whatever. People think that I think I’m superior, above them, and I don’t do it intentionally. I just don’t like people labeling me as one thing when I know I am more than that. So I make sure to let them know. So if they say, ‘Girl, you’re black.’ I say, ‘No, I’m Black and Hispanic.’ And, if they say, ‘Girl, you’re Mexican.’ I say, ‘No, I’m Hispanic and Black.’ But they just take it as, yeah, you think you’re this and that and I’m like well, okay, there’s nothing I can do about that. I’m sorry you feel this way.

Nicole suggests that claiming a Multiracial identity has been interpreted by others as considering oneself better than solely Black. Another way of saying this is that one compromises one’s racial loyalties by actively choosing not to identify as one race. Jonathan attributes the fear of racial disclosure to these types of societal pressures.

I think there are societal pressures to not necessarily accept that you are mixed race. Not in a negative way like it’s bad to be mixed but – that comes out in rare occasions when people use words like mutt or mixed breed or things like that to make people seem like animals, but I think there is positive action or will generated at people who are part of one group. It is sort of like a clan mentality – you’re part of our group, you’re one of us. So I think that if people establish multiple loyalties then there’s a fear that they will always be like a spy.

Racial disclosure means that you may have multiple racial loyalties. According to Jonathan's experiences, the establishment of multiple racial loyalties can mark you as a racial spy. Simply stated, coming out as a racial queer can have negative connotations in monoracial groups because you are seen as suspicious – why do you identify as more than one when you could just as easily identify with just one? Jonathan's thoughts regarding the positive association with being “part of one group” is further echoed by Betty Gutierrez who identifies as half white and half Mexican.

Rather than regarding racial disclosure as a place of fear, Betty suggests that a Multiracial or racially queer community, that is, a community of people who identify as more than one race, would allow Multiracial people to feel like they are “part of a group.” Betty articulates this suggestion in the following way.

People like to be in a group or community and they like feeling that sort of connection. I have mixed feelings about this. While I think it is good to be part of a community, I think there should be more dialogue among races. Identifying as Multiracial means that you are more stable. It's like you have already been through the identity process so you don't feel the need to identify as one or the other. When you're one or the other, you're not sure – it means that you don't know what to make of yourself. You are uncomfortable with one part or more comfortable with the other.

And while Betty acknowledges that group connection (or a sense of belonging) is something that people like, she seems to convey a desire for “more dialogue among races,” suggesting that it would be beneficial for people to also travel within and among different racial groups. Betty's suggestion that it is important to cross borders with regards to racial groups calls to mind Sandoval's (2000)

emphasis on the critical nature of embracing an accessible and trans disciplinary approach to the study of oppression that challenges and breaks through the “horizontal hostility” (p. 75) across academia. More importantly, Betty challenges the notion that identifying as one race when you are Multiracial is a sign of loyalty, authenticity and/or trustworthiness. On the contrary, she states that when you identify as just one, “it means that you don’t know what to make of yourself. You are uncomfortable with one part or more comfortable with another.” Betty suggests that identifying as Multiracial indicates a stronger sense of self as opposed to identifying monoracially. Betty’s choice to disclose her racial identity empowers her because she actively gets to decide how she will present her racial identity to others, when given the opportunity to do so. Yet, Betty’s suggestion may be quite a leap. As I have heard from other participants, identifying or being “outed” as Multiracial is sometimes not a personal choice. At times, others inadvertently “out” you.

Take three different participants’ examples of racial “outing.” For August Tolley, who identifies as half Filipina and half Black, she describes an experience where she is introduced as a Multiracial person through her friend.

My Asian identity pops out more because my Vietnamese friend who I now work with always introduces me as half-Filipina. She tells them. I don’t look Asian. I thought it was cute that she would say that. She takes that pressure off of me because she does it for me.

Because August “doesn’t look Asian,” she suggests that her Asian friend will introduce her as Asian (Filipina) to incorporate her into Asian social circles. In other words, August says she looks phenotypically black and therefore unless she or someone else “outs” her as part-Asian, the Asian part of her identity would be unknown. August considers it relieving to have this burden of disclosure removed with the unintentional help of her friend. However, August’s “outing” could be interpreted differently depending on who August is being introduced to and who is doing the introductions. If she is introduced to Asians, this scenario could be interpreted as a way of saying, “she’s just one of us,” not totally Black, thereby somehow easing the possible tension of her being solely Black. If she is introduced to Black social circles, the ready assertion that she is part Asian could be interpreted as a way of saying, “she’s mixed” and therefore not totally Black. This scenario could elicit a response from those that she is introduced to that she is uppity because of her choice to “out” herself as a racial queer (rather than just say that she is Black) and/or as somehow definitively setting herself apart as unique and different from someone who is solely Black.

For May Kongsangchai, who identifies as Mexican, Chinese, Thai and Italian, she is “outed” whenever her parents are present. Latino Critical Race Theory helps to inform the analysis of May’s experience because it provides a theoretical lens from which to analyze May’s intersecting identities. Critical to its use in the analysis of May’s experience, “LatCrit gives credence to critical raced-

gendered epistemologies that recognize students of color as holders and creators of knowledge” (p.107).

LatCrit is similar to CRT. However, LatCrit is concerned with a progressive sense of a coalitional Latina/Latino pan-ethnicity (Valdes et al., 2002), and it addresses issues often ignored by critical race theorists. I see LatCrit theory adding important dimensions to a critical race analysis. For example, LatCrits theorize issues such as language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality (Espinoza, 1990; Garcia, 1995; Hernández-Truyol, 1997; Johnson, 1997; Martinez, 1994; Montoya, 1994). LatCrits elucidates Latinas/Latinos’ multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression. (p.108)

While May is what I would term racially ambiguous (her racial identity is not obvious to an observer), her mother is phenotypically Mexican and her father is phenotypically Asian. As she recounts, just the mere presence of her Asian father gives her racial identity away.

When my dad used to come pick me up at school, then the whole issue of my Asianness – no one would ever see my dad and he was this Asian guy. People would of course ask me, am I Asian and it would come up again.

May and August don’t have to disclose their race in these contexts – it is done for them. While I explicitly used LatCrit to discuss May’s experience, its theoretical underpinnings are useful in situating many of the study’s participants because LatCrit validates students who “often feel as if their histories, experiences, cultures, and languages are devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal educational settings.”(p.106). Similarly, Asian Crit (Asian Critical Theory) also contributed to an understanding of May’s experience and may contribute to a better understanding of other Participants.

Critical Race scholarship has been critiqued for primarily focusing on the black-white racial paradigm, excluding Asian Americans and other racial minorities (Chang, 1993), contributing to “serious omissions” of the Asian American experience and thereby “ignoring the complexity of a racial hierarchy that has more than just a top and a bottom” (Chang, 1993, p.1267). Chang (1993) argues that an important tool in breaking this silence is the use of personal narrative. He notes that “narrative will allow us to speak our oppression into existence, for it must first be represented before it can be erased” (p.1267). Chang argues that there must be a “clearing [of] space” for the use of Asian American narratives. I argue that Multiracial experiences which incorporate Asian American experiences expand this space that Chang refers to by adding a nuanced perspective to the overall Asian American narrative. Additionally, Chang points out that in many cases, people do not believe that Asian Americans experience discrimination and this fact makes it difficult for Asian Americans to articulate such discrimination without hesitation or doubt.

From their perspective, since Asian Americans do not suffer from discrimination, I must be mistaken, deluded, or lying. And even if they believe my stories, they discount them as isolated incidents. (Chang, 1993, p.1274)

In the case of Lizzy Chu, who identifies as half white and half Chinese, the notion that Asian Americans do not experience discrimination leads her to

either pass as white and acquiesce to this notion or to call it for what it is – racism.

For Lizzy, racial disclosure is not simple. As for many of the participants I spoke with, she found herself in a situation where she could either choose to pass as white or disclose her full identity as white and Asian. As Lizzy tells it, she finds a moment of agency in calling out her classmate for a racial insult.

Yesterday, there was this one annoying Asian girl in my class. This white male friend next to me said, “Uh, I hate Chinese people.” I responded, “You know I am Chinese.” And then he said, “that’s too bad then.” I didn’t even know what to do. I decided I would never talk to him. Then, he came up to me and said “I am sorry, I don’t really hate Chinese people.” My mom said the next time I see him, I should say thanks for apologizing because that’s a step up. So, I did that and I felt really good about myself. I told him I didn’t appreciate those comments.

Lizzy’s choice to disclose her Chinese identity at this painful moment of insult is a bold one because she could have just as easily remained silent. Lizzy realizes that she risks ostracization and further insult by racially disclosing her Chinese identity. Yet, her facultad emerges in defense of her identity. When faced with her white male friend’s “that’s too bad then” comment, she is emotionally paralyzed. In this moment of racial shock, where Lizzy faces a challenging and painful encounter because of her race, she is shocked and does not verbally respond. Certainly, there are many phrases and comebacks that Lizzy later wishes she would have uttered, but in that moment of racial violence, Lizzy is caught off-guard and is unable to muster the energy to fend off such an attack. Lizzy’s experience reflects a running theme throughout the participants’ interviews which

all included incidents where they could choose to reveal or conceal their racial identity. Disclosing one's full/partial racial identity for these Multiracial students is not right or wrong. Rather, racial disclosure for these Multiracial students is consequential and emotive. The participants in my study, in all of their diverse experiences with racial disclosure, spoke to the inevitable consequences and emotions that these experiences produced.

I say inevitable consequences and emotions because acts of racial disclosure are spaces of authoring which are embedded with tradeoffs and subsequent feelings. The activities that Multiracial students engage in, whether it be asserting their Multiracial identity, passing as white, identifying monoracially, or a combination of all of these activities are not self-orchestrated. They are products of habitus, prior interactions, personal histories, societal norms and the like, which occur on a moment-to-moment basis. While racial disclosure can be something that is well contemplated and planned, generally, participants expressed the seeming spontaneity of coming out as racial queers. Depending on their relative power, status and privilege or their positional/relational identities in a given context, Multiracial students use their facultad to gauge their activities and the perceived level of risk in coming out as racial queers. Their activities in any given situation were mediated through the ways in which they felt either "comfortable or constrained" (Holland et al., 1998, p.127) relative but not limited

to others present, the nature of the space of the interaction and the series of voices that are simultaneously orchestrating within them.

### Identity Fusion

“There’s little way of being able to separate all of those identities out.” - Jonathan

The intersection of students’ identities with regards to language, class, religion, sexuality, gender, immigrant status and the like is evident in participants’ narratives. Jonathan’s statement that “there’s little way of being able to separate all of those identities out,” calls to mind tenets of Critical Race Theory.

According to the study participants’ narratives, race is undoubtedly a lived reality and their narratives illustrate counter-storytelling. Their counter-stories expose Multiracial experiences otherwise untold through the dominant monoracial lens. The participants’ counter-stories challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform. As Crenshaw (1991) notes, the intersectionality of identities that Jonathan points out refers to the dependent and interactive ways in which various socially and culturally constructed categories (such as race, class, sexuality, religion, gender, ability) interact on multiple levels to manifest themselves as inequality in society. Participants expressed, both directly and indirectly, the ways in which different aspects of their identities spoke to them and impacted their daily interactions. The consensus among them seemed to be that race was solely one factor that held meaning and had

repercussions on their lives. Jonathan Mubarak, raised this issue in the following way.

I think ethnicity is one factor in identity but I personally have decided that what needs to be worked on are issues, not just of race and ethnicity, but issues like gender and sexual orientation. I think these are other issues of discrimination that are out there and that need to be addressed. There's little way of being able to separate all of those identities out.

I refer to the inseparability and interconnectedness of identities as identity fusion – the amalgamation of socially constructed categories that are fused together, with potentially dangerous consequences should they be separated. The same way that an electrical fuse melts and/or breaks if the current exceeds a safe level, one's identity may melt or break if certain categories have a stronger surge of power than the others.

The concept of identity fusion clearly draws from Critical Race Theory which focuses on examining everyday lived experiences and specifically through intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996). Intersectionality, as earlier mentioned, refers to various socially and culturally constructed categories of discrimination that interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systematic social inequality. Intersectionality states that different forms of oppression perpetually interact with another and that social processes, racializing structures and social representations are shaped by different forms of oppression such as sexuality, immigrant status, nationality, race, gender, class and so forth. For the Participants in my study, the notion of intersectionality resonated loudly and most

expressed the ways in which these various identities/forms of oppression fused together in a way which was particularly salient with regard to their different racial identities and how each of these racial identities elicited assorted assumptions and presumptions about other facets of their identities (such as sexuality, immigrant status, nationality, race, gender, class, etc.).

Certainly, participants shared that some identities were more pronounced at times, but they also stressed the importance of balancing out identities and learning/delving into those identities which they may not have been as familiar with for whatever reasons. Participants consistently shared that while race was a dominant dimension of their identity, other dimensions of their identity also contributed to their daily lived experiences. For example, all of the female participants relayed individual accounts of their gendered identities; LGBTQ participants relayed individual accounts of the impact of their sexuality on their lives and overall identity; participants who grew up in poor communities recalled the ways in which class affected their identity production.

As participants shared their process of “coming out” as Multiracials, they identified other identities that were triggered simultaneous to their racial identity development. Jodi Farquar, who identifies as Black, Italian and Cherokee Indian, illustrated this provocation as she described an African American Leadership course at Central University.

I took an African American leadership class my freshman year and I learned that I like to extract social structures from things. Race and gender are very important to me. It was predominantly a black class, the teacher was black and she was stern, feminist. There were lots of athletes in the class. I am in my own world and I realized I have to think outside of the box. I am starting to pick up on things that I didn't have to think about before and helping me form my own identity.

Jodi's experience in an African American themed course with a Black feminist professor influenced her thinking on race and gender and specifically raised issues about her sexuality.

Directly following this description, I sensed that we were entering somewhat uncomfortable and perhaps, uncharted, territory. As a relatively seasoned academic and personal counselor to many undergraduate students, I could detect these moments quite quickly, especially after piecing together different aspects of Jodi's particular history and life experiences. Jodi was raised in a fundamentalist Christian family which emphasized the importance of a traditional (heterosexual) family and orthodox gender roles. Additionally, as a competitive student athlete, Jodi's family instilled a strict sense of discipline and bodily strength and control. Because of Jodi's outstanding performance in athletics, she was consistently featured in relatively high profile venues such as newspapers, television and radio. Jodi's public visibility required her to fashion an image of a "good girl" that was athletically gifted. Jodi was very sensitive to others' perceptions of her, especially her parents' opinions. As the child of divorce parents, she sought the approval of both her father and mother and was an

ultimate people-pleaser. Her complex identity was highly informed by what she perceived as her public persona. I assumed that Jodi's main struggle was her racial identity as a Multiracial Black student athlete. My focus was on Jodi's "coming out" as a Multiracial woman. What I did not expect was that she might come out as a lesbian.

I find myself trying to veer away from different things because I am afraid of it. What I really want is to find out who I am. It's a long process since senior high school. I have been questioning who I am. It's difficult and it's there. I am trying to avoid things that might have been wrong for my family – no, Jodi would never feel this way. I am a changed woman and I will keep changing. I keep lying to myself and avoid situations and then I find myself knowing that I have to deal with it. It's like competing with my own self. I don't know how to explain it – I'll just leave it at that.

As a counselor, I knew what she was telling me. One aspect of intuition that Delgado Bernal (1998) discusses is professional training as a source of experience and intuition. My academic and professional foundation as a public school teacher of diverse students and my career focus on first-generation, low income and traditionally under-represented students in various roles (university administrator at two flagship institutions, educational manager and participant for a major educational non-profit organization and K-16 instructor) has prepared and sensitized me to the various issues and needs of developing youth. The professional aspect of my positionality strengthens and enables the analysis of my work because it has made me especially conscientious around students' strengths, challenges and overall needs. Similar to the common bind that I had always found

myself in as an educator/counselor, as a researcher, I was also uncertain of my parameters. Would I entertain this conversation – was it appropriate? I took my cue from her – “I’ll just leave it at that,” and so did I. Later I learned that she was, in fact, in a committed relationship with another woman. What I took from this exchange was that at the precipice of each discovery of racial identity, there are also other identity cliffs from which to jump off. Jonathan’s words resonate here – “there’s little way of being able to separate all of those identities out.”

For Angie Walters, who identifies as Filipina and Black, her narrative is intertwined with her multiple identities as a poor, non-English speaking, Multiracial immigrant from the Philippines. I draw on Asian American Critical Race Theory to analyze Angie’s experience as a Multiracial woman. Liu (2009) describes the value of using a Critical Race Theory framework to better understand Asian Americans’ educational experiences.

A CRT framework provides a situational context for exploring the impact of race and ethnicity on students’ self-image and interactions with others, which is fundamental to better understanding Asian Americans’ educational experiences. Recognizing the salience of race, ethnicity, and racism in daily life is a key component of what Osajima (2007) describes as developing an Asian American critical consciousness, which he notes is similar to the Freirean notion of “conscientization” (p. 61). In his study, Osajima finds that the process of developing critical consciousness is a transformative one “where knowledge of and commitment to Asian American concerns represented a significant change from earlier views [students] had held in their lives” (p. 63). For the students interviewed, conscientization was a social process that involved discovering greater meaning of their lives as Asian Americans within larger historical and social conditions, connecting their own experiences to a larger collective identity, and transforming their

deeper self-understanding into practice and activism. (p.120)

How Angie's Filipina identity informs her Multiracial identity and the development of her own Asian American critical consciousness. Angie discusses the evolution of her racial and ethnic identity as a young girl growing up poor in the outskirts of Manila and her transition to the United States as a light-skinned, non-native English speaking Black woman from the Philippines. On the outset, Angie might appear as a Black woman attending college, yet, as I learned from her narrative, her story is much more complex. While Angie navigates her educational experience in college as a Filipina woman, she also negotiates her experience as a Black woman. Together, as a Multiracial college student at a predominantly white institution, Angie's experiences are anything but homogeneous. As Liu (2009) astutely notes in her review of Asian Crit literature, we must avoid othering Asian Americans by simplifying their experiences as model minorities and one dimensional people.

The literature likewise details the complexities of interpreting and negotiating the racial and cultural demands of identity development, family relations, college access and retention, campus racial climate, and invisibility in education policies. Like Yu (2006), Ng, Lee, and Pak (2007) agree that hegemonic narratives of Asian American successes are "highly political and manufactured" for ideological purposes and that such representation ultimately undermines the diversity of Asian American experiences (p. 119). Additionally, using educational parity as a measure for lack of discrimination can be misleading and harmful to the interests of Asian Americans. As Ng, Lee, and Pak (2007) state, "More nuanced understandings of race and racializations in education are needed to see the real experiences of Asian American students as they negotiate inequitable and discriminatory social structural conditions. This understanding is

critical to seeing Asian Americans in their full complexity and diversity and to avoid essentialist notions of culture that feed into an Othering discourse” (p. 122).

From an Asian Crit perspective, Angie is up against the model minority myth which renders Asian Americans as homogenous, invisible and in sharp contrast with other groups of color. Such representations tend to over simplify the very nuanced and diverse Asian American population and in that process, also position Asian Americans as an ideal minority group in comparison to “other” groups of color.

Yu notes that most egregiously, the model minority rhetoric over-generalizes about the extremely diverse Asian American population and ignores its multiple voices. Furthermore, it pits Asian American minorities against other minorities, such as African Americans and Latinos, thereby serving the socio-political interests of White elites and their larger purpose of maintaining a racial hierarchy. The perception of model minority success also tends to render Asian Americans invisible because of the misguided belief that it is somehow unnecessary to consider their educational needs or issues. (p.123)

None of Angie’s identities are entities onto themselves, rather, they all depend upon one another and interact with one another in her consideration of her Multiracial identity. Angie’s experience illustrates the impact of intersectionality on her daily lived experiences. The intersection of her Black, Filipina, socioeconomic, national, rural and educational identities fused together to shape her overall experiential knowledge and sense of self. Angie explains the origins of her racial identification.

Now, I identify as a Black American and Filipina. When I was younger, I was leaning more toward being Filipina. It's changed now because I am learning more. I grew up with my Filipina mom in the Philippines so that was all I knew – those were my surroundings. I grew up on the outskirts of Manila. The town was small – the majority of the people who live there are poor. I went to a public school. If you were rich, you went to a private school. If you were half American, like I am, you were expected to go to a private school because American equates to rich. I didn't have that because my father, who is Black American, did not support us while we were in the Philippines. Looking back, we were poor. But, at the time, we were considered middle class. You don't know you're poor until you have something else to compare it to.

In Angie's case, her identification with her economic class is directly connected with her racial and national identity as the daughter of a Filipina woman and an African American man. Furthermore, Angie goes on to say that language or rather, her accent, interrupts people's racial perceptions of her. Angie's membership in a "developing" formerly colonized country adds yet another dimension to her ethnic, linguistic and cultural experience. I use the term "developing" because of its implications both globally and on a daily interactional level. "Developing" implies inferiority to a "developed" country and assumes a desire on the "developing" country's part to aspire to Western "developed" countries and their norms. Theoretically, this same argument of "development" could be applied to identity production where the ultimate goal in the United States is for everyone to "develop" an "American" identity that is homogeneous and free of "foreign" characteristics, such as language, customs and traditions. Angie points to the tension that she feels as a Multiracial woman from a "developing" country.

When I first came here, I didn't speak English fluently. I spoke with an accent and people didn't know what to make of me and that bothered them. They couldn't understand what I was. It bothers people. The what are you question comes up and then the bothered look. And I am like, why should I tell you?

Revisiting DeeDee's concept of the racial rubric, Angie attests that because her accent does not fall neatly into a category within the Black racial rubric, "it bothers people." Her accent, fused with her mocha colored skin and petite frame interrupts such categories and leaves people confused, even upset.

May Kongsangchai echoes these sentiments when she discusses the way in which language operates in her identity formation. May connects knowledge of language to having a right to be a part of a culture. In her words,

Language plays a huge role in my identity. I know I feel more out of place going to Thailand than to Mexico. Even in Mexico I feel out of place. I speak Spanish there, but I get nervous. I get ashamed that I have a Texas accent. Language helps – it's the basis for communicating to that culture. So if I don't have that, I don't deserve to be part of that culture.

In other words, language is inseparable from her cultural/racial identification.

Similarly, Betty Gutierrez, explores the ways in which gender and race fuse for her.

One of the main reasons I majored in Women and Gender Studies is because I feel it would be more acceptable for me to talk about or question gender issues rather than racial issues. I can't pinpoint why. I just feel that it is more acceptable for guys to talk to race and not to gender and women to talk about gender and exclude race. I know that there are intersections but for me it's so complicated and confusing what it means to be a Multiracial woman. It's something I'm trying to work out. The fact that my sister has had anorexia for about fifteen years. That's perceived as a white disorder. So that has always complicated how I see her. She has always tried to connect to her Mexican side but since she is a woman with

a disorder, this has influence the way I think about my own gender and ethnicity.

Race can not be compartmentalized, just as Multiraciality can not be compartmentalized. There are limits to this study's scope and so while the focus is on Multiraciality, I also acknowledge and try to bring to bear that it does not operate in a vacuum. This is significant because I don't want to give the false impression that being Multiracial operates outside of the intersectionality of other identities. Quite the contrary, there is a dynamic relationship between Multiraciality and other salient identifications.

### Multiracial Entitlement

“I felt more entitled to the [Multiracial] label.” - May

Participants expressed their feelings of entitlement and/or pride in their Multiracial identity. By entitlement, I refer to an iteration of racial rubric, except that, in this case, while Multiracial students challenged and, in some ways, resented the monoracial rubric, in many ways, they seemed to be setting up their own categorizations of Multiracial authenticity. Who is Multiracial? Isn't everyone Multiracial? Who gets to “qualify” as Multiracial? These are questions that were raised throughout my conversations with participants. As May declares, “so, are you Multiracial just because you think you are?” Race is a social construction after all – does Multiraciality just add to this or is it a legitimate

identity and who gets to be the judge of that nomination? The theme of Racial Floating/Multiracial Entitlement originated with May's discussion of a close friend of hers – one who wanted to claim that she was Multiracial but, in May's eyes, did not meet the requirements for such an identification.

Once in a college class, we had to do our final project on identity. My friend, Tara, told me she was Multiracial too because she found some distant French relative. I was angry because she didn't go through what I went through. I don't know if it's bad that I want to close off the Multiracial category but I don't consider her Multiracial at all. I guess I think of it this way. If an Italian lives in Thailand, would he be Thai and I guess the answer is yes because it's part of his culture but with Tara, French is not part of her culture. She never experienced racism or judgment because of her distant French relative. I think experiencing racism is part of the Multiracial experience. I am Chinese but I don't really claim that term because I am not familiar with the culture at all. This is weird. To me, Tara was trying to claim this term that I barely found out about, that helps me describe myself and what I've been through my whole life. Multiraciality is something she felt she could only claim through her lineage rather than her experience, her exposure. I felt more entitled to the label than she was. That's what my thought was.

May passionately expressed her anger and frustration regarding her friend's attempt to claim Multiracial identity as her own. While May has ethnically ambiguous features and a name that solicits questions and confusion from outsiders, Tara, her friend, had always identified as Latina. May suggested that Tara was only claiming Multiracial identity as a way of being trendy or unique, when, to May, Tara had no real sense of the meaning or implications of Multiracial identity. For Tara, however, Multiracial identity was laden with meaning, emotions and self-definition. Multiracial identity was not an identity to

claim lightly. Multiracial entitlement, then, is a person's belief that he or she is entitled to claim Multiracial identity as a result of one's distinct daily lived experiences, both positive and negative, rather than solely based on one's lineage. The key here is that specific experiences link you to Multiracial identity. By specific experiences, I don't mean to imply that there are essentialist benchmark experiences that all Multiracial students face. Rather, to claim Multiracial identity, May suggests that, to some extent, a certain Multiracial facultad and consciousness must be present. Multiracial pride emerges from this sense of entitlement, and is demonstrated through one's satisfaction or joy with making that claim.

Oftentimes this claim is couched in an "American" identity – a theme which resonated throughout the participant interviews. Participants expressed that their Multiracial identity was uniquely American and felt a particular affinity toward identifying as such. I use "uniquely American" as a reference to the popular and often misguided notion of Americanness as a symbol of heterogeneity and freedom to be who you want to be. Participants expressed that, in many ways, their Multiracial identity represented the American ideal of a so-called "melting pot" and emblem of universality and broad diversity. And while this sentiment arose in different forms, as I will illustrate through their responses, the notion of being American (living in the U.S., being born or raised in the U.S.

or having a parent who was born in the U.S.) was a source of pride and personal power. May was one of the first participants to express this sentiment.

And I pride myself in being American. I consider the person who immigrated here yesterday and is working here, American. I don't know where to draw the line. We're all immigrants basically. I overheard a conversation where a girl was saying that immigration is taking over our American culture and our language. I shut up. I didn't say anything because I could offend her. It offended me when she said that. Who cares, I guess? I don't think immigration is a problem. I think we should help them – who are we to kick them out? I say I'm American when I'm in other countries. In Mexico, my family values that I'm an American more than if I was born in Mexico. I'm up on that pedestal when I am in Mexico.

When I'm in Thailand, being an American excuses me from a lot of things. For example, I'm more outspoken – I don't have to be submissive. I embrace that I'm American in that way. They don't understand what the term American means. American represents power, money, success. They see it as a way to provide for family, gain power, that sort of thing. Me being from here – they want it. I know with me it's comfort for them to know that I don't need to fit perfectly into their culture – they can't understand me because I'm American, it's a protection. So if I do something weird or un-Mexican or un-Thai they can't judge me for it. They are in the wrong and I am in the right. It protects me from them judging me, them making me feel bad about myself. It mentally puts me in a box.

May's family associates Americanness to “power, money, success” and “protection” or perhaps, a dispensation (also a privilege) from adhering to behaviors and/or customs that are viewed as authentic to that race or culture. May seems to suggest that her Multiracial identity allows her to float between cultures almost as if Americanness equates to an ambiguous state of being – as if Americanness is defined as the crevices between the racial rubric category lines.

Some participants specifically used the word “float” to describe their experiences in, out and among their Multiracial identity.

Melissa stated that she “could racially float” between the white community and communities of color. This “floating” meant that she “had the automatic respect of the minority community but if I were having an argument with someone who was a minority, I became white.” Nicole, in discussing a specific experience as Multiracial college student, also refers to this notion of floating.

I don’t want to say I’m discriminating against the Hispanic community but I float towards the Black community. I mean it’s just natural because that was the environment that I grew up in. I mean I have Mexican friends up here [at Central U], but I just don’t hang out too much with them. It’s predominantly the Black community.

I’ve always found it funny that I would click with my Black friends more so than I would with my Mexican friends. But then I was really close to my Mexican side of the family and not my Black side. That’s a really good question, maybe it’s a psychological thing or something. But I know that two of my very best friends are the girls that know me, I mean, know me, know me – they’re Mexican. But most of my friends are Black.

Nicole states that she floats toward the Black community while recognizing that the friends that really know her on a deeper level are Mexican. Racial floating takes on the image of freely fluctuating from community to community. Racial floating also conjures up an image of buoying right above the surface of the racial waters – calm but risky, always moving with ebbs and flows of each situation, albeit gently at times and more intensely at others. Angie uses her

Americanness/Multiraciality to assert a certain more prestigious status. Angie claims that many of her insecurities come from her identification as “half and half.” In her words, she recounts her experience as a young child growing up in the Philippines.

Just because I’m half-Black, I am that thing you can pick on but when they realized I was American, they don’t look on you because it has prestige. I would my Americanness known. Kids were curious about me because they thought I had money. Everyone was befriending me because of this.

Yet, ironically, Angie immediately recounts the way that this “American” power only existed for her outside of the U.S. context. When she immigrated to the U.S., she was sorely disappointed – here she was no longer considered American, at least, not in the way that she was in the Philippines. She was now an immigrant, an ESL student, a Black girl.

I remember crying a lot because of the teasing. My small, tiny cousin would always stand up for me. My mom would say, once we come to the States, it’s not going to be like this. And when I came here, it did stop, but other problems came. I didn’t fit in like I thought I would. As a child, you have this naïve state of mind that you will befriend everyone. I wasn’t aware that there was racism in America. I thought it was diverse from stories I heard and TV images. I thought I would fit in perfectly because I was Black American.

Angie recalls the engrained mythological images and aspirations of life in the United States when she resurrects her mother’s words, “once we come to the States, it’s not going to be like this.” Angie, following cues from stories she had heard and television images, assumes and dreams of the welcoming climate that

she and her family will encounter in the United States. Angie is left disillusioned when she realizes that racism exists in America and that racism is particularly targeted at Black Americans. Angie noted, with a deep sadness in her voice, that “when I came here, [the teasing] did stop, but other problems came.” These other problems involved her positionality as a Black/Filipina Multiracial female, a non-native speaker of English with a heavy accent, a daughter of divorced parents, the product of a military marriage and a member of a low income household. As Angie tells it, she thought she would “fit in perfectly because [she] was Black American.” Little did she know that she had traded one source of social outcasting for another. Being American and acting American would continue to try her resilience.

Ladybug addressed the family tension which resulted from her “acting American,” as her father would put it. On the one hand, being American was seen negatively in her father’s eyes while also serving as a tool of manipulation and power against her father, should she choose to utilize it that way. Her father, a Nigerian immigrant, and her mother, a white U.S. born citizen would fight over their fear that their daughter might be taking on American ways.

My dad would always, but my mom doesn’t talk about race or anything. He would always tell me I was Nigerian. He would say, like you’re NOT American or don’t act like your mother. Usually it was in the context of cooking and cleaning. Act American means not being able to cook. I don’t think I’ve ever told my dad, he’s always pushed me to – this is what Nigerians do. I could never spend the night at someone else’s house and so when I came here (college) and realized that happened to other people,

I was like oh! So, yeah, that's like what Americans do, not Nigerians, so I could never do that.

Ladybug's father equated Americanness to laziness, insubordination, inappropriate gender roles and a direct affront to Nigerian culture. "Acting American" implicated Ladybug as a "bad daughter," and when she arrived at Central University, she joined a Nigerian student community that shared the same values. To adhere to her father's Nigerian standards, Ladybug became sensitized to "what Nigerians do" and veered away from engaging in activities that "Americans do." For Ladybug, she can only operate in a monoracial figured world. A Multiracial figured world is not an option for Ladybug because such a world would severely collide with the values that she and her father espouse.

Perhaps May sums up part of the sense of racial floating, Americanness and Multiracial entitlement well when she says that "It's like battling with yourself. I would ask myself which one am I more like? I can say Mexican but that would cut off the whole Asian side of me and I think they interlink."

Participants felt proud, torn, and entitled to their Multiracial identity.

#### Development of Portraits/Narratives

It is important to discuss the development of the portraits of racial queers from beginning to end prior to addressing the thematic aspects which I will explore in the next chapter. The narratives are not fully verbatim from the

Participants. I could have chosen to present the interviews exactly as they were communicated (my questions/comments followed by Participants' responses/comments), however I felt strongly that presenting them in this manner would be dull, failing to bring the Participants' stories to life. And while the narratives are not fully verbatim, they are based heavily on the order, manner and words which Participants relayed to me in the course of interviewing them. I constructed these narratives in first-person in order to humanize the participants (rather than refer to them objectively in third person) and to engage the reader through vivid, emotive and poignant depictions of the participants' stories. Primarily, I added transitional phrases, corrected grammatical errors and enhanced the conversational style to the Participants' stories so as to create a flow that was easy to follow (unlike the interruptive nature of an interview which tends to go in different directions and abruptly so at times). Aside from that, I used the exact language that the Participants used. Throughout this narrative construction process, I was cognizant of my own positionality as researcher and how my positionality and my own narrative would intertwine with the Participants' narratives as well as with my choice of case studies. As Stake (2000) notes,

Even when empathic and respectful of each person's realities, the researcher decides what the case's *own story* is, or at least what will be included in the report. More will be pursued than was volunteered. Less will be reported than was learned. Even though the competent researchers will be guided by what the case somehow indicates is most important, even though patrons, other researchers, and those researched will advise, what is necessary for an understanding of the case will be decided by the

researcher. What results may be the case's own story, but the report will be the researcher's dressing of the case's own story. This is not to dismiss the aim of finding the story that best represents the case but to remind the reader that, usually, the researcher ultimately decides criteria of representation. (p.441)

My telling of the cases' stories are my own representations of their stories.

I chose these five specific case studies for three main reasons: 1) together, the case studies highlighted the diversity of and similarities among Participants' varying Multiracial combinations, 2) the Participants' voices particularly resonated with my facultad which, in turn, developed into an intrinsic need for me to further learn about the case and 3) each brought something fresh or new to the study that I felt was ripe for an assortment of interpretations. In choosing these five case studies, I wanted to choose Participants that, in my mind, would maximize the learning potential of those exposed to the study itself. The case studies I chose often did reflect a common theme that weaved throughout the twenty five interviewees. In fact, I primarily used the actual language of these Participants to name the themes that arose from the data. Simultaneously, the case studies I chose also possessed an authorial voice that captivated me and that, from my vantage point, offered a compelling story.

After utilizing the data to construct the first person narratives, I shared them with the case study Participants and asked for feedback regarding the integrity of the storytelling. The narratives followed a conversational style and followed both issues that were unique to the case study and representative of the

larger data set of interviews. The narratives systematically attempted to address Multiracial students' "coming out" stories as racial queers and highlighted the Participants' improvisational activity within the figured world of Multiraciality. The narratives illustrated the lived experiences of Multiracial college students in this study and I aimed to convey the Participants' counter-stories and their particular ways of knowing and understanding their experiences. I chose to present the Participants' stories as narratives because I believe that they best capture the particular time, space and relationships specific to the Participant at the time of the interview. I would have liked to tell as complete of a story as possible but as Stake (2000) notes,

Many a researcher would like to tell the whole story but of course cannot; the whole story exceeds anyone's knowing, anyone's telling. Even those inclined to tell all find strong the obligation to winnow and consolidate. A continuum runs from telling lots to telling nothing. The holistic researcher, like the single-issue researcher, must choose. (p.441)

I don't pretend to tell "the whole story" of these particular cases, just the cases as I was best able to relay them through my own set of subjectivities.

## Discussion

The interview data from this study illustrate the diverse ways in which participants understood and experienced their Multiracial identities in their everyday interactions with others, in relation to their own self-perceptions and in response to the way others perceive them to be. Issues of positionality, power,

privilege, phenotype and status were raised through concepts that emerged from the participants' own words: racial rubric, racial disclosure, identity fusion and Multiracial entitlement.

### Agency

Participants utilized their personal agency to construct and negotiate their identities by developing “new scripts” which fall outside of the monoracial rubric and similarly, create categories/rules for a new Multiracial rubric wherein racial authenticity (the notion that consistently irked them) is ironically adopted even within their own Multiracial figured world. Participants are positioned as racial queers, both as outsiders to the monoracial storyline and unique members of a racial borderland or third space where they are “neither”, “either”, “both”, “other” and /or “none of the above.” In the figured world of Multiraciality, we are introduced to participants' situational contexts (with family, fellow peers, strangers, educators, etc.). We see the way that they are positioned in certain ways which procure varying levels of power, privilege or status depending on how they relate to themselves and how others relate to them.

Specific moments in the lives of participants indicate a space of authoring, where they utilize their intuition to engage in improvisational activity (such as passing, disclosing, resisting, challenging) which oftentimes breaks from the typical monoracial storyline. As Holland et al. (1998) note, “the authoring self is

invisible to itself,” therefore I do not suggest that participants necessarily act in conscientious efforts to assert agency, but, rather that, in their figured world, one is always “in a state of being ‘addressed’ and in the process of ‘answering’” (p.169). In other words, their identities are formed through a “continuing flow of activity” (p.173) which is “heteroglossic, a cacophony of different languages and perspectives” (p.182). Participants, as they recounted their stories, did not lead me to believe that they premeditated acts of resistance to challenge monoracial storylines, rather, their experiences and *facultad*, led them to negotiate daily experiences in insightful ways, guided by the compass-like utility of *facultad*. Alison refers to a sentiment that is somewhat intangible, something that “you have to think about in order to feel.” Similar to most of the Participants in the study, Alison alludes to a variation on the notion of *facultad*.

I feel like I have a lot of insight. It gives me so much more to think about, almost like meaning because I can feel for all different kinds of people. I can identify with two things which in turn helps me identify with more things. This has made me more compassionate. I love volunteering, helping those that aren't as fortunate as me. When I was a freshman in HS, I volunteered at a place that mainly helped Hispanic and Black children and one of my white friends started making fun of them and it infuriated me. This has made me more accepting – that is one extra thing that I have. I enjoy being both, it's exotic and interesting. Any time that you have any kind of minority in you, you are going to have compassion, more compassion – not about everything but definitely around certain issues. I feel this unspoken connection. I don't know if other people feel it but it's something you have to think about in order to feel.

Alison states that this sentiment is “almost like meaning,” something that makes her “more compassionate” and “more accepting” toward others. “I feel this

unspoken connection,” says Alison. This unspoken connection could be interpreted as the “instant sensing, a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning” (p.60) that Anzaldúa (1989) refers to when explaining the meaning of *facultad*. Marie’s words also echo this unspoken connection,

I think being biracial [Mexican and Italian] has made me really think about my place, or how I’m involved in the community. I ended up becoming a Mexican-American Studies major and my passion is to work in education and build the Latino youth into an educational force in higher education. Still, my personal involvement in campus Chicano struggles weren’t always identified with the Chicano struggle. Like I never joined MeCha or the Latino Unity Council or any solely Mexican-identified groups. I think because of being biracial it gave me a broader sensibility, that maybe it’s not just about working in isolation as a Chicana but maybe working in lots of different communities so that other Chicanos can also integrate and work in other communities.

The “broader sensibility” which Marie refers to also calls to mind Anzaldúa’s (1989) notion of *facultad* because Marie implies that her Multiracial identity presents a “shift in perception [which] deepens the way we see concrete objects and people” (p.61). Marie asserts that she is able to see beyond monoracial student group organizations to build coalitions to increase integration in her community work. In this way, Marie’s *facultad*, while in a way kept her from identifying with Chicano struggles, she felt personally proud of her efforts to reach across racial lines in furthering socially just efforts.

*Facultad* allowed the Participants to navigate in a borderland racial space, often producing feelings of both inner tension and personal satisfaction in their uniqueness. “Tension grips the inhabitants of the borderlands like a virus,”

Anzaldúa affirms. Simultaneously, the tension that racial queerness produces also yields a distinct realization of a powerful insight into the hearts and minds of others. As Amber notes, she “switches up” her behavior in different contexts and while, frustrating, there is also a sense of agency because of her ability to connect with both her Black and white identities.

I think it was difficult in high school. I wasn't black enough for black people and too ethnic for white people. I didn't really have a place. In college, you have to find a place – there was no middle ground here. That's where I really found my black identity so I guess that's why I began connecting to blackness. When I got here, I was clueless. I had mostly white friends, went to a white church. When I got to college, I went to a lock-in and made a few friends, joined a black bible study. That became my circle and they were all black. They were the first people to teach me how to fix my hair.

I got made fun of a lot. My roommates taught me how to straighten my hair, wrap my hair at night. Black church was interesting – longer and louder. All very new. It was kind of comforting because I felt like I had a place where I finally belonged. At the same time, I felt like I was learning how to act but at the same time, it got more confusing. I would have to do more changing of my personality. I had to switch up my actions when I was with my white grandparents and then with my black grandparents. I became closer to my black family because I could connect more with them. I know that at my white grandparents' house we will eat on good China, listen to classical music, discuss current events, play a game afterwards. At my black grandparents, it's loud, buffet-style, football game, come as you go type of thing. I have to explain the difference if I bring a guy over.

I wouldn't want to trade who I am for anything. I love having both experiences, both cultures, so many different experiences. I still feel like I haven't quite found my place. I've evened out now but I really haven't found exactly who I am. I know that sounds cliché – that's contributed to the fact that I am Multiracial and I have lots of family surrounding me. There are differing values and in trying to please both sides, I tell my families different things. I'm constantly playing a little game. I can't ever be exactly who I am so I never know who I am.

The “little game” that Amber engages in is played in a racial borderland, in a “middle ground,” but within the confines of Central University, Amber “wasn’t black enough for black people and too ethnic for white people. I didn’t really have a place. In college, you have to find a place – there was no middle ground here.” Amber’s facultad allowed her to navigate both worlds of college and home and of Black and white.

Jodi, who identifies as Black, Native American, Italian, Portuguese and French also speaks to the concept of facultad. Jodi details her experiences at Central University.

I took an African American leadership class my freshman year and I learned that I like to extract social structures from things. Race and gender are very important to me. It was predominantly a black class, the teacher was black and she was stern, feminist. There were lots of athletes in the class. I am in my own world and I realized that I have to think outside of my own box. I am starting to pick up on things that I didn’t have to think about before and helping me form my own identity.

I find myself trying to veer away from different things because I am afraid of it. What I really want is to find out who I am. It’s a long process since senior high school. I have been questioning who I am. It’s difficult and it’s there. I am trying to avoid things that might have been wrong for my family – no Jody would never feel this way. I am a changed woman and I will keep changing. I keep lying to myself and avoid situations and then I find myself knowing that I have to deal with it. It’s like competing with my own self. I don’t know how to explain it – I’ll just leave it at that.

I have just recently begun to think about my multiracial identity. In high school, I had to stretch myself in multiple ways and now that I see that others have the same struggles, I identify as a Multiracial woman. I had never thought about it that way. I’ve met a lot of multiracial people in college. In high school, my best friend was also black, white and Indian. Now, I find myself meeting more and more multiracial people. It’s still a rarity. People don’t really identify as Multiracial even if they look it.

We always got the what are you question and we'd roll our ways. When we went to the beach, she was darker and nappier than me. People would ask her why are you at the beach? Like black people aren't supposed to go to the beach or something. It's those little things that go a long way.

Being multiracial makes me more unique than other people. Its negative because I haven't been able to fully relate to all of my racial identities except Italian. In my AfrAm class, I said I was multiracial. When I would speak up in class, I would have to reiterate that I am black and that I understand what they are talking about. I cant' just go to a group of African Americans without getting a weird look. I always get the no you're not from them especially because they think they know – you have to have some part of you like the nose and the hair. Well do you want to go look up my DNA? It was intimidating at first. I have that in me. I have hade experiences and my dad too but it's annoying because I find myself always having to explain myself.

The football players are attracted to her because she is a big white woman. No white guys look at her because she is the skinny type. I kind of understand what she is going through but it's weird that she is going through that. No, they could like you. The languages of different people are so different. Being a multiracial I have an understanding of every part and an ignorance of other people. She doesn't understand. I understand her and I understand the guys.

One of my close friends is black and is on my team and she accepted me. The first thing she asked me was, are you black? That usually doesn't happen but it was cool that it did. She converses about being black all the time. She'll make comments – why am I on the back of the plane? We don't talk about race much because not many people understand how I am. But no one is my mix and can relate to me not really understanding who I am.

Jodi's reflections illustrate both the inner tension and the personal satisfaction that she feels in regards to her Multiracial identity . Her facultad provides her with a unique sensitivity, what she terms as an “understanding of every part and an ignorance of other people.” This calls to mind Anzaldúa's (1989) notion of the *new mestiza* who “copes by developing a tolerance for

contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity” (p.101). Jodi also refers to a new awareness that assists her in finding her own space and in navigating the production of her own identity. Jodi states, “I am in my own world and I realized that I have to think outside of my own box. I am starting to pick up on things that I didn’t have to think about before and helping me form my own identity.” This notion of “thinking outside the box” and “start[ing] to pick up on things that I didn’t have to think about before” imply that Jodi now sees things that are beyond the surface, “the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface” (Anzaldúa, 1989, p.60). Jodi suggests that this new awareness or facultad has been in development for some time. She states that she has “just recently begun to think about my multiracial identity.” However, she also recalls that “in high school, I had to stretch myself in multiple ways and now that I see that others have the same struggles, I identify as a Multiracial woman.” When Jodi states that she “had to stretch” herself in high school, she refers to her need and ability to access different racial groups on campus in an attempt to find a group to fit into.

These activities/actions of negotiation became common sense practices. As Holland et al. (1998) note, “identities constitute an enduring and significant aspect of history-in-person, history that is brought to current situations” (p.65). In this process, participants illustrate the way in which their “authorial stance, a voice that over time speaks categorically and/or orchestrates the different voices

in roughly comparable ways,” (p.182) is established. The behaviors that comprise this authorial stance become “habituated, fossilized in Vygotsky’s terms, automatic” (p.190).

By the same token, I acknowledge that participants are not passive actors. Their experiences indicate that their Multiracial identities “bump up against one another,” (p.238) creating crevices of space that are “arenas of play” (p.238). Yamina, who identifies as Mexican and Algerian, explains how her Multiracial identity gives her the power to “not be compartmentalized in any way.”

Here at Central U, people approach race differently. In high school, everyone blends in and race is not really discussed. At my school, they lived up to Hispanic stereotypes. Here, it is so amazing how much diversity is encouraged and celebrated. That was the first thing I noticed. The emphasis is diversity and I love people and I’ve always wanted to live in a big city. I was proud to be half here – it was different even among so much difference. It’s really refreshing to see people proud of their background. Different but a lot better.

I think there are groups of students who still hold on to their group dynamics that they learned growing up. But I’ve been very careful about giving off the impression that I want to be compartmentalized that way. I tend to flock to people who see things the way I do. A lot of my friends are open to all sorts of backgrounds. The whole segregating type of thing – I steer clear from that.

I draw particular attention to Yamina’s newfound pride in “being half here” because “it was different even among so much difference.” In other words, her Multiracial identity gave her a sense of uniqueness that allowed her stand out in a crowd which she already considered diverse. This ownership of her identity increased her confidence, enough so that she began to consciously be “very

careful about giving off the impression that I want to be compartmentalized that way.” Yamina utilized her agency to shape and craft her own space where she could identify as fluidly and openly as she deemed appropriate or comfortable.

Similarly, August who identifies as Filipina and Black, expresses that she feels as if she has “a bit more freedom” with her actions because of her biraciality.

Black folks will say that I sound like a white girl. I get put off because I don’t act Black and talk Black. I am not your stereotypical Black person. I just see that stuff as stereotypes of Black people. The majority of Blacks acts a certain way so we are all expected to act that way. Every now and then. My dad once told me on the phone that I sound like a white girl and I was like okay. Once a friend of mine called the house and told me the same thing. I don’t like that stereotype. It’s dumb. I usually brush it off. I don’t follow any particular stereotype. I just like that I am different. I don’t follow the stereotype of listening to Black music – I actually like rock music. For a lot of my actions, I think I have a bit more freedom because of my biraciality. I wonder how different parts of me come from, either my mom or dad. Like, when I mispronounce things, I think my mom is rubbing off on me because even though her English is pretty good, she has an accent. She also does this thing where she goes back and forth between English and Tagalog. She has been here for about fifteen years. My mom is very Americanized.

August attributes her “freedom” to not follow any particular stereotype, pursue art as a major and her overall “awkwardness” that she prides herself in, to her biraciality. It is oftentimes challenging for outsiders to categorize her racially because she “doesn’t look Asian” or “when people meet me they think I am black [only],” or “sometimes I am asked what I am.” August utilizes her ethnic ambiguity to break free from expectations of her. Currently at Central University, she wants to use her last two years “to be able to answer questions about my

Filipino side that I have been unable up to now.” August asserts, “I am connecting more to the Filipino side of me because I am trying to open up that side of me since that is half of who I am.” August utilizes her agency to concentrate on different aspects of her identity at varying stages of her life.

As Holland et al. (1998) contend, “the space of freedom that is the space of play between these vocations is the space of the author” (p.238). So, if we recall when Dee-Dee feels that she can be creative about who she wants to be or Jonathan adamantly asserts that he is Hispanic and not just white – these are examples of this freedom as well. They are not sole orchestrators in their identity formation, however, there is room, albeit narrow, for them to employ a certain authority over their daily interactions. One of the arenas in which Participants clearly expressed their desire to exert agency was within their schooling experiences.

### Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Hidden Curriculum

Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as utilizing students’ cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles in an effort to improve their overall engagement and learning. Ladson-Billings (1994) notes that culturally responsive teachers develop students’ socioacademic learning by "using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 382). Culturally

responsive teachers teach the child in a holistic approach and realize that the maintaining of cultural identity and heritage is key to an affirming and engaging school experience (Gay, 2000) because the “pride it generates are both psychologically and intellectually liberating” (p. 35). Discourses around culturally responsive teaching center on the experiences of monoracial students which is appropriate and has made great gains. How are Multiracial students’ needs being addressed in this regard? What are their “cultural referents” and how do teachers maintain the cultural identities and heritages of Multiracial students? If it is true that students learn better when they see positive representations of themselves and their corresponding cultures, and research has shown that it is, what are educators communicating to Multiracial students when they are invisible in texts, assignments, celebrations, lessons and the like?

According to my participants, there is little to no direct instruction regarding their Multiracial identity. And, yet, it is precisely in this omission, where they learn about the lack of value that is placed on their experiences. It is through the hidden curriculum of omissions that participants picked up on these messages of disregard or complete ignorance of their existence. *Hidden curriculum* refers to messages communicated by schooling which reward, punish and/or validate specific norms, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors. These messages are conveyed in both the formal curricular content and the social interactions within or by-products of schools or of non-school settings,

particularly those things which are learned but not explicitly intended. (Martin, 1983) Participants spoke ardently about their schooling experiences. Each of the excerpts below comes from a different participant. I listed them this way and bolded the main point of the phrase to highlight both the consistency of their experiences (as is illustrated by hidden curriculum) and the eagerness and vividness with which they recall such incidents. I titled each excerpt to allude to emerging themes that deserve additional research and consideration. This dissertation cannot take on the full scope of these themes, however, I present them with the hope the themes will, at least, ignite thinking and, at best, inspire further research on this and related topics.

Black and White, but not Brown

The problem with theater [her college major] is that it was an old art and so a lot of so-called classics were racist. Race comes up a lot in theater. **It's usually more black and white.** In general, there is very little about Hispanics in theater. I just think we have been very much under the radar because mostly there were just less of us in the U.S. and also **people's concern with race, especially in the sixties, were about black and white, not brown.**

Directly Affected by History

**They don't teach much about African American history in high school** and so when my father would talk about these [historical] things with my friends, I didn't know. It's crazy because my grandfather was a slave-owner and my great grandmother was a slave. That's where our last name came from – Walters. My grandmother is light skinned and now we know why. **I am directly affected by this history – the rapings, things like that. More than likely, my great grandmother was raped.** My dad said that she was ridiculed because of her light skin so she sought the darkest man she could, so her children wouldn't have to endure the same suffering she did.

### Critical Mass of Multiracial Students

**I can't think of any classes where my Multiracial identity came up.** I took a bunch of African American classes and Mexican American classes but I don't remember any emphasis on biracial people. I don't know why. **It's like we're not around. I don't know if the powers that be think that there aren't enough Multiracial people to cater to, but I think that there are.** I was uncomfortable in my African American classes because inevitably folks are going to talk about white people. It's hard to hear that – they are talking about my family. Are they right? Is my family wrong? What am I supposed to believe? It couldn't be an outlet because they weren't like me. I remember one class where there were five biracial people and only two of us identified as such so even though there were more people, I still couldn't talk about it. I don't have a venue really.

### Validating Multiracial Students' Experiences

**I feel like I was forced to think about identity when I got to Central U. When I took *La Chicana*, I got to listen to how others thought about their ethnicity, being around people who have been in touch with their culture.** For a while, I felt uncomfortable because I didn't want to mention the white part of myself but I felt that it was necessary. I felt kinda weird in that class because everybody was sort of brown and proud, and I never felt that way. I was kind of ambivalent about being Mexican. I just started becoming more interested. I wasn't ashamed of being white but I just felt different. I didn't grow up on the border or in a large Latino community but I felt that I needed to represent that ethnicity in my context. **I go back and forth questioning whether or not my experiences are valid.** Part of me wants to just be Chicana because I feel guilty about being white. I don't know what to do with that part of myself.

### The Power of Multidimensional Teaching

The structure of school is not something I liked. I have always been known as an athlete. I grew attached to my sport life. **Teachers taught the same all the time, bare minimum, flat surfaced. When teachers have expanded more, I have enjoyed classes more. I've wanted to learn in those classes.**

### The Impact of Teachers' Silence

**I had this class full of jocks and they would always make fun of minorities but my teacher wouldn't say anything. She would just stay quiet.** I would always talk to my mom about these types of situations but

she's Caucasian. She tells me that I need to tell them, not just get upset with them. I don't know how to react.

### An Inclusive Curriculum

I want to learn about my Filipino half. I haven't been to any of the [Filipino Club] meetings yet but I want to go. It hasn't really crossed my mind to join Black organizations. **At school, I used to learn about Black history but I don't know anything about my Filipino side and they don't teach that in school.** So, here, I have decided to focus on my Filipino side while at Central U.

### Seeing Myself in My Texts

One time in my History class we were talking about Creoles in Louisiana. The professor asked if anyone was Creole but nobody raised their hand. She talked about having to laws and stuff related to having this mix. It occurred to me that there was a racial middle, not just white and black. In another class, I remember reading a book that really spoke to me. It was about checking boxes on forms and how leaving a space on forms to fill out rather than checking one box would save us from having to check "other." **I can think of another reading that I related to – it was about Multiracial identity. I remember I hadn't read the book yet but Lucia had read it first and was commenting about how much she could relate to the chapter on Multiraciality even though she is not multi ethnic, racial.** Lucia is one hundred percent Mexican. But everyone always thinks that she's Asian because of her typically Asian facial features. I remember she was telling Vu, our Vietnamese friend, that she could relate to her because everyone thinks that she is Asian. And I was excited when I heard her say that, so I skipped over the first chapters and went straight to that one. **The part that I liked the most was when the author was forced to choose between the Black group and the white group in her college experience. She said if she could go back in time she wouldn't choose at all. Instead, she would make her own group. I liked that a lot.**

### Who Receives Instruction about Identity?

I especially don't hear about Latinos and Asians [in classes]. I think there is a lot of hostility toward Latinos because of immigration. When I learned about race and ethnicity in sociology, we only focused on the civil rights movement with black and white, nothing about the Chicano movement. **It's frustrating – the only people who learn about Chicano identity are Latinos, so it defeats the purpose of those courses in some**

ways.

Assessing Beyond the Technical

**Since I read Roots and exploring my identity, my diary was my canvas since I didn't have anyone to express it to.** In high school, I took an art class and had a really good teacher. Some of the first things I drew were about African American culture. I would do research and then draw about it. **The intersection of art and African American studies has a big role in shaping my identity.** My art classes – all of my assignments are around African American experiences. I don't know what my classmates think of that. **The professor just looks at the technical aspect of my art and I am always doing something wrong.** She doesn't say that this is a good idea or anything like that.

Conclusion

The themes that emerged from participants' experiences speak to Holland et al.'s (1998) notion that “a figured world is formed and re-formed in relation to the everyday activities and events that ordain happenings within it” (p.53). The figured world of Multiraciality is formed and re-formed with every new interaction with another sentient being, with the unique experiences of Multiracial individuals with diasporic racial combinations and in response to those that engage with them, with “‘standard plots’ against which narratives of unusual events are told” (p.53). With each improvisational activity, participants add to standard plots/storylines, create new storylines, ignore storylines (to the extent to which that is possible) and/or follow established storylines with regards to racial expectations.

The primary purpose of this study is to illustrate the agentic ways in which Multiracial college students come to understand and experience the complexity of their racialized identity production. Holland et al. (1989) state that “agency lies in the improvisations that people create in response to particular situations” (p.279). Certainly, Participants showed such improvisational behavior and readily confirmed that this space of authoring “remains a social and cultural space, no matter how intimately held it may become. And, it remains, more often than not, a contested space, a space of struggle” (p.282). As May contends, “I think it’s battling with yourself.”

In the final chapter, I will explore Multiracial students in the daily practice of schooling. As we come to understand the identity production of Multiracial college students, and Multiracial students in general, I will explore the practical implications and significance of their presence in our schools. The chapter will be divided into the following sections: learning the meaning of race at school, general findings with regards to racial identification, relationships, phenotype, collectivity and skills gained as part of being Multiracial. The chapter will end with the implications and final thoughts.

## **Chapter Six: Multiracial Students in the Daily Practice of Schooling**

### Introduction

The ways in which Multiracial students self-identify and how others identify them uniquely positions them at the intersection of identity, education and agency because their presence complicates public policy (such as affirmative action, achievement gaps, curricula) and is the embodiment of the nuanced and often disregarded aspects of racial discourses around education. Because educational (and other national) policies, especially as related to the educational attainment and access to equitable education of under-represented students, depend upon racial categorization data as defined by the federal government, Multiracial students present a serious disruption and complication of such categorizations. How Multiracial students choose to identify will certainly impact educational policies and subsequent daily practices of schooling because their choice of racial identification will translate into resource allocation (federal funding of programs which uses disaggregate data to determine educational performance by race and ethnicity), national, statewide and local policy decisions (decisions based on the analysis of social policy which use data to determine the effectiveness of programs in fields such as health, education, social welfare, economics, law and psychology) and everyday interactions (the way in which people of different races relate to one another and how racial stereotypes and non-traditional racial categorizations play into these interactions).

How Multiracial students understand and live out their racial identity within the realm of educational institutions further problematizes socially constructed notions of racial categorization. Multiracial students are already beginning and will continue to impact issues of educational equity, with regards to traditionally under-represented racial groups, are represented, discussed and addressed. Educators have been able to ignore these students by classifying them in monoracial terms, but this confined approach to Multiracial students is inadequate and potentially damaging because of the ways in which we know one's social identity is linked to one's academic identity.

As I experienced schooling, my socioacademic world was greatly impacted by my Multiracial background. As my introduction to this study revealed, depending on whether I was perceived as "Aurora" or "Chang", I was held to different academic expectations. Friendships within school were interrupted by the uncomfortable vagueness of my racial background. Applying to scholarships became an exercise in strategy and integrity. Campus groups saw me as suspicious, unclear as to what my affiliations were. School festivities which celebrated individual cultures did not match the multiple ways of knowing which had been fostered in my multicultural home. Reading academic studies about both Latino and Asian American students spoke to me but the intersection of these two identities were never engaged in the literature that I was exposed to. I was forced to choose one identity by institutional parameters, rules, traditions and

socially constructed notions of race. I often wonder who I would be today or how I would be different if my Multiracial identities had been acknowledged as a reality, much less affirmed as an experience. Educators should carefully consider the unique needs that the Multiracial student population may pose. If not, we run the risk of silencing, whether passively or actively, a group of students that deserve our attention.

### Learning the Meaning of Race at School

All participants consistently spoke of their schooling experiences as they related to their Multiracial identity. Specifically, participants learned the meaning of race at school. From the general reputation of the school, the content or lack of content in the curriculum; the influence and words of teachers and administrators; to racial slurs and name calling – school, according to the participants, was where they were taught about the significance of their racial identity, for better or worse. May recalled how she “was always the Asian kid in my school even though I wasn’t fully Asian.” She explains that since “no one else was Asian” and because she was “different from the Hispanics, the easiest thing was for people to classify me this way.” In elementary school, May learned to “hate my name – I absolutely hated it.” May Kongsangchai, her name, was a source of ridicule – “I remember this boy used to break my name up into syllables making fun of it.” Although this

lesson was not taught on the chalkboard or as a result of a homework assignment, it was one that would have more impact on her than most lessons she could remember.

Another way of understanding May's experience is that the hidden curriculum (Apple, 2000) of race reveals itself in insidious ways within the daily practices of school, both in emission and omission. The fact that May's teacher never addressed May's classmate's insults about her name and that May did not feel comfortable or safe in sharing such insults with anyone, from classmates to teachers to school administrators is indicative of a larger school climate. When students do not feel safe about sharing specific experiences within school, as in May's case, a hidden curricular message is sent. For May, her school's message was that being Multiracial was an unsafe space and an experience that had to be managed alone. The hidden curriculum is expressed in both implicit and explicit ways. The hidden curriculum is what lies beneath what is meant to happen, that is, the curriculum as manifested by formal mechanisms such as lesson plans, class size, administrative decisions, and the like. Hidden curricular messages are lessons that teachers and learners actually do and experience on a daily basis, a kind of de facto curriculum that consists of non-verbal cues, physical condition of the school building, social interactions that happen outside of the confines of a four-walled classroom.

For Betty Gutierrez, her education about race did not come from the actual content of the lessons or curriculum in her classes but, rather, from what was missing from it (omission). Again, the hidden curriculum of her campus reveals itself. As an undergraduate at Central U, Betty expresses her desire to learn about her “Mexican side.” She was frustrated and angry because she had to seek out this learning – it was not taught to her.

I’m more interested in learning about my Mexican side. I never learned anything about it in school so there is really no point in pursuing learning more about my white side since that is all I have learned. I want to learn more about my history and background. My school was 85% white. All of my friends were white. My boyfriend is white. There was a group of Mexican students but they all hung out together but I didn’t have classes with them. I took a lot of AP classes, they were all white classes.

As far as textbooks, they did not talk about Mexican history unless we were talking about the Alamo. In school, I had no instruction or connection to my culture. Except for Spanish where I learned about customs and traditions but I couldn’t really relate. After the fact, knowing that I only learned Anglo history, I am frustrate by my public school experiences. Had they discussed it in some way, I could have started this identity process much earlier.

I don’t know if teachers don’t want to discuss it because it is a touchy subject, that people will get hurt. I just didn’t get anything from that. It would have been easier for me as far as my racial awareness, if my history was taught to me rather than the apathy or indifference I felt.

Not learning about her Mexican history and being part of a highly racially segregated residential area, Betty highlights that she was basically positioned to follow a monoracial storyline of whiteness – how could she do otherwise if she did not know of it? Even if there was another alternate storyline to be had, Betty

was never introduced to that plot within her neighborhood or within her segregated school. Not only did Betty contend with the issue of not learning curricular “content” associated with her Mexican American identity but it was further exacerbated by the lack of social and cultural proximity to Mexican American culture itself.

Most of our learning happens outside of the walls of a classroom, as is the case for Jodi Farquar. Not a fan of books and never a model student, in terms of grades, Jodi’s motivation to attend school consisted of sports. Her racial instruction took place in fields, courts and gyms.

When I played basketball, there were a lot of African Americans and I am loud and outgoing so we connected. That race particularly has that. Volleyball is not so much – it’s sort of like football where the quarterback is white. I took a sociology of sports class and learned a lot about that.

My high school was very intermixed – no racial segregation in California. A lot of Asians and Whites, not many Blacks or Mexicans. You’d see different races everywhere. I hear a lot of stories about Texas being segregated and racist, but that was never an issue for me.

Jodi’s connections to culture occurred in her social sphere and, there, she makes astute observations about the racial power dynamics of sports when she compares volleyball to football. She points out that the lead position, the quarterback, is white, alluding to the fact that the “others” were probably of color. Jodi’s observation calls to mind Foley’s (1990) *The Great American Football Ritual: Reproducing Race, Class and Gender Inequality*. In this article, Foley illustrates how deeply implicated high school football is in the reproduction of class, gender,

and racial inequality. The football ritual, according to Foley, remains a tool for reproducing conservative, status quo power structures in society. And, yet, there seems to be some cognitive dissonance when Jodi quickly states that there is “no racial segregation in California” and that racism was really “never an issue for me.” Jodi prides herself in challenging monoracial discourse yet she actively contributes to it through her ignorance of the racism and structural racism that is embedded within her everyday surroundings and interactions. Jodi states,

My high school was very intermixed – no real racial segregation in California. A lot of Asians and Whites not many blacks or Mexicans. You’d see different races everywhere. I hear a lot of stories about Texas but that was never an issue for me. Looking back, the faculty was predominantly white even now at UT. I am not a really social type of person. I don’t attach on to a lot of people. If I didn’t play sports, college would never be an option. My athletic ability got me here, not my academics. I’m a reader and writer in my own way. The structure of school is not something I liked. I have always been known as an athlete. I grew attached to my sport life.

Jodi’s statement that there is “no real racial segregation in California” and that race “was never an issue for me” is biting in contrast to her statement that “if I didn’t play sports, college would never be an option,” a clearly racially-laden issue. Certainly, Jodi is unaware of her contribution to this monoracial discourse yet it is important to point out this contradiction because it highlights the complexity of her experience as a Multiracial student. Some participants shared similar experiences where they claimed to not have experienced racism, yet described circumstances that would support institutionalized racism.

August Tolley describes her confusion about racism. She feels that she has never experienced it firsthand then goes on to describe what is clearly a history of attending unequal schools.

It still baffles me that there is racism in some parts because we should be over that. I've never experienced that firsthand but I have heard it second hand. I have always been in bad schools. For some reason, I always end up at schools with bad reputations. Pregnant girls were there, students would act dumb. I took AP classes, like two of them, and those classes were somewhat diverse.

In the above example, August is “baffled” by the racism that exists in schools and yet, as she continues to describe how she has “never experienced [racism] firsthand,” she lays out a series of indicators of institutionalized racism. August points out that she was always in “bad schools,” that students would “act dumb” in these schools and that she took only two AP classes that were “somewhat diverse.” So, while August claims that she has only heard of racism “second hand,” she fails to see the racism embedded within the inequities of school, her perceptions of students within these “bad” schools “acting dumb,” and the lack of AP courses and her limited access to them. In addition to the classroom (with regards to texts) and social aspects of schooling, Participants oftentimes recalled vivid examples of teachers’ and administrators’ roles in their racial erudition.

Melissa Armstrong recalled an early memory of being tokenized as the unique, Multiracial girl in elementary school.

I remember when I was in first or second grade; the principal would always show prospective parents and students a tour of the school and

show them around the classrooms. We would just act normally. She would pull me out of my entire class. She would say, ‘This is our little half-Chinese girl.’ And it was really embarrassing! First, I wasn’t far removed from when the kids would make fun of me for being half Chinese and secondly, I felt like an animal in the zoo. It was like she was saying, ‘look, not only do we have ethnic diversity, as proven by our obviously ethnic faces but by our mixed race kids.’

That was the roughest period for me – that’s when kids began to notice that we were different for reasons that were beyond physical. We looked different and that was connected to traits – the utopia stopped. The white kids wanted to know why we were Asian. For me, the kids were confused – ‘why don’t you look like one? Why do you kind of look like another thing?’ One kid, of course, has not so great of an upbringing, so he starts pulling his eyes back, so then all the kids started pulling their eyes back when they would see me. I cried. I went home and cried.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2009), racial tokenism usually refers to “the practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, especially by recruiting a small number of people from underrepresented groups in order to give the appearance of sexual or racial equality.” I concur with this definition. The interesting dimension to Melissa’s story is that the principal seems to suggest that Melissa is a utopian, catch-all example to underscore the racial diversity at her elementary school. Melissa was a convenient and all-inclusive package, commodified for the interest of showcasing the progressiveness of the educational space. In this process, Melissa learns that she has symbolic value but at a personal cost.

Similarly, Solomon Hoffman recalls an incident where he was singled out for his racial background in a classroom setting. Singling out Solomon, however,

is complicated by the fact that his teacher perceives him as only white, and, as a result, praises him in direct contrast to her insult of “Hispanic men.” He recounts the memory.

I had a history teacher. It was my sophomore year and she was a strong advocate of women’s rights. When she got married, she didn’t want to change her last name because she wanted to keep her own last name. As she was sharing this story with the class, she went on to say that she didn’t want her husband’s name. She was ranting on and on about how unequal everything was. Then, she inserted, ‘Hispanic men wouldn’t dare to go to the kitchen and clean.’

She was just lashing out at our entire class. Just when I thought it was bad enough, she said, ‘of all the guys in this class, I only see Solomon as worthy enough to clean my house.’ That really embarrassed me. She was saying that I would be a good catch. At the time, I didn’t care much about it, but after class, I started thinking about how weird that was. In her eyes, I was the worthy white kid in the class. It wasn’t until parents’ night that she realized I was Mexican.

And, while these participants were targeted as “exemplary” in some way or another, many more of the participants pointed to times in their educational life where they were recipients of negative comments such as racial slurs and teasing.

Lizzy Chu recalls her family’s move from California, where she attended racially diverse schools, to Texas, where she enrolled in a predominantly white school in an affluent neighborhood.

In my senior year in high school, people would make racial slurs and jokes. I felt so insecure because I was the only minority. And I had never felt this way in California. Here, I felt totally Asian. Here at Central U, people didn’t even think that I was Asian. So, in high school, people would constantly bring up Asian jokes. But, here, people are like, why is your last name Chu? I don’t want people to perceive me as only one. The difference between California and Texas is that in California, there are full

Asians so, comparatively, I look different. But no one here even knows the word, Hapa. Here, people sometimes think I am Mexican. I would get really upset internally. It's been hard to figure out what to do. I might say something to them like 'I don't like when you speak that way. I don't think that you are a racist because I don't see you that way.' I can do that with friends.

Lizzy learns that, depending on the place and region, her Multiracial identity is perceived differently and, as a result, can produce different experiences that affect her in multiple ways. In California, Lizzy fit in. Being Multiracial in California was not unusual. However, when Lizzy moved to Texas she felt like an oddity. Lizzy's racial queerness stood out and her fellow classmates and teachers were quick to call attention to her queerness. From racial slurs to others not knowing the littlest details, such as the meaning of Hapa, Lizzy expresses her disappointment and hurt over both the commission and omission of racial terminology and language. What seemed to hurt Lizzy the most however was that others did not recognize who she was. "I don't want people to perceive me as only one," Lizzy emphatically notes. She then goes on to claim that she "would get really upset internally" because people mistook her as "Mexican." I found this sentiment to be quite interesting – was Lizzy upset because she was not being recognized or because being "Mexican" has a negative connotation, one which she is offended by? I argue that Lizzy's reaction is a mixture of both feeling unrecognized for her full Multiracial identity and feeling that she was insulted by being mistaken as Mexican. Lizzy's hurt feelings as a result of being mistaken as

Mexican has deep roots. It is not arbitrary or coincidental that, growing up in California and then moving to Texas, Lizzy would internalize a racial hierarchy that places Mexicans (more broadly, Latinos) at a lower status than Asians. This racial internalization plays on the stereotypes and subsequent beliefs that Asians are a model minority while Latinos are foreigners who refuse to assimilate to the United States.

Naming, as it turns out, plays a significant role in the experiences of most participants. Amber Jones began her interview with me with the following statement, “My nickname in school was Oreo.” Oreo condescendingly refers to those that are “Black on the outside but white on the inside.” Amber recalls how she endured teasing at school and also how her Black and white racial combination also forced her to acknowledge that she would always be considered Black, regardless of whether she saw herself as mixed. She recalls a memory.

Very vivid. Second grade or third grade and someone at school said I was Black. I can remember not accepting that right away. I didn't say anything but I was confused. I don't think I am but I am not sure. I don't really know who I am. I remember asking my mom, ‘am I Black?’ She said, ‘no, you are both, you are half daddy and half me.’ I went back to school the next day and told that person, ‘I am half.’

Being “half” is a source of both pride and pain for Amber. She finds uniqueness in her identity but is also plagued with the pressures of “acting Black” (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986) while attempting to embody both her Black and white identities. And just as terms such as Oreo, Banana, Coconut and similar insults abound in

the stories that my participants shared, there were other popular phrases that seemed to arise on a regular basis.

Nicole recalls one of these popular phrases used to describe people of mixed racial descent.

Well, in elementary, there was this other little girl that was half-Black, half-Mexican and she used to always say that I'm half-breed, I'm half-breed. And I think I just picked up on it. Well if she's the same thing I am then – So my mom was like, 'No, those are terms for animals. You're not half-breed. You're not a breed. She's like, 'you're mixed,' so then, I was like, 'OK, then I'm mixed then.' So, that's when I got to junior high and I started telling people that I was mixed.

I guess it's just kind of silly. I guess it was me being ignorant. Not knowing exactly what half-breed meant. But I just kind of looked at it like, it's offspring, it's from two different races, it's half. But now just thinking about it, I think, oh my God, I used to say I was half-breed. That's so stupid but other than that, it doesn't affect me anymore.

Whether half-breed, mongrel, oreo, mulatto, mixed (up), mutt, or other expletive, the terminology that the participants were and are called impact their self-perception and stand out as markers of their own racial awareness. School is, indeed, a place of deep-seated learning, as is curriculum in the broadest sense of the word. In the following section, I will explore these larger general findings as they emerged in the twenty five interviews that I conducted.

## General Findings

### Identity

Identity is a production – a process that is manufactured. The process of being so manufactured is partially staged prior to any contribution on the individual actor's part. "Power, status, relative privilege," as Holland et al. (1989) claim, are factors which are already critically present and non-maneuverable in the production of identity. Once the actor participates in this process, she does so within a defined, predetermined set of positionalities. The fact that this predetermined context limits the actor's ability to create her own self-definition is undeniable. However, the extent to which this predetermined context limits the actor's ability to have a say/play a role in her identity production is immeasurable but one can continually push the boundaries of these limits. If there is a salient sentiment that embedded the Participants' narratives, it is that while there is a choice to queer one's identity by enacting agency in everyday moments of authoring, it is also part illusion. That is, there is no way of weighing the impact of socially embedded factors/the environment and its control over figured worlds. There is no mathematical calculation to determine the degree to which the actor has agency over her identity production. Is our identity 60% externally based, the elements out of our control and 40% internally based, with room for improvisational activity in a third space of empowerment? Perhaps the ration is 50/50, 40/60, 60/40, 80/20, 20/80. I use numbers purposefully here

to drive the point that identity is in constant motion, never passive or stagnant and thereby unable to have any secure handle on its complex negotiation. Identity can not be defined by a progressive table of stages, a diagram, a flowchart, words, motions, sounds or utterances of any kind. Identity production, as Holland et al. (1989) frame it, is just that – a production.

Likened to a theater production, for example, there are actors, directors, scripts, props, stage crews, audiences and a price for admission into the performance. And, depending upon the audience that is present at that particular performance (or moment of time), it can be interpreted differently, almost as if at least two, but often multiple entirely different productions were taking place simultaneously. Analogous to identity production, people, places and things play different roles and depending on the eye of the beholder, the production takes on different meanings in varying spaces at specific times. The actor's costume is outfitted by her positionalities. And while the actor wears her positionalities, this costume is not entirely a straightjacket. So while the costume, woven of positionalities, is consequential because socially constructed identities such as race have real life implications and consequences – there is a delicate space of movement or improvisational agency. Individual moments are bound by oppressive structures such as racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, ableism and the like. However, as with a theatrical production, the actor has the ability to

inject her own flavor into the given role and in rare circumstances, transform the role into something revolutionary and/or magical.

The actor can take the role in a specific direction, working within the confines of the script to interpret the role at will. This is what Holland et al. (1989) would call the space of authoring. And, it is within this space that agency is enacted. The extent to which this agency can be enacted varies from context to context, but the point is that while identity is both produced for you and by you, there is always space for improvisational activity which holds a degree of power. The degree to which this power is exerted or has an overall impact is somewhat relative since the perception of this power lies in the psyche of the actor. As Urrieta astutely asserts,

Identity is defined from a cultural production perspective as people's ever-changing perception of who they are. Holland et al. (1998) broadly define identity as "...self-understandings, especially those with strong emotional resonance." Whether as individuals and or as collectives, people make sense of who they are personally and politically and they convey these meanings to others (Calhoun, 1994). Identity is always a dynamic co-constructed cultural phenomenon. Even when more durable identities are formed, how these identities are understood and how their meanings change over time become life-long processes. (Urrieta, 2007, p.118)

In other words, identity is never static – it is "always a dynamic co-constructed cultural phenomenon" (Urrieta, 2007, p.118). Identity constantly reinvents itself and is reevaluated and recreated with time, experience and positionalities. How identities are formed, understood and how their meanings change over time depends upon the ways in which the actor utilizes his/her agency and the external

circumstances which occupy the contextual instance.

The notion of facultad/cultural intuition plays a vital part in shaping the actor's identity. This "instant sensing," "acute awareness," "this sensitivity is excruciatingly alive to the world" (Anzaldúa, 1989, p.60). Facultad is that intangible yet visceral survival mechanism, like a radar that can perceive things from afar. And for those who are persistently marginalized, this radar becomes increasingly accurate in sensing uncertainty, threat and/or danger. The study of identity as a concept needs to incorporate the supernatural, the mysterious, the intangible aspects of knowing. The more we begin to validate and embrace knowledge bases such as facultad/cultural intuition, the more we penetrate beyond the epidermis of identity production and allow for a third space of identity production which is neither black or white but subsists in a borderland of grays. Viewing identity production as an increasingly non-linear, even amorphous space of multiple possibilities and evolving potential for self-authoring and empowerment frames the overall study of identity in an alternate light. Rather than placing emphasis on how one categorizes himself/herself within different social identities, the active consideration of facultad/cultural intuition places the focus on those intangible sensibilities that are often seen as liminal and peripheral rather than central to the discourse around identity production.

## Findings Specific to Multiracial Identity

### The Politics of Racial Identification Terminology

“I think I fall in a racial spectrum and it can change.” (Amber)

Racial identification terminology, especially as it relates to filling out “official” forms such as applications for college admissions and financial aid, standardized tests, surveys, employment forms and similar documents, was a topic that, without fail, was raised by my participants. Regularly confronted with the decision of what to check, participants, as Amber notes, fell into a “racial spectrum” of sorts. The visual table below illustrates the ways in which participants generally categorized themselves with regards to racial terminology. It is important to note that these categories are in no particular order (as a spectrum might suggest), therefore no meaning is assigned to their location or placement. Rather, a visual representation better pictures this “spectrum” in a way that written text alone would not.

I Check One	How I Look	It Depends	Other	Multiracial
<p>I identify as Chicana, but, depending on who I am talking to, since most people are not familiar with that, I will or will not describe myself as such.</p>	<p>I usually check African American because that is how I am viewed. If there was a mixed box, I'd check that. But when it comes to tests, I check the Black identity.</p>	<p>The Central U admissions form was a "check one" box which I don't understand. I chose Black because it was a financial aid type of thing.</p>	<p>If they don't have both, I check "other." I don't like choosing just Black.</p>	<p>I never use the term Multiracial. What exactly is race? Who gets to say they are biracial?</p>
<p>I do check the Hispanic/Latino box. I don't think there is a Multiracial community or bond. I mean I would be interested in talking to others who are Multiracial. I feel that most people identify more strongly in one direction.</p>		<p>I think my identity changes depending on where I am. Lately, I am inclined to say that I am Chinese and stand up for that rather than be Caucasian and say what they say. I cant really be both.</p>	<p>I always do "other" when I am filling out forms. I always do other. And if there's a line next to it, I would fill something in. I put half-Hispanic and half-Black. I thought, I'm not denying that I am Hispanic so I always check "other."</p>	<p>For a while, I thought, maybe I am not Multiracial, maybe I am multiethnic. It's tricky. I usually say I am Multiracial and then follow that up with I'm half Hispanic and half white.</p>
<p>I think that Multiracial people will just identify with whatever is the biggest part of their culture, at least what they recognize – the same way I identify more with my Mexican family. It's what I'm used to. It's what I grew up with. Until the majority of people are Multiracial, I think people are</p>		<p>To this day, I don't even have a consistent way in which I identify on forms. When they say to only check one, I check Hispanic partly because I'm more Hispanic than anything else and I just feel closer to that.</p>	<p>I try to do "other" when they have it but when they don't, I'm very reluctant to check Asian American, but what can I do?</p>	<p>I barely started doing the whole Multiracial thing until I got to college, but before that I identified with Asian American.</p>

just going to identify with one side more than the other.				
		I am still in the process of figuring out how to identify when I talk to people.		
		I used to check either Black or Asian. When I applied to college, I would check the box that would give me more of an advantage. I put my identity to the side – I didn't want to face it. It was just practical.		

Because Multiracial students have options on how to racially identify themselves, they may check different boxes at different times according to the situation. Participants participated in a variety of activities: some identified and checked one race only; others checked a box according to how they looked (or how they thought they were generally perceived by others); many used practicality and strategy to determine how they would identify in different situations/contexts; some chose to check “other” without necessarily going into detail about their racial background; and still, some identified as Multiracial or mixed, when given the option to do so.

Those that identified and checked one race only, such as Ladybug, Lizzy and Taylor, felt that checking one race was most appropriate for them. As

biracials with White heritage, Ladybug and Lizzy chose their racial identification of color rather than their White racial identity when asked to self-identify on a form. Their rationale was that due to their phenotype which consistently marked them as Black. Lizzy checked one race as well but she chose the white category for the same reason as Ladybug and Taylor. Lizzy felt that because she consistently appeared white to others and acted white, she did not have the right to claim a Latina identity. The decision to racially identify in a specific way was indeed a complex one, whether or not the participants recognize it or not. Racial identification for many Multiracial students was simply common sense (Apple, 2000). Racial identification was a culmination of responses to hidden curricula, habitus and la facultad.

For participants such as DeeDee, Waverley, August, Katrina and Steff, how they identified depended upon the situation and the context. Their positional identities dictated their choice of racial identification. DeeDee, for example, identified as Multiracial if she felt she was in sufficiently safe space where her facultad informed her that she would be validated. Other times, DeeDee would identify as Black, particularly when she was in student group meetings that were specifically targeted to Black students. In these situations, identifying as Black gave her more credibility and power. Waverley generally relied on her geographical location when deciding upon how to racially identify. Back home, among her predominantly Latino neighborhood, she identified as Mexican. With

her relatives in Thailand, she identified as Asian. Waverley never identified as White because she felt that no one, including herself, could relate to a white identity. She would always be perceived as and feel like a person of color.

When it came to filling out forms, many of the participants seized the opportunity to utilize their agency in asserting an “other” identity. For example, Laila would oftentimes check “other” instead of limiting herself to a prescribed monoracial category. Jodi would go further by checking “other” and following that up with a series of long explanations in the blank line after “other.” Laila used this space to assert her identity as a Multiracial individual and expressed to me that this action gave her a sense of self-control and power. Marissa would regularly check “all that apply” to illustrate her Multiracial identity. Because Marissa identified herself as Black, white, Native and Creole, she checked at least four boxes. Marissa indicated that visualizing the full scope of her racial identity on a form gave her a sense of pride and uniqueness, a feeling that she would not have experienced if she had to just choose one racial category.

As it turns out, this terminology and the decision to choose an identification is quite a political process. How the participants identified was a result of a thoughtful, well-planned process which weighed the potential consequences of that choice. When I say that the participants’ process of racial identification is thoughtful and well-planned, this process is not necessarily purposive. Most participants agreed that their racial identification became

common sense (Apple, 2000) to them. Rather than pausing to determine what racial identity they would choose at a particular moment, their relational//positional identities combined to trigger their facultad in a subconscious manner. Participants' relational identities moved them to behave in a certain way as it related to how they viewed themselves relative to others and especially in contrast to or compared with their monoracial peers. Participants' positional identities caused them to feel apprehensive about their social position in the monoracial figured world. In other words, Participants became accustomed to adjusting various facets of their behaviors based upon what they had learned in the course of their personal development. Over time, participants shared that they had become accustomed to responding in a variety of ways within different situations, to the extent that their thoughtfulness regarding their racial identification was instantaneous rather than interruptive.

These responses suggest that, in the identity production of Multiracial students, there is a certain level of negotiating and strategizing that occurs. A variation on Spivak's "strategic essentialism," (1990) my participants oftentimes identified differently, dependent upon the context, or chose to consistently identify one way after concluding that they identified more with one identity than the other. It was sometimes advantageous for participants to temporarily self-identify one way and then self-identify differently dependent upon the situation. By "essentializing" their racial identity in a simplified way, they are able to gain

access into monoracial figured worlds either temporarily or permanently. The participants understand that essential traits that are attributed to certain racial groups are constructs, yet they use this knowledge to when it is socially useful or self-empowering to do so. As Ladybug, who identifies as Nigerian and White illustrates through our interview exchange, the decision to identify as one race or another or both is an act in critical self-negotiation skills.

Q: How do you identify?

A: As multiracial but well sometimes as multiracial, sometimes as black, sometimes as Nigerian – whichever one fits. If someone asks me what are you I'll say I'm biracial or my dad is Nigerian and my mom is white.

Q: Do you get that question often?

A: Yeah. So I'm in an organization called Students of African Descent so if someone asks me THERE or if someone is African or maybe from Nigeria if they say where are you from, I'll say Nigeria. Or, I'm Nigerian. And if they look at me funny I'll say my dad is from Nigeria and my mom's white. I guess for black I just, I don't know, identify if someone says something about the black experience, I can identify with that.

Q: So am I hearing that you usually don't identify as black, you consider yourself part of the black community but identify as Nigerian?

A: U-huh.

Q: What is it like to identify differently in different spaces?

A: It's just – sometimes it does bug me. Like the question, who are you, I always think of who am I talking to and what is their reaction going to be? Say someone in Students of African Descent (SOAD) would ask me what are you, just a new person, I'd say that I'm Nigerian. But I would think should I say I'm Nigerian or should I say that I'm multiracial? So I'll think about it and then tell them. I don't think it's random. Maybe if they're, if I. In SOAD, if they're straight from Nigeria (foreign exchange

student) I would say that I'm from Nigeria cuz they might not understand biracial. But if they were born here, or more American, I would say I'm multiracial. I know there's biracial people over there but maybe it's that I want them to like me so I'll say that I'm full Nigerian.

Q: When you say you are multiracial, does that connect you more to that person the same way you feel more connected to Nigerians when you identify as Nigerian?

A: No, unless the person is multiracial I don't think so. Maybe I look different or they can tell. Sometimes I say that I'm Nigerian and they'll say no you're not! And I'm like okay.

Q: Why do you think people react like that?

A: I don't know. Maybe they already have a picture in their head of what a Nigerian should look like. I don't have an accent so, still for an American Nigerian to say that is still . . .

Q: How do you define American?

A: Like American-Nigerian?

Q: American-Nigerian or American in general.

A: Someone that was born here or someone that has been here for a long time. This is really mean, but in SOAD we have this thing where we say the Americans and the authentic Nigerians or Africans. So maybe I do it myself. The authentic people are international students or just came here to finish two years of high school. Usually they all like to hang around each other and no one else. I guess I do it too.

Q: Have you always identified as multiracial?

A: When I was really little, I didn't know any better. But as I got older I wanted to and I would. Thinking about high school in Monteclara which is predominantly Hispanic I would always say. If someone would call me a black girl I would say whatever I wouldn't correct it. I'd just say my mom's white. But I remember I would fill out for bubbling in tests, I would always fill in other but my mom told me never to do that. She told me to fill in the black bubble. Probably for scholarships or something like

that. I still didn't want to fill in black for some reason but I still filled in black.

Q: Why is that?

A: I don't know – that's what I know I am. I mean like on standardized test they never said check more than one box, there was never multiracial, there was just other so. Oh yeah, some of the times I would fill in the blank and write biracial or black and white.

Q: Did your parents raise you to identify as multiracial?

A: My dad would always, my mom doesn't talk about race or anything, he would never, he would always say you're Nigerian. He would say like you're NOT American or don't act like your mother. Usually it was in the context of cooking and cleaning. Act American means not being able to cook. I don't think I've ever told my dad, he's always pushed me to – this is what Nigerians do. I could never spend the night at someone else's house and so when I came here (college) and realized that happened to other people, I was like oh! So, yeah, that's like what Americans do, not Nigerians. So I could never do that.

Q: What are the distinctions between being Nigerian and being black (American)?

A: I think what I've heard is that they are better than everyone else (Nigerians). This is what I've seen here at school. Africans and African-Americans don't, especially Africans, they don't want to be put in that same category. So, I don't know. I wasn't raised like that but they just – characteristics – study more.

Q: What's associated with being African American?

A: One of them is laziness, this is from, if African Americans, to my dad are in the same category as Americans. You just have to study all the time and Nigerians do that and African Americans don't. What else? I guess gender roles. You have to cook and clean – it's very traditional, 1000 years ago. That's what my dad believes. It's funny because my mom's not like that, almost like a second class citizen that 's how women are considered in Nigeria but my mom is like that. My dad has told me that I have to marry a Nigerian and he didn't. How I was raised, my mom

was like marry whoever you want to. We never talked about race or anything like that but my dad said you have to marry a Nigerian from this tribe. That's really hard to find. I would like to marry a Nigerian – I don't know if that's my dad's influence. I guess before I came here I said I am not going to do that. But now that I came here – in high school and when I was little I would think of older people like my dad. Even at all my schools, they have been predominantly white so I just didn't know. There are so many Nigerians here (in college). I like it.

Ladybug raised several important issues about the political nature of personal racial identification. Early on, Ladybug indicated that her decision to racially identify in a specific way depends on how she related to others within a particular setting. Depending upon how she was positioned in that context, she identified according to her comfort level, or, in her words, “whatever fit.” Ladybug furthered this explanation of identification when she referred to the “what are you” question. She claimed that “I always think of who am I talking to and what is their reaction going to be?” Here, Ladybug illustrates the concepts of relational and positional identities. In other words, Ladybug bases her choice of racial identification based on who she is relating to and how she is positioned. As an example, she relayed her experience in SOAD (Students of African Descent). In spaces where there were primarily Nigerian-born peers, “I would say that I'm from Nigeria cuz they might not understand biracial.” Ladybug contrasts this response to the one she had “if they were born here, or more American, I would say I'm Multiracial.” She rationalized her decision to identify in those distinct ways in this way, “I know there's biracial people over there but maybe it's that I

want them to like me so I'll say that I'm full Nigerian." Ladybug made the assumption that being "full Nigerian" would be a more likeable position to occupy than "biracial."

Nicole, who identifies as Mexican and Black resists categorization and therefore identifies as Multiracial in different settings to emphasize the fact that she is not just one race. This act gives Nicole a sense of self-ownership and confidence.

I think there is a difference in perception between those folks that are light skinned and black and light skinned and mixed. I guess it's because I'm not black enough and I don't come off like – I guess I don't have the homegirl attitude. I will if you piss me off but I don't walk around with the little attitude or anything. Other people say I do but I really don't. But I make it a point to let people know that I am biracial or mixed or whatever. People think that I think I'm superior, above them, and I don't do it intentionally. I just don't like people labeling me as one thing when I know I am more than that. So I make sure to let them know. So if they say, girl, you're black I say no I'm black and Hispanic and if they say, girl, you're Mexican, I say no I'm Hispanic and Black. But they just take it as, yeah, you think you're . . . and I'm like well ok, there's nothing I can do about that. I'm sorry you feel this way.

Although it often isolates her in social settings, Nicole proudly adheres to identifying as Multiracial because, from her vantage point, not doing so equates to denying her full self.

### Negotiating and Strategizing – Racial Identity and Relationships

For all participants, deciding how to identify is not unlike "constantly

playing a little game,” as Amber Jones captures it. In this game, they decide how to move forward after considering how the next player will respond. It is not simply a matter of cavalierly opting for a racial identity. Instead, this decision is predicated on a few questions: Will I fit in? Will I be judged and/or reacted? In this specific situation, what racial identity is in my best interest? A combination of relational (behavior as indexical of claims to social relationships with others) and positional identities (a person’s apprehension of her social position in a lived world), the participants’ decision to racially identify in a certain way becomes an exercise in assiduous assessment – they carefully scope out their situations and contexts, assess the pros and cons and identify accordingly.

Amber straddles this racial tightrope every time she is with family members. She feels that she must “do more changing of my personality” when she travels in between her white family and her Black family. She describes how her struggle became more pronounced after entering Central U, where she “really found my Black identity, where her roommates taught her “how to straighten my hair, wrap my hair at night” and took her to “Black church.” While Amber felt affirmed and more comfortable “learning how to act,” she also felt that “at the same time, it got more confusing.”

I had to switch up my actions when I was with my white grandparents and then with my Black grandparents. I became closer to my Black family because I could connect more with them. I know that at my white grandparents’ house, we will eat on good China, listen to classical music, discuss current events, play a game afterwards. At my Black

grandparents, it's loud, buffet-style, football game, come as you go type of thing.

Upon entering Central University, Amber was recruited, in a sense, to the figured world of "Blackness" as her Black roommates sensed and discussed her racial identity issues. Amber's Black roommates saw Amber as a mentee, paying it forward, the way in which they had been mentored, guided and nurtured by fellow Black upperclassmen. In a community where Blacks have a history of discrimination, lack of social networks and a dearth of businesses/services that cater to Black people (such as barber shops, hair salons, eateries, churches, social venues, bookstores, cultural events, entertainment), Black students actively engaged and sought out freshmen who likely would feel alienated. In this process, Amber refigured her racial identity as she gained more knowledge about and exposure to artifacts of a Black figured world.

Amber's experience as a Multiracial person in her family was complex and taxing. And while most, if not all, college students' families are complex and taxing, the reasons behind Amber's family's complexity and taxation are specific to racial and cultural norms. She said, "There are differing values and in trying to please both sides, I tell my families different things. I can't ever be exactly who I am so I never know who I am." Amber's struggle was specific to her situation – living in very close proximity to both sides of her family. When she thought of what could be, she fantasized what it would be like to "form my identity without

including all my family members, would I be able to form my identity the way I wanted to?" It was a negotiation process which she wished to explore.

Many of my participants shared the complexity of managing their Multiracial identity. Lizzy Chu states that "it is hard to decide who you are when different people say different things." The influence of others' perceptions is great. Angie recalls her high school experience which positioned her as an outsider in all the different groups she felt connected to.

Either you were white, Latino or Black and everybody else is just out there. I had friends in each group and did not know where I fit in perfectly. I just wanted to be me but you can't do that in a clique situation. I became an outsider because I changed up depending on the situation. For example, my Black friend and I played on the basketball team but then, in the cafeteria, I sat with my best friend, who was a white boy. We could not sit at the same table.

Lizzy's words call to mind Tatum's (2003) book, *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* Tatum discusses the common phenomenon of high school students of color clustered in their own racial groups in the cafeteria and elsewhere. As Tatum noted, the same could be observed in college dining halls, faculty lounges, and corporate cafeterias. She raises the debate about so-called self-segregation in schools – is this phenomenon a problem that should be fixed or a coping strategy that we should encourage and support? Tatum asserts that our society is unwilling and ill-equipped as to how to talk about racial differences. When Lizzy claimed that she could not sit at the same table with her Black teammate, she is referring to the phenomenon which most of us have

noticed across educational institutions – what some would negatively imply as “racial balkanization” (Villalpando, 2003, p.619).

In Villalpando’s (2003) study of self-segregation or self-preservation of Chicana/o college students, he made the following findings.

When /o college students associate with other Chicano/as, their socially conscious values are reinforced, they increase their likelihood of pursuing careers in service of their communities, and they are more inclined to become involved in community service activities after college. (p.619)

In other words, there is a direct benefit when students of the same racial group socialize together that goes far beyond the racial balkanization argument.

Another one of Villalpando’s (2003) arguments indicates that college students’ cultural resources are key in their ability to navigate institutionalized racism on their campuses.

Chicana/o college students benefit from associating with their Chicano/o student peer groups by drawing from their cultural resources to mitigate the racialized barriers erected by universities. (p.619)

Sitting at the “wrong” table could be interpreted as a direct affront to the established social and racial norms of the campus. Sitting there could also be a mechanism for what Villalpando (2003) refers to as self-preservation. In other words, to counter the embedded racism of schooling, students of the same racial background will depend on one another to survive the ongoing abuses and dehumanization which racist structures of school impose upon them. In Lizzy’s case, her self-preservation involves a dependence on and acceptance from her white peers, who see her as one of them.

Perhaps most interesting to note is that Lizzy, as a biracial white and Chinese student is a perfectly acceptable member of the white lunch table. This occurrence speaks to the differing levels of acceptability and tolerance between racial groups in a campus setting. In Lizzy's case, her Asianness is not deemed as threatening to the white student group. Participants expressed that their familial and friend relationships were significantly impacted by their personal processes with identity production. Conflict and tension often resulted from conversations that involved these processes as I detail below.

Nicole describes the ways in which her family members' perceptions of her racial authenticity, "not being Mexican enough," "not being Black enough," affects her on a regular basis.

Oh I get mad – that's why I get quiet around them. Cuz with my Mexican side of the family, I'm all out in the open and everything. And on top of that when I do decide to speak in front of my Black family members, I don't know if I come off as not Black. Or I don't speak like I'm Black but I don't know.

I think it's moreso just a feeling but they've said stuff before. Like if I say a certain word, especially if I pronounce a Mexican word in that little tone, then they'll be like oh you're nothing but Mexican. Okay, but that's how you pronounce the word though.

Nicole points specifically at linguistic ability and style as the source for her self-consciousness. Nicole's self-consciousness speaks to her desire to balance her Mexican and Black identities in an effort to prove her loyalty to both. She refers to a time when her brother revealed that he "always checked Black" on forms. "It

was a big deal to my mom, because in her eyes, he was sort of denying that he was Mexican or Hispanic or whatever. So, I thought, I'm not denying that I'm Hispanic, so I'm checking other." Nicole picks up on family cues and acts accordingly so that she will not offend or cross either side of her family.

Participants brokered deals with themselves and developed coping strategies in order to better relate to others.

Kamina Guadalupe Ko is keenly aware of others' comfort levels with her identity. She understands that people often feel distance with her racial identity because they don't know how to approach her since they can not easily categorize her. Growing up in a predominantly Latino neighborhood, she makes accommodations so that others can relate to her.

I identify as half Mexican and half Algerian and it's really sad how many people don't know what or where Algeria is, so I find myself just saying I am Hispanic. It's easier to relate to others when I say I am half Mexican. It makes other people more comfortable. For me, it makes me a little sad because I don't know much about Algerian culture and a small part of me just doesn't want to be just another Hispanic girl in Texas because there isn't something very special about that. My friends can relate to Mexican culture. In the long run, I would like to learn more [about Algerian culture], maybe learn to speak French.

Rather than be perceived as "abnormal," Kamina finds it more convenient to follow the monoracial storyline. It is interesting to note that Kamina "doesn't want to be just another Hispanic girl in Texas because there isn't something very special about that." Another way of interpreting Kamina's statement is that being a Hispanic girl in Texas is not only "not very special" but even negative. In her

predominantly Latino neighborhood, Kamina does not want to be perceived the way that other Hispanic girls are stereotypically viewed. By identifying as half Mexican, she releases the negative stereotypes of Hispanics somewhat and simultaneously accentuates that she is different, that she is only half. This approach, while keeping her more palatable to others “makes me a little sad,” costing her emotionally.

For Betty Gutierrez, who is actively attempting to make sense of her Mexican identity, relaying this undertaking to her exclusively Anglo community of friends, has proved challenging. Their lack of understanding prohibits her from embarking on the intense kind of journey that she feels is required to fully comprehend her full racial identity. Particularly poignant is her relationship with her closest friend.

My closest friend, I feel like she thinks my whole identity process is silly. She hasn't come right out and said that but I guess this sense of, you're really white, you're not culturally Mexican. I guess she doesn't perceive me as Mexican and it's hard for her to see me in that sort of way. Why is it such a big deal, taking all of these classes? For her, it's pretty simple, you're half and half, what's the big deal?

I talked about joining MEChA and she doesn't understand why I would feel weird about going to a student organization like that. I haven't gone to any of these meetings yet because I am kinda scared. I felt weird in my Chicana class and I felt that a lot of the students in there were really vocal, passionate – it was more of a community and I don't have that.

I just never felt that I belonged to a community or that I could talk to someone who is Mexican who would understand. I've never felt rejected from the white community but it's hard to think of them as a community, because they are so dominant. Like my boyfriend feels that he doesn't belong to anything because being white is just like nothing. I

acknowledge that I am part of a white community, if there is such a thing. Lizzy's claim that "being white is just like nothing" is supported by scholars such as Peggy McIntosh who acknowledge that whiteness is far from being nothing. Whiteness, under the guise of nothingness, is actually an "invisible weightless knapsack" of privileges that is consistently utilized but rarely acknowledged for its deep power and everyday entitlements. McIntosh explains how whites are taught not to recognize their white privilege.

I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks. (McIntosh, 2002)

And, yet, it is important to emphasize that participants have varying levels of control with regards to the ways in which they negotiate and strategize their Multiracial identity. Some are able to pass much more readily than others whether by phenotype, language ability and/or behaviors/customs – more often than not, resulting in a more privileged position. This is no small matter. Racial passing is defined by Kennedy (2001) as follows,

Passing is a deception that enables a person to adopt certain roles or identities from which he would be barred by prevailing social standards in the absence of his misleading conduct. The classic racial passer in the United States has been "the white Negro": the individual whose physical appearance allows him to represent himself as "white" but whose "black" lineage (typically an only very partial black lineage) makes him a Negro

according to dominant racial rules.

Those participants that possessed phenotypical characteristics which allowed them to pass as white had markedly more privileged experiences than those participants who could not pass as white, even if they were unaware of such privileges.

As Betty relays in her story, she is aware of her whiteness, yet feels awkward, guilty and frustrated by the ways in which her white phenotypical traits impact her daily life as a college student.

I am aware that I do pass as white. After I became interested in the way others perceive me, I would ask my friends. It would hurt me when my friends would say that I was white. I mean I am not going to go out and buy a poncho. I know that it is true – that is why it hurts me. I'm not Catholic, I don't know much about Mexican culture. I still don't know what it means to identify as Mexican. I am okay with passing as white now but if anyone asks I will tell them that I am Mexican. There's not much I can do about how I look. I'm not going to try and dress more Mexican because it is not a good representation of my experiences.

My close circle of friends is all Anglo. They are definitely Anglo. I wouldn't say my friends have made it more difficult but in a certain way it has because I wish I knew people who were of other ethnicities because then I would have someone to talk to. My boyfriend has been really supportive. He's white but very interested in race – he took a black feminism class so I have to give him points for that. My closest friend, I feel like she thinks my whole identity process is silly. She hasn't come right out and said that but I get this sense of, you're really white, you're not culturally Mexican. She has known me since before I went to college. We have very similar backgrounds, economically, educationally. She perceives that I am trying to be more Mexican. I guess she doesn't perceive me as Mexican and it's hard for her to see me in that sort of way. Why is it such a big deal, taking all of these classes? For her, it's pretty simple you're half and half, what's the big deal? I talked about joining MeCha and she doesn't understand why I would feel weird about going to a student organization like that. I haven't gone to any of these meetings

yet because I am kind of scared. I felt weird in my Chicana class and I felt that a lot of the students in there were really vocal, passionate – it was more of a community and I don't have that. I just never felt that I belonged to a community or that I could talk to someone who is Mexican who would understand. I've never felt rejected from the white community but it's hard to think of them as a community, because they are so dominant. Like my boyfriend feels that he doesn't belong to anything because being white is just like nothing. I acknowledge that I am part of a white community if there is such a thing.

As we have heard repeatedly from the participants, their observable characteristics and how others perceive them is central to their treatment and therefore, to their everyday experiences. In short, phenotype matters.

### Phenotype Matters

Phenotype emerged as a consistent theme with my participants as both a marker of status and privilege as well as a cause for suspicion and rejection. Participants that could pass as white revealed that, many times, they were privy to activities that were meant for whites only such as joke-telling at the expense of people of color and conversations that assumed a white heterosexual norm and belief system. Had their identity of color been known, and oftentimes they disclosed this fact, such activities would not have occurred. Participants that could not pass as white indicated that while they did not have the type of privilege that accessed white benefits, they were regularly tested with regards to their “true” identity and scathed for identifying themselves as anything other than Black, Latino/a, Asian, Native and so forth. Those participants that were neither

Black or white, a population often overlooked when referring to Multiracial individuals, shared that they could “pass” as one of their races or both. With that came advantages and drawbacks, all depending on the situational context.

Solomon Hoffman recalls that, “for my little sister and I, our skin color and look has brought us lots of grief.” He describes he and his sister as looking “really white,” taking from his Irish roots. In school, they were both assumed to be white and, as a result, enjoyed the privileges of being white such as being expected to perform academically, assuming a certain high standard among teachers and administrators and generally being left alone to learn and socialize. However, tension rose among their peers. It is important to note that Solomon and his family lived in an almost all-Brown environment where their white appearance worked against them socially. However, the area was marginal with a history of low academic achievement, few economic opportunities and border violence. As an example, Solomon recounts an incident that occurred with his sister.

School was in session and we picked her up and she asked my mother, ‘Why are the kids in history class asking me why I took their land?’ And she didn’t know, but I did. She’s physically – she looks white. In fact, she looks really white. My mother says she tends to look like my grandmother who is Irish. She has a lot of freckles and other defining features that are stereotypically Irish. So, in history class that day, the other Mexican students assumed she was white and were accusing her of stealing their history. She is still in that process of defining herself – I think we all are.

This incident is not to minimize the extent of white privilege, rather that there is

another dimension to phenotypically white Multiracial individuals. For a person of color who is also white, “looking white” can undermine his/her non-white identity. Participation in a monoracial figured world (of color) is quickly interrupted by his/her white phenotypical features.

Betty Gutierrez grappled with the question of what it means to look white but identify as non-white. While she acknowledged her white privilege, she also longed for a connection to her Mexican heritage. According to Betty, there are certain ways that people expect Mexicans to act (similar to the racial rubric concept), and that she does not fit that mold. She explains it this way,

No one has made any discriminatory remarks towards me about being Mexican and I'm not sure that it's because they can't tell if I'm Mexican. I don't know if I look it or not. Sometimes people can tell but sometimes they can't. I can pass for white. People have an idea of how Mexicans talk and act so they don't think I'm Mexican.

I don't know if it's stereotypes. There is a lot of confusion. I can't; it's hard to tell sometimes if someone is Latino – even I get confused. Unless people know my last name, Gutierrez, there is nothing to indicate that I am Latina. I have dark hair and dark eyes but that might not necessarily be a Mexican trait.

What Betty described was a frustrating state of racial identity limbo where the racial rubric, while she was aware of it for the most part, was not clearly demarcated. Betty claimed that she did not know whether or not she looked or acted Mexican but still clung to the desire of including Mexican as part of her overall racial identity. She pointed to specific artifacts such as ponchos, religion, surname, style of talk and phenotypical features that she attributed to

Mexicanness. Betty struggled to understand how she could possibly identify as Mexican and yet benefit from the privileges of her physical and racial whiteness. Does she wear a poncho to make herself more Mexican? She answered her question by stating that that would not be a good representation of her experiences. Yet Betty seeks something, whether physical or figurative, that will clarify her racial identity.

Passing as white is something that my participants appeared to be well aware of. They seemed quite mindful of this racial immunity and had an almost anthropological lens through which they examined both the act of passing and the way in which others perceived them to be accompanied by the seemingly appropriate actions. Jonathan Mubarak expounds on this point.

I'm probably perceived as some sort of white too. My skin's relatively light and maybe people perceive me as maybe Latino or half of something. They don't quite know but I definitely wouldn't say that I am an obvious person of color. Unless I tell people that I am a person of color, I don't think people treat me as such. For all intents and purposes, I am a white person. I look like a white person so I get all of those privileges.

Jonathan was somewhat perplexed yet aware of the fact that looking like a white person gives him access to white privilege. This heightened awareness of skin color and its impact on the participants' daily lived experiences was compounded by the participants' interactions with their family members as the participants illustrate in the following examples.

Repeatedly, participants recalled memories of walking down the street

with family and getting odd looks from people. Within the family, “our skins tones are very different,” says Angie. She explains how “my mom and I don’t look alike.” Phenotypically, she claims, no one would ever guess that they were related. She is not surprised, yet still bothered, by what she senses – “When we walk around together, people look confused like, why are they walking together?” From the outsider’s perspective, this image is incongruous – one of these people does not belong here. Angie and her mother are in two completely different racial rubrics and therefore can not be comfortably situated in a neat racial category. August, who is also Filipina and Black, admits that “when people meet me, they think I’m Black.” Depending on the situation, August “sometimes volunteers my information or I talk about my mom [who is Filipina].” August, however, is not bothered by this. She says that when she is asked, what are you, “I liked being asked that because I am proud of being biracial.”

With a mix of excitement and awe, Nicole describes her three siblings and goes further to detail the varying experiences they have had as a result of the color of their skin. She illustrates the vast diversity that each race holds, as exemplified by her own immediate family.

We are totally different colors. If you just look at us three kids – I wish I had pictures in my phone. If you just look at us and we were walking down the street, you would think my older brother is Puerto Rican or Cuban because he is really dark complected or you might just think he’s Black. My middle brother, he looks white to me. Personally, I think he is white as day. If he grows his hair out in the front, it is really blond. And he has blond hair along his arms and everything.

And then me, I just think that I look flat out Mexican. So there's a little differentiation between all of us and that's what I've gotten from some people. Oh, Leroy, he thinks he's Black or ooh, he looks like he could be Cuban or something. Or other people think that my other brother is white or that he is mixed with something. Or he's yellow-boned.

Such stark difference in appearance, Nicole claims, made her more cognizant, albeit unconsciously, about the phenotypical variety among people and the privileges and drawbacks that accompany each shade, feature and trait. Nicole goes on to explain how, due to each of her siblings' varying physical appearances, each of them encountered very different upbringings even though they are of the same racial mixture. Their positionalities varied depending upon how "bright" or how dark they were. And, while, Nicole revealed that they never talked about their skin color and its influence upon their lives, she was quite certain that the contrast and variance among them was an unspoken conversation. One might think that sharing a racial mixture in common would translate to a shared racial experience, however, as Nicole relayed, sharing a racial mixture does not necessarily make one part of a larger, united Multiracial community.

#### Collective Experiences – Multiracials as Community

Much has been debated about whether or not Multiracial is a legitimate identification (Alex-Assensoh & Hanks, 2000; Brunsma, 2006; DaCosta, 2007; Spencer 2000, 2006; Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 1992; Williams, 2006; Wise, 2010;

Yang, 2000). One of the arguments supporting this claim is that Multiracial people are not a bona fide community, that is, they do not share histories, characteristics and genealogy in the same way that monoracial groups do. Others argue that Multiracial people share a collective experience, at some level, and that those that identify as Multiracial are part of a so-called Multiracial community.

As part of my data collection, I observed and participated in the sole registered Multiracial student organization at Central University. Throughout my interviews with my participants, I noticed a clear disparity between those that felt strongly that there was a Multiracial community and those that did not necessarily feel a part of a Multiracial community. My choice to observe a subset of the interviewees within a campus community that was formed precisely for the purpose of fostering, connecting and building a Multiracial student community was based on a need to observe and participate in the dynamics of such a community. I expected the Multiracial Students United group to talk almost exclusively about Multiracial identity because I assumed that students that joined a Multiracial group would identify as Multiracial and would want to primarily discuss their Multiracial identities. I quickly learned that my expectation and assumption was inaccurate. While there were moments within group meetings when the topic of Multiracial identity was raised, the group mainly concentrated on organizing several campus wide events that centered on racial performativity and racial stereotypes (not specific to Multiracial students but rather focused on

monoracial group).

The group's lack of discussion regarding Multiracial identity was meaningful because it suggested that being part of a collective Multiracial community was not necessarily on the forefront of their immediate needs or wants. It might also speak to society's overall lack of attention and/or acknowledgment of a Multiracial community. Perhaps my participants did not see this as a viable alternative to being part of a monoracial community. And, then, there is the numbers issue. With the infinite amount of Multiracial combinations, some might question whether or not there is a real basis for shared experiences. While there were those that fit into this group, there were other students that I would define as Multiracial activists. These students were vocal and active in building and supporting a Multiracial community on campus.

Taylor stated that she "would like to see the Multiracial community grow in the future. I think that Multiracial people could connect." Alison shared her experience with attempting to find a Multiracial community at Central U,

Here at Central U, in orientation, I picked up a pamphlet for different Asian American associations. I still feel that that is still different because I am not fully Asian. I noticed that there was one group called CU Hapas and there were 60 people on it but then I looked on it and saw that they had all graduated. I wonder if there are some people like me on campus. My mom told me that I should start my own club.

For Taylor, her quest to find a Multiracial community at Central U, ended quite abruptly when she realized that a potential group, "CU Hapas" which seemed to

fit her needs, no longer existed. While Taylor was approached by and picked up information about Asian American associations, she felt that the monoracial Asian groups were different because on some level, they would not understand her experience as a Hapa. Taylor's first impression of what her social experience might be like was discouraging because she wondered whether or not she would find "people like me on campus." Taylor's mother encouraged her to start her own club but at the time, Taylor felt that she was not readily acclimated to campus life as a freshman.

Participants generally did not know that there was a student organization on campus, the Multiracial Student Organization, which, while small in membership, was started for just this purpose. DeeDee remembers how MSC originated. Quite simply, she took a course about Multiracial identity at CU. She enjoyed the course, felt a camaraderie with the students in her class and, "at the end, a couple of us decided that we should make a club – there was about five of us."

I was eager to follow MSC (Multiracial Students United) but I quickly realized that the organization was struggling to stay afloat. Each meeting I attended had an average of about five students and varied with its participants and level of enthusiasm. We would all sit in a circle in movable desks. I would listen and very rarely contribute my thoughts and only if I was asked. I did not want to

interrupt the dynamic of the group, but just my presence seemed to make the participants somewhat self-conscious. However, as I attended more of the meetings, I became more of a backdrop than a presence. The attendance was short-lived however quickly dissolved.

At the first meeting, the leaders of the group planned their annual symposium on racial issues. Full planning was underway – different students had varying assignments to bring the event to fruition. They had in-depth, heated and multifaceted conversations about the content, marketing and sustainability of the symposium. I was impressed by their level of organization, their fervor and excitement. Like many student organizations, there were the few who took the reins early on and the fact that the group was so small to begin with, made this a challenging endeavor. Between meetings and a flurry of email exchanges among the MSC students, it was clear that the symposium was coming undone. At each meeting I attended, the topic of the groups' viability surfaced. Questions arose – who will take over next year? What is the real purpose of the organization? How can we increase participation? DeeDee and Jonathan, the leaders of MSC, struggled to encourage meeting attendance and for the group members to follow through on their commitments and tasks associated with the planned events. The meetings' attendance fluctuated but remained small and DeeDee and Jonathan began to share with me their anxiety and frustration at the likeliness of the group's dismantling.

Five meetings into the semester, the symposium was cancelled, fewer students showed up for meetings and after various meeting cancellations, the MSC president informed me that they decided to dismantle the group. I was discouraged by the news. Was there a Multiracial community on campus? Did a critical mass of Multiracial students exist? Was there a need for community building? These questions were at the heart of the series of events that transpired. Since the breakdown of MSC, the organization has yet to resuscitate. And participants, regardless of their feelings about a stand-alone Multiracial community, all relayed some of what they had learned as a result of actively constructing their Multiracial identity.

#### Skills, Intuition and Perspective – Lessons in Constructing Multiracial Identity

Participants attributed their Multiracial identity to the development of specific skills, a special intuition and/or a unique perspective with regards to tolerance and appreciation of difference. This facultad or cultural intuition allowed participants to feel compassion for others as well as a unique sense of connection to others who shared either or both their Multiracial identity and/or something unorthodox about their overall identity. Jonathan sums up this sentiment by stating that he would “like to think this perspective gives me an opportunity to see more than one side of an issue and I’d like to think it makes me

very aware of my privilege and where I am.” Jodi claims that “being a Multiracial, I have an understanding of every part and the ignorance of other people.” When referring to a specific incident when a “friend who puts minorities down all the time,” makes a racist gesture, Lizzy displays a sense of relief. She says, “I am glad I am mixed because otherwise I wouldn’t realize how wrong stuff like that was. I don’t know who I would be if I wasn’t half-Chinese.” Melissa maintains that “my Multiraciality has forced me to confront a lot of stereotypes about my independent races, separate and autonomous from one another.” August corroborates this statement when she explains that “not only do I break stereotypes by being different as a person, I am also half and half. I notice that I really like meeting new people, new languages, new cultures.”

Participants seemed to indicate that their Multiracial identity could serve as a resource which provides knowledge, experience and skills gained from consistent interaction with varying cultural groups. This resource was an agentic tool that was accessed by Multiracial students and equipped them to effectively manage situations which required them to strategize with regards to their racial identity. It also allowed them to perceive the world in a more global and multifaceted way. Jonathan Mubarak captured this notion in the following way.

I think that being mixed race can develop a certain skill. It depends on how you perceive yourself. If you’ve gone through a process and maybe you’re, not at the end stage, but a later stage of development where you look at your identities altogether, then there is probably a skill set that has been learned along the way in mediating between multiple, different

groups of people. It's probably an area of diplomacy that people may be able to have. As a multiethnic person, you're exposed to a lot more different things. You're exposed to a lot more different cultures. You'll have to know from an early point where the push and pull is from different things because obviously different cultures don't always have the same ideas and you may have to decide on some things.

Jonathan described "a certain skill" that he attributed to being "mixed race" that "has been learned along the way in mediating multiple, different groups of people." Jonathan refers to an accumulation of experiences, activities and responses which became common sensical to him over time. This notion of Multiraciality as a resource is not to suggest that all Multiracial students are panaceas of racial harmony, rather, that the participants I interviewed shared, in similar terms, that their Multiracial identity gave them a kind of edge when it came to respecting and tolerating others in general. The set of resources -the knowledge, experience and skills gained from consistent interaction with varying cultural groups contributed to the Participants' overall self-efficacy and well-being.

### Implications and Significance

#### Expansion of Racial Discourses-Challenging Racial Inclusivity

This study suggests that there are students who not only identify as Multiracial, but feel particularly passionate about their experiences, oftentimes feeling ignored and/or rejected while simultaneously invoking pride in their

unique identity. While there are arguments that vehemently oppose a Multiracial categorization, there are also solid arguments that support an expansion of racial discourses and beyond so that Multiracial students, such as the ones in this study, are included in these racial discourses. The voices of Multiracial students are powerful and speak to the ways in which stressing monoracial identification, both in personal and public spaces, limits the ways in which they can be full participants in the daily practices of schooling.

If the educational community seeks inclusivity, equity and access in all of its iterations, the participants in this study agreed that this can only happen when we are willing to engage in critical discourses about the intersection of all identities, including Multiracial identity. While scholars debate the legitimacy of Multiracial identity, Multiracial students are experiencing that identity – there is no question for the participants. Multiracial identity is not only valid – it is real, experiential and consequential.

### Rethinking and Reevaluating Educational Public Policies

Educational public policies based on data that rely on monoracial categories are outdated because as the participants in this study have attested to, monoracial categories do not capture the experiences of Multiracial students, a population which continues to grow. As my participants astutely asserted, checking boxes on forms do not provide an accurate or relevant representation of

their identity and experiences. For a person that is Black and Filipina, what does she check? If she checks solely Black or Filipina/Asian, does that account for half of her experience? If she checks other, does that account for otherness, not fitting into a predetermined category? And, when, carrying out public policies based on such data, who decides if she is Black or Filipina/Asian or does she count twice? Or is a determination made by a researcher or policy analyst as to which underrepresented group is most salient, without ever having met or spoken to the individual? These questions are the bases for further study, but they also immediately raise concerns regarding how we think and evaluate educational public policies, particularly with regards to data collection and interpretation.

Public policy matters substantially rely on racial data, which inform constitutional rights, legislative acts, and judicial decisions. Any governmental action is directly tied to funding streams which equates to public services – who gets to readily access these services and decisions and conclusions that are made as a result. Race remains a crucial aspect of U.S. society with influential public policy decisions that resonate and impact our daily lives. Racial issues have historically involved oppressed groups such as African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos/as and Asian Americans. But a new wave of self-identified Multiracial Americans add another dynamic to the struggles of traditionally underserved groups. They are people of color, however, their life experiences reflect an untapped and potentially influential array of history, knowledge and

understanding to the U.S. landscape. Rethinking and reevaluating public policies, specifically as it pertains to education, is crucial if we are interested in true inclusivity and an honest portrayal of the U.S. population. To continue collecting data based on monoracial categories alone without regard to the process of data analyses and its inevitable impact on daily lives is not only status quo but reckless.

So, what might university administrators, faculty, student service personnel and policy makers do to not only expand this important racial discourse to incorporate Multiracial student experiences but also to proactively engage these students in the daily practices of schooling? Here are a few suggestions.

1. Reinforce the need for more fully prepared instructors who can address diverse needs and backgrounds of students (including Multiracial students)
2. Launch a national study of Multiracial students (specifically college-age but also pre-college) that explores and examines their schooling experiences
3. Urge educational institutions to increase development of curricula, training and research studies pertaining to Multiracial student populations
4. Promote a new federal research agenda that aligns with the 2010 Census categories (which allow for the marking of multiple races)
5. Implement a nationwide public awareness campaign affirming and encouraging Multiracial children to be proud and knowledgeable about

their heritage

6. Enhance the quality and welcoming nature of campus climates by incorporating Multiracial experiences into curricular decisions/reform, student affairs programming and campus-wide event organization
7. Include Multiracial students as members of traditionally underrepresented racial groups when developing diversity plans, outreach and recruitment efforts and curricular reviews
8. Ensure that racial data collection accurately reflect Multiracial students' racial self-identification
9. Examine the ways in which the incorporation of Multiracial students' experiences and needs will impact policy making decisions for monoracial students and work toward collaboration among Multiracial and monoracial groups of color rather than pitting one against the other

### Final Thoughts

#### Reflections of a Native Researcher

This journey has made me laugh with joy and wonder, cry out of a feeling of frustration, invisibility and fear, appreciate the wisdom and openness of young people, challenge my own preconceived notions and reflect on my own life as a Multiracial woman. When I started this project four years ago, I had deep insecurities about opening the watergate of what is a controversial topic. Mainly,

though, I felt that I was putting myself at risk in a personal way. I knew that, in order to honestly explore this topic, I would have to reveal things about my family and myself that weren't particularly pleasant. I had to balance this fear with an unwavering sense that I had to do this. Even though the "official" research and dissertation process started relatively recently, this topic has been effervescing inside of me since I was a child. I didn't know it at the time, of course, but being Multiracial has always been a unique and awesome part of my life, causing me both great joy and pain. I suppose this is the tradeoff that a researcher makes – trading safety and security in writing for candor and uncertainty.

I don't have words that would give justice to the impact that my participants have had on my life and their contributions to new knowledge about Multiracial experiences. Oftentimes, as I was listening again to a transcript, or doing a write-up on their words, I could picture them clearly in my mind and was struck by their courage, articulateness and critical thoughts. Each one told an important story and I am convinced that every story they shared was that tip of the iceberg – how many other students would like to share their narrative but have simply not been asked to do so? And, this is the charge of this study – to find ways to create such venues, take these voices into careful consideration and understand how they specifically impact education and public policy as a whole. In the midst of struggle and opportunity, participants' agency was embedded in their every day practices.

### Recommendations for future research

During the course of this study, some of the most pertinent themes and issues are described in the above chapters. I have summarized future research recommendations below.

#### Extend and Expand Research on Multiracial Identity

The data collection for this study is by no means complete. A study which incorporates a larger, increasingly diverse sample size accompanied by a more extensive period of data collection (over the course of several years, perhaps) may shed light on the saliency of the themes which arose as part of this study. This extension of research on Multiracial students is important because as the Multiracial student population continues to grow, it will become increasingly critical to monitor and assess the diverse needs and impact of the Multiracial student population on larger issues of educational equity/access, curricular review, institutional racism, interracial/intraracial relations and overall holistic wellness for students. Additionally, for those Multiracial students who have experienced and are in the midst of the schooling process now, there is much backtracking and imminent work that needs to be done if the form of advocacy for Multiracial students, accountability of educational institutions' commitment to the Multiracial population's present and emerging needs and a careful examination of

the impact of the Multiracial student population within educational spheres and beyond.

Conduct research that is specific to Multiracial sub-groups

Multiracial identity takes a variety of forms and combinations. Future research with regards to specific Multiracial combinations may give way to a more complete understanding of issues that specific Multiracial groups may face. As this study has found, there is not one essential Multiracial experience, even among a small group. Much of the diversity of experiences can be attributed to the different combinations of racial backgrounds within the overall Multiracial student population. Future studies which focus on specific Multiracial combinations may increase our understandings of specific Multiracial sub-groups within the larger Multiracial population. These types of studies are significant because they pay reverence to the unique and complex experiences that different Multiracial sub-groups undergo and, in this way, unveil the nuances and subtleties of their experiences. As this study has illustrated, issues of power, status and privilege play out differently depending upon one's racial combination, phenotype, community of origin and family norms.

Engage in studies which examine racial discourses in a variety of arenas

A study which closely examines racial discourses in a variety of arenas (such

as educational contexts, public policy fields and media venues) would be an engaging and elucidating way to study how we discuss race and where Multiracial experiences do or do not come into play and the repercussions and impacts of such discourses. This study represented the tip of an iceberg with regards to the need for Multiracial students to access more venues for discussion around their racial identities in multiple settings and around various subjects. Multiracial students want to share their experiences and be heard. One of the ways that we can continue to make this a reality is by engaging our colleagues, friends, families, coworkers and communities in conversations around Multiracial identity.

#### Examine the role of curriculum in shaping Multiracial schooling experiences

Curriculum played a significant role in the experiences of Multiracial students within this study. A closer examination of culturally responsive teaching and the hidden curriculum, as it relates to the experiences of Multiracial students would enhance our understanding and efforts toward a more inclusive and equitable educational environment and pedagogical practice. There continues to be a strong need for revisiting curricular content both at a national and local level to address appropriate representation of traditionally underrepresented students. While this continues to be a challenge with monoracial student populations, we must include Multiracial students in this ongoing pursuit for socially just educational

opportunity and attainment. Waiting for monoracial inequities to be addressed as a pre-requisite for “moving on” to Multiracial issues is a massive mistake and would only exacerbate the mythological hierarchy of oppression which only serves to divide oppressed groups.

Explore and expand upon conceptual frameworks which address Multiraciality

New conceptual frameworks, such as the *Racial Queer* framework which this study introduces, should be explored and/ or expanded upon so that other lenses can be utilized in an effort to understand Multiracial experiences. While it is important to utilize past and current theoretical frameworks from which to analyze Multiracial experiences, we must also be open and proactive in the development of alternative, groundbreaking approaches that consider standpoint, theories, perspectives and insights that are otherwise invisible. A crucial element that can contribute to this generation of scholarship is the intentional outreach, recruitment, retention and incorporation of Multiracial graduate students across disciplines.

Include Multiracial experiences within the study of campus climate

Research which deals specifically with campus climate, classroom culture and educational policies as it relates to Multiracial students may ultimately present new and important challenges which need to be addressed. While there is a

vigorous scholarship base which already and continues to take on issues of welcoming campus climates, the majority of this work continues to focus on monoracial student populations. The inclusion of Multiracial students is the next step in ensuring that we are not just paying lip service to the idea of inclusivity. Multiracial college students are on every campus and they notice, whether consciously or via hidden curricular messages, that their experiences are omitted.

Explore the need for research that addresses connections between body image and Multiracial Identity

The struggle with body image was a theme that consistently emerged among my female participants, that although, important, was beyond the scope of this study. There is a need for research which explores the connections between Multiracial identity and body image, specifically with regards to Multiracial women. Participants in this study drew connections between eating disorders and Multiracial identity, pointing specifically to the push and pull effect of maintaining racial expectations of beauty (primarily focusing on body shape, size and image) when one's body is a combination of two or more racial standards of beauty. Future studies that examine the impact of Multiracial identity on perceptions of body image and overall beauty would further the analysis of Multiracial identification and its wide-reaching meanings and implications for the overall wellness of this student population.

### Collaborate across disciplines to research impact of Multiracial population on society

Finally, interdisciplinary research studies in the areas of health, education, sociology, ethnic studies, public policy and beyond, are crucial to understanding the ways in which Multiracial identity adds a meaningful dimension to our current knowledge in these areas and the ways in which they intersect. The subject of Multiracial identity touches, crosses and bridges every discipline from health care to education. Rather than studying Multiracial identity in disciplinary enclaves, it would be mutually beneficial to collaborate across disciplines to deepen and enrich our knowledge about Multiracial identity in all its complexity.

### Lessons Learned

I end this work as I believe it should end – with the voices of the participants. These are the lessons that they left me with (illustrated by the individual quotes from different participants below): the study of Multiraciality is just beginning and needs to grow; understanding Multiracial identity is challenging but it matters so much, and; educational spaces are supposed to be progressive spaces and should reflect that forward-thinking.

*Jonathan:* Multiethnicity in an educational setting is at its infant stages. It'll be interesting to see where it goes. I'm about to turn 19 – it'll be interesting in eighty or ninety years – God willing, knock on wood. It'll

be interesting to see what happens.

*May:* So, are you Multiracial just because you think you are? I am trying to understand it all. I feel like it shouldn't matter but it matters so much. It affects my daily life – I don't think about it everyday but this whole series of questions of puzzles of who am I come up.

*Solomon:* What I will end with is the fact that it's more open minded up here at Central U than down there in the Valley – significantly. I mean I don't want to generalize, but campuses, you know, are usually, supposed to be, liberal places.

Throughout this process, I would often express my concerns and challenges in this undertaking to my participants. They were never shy about advising me. At one point, I shared that I wasn't sure I was on the “right” path – would my topic resonate with others? Would this study really help? Is this work worth doing, really? One participant, poignantly and succinctly provided me this counsel about continuing this work -

And when I recall moments, facts are constructed. They are reconstructed from your point of view. It's not what actually happens – it's what you want them to be. That's how memory works, right? How do we reconstruct identities so that they make sense to us? This is an incredible journey – you appreciate things more when you know what struggle really is. You can feel happy when you have felt sadness. You know you are on the right path when stones are constantly thrown at you. If you know it's right, then whatever challenges lay ahead, you know you're on the right path.

I couldn't agree more.

## REFERENCES

- Abu-Lughod. (1991). Writing Against Culture. In R. Fox (Ed.), *Recapturing Anthropology*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Abu-Lughod, J. (1989). On the remaking of history: How to reinvent the past. In B. Kruger & P. Marini (Eds.), *Remaking History: Discussions in Contemporary Culture*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Adams, M., & Zhou-McGovern, Y. (1994). *The sociomoral development of undergraduates in a social diversity course: Developmental theory, research and instructional applications*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association.
- Adhikari, M. (2005). *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1987). *Membership Roles in Field Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Akintunde, O. (1998). Rap, Race, and Ebonics. *The Griot*, 17(1), 20-31.
- Alarcón, N. (1988). Making 'Familia' from Scratch: Split Subjectivities in the Work of Helena María Viramontes and Cherríe Moraga. In M. H. Sobek & H. M. Viramontes (Eds.), *Chicana Creativity and Criticism: Charting New Frontiers in American Literature* (pp. 147-159). Houston, TX: Arte Publico.
- Alarcón, N. (1990). Chicana Feminism: In the Tracks of 'the' Native Woman. *Cultural Studies* 4(3), 248-256.
- Alarcón, N. (1990). The Theoretical Subject of This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminism. In H. Calderón & J. L. Saldívar (Eds.), *Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Alarcón, N. (1994). Conjugating Subjects: The Heteroglossia of Essence and Resistance. In A. Arteaga (Ed.), *An Other Tongue: Nation and Ethnicity in the Linguistic Borderlands* (pp. 125-138). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Alex-Assensoh, Y., & Hanks, L. J. (2000). *Black and Multiracial Politics in America*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Alvarado, D. (1999). Multiracial student experience: what faculty and campus leaders need to know. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 20(3).
- Alwin, D., Cohen, R., & Newcomb, T. (1991). *Political attitudes over the lifespan*. Reading, MA: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Anderson, G. L. (1989). Critical ethnography in education: Origins, current status,

- and new directions. *Review of Educational Research*, 59(3), 249-270.
- Antonio, A. L. (2001). The role of interracial interaction in the development of leadership skills and cultural knowledge and understanding. *Research in Higher Education*, 42(5), 593-617.
- Anyon, J. (2009). *Theory and Educational Research: Toward Critical Social Explanation*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1981). *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Berkeley, CA: Third Women Press.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands: La Frontera - The New Mestiza*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.
- Apel, D. (2004). *Imagery of Lynching*. Piscataway, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Appiah, A. (1986). The importance of triviality. *Philosophical Review*, 94, 209-231.
- Apple, M. (2000). *Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Armelagos, G. J., Carlson, D. S., & Van Gerven, D. P. (1982). The theoretical foundations and development of skeletal biology. In F. Spencer (Ed.), *A history of American physical anthropology* (pp. 117-204). New York: Academic Press.
- Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college: Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Atkinson, D. R., Morten, G., & Sue, D. W. (1993). *Counseling American Minorities: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (4th ed.). Dubuque, IA: Brown and Benchmark.
- Baher, R. (1997). *The Vulnerable Observer*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Baker, L. (1998). *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bakhtin, M. (Ed.). (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Barnard, I. (1999). Queer Race. *Social Semiotics*, 9(2), 199-212.
- Behar, R. (1997). *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks your Heart*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Behar, R. (2003). *Translated Woman*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Bell, D. (1980). The Interest-Convergence Dilemma and Brown v. Board of Education. *Harvard Law Review*, 93(518).
- Bell, D. (2002). *Ethical Ambition: Living a Life of Meaning and Worth*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.
- Benedetto, A. E., & Oilsky, T. (2001). Biracial youth: the role of the school counselor in racial identity development. *Professional School Counseling*, October (2001), 1-6.

- Benmayor, R. (1991). Testimony, action research and empowerment: Puerto Rican women and popular education. In S. B. Gluck & D. Patai (Eds.), *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history* (pp. 159-174). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Berry, C., & Jagose, A. (1996). Australia queer. *Meanjin*, 55(1), 5-15.
- Binning, E. (2009). The Interpretation of Multiracial Status and Its Relation to Social Engagement and Psychological Well-Being. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65(1).
- Black, E. (2008). *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race*. New York, NY: Dialog Press.
- Blauner, R. (1972). *Racial Oppression in America*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Blumer, H. (1958). Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position. *Pacific Sociological Review* 1, 3-7.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003). *Racism without Racists*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003). *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction. In R. Brown (Ed.), *Knowledge, Education, and Cultural Change* (pp. 487-511). London, England: Tavistock.
- Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction. In R. Brown (Ed.), *Knowledge, Education, and Cultural Change* (pp. 487-511). London, England: Tavistock.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1985). The Genesis of the Concepts of 'Habitus' and 'Field'. *Sociocriticism*, 2(2), 11-24.
- Bourdieu, P. (1985a). The Genesis of the Concepts of 'Habitus' and 'Field'. *Sociocriticism*, 2(2), 11-24.
- Bourdieu, P. (1987). What Makes A Social Class. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 22, 1-8.
- Bourdieu, P. (1988). Social Space and Symbolic Power. *Sociological Theory*, 7(1), 14-25.
- Bowen, W. G., & Bok, D. (1998). *The shape of the river: Long-term consequences of considering race in college and university admissions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Brackett, K. P., Marcus, A., McKenzie, N. J., Mullins, L. C., Tang, Z., & Allen, A. M. (2006). The effects of multiracial identification on students' perceptions of racism. *The Social Science Journal*, 43(3), 437-444.

- Bray, A. (1982). *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*. London, England: Gay Men's Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1993). Ecological systems theory. In R. Wozniak & K. Fisher (Eds.), *Specific environments: Thinking in contexts* (pp. 3-44). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Brown, M. K. (2005). *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of A Color-Blind Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Brunsma, D. (2006). *Mixed Messages: Multiracial Identities in the "Color-Blind" Era*. Boulder, CO: L. Reinner Pres,.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of sex*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Butler, J. E. (2001). *Color-Line to Borderlands*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Cabrera, A. F., & Nora, A. (1994). College students' perceptions of prejudice and discrimination and their feelings of alienation: A construct validation approach. *Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies*, 16, 387-409.
- Cameron, S., & Wycoff, S. (1998). The destructive nature of the term race: Growing beyond a false paradigm. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 76(277).
- Carber, R., & Valocchi, S. (2003). *Queer Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley Blackwell.
- Cary, L. (2006). *Curriculum Spaces: Discourse, Postmodern Theory And Educational Research*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Cass, J. V. (1979). Homosexual identity formation: A theoretical model. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 4(3), 219-235.
- Castillo, A. (1995). *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma*. New York, NY: Plume.
- Chang, H. (1985). Towards a Marxist theory of racism. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 17(3).
- Chang, M., Denson, N., Sáenz, V., & Misa, K. (2006). The Educational Benefits of Sustaining Cross-Racial Interaction among Undergraduates. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 77(3), 430-455.
- Chang, M. J. (1999). Does racial diversity matter?: The educational impact of a racially diverse undergraduate population. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40, 377-395.
- Chang, M. J., Witt, D., Jones, J., & Hakuta, K. (2003). *Compelling interest: Examining the evidence on racial dynamics in colleges and universities*.

- Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Charmaz, K. (1983). The Grounded Theory Method: An Explication and Interpretation. In R. M. Emerson (Ed.), *Contemporary Field Research*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.
- Chickering, A. W. (1969). *Education and Identity*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. (1999). Development and Adaptations of the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 80, 75-81.
- Chickering, A. W., & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and Identity* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cho, S., & Westley, R. (2002). Critical Race Coalitions: Key Movements that Performed the Theory *University of California at Davis Law Review*, 33(1377).
- Chow, E. N. (1987). The development of feminist consciousness among Asian American women. *Gender and Society*, 1, 284-299.
- Clarke, M. (1975). Survival in the Field: Implications of Personal Experience in Field Work. *Theory and Society*, 2, 95-123.
- Collins, P. H. (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of black feminist thought. *Social Problems*, 33, 14-32.
- Connerly, W. (2001). Let's Rid Ourselves of Those Silly Race Boxes. *The Abolitionist Examiner*, August/September 2001.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons and Evaluative Criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13, 3-21.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research*. London, England: Sage.
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299.
- Crenshaw, K. W., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1996). *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*. New York, NY: New Press.
- Cross, W. (1991). *Shades of Black: Diversity in African American Identity*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Cross, W. E. J. (1978). Models of Psychological Nigrescence: A Literature Review. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 5, 13-31.
- Cross, W. E. J. (1995). Encountering Nigrescence. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling* (pp. 30-43). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cross, W. E. J., & Fhagen-Smith, P. (1997). Nigrescence and Ego Identity Development. In P. B. Pederson, J. G. Draguns, W. J. Lonner & J. E.

- Trimble (Eds.), *Counseling Across Cultures*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crotty, M. (2005). *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- D'Emilio, J. (1983). *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- DaCosta, K. M. (2007). *Making Multiracials*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Daniel, G. R. (1992). Beyond Black and White: The New Multiracial Consciousness. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *Racially Mixed People in America*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Daniel, R. (2002). *More Than Black?: Multiracial Identity and the New Racial Order*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Datum, B. D. (1992). Talking about Race, Learning about Racism: The Application of Racial Identity Development Theory in the Classroom. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(1).
- Davalos, K. M. (2008). Sin Verguenza: Chicana Feminist Theorizing. *Feminist Studies*, 34(1/2), 151-171.
- Davies, C. (1999). *Reflexive Ethnography: A guide to researching selves and others*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Davis, J. (1991). *Who is Black? One Nation's Definition*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (1998). Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research *Harvard Educational Review*, 68(4), 1-26.
- Delgado, R. (1989). *Critical Race Theory* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Delgado, R. (1995). *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (1998). *The Latino/a Condition: A Critical Reader*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Denzin, N. (1986). A Postmodern Social Theory. *Sociological Theory*, 4, 194-204.
- Denzin, N. (1997). *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2005). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- DeVault, M. (1996). Talking Back to Sociology: Distinctive Contributions of Feminist Methodology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 29-50.
- Diesel, V. (Writer) (1999). Multifacial.
- Dubois, W. E. B. (1903). *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York, NY: Random House.

- Duval, D., Carr, S., Egan, J., Mundt, K., & Stephens, M. (2008). *The University of Texas at Austin Division of Diversity and Community Engagement Impact Report*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin.
- Edwards, J. (2009). *Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick*. New York, New York: Routledge Critical Thinkers.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing Ethnographic Field Notes*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, Youth and Crisis*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Eschbach, K. (1995). The enduring and vanishing American Indian: American Indian population growth and intermarriage in 1990. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 18(1), 89-108.
- Espinoza, L. (1990). Masks and other disguises: Exposing legal Academia. *Harvard Law Review*, 103, 1878-1886.
- Espiritu, Y. L. (1997). *Asian American women and men: Labor, laws and love*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Faderman, L. (1985). *Surpassing the Love of Men. Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from Renaissance to the Present*. London, England: Women's Press.
- Ferdman, B. M., & Gallegos, P. I. (2001). Latinos and racial identity development. In C. L. Wijeyesinghe & B. W. Jackson (Eds.), *New perspectives on racial identity development: A theoretical and practical anthology* New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Foley, D. (1990). The great American football ritual: reproducing race, class, and gender inequality. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 7(2), 111-135.
- Foley, D. (1995). *The Heartland Chronicles*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Foley, D., & Valenzuela, A. (2005). *Critical Ethnography: The Politics of Collaboration*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2000). The Interview - From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the "burden of 'acting white'". *The Urban Review*, 18, 176-206.
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison*. New York, NY: Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (1981). *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. London, England: Penguin.
- Fraser, N. (1997). *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* New York, NY: Routledge.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of The Oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Company.

- Fryer, R. G., Kahn, L., Levitt, S. D., & Spenkuch, J. L. (2008). The Plight Of Mixed Race Adolescents. *National Bureau of Economic Research*, 14192.
- Funderburg, L. (1994). *Black, White, Other: Biracial Americans Talk about Race and Identity*. New York, NY: Marrow.
- Gamson, J. (2000). Sexualities, Queer Theory, and Qualitative Research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 347-365). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Garcia, A. M. (1989). The development of Chicana feminist discourse 1970-1980. *Gender and Society*, 3, 217-238.
- Garcia, R. (1995). Critical race theory and Proposition 187: The racial politics of immigration law. *Chicano-Latino Law Review*, 17, 118-148.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, & Practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gilligan, C. (1977). In a different voice: Women's conceptions of self and morality. *Harvard Educational Review*, 47, 481-517.
- Goldstein, J. R., & Morning, A. J. (2000). *The Multiple-Race Population of the United States: Issues and Estimates*. Paper presented at the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America.
- Goldstone, D. (2006). *Integrating the 40 Acres*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press.
- González, D. J. (1998). Speaking Secrets: Living Chicana Theory. In C. Trujillo (Ed.), *Living Chicana Theory*. Berkeley, CA: Third World Press.
- Gurin, P., Dey, E. L., Hurtado, S., & Gurin, G. (2002). Diversity and higher education: Theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72, 330-366.
- Guy-Sheftall, B. (1995). *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Hall, C. C. I. (1980). The Ethnic Identity of racially mixed people: A study of Black-Japanese. University of California at Los Angeles.
- Hall, C. C. I. (1992a). Coloring outside the lines. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *Racially mixed people in America*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hall, C. C. I. (1992b). Please choose one: Ethnic identity choices for biracial individuals. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *Racially mixed people in America*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hall, S. (2000). Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities. In L. Back & J. Solomos (Eds.), *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader* (1st ed., Vol. 1, pp. 155-153). London, England: Routledge.
- Halperin, D. (1995). *Saint Foucault: Towards A Gay Hagiography*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Hardiman, R. (1981). White identity development: A process oriented model for describing the racial consciousness of White Americans. *Dissertation*

- Abstracts International*, 43(1).
- Hardiman, R. (1994). White racial identity development in the United States. In E. Salett & D. Koslow (Eds.), *Race, ethnicity and self: Identity in multicultural perspective*. Washington, D.C.: National MultiCultural Institute.
- Hardiman, R., & Jackson, B. L. (2006). Racial identity development: Understanding racial dynamics in college classrooms and on campus. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 1992(52), 21-37.
- Harris, C. (1993). Whiteness as Property. *Harvard Law Review*, 106(8), 467-498.
- Harris, D. R., & Sim, J. J. (2002). Who is Multiracial? Assessing the Complexity of Lived Race. *American Sociological Review*, 67, 614-627.
- Harris, D. R., & Thomas, J. L. (2002). The educational costs of being multiracial: evidence from a national survey of adolescents. *Population Studies Center at the Institute for Social Research*, 02-521.
- Hayman, R. L., & Levit, N. (2002). Un-Natural Things: Constructions of Race, Gender and Disability. In F. Valdes, J. M. Culp & A. P. Harris (Eds.), *Crossroads, Directions, and a New Critical Race Theory*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Heckathorn, D. D. (1997). Respondent-Driven Sampling: A New Approach to the Study of Hidden Population. *Social Problems*, 44, 174-199.
- Helms, J. E. (1984). Toward a theoretical explanation of the effects of race on counseling: A black/white interactional model. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 12(4), 153-165.
- Helms, J. E. (1990). *Black and White Racial Identity: Theory, Research, and Practice*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press.
- Helms, J. E. (1995). An Update of Helms' White and People of Color Racial Identity Models. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hennessy, R. (1994). Queer theory, left politics. *Rethinking Marxism*, 7, 85-111.
- Hernandez-Truyol, B. (1997). Borders (en)gendered: Normativities, Latinas and a LatCrit paradigm. *New York University Law Review*, 72, 882-927.
- Holden-Smith, B. (1996). Lynching, Federalism and the Intersection of Race and Gender in the Progressive Era. *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, 8, 31-78.
- Holland, D., Lachicotte Jr., W., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- hooks, b. (1989). *Talking Back*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- hooks, b. (1990). The politics of black radical subjectivity. In b. hooks (Ed.), *Yearning: Race, gender and cultural politics* (pp. 15-22). Boston, MA: South End.

- Horse, P. J. (2005). Native American Identity. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2005(109), 61-68.
- Hurtado, S. (2001). Linking diversity and educational purpose: How diversity affects the classroom environment and student development. In G. Orfield & M. Kurlaendar (Eds.), *Diversity challenged: Evidence on the impact of affirmative action* (pp. 187-203). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group.
- Hurtado, S., Dey, E. L., Gurin, P., & Gurin, G. (2003). College environments, diversity, and student learning. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 18, pp. 145-190). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers
- Hurtado, S., Milem, J., Clayton-Pedersen, A., & Allen, W. (1999). *Enacting Diverse Learning Environments: Improving the Climate for Racial/Ethnic Diversity in Higher Education: ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*.
- Hurtado, S., Milem, J., Clayton-Pedersen, A., & Allen, W. R. (1998). Enhancing campus climates for racial/ethnic diversity: Educational policy and practice. *The Review of Higher Education*, 21(3), 279-302.
- Ibarra, R. A. (2001). *Beyond Affirmative Action: Reframing the Context of Higher Education*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Ifekwunigwe, J. O. (2004). *Mixed Race Studies: A Reader*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jackson, B. W. (2001). Black identity development: Further analysis and evaluation. In B. W. J. C.L. Wijeyesinghe (Ed.), *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: A Theoretical and Practical Anthology*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Jagose, A. (1996). *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
- Janesick, V. (2000). The Choreography of Qualitative Research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jimenez, T. R. (2004). Negotiating Ethnic Boundaries: Multiethnic Mexican Americans and Ethnic Identity in the United States. *Ethnicities*, 4, 75-77.
- Johnson, K. (1997). Some thoughts on the future of Latino legal scholarship. *Harvard Latino Law Review*, 2, 101-144.
- Jones, N. A., & Smith, A. S. (2001). The Two or More Races Population: 2000. *Census 2000 Brief*.
- Kao, G. (1999). Racial Identity and Academic Performance: An Examination of Biracial Asian and African American Youth. *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 2(3), 223-249.
- Kasindorf, M., & El Nasser, H. (2001). Impact of Census' race data debated. *USA Today*,
- Katz, N. (1975). *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* .

- New York, NY: T.Y. Crowell.
- Kelly, W. (1999). Postcolonial perspective on intercultural relations: A Japan-U.S. example. *The Edge: E Journal of Intercultural Relations*.
- Kennedy, R. (2001). Racial Passing. *Ohio State Law Journal*, 62(1145).
- Kerwin, C., Ponterotto, J. G., Jackson, B. L., & Harris, A. (1993). Racial Identity in Biracial Children: a Qualitative Investigation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 40(2), 221-231.
- Kich, G. K. (1992). The Developmental Process of Asserting a Biracial, Bicultural Identity. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *Racially Mixed People in America* (pp. 304-317). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Kim, C. J. (2001). The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans. In G. H. Chang (Ed.), *Asian-Americans and Politics: Perspectives, Experiences, Prospects*. Stanford, CA: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford University Press.
- Kincheloe, J., & McLaren, P. (1994). Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kinder, D., & Mendelberg, T. (1995). Cracks in American Apartheid: The Political Impact of Prejudice among Desegregated Whites. *The Journal of Politics*, 57(2), 402-424.
- Krolokke, C., & Sorensen, A. S. (2005). *Gender Communication Theories and Analyses: From Silence to Performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Krysan, M., & Lewis, A. E. (2004). *The Changing Terrain of Race and Ethnicity*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Landman, M. (2006). Getting quality in qualitative research: A short introduction to feminist methodology and methods. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, 65, 429-433.
- Lassiter, L. E. (2005). *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lather, P. (1986). Issues of Validity in Openly Ideological Research: Between a Rock and a Soft Place. *Interchange*, 17(4), 63-84.
- Lather, P. (2007). *Getting Lost*. New York, NY: SUNY
- Leontiev, A. N. (1978). *Activity, Consciousness and Personality*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Lerner, G. (1986). *The Creation of Patriarchy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Liu, A. (2009). Critical Race Theory, Asian Americans, and Higher Education: A Review of Research. *Interactions: UCLA Journal of Education and*

- Information Studies*, 5(2).
- Loo, C. M., & Rolison, G. (1986). Alienation of Ethnic Minority Students at a Predominately White University. *Journal of Higher Education*, 57(1).
- MacPhee, D., Kreutzer, J. C., & Fritz, J. (1994). Infusing a multicultural perspective into human development courses. *Child Development*, 65, 699-715.
- Madison, D. S. (2005). *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Madriz, E. (1997). *Nothing bad happens to good girls: The impact of fear of crime on women's lives*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Madriz, E. (2000). Focus Groups in Feminist Research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Manganaro, M. (1990). Textual play, power, and cultural critique: An orientation to modernist anthropology. In M. Manganaro (Ed.), *Modernist anthropology: From fieldwork to text*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Manning, K. (1997). Authenticity in Constructivist Inquiry: Methodological Consideration without prescription. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3, 93-116.
- Marable, M. (2001). The Problematics of Ethnic Studies. In J. E. Butler (Ed.), *Color-Line to Borderlands*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Marks, J. (1995). *Human biodiversity: Genes, race, and history*. New York: Degruyter.
- Martens, J. (2007). Citizenship, 'Civilisation' and the Creation of South Africa's Immorality Act, 1927 *South African Historical Journal*, 59(1), 223-241.
- Martin, M. (Writer) (2008). Biracial Americans Discuss Obama's Identity: National Public Radio.
- Martinez, G. (1994). Legal indeterminacy, judicial discretion and the Mexican-American litigation experience: 1930-1980. *UC Davis Law Review*, 27, 555-618.
- Marx, A. (1996). Race-Making and the Nation-State. *World Politics*, 48(2), 180-208.
- Matsuda, M. (1993). We Will Not Be Used. *UCLA Asian Pacific American Law Journal*, 1(February).
- McIntosh, M. (1968). The Homosexual Role. *Social Problems*, 16(2).
- McIntosh, P. (2002). White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack. *Peace and Freedom*, 247-250.
- Mencke, J. G. (1976). *Mulattoes and Race Mixture*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press.
- Milem, J., & Hakuta, K. (2000). The benefits of racial and ethnic diversity in higher education, featured report. In D. Wilds (Ed.), *Minorities in higher*

- education: Seventeenth annual status report*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.
- Milem, J. M. (1994). College, students, and racial understanding. *Thought and Action*, 9(2), 51-92.
- Miler, R. L. (1992). The human ecology of multiracial identity. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *Racially mixed people in America*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Mills, C. (2000). Race and the Social Contract Tradition. *Social Identities*, 6(4), 441-462.
- Montoya, M. (1994). Mascaras, trenzas, y grenas: Un/masking the self while un/braiding Latina stories and legal discourse. *Chicano-Latino Law Review*, 15, 1-37.
- Moraga, C. (1983). *Loving in The War Years*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Moraga, C. (1993). Queer Aztlan. In C. Moraga (Ed.), *The Last Generation* (pp. 145-174). Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Moraga, C., & Anzaldúa, G. (1983). *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. New York, NY: Kitchen Table - Women of Color Press.
- Morrison, J. W., & Rodgers, L. S. (1996). Being responsive to the needs of children from dual heritage backgrounds. *Young Children*, 52(1), 29-33.
- Nakashima, C. (1992). An Invisible Monster: The Creation and Denial of Mixed-Race People in America. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Narayan, K. (1993). How Native is a "Native" Anthropologist? *American Anthropological Association*, 95(3), 671-686.
- Nieto, C. (1974). The Chicana and the Women's Rights Movement. *La Luz*, 10-11(32).
- Nieto-Gomez. (1974). La Feminista. *Encuentro Feminil*, 1(2).
- Nishimura, N. (1998). Assessing the issues of multiracial students on college campuses. *Journal of College Counseling*, 1.
- Oakley, A. (1981). Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms. In H. Roberts (Ed.), *Doing Feminist Research* (pp. 30-61). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Obama, B. (2004). *Dreams of My Father*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Olesen, V. (2000). Feminisms and models of qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Omi, M. (2001). The Changing Meaning of Race. In N. J. Smelser, W. J. Wilson & F. Mitchell (Eds.), *America Becoming: Racial Trends and Their Consequences*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial Formation in the United States: From the*

- 1960s to the 1990s. New York: Routledge.
- Orfield, G., & Kurlaendar, M. (2001). *Diversity challenged: Evidence on the impact of affirmative action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Publishing Group.
- Park, R. E. (1928). Human Migration and the Marginal Man. *American Journal of Sociology*, 33, 881-893.
- Parker, L., Deyhle, D., Harris, A., & Wildman, S. (1998). *Race Is . . . Race Ain't: Critical Race Theory and Qualitative Studies in Education*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Parker, W. (1998). Altering white racial identity and comfort through multicultural training. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 76.
- Parker, W. M., Moore, M. A., & Neimeyer, G. J. (1998). Altering white racial identity and comfort through multicultural training. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 76(3), 302-310.
- Pascarella, E. T., Edison, M., Nora, A., Hagedorn, L. S., & Terenzini, P. T. (1996). Influences on students' openness to diversity and challenge in the first year of college. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 67(2), 174-195.
- Pascoe, P. (2009). *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Perry, W. G. (1968). *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years - A Scheme*. Cambridge, MA: Bureau of Study Counsel, Harvard University.
- Peterson, M. W., & Spencer, M. G. (1990). Understanding Academic Culture and Climate." In "Assessing Academic Climates and Cultures. In *New Directions for Institutional Research* (Vol. 68). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Phinney, J. S. (1989). Stages of ethnic identity in minority group adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 9, 34-49.
- Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic Identity in adolescents and adults: Review of research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 499-514.
- Phinney, J. S. (1992). The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure: A new scale for use with diverse groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 7, 156-176.
- Phinney, J. S. (1993). A Three-Stage Model of Ethnic Identity Development in Adolescence. In M. E. Bernal & G. P. Knight (Eds.), *Ethnic Identity: Formation and Transmission Among Hispanics and Other Minorities*. New York, NY: SUNY Press.
- Phinney, J. S., & Alipuria, L. L. (1996). At the Interface of Cultures: Multiethnic/Multiracial High School and College Students. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 136(2), 139-158.

- Ponterotto, J. G. (1988). Racial consciousness development among white counselor trainees: A stage model. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 16*, 146-156.
- Ponterotto, J. G., Utsey, S., & Pederson, P. B. (2006). European American (White) Racial Identity Development, Mental Health, and Prejudice. In *Preventing Prejudice: A guide for counselors, educators and parents*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Poston, W. S. C. (1990). The Biracial Identity Development Model: A Needed Addition. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 69*(2), 152-155.
- Reich, C. (1970). *The Greening of America*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Renn, K. A. (2000). Patterns of Situational Identity Among Biracial and Multiracial College Students. *The Review of Higher Education, 23*(4), 399-420.
- Renn, K. A. (2003). Understanding the Identities of Mixed Race College Students through a Developmental Ecology Lens. *Journal of College Student Development, 44*, 383-403.
- Renn, K. A. (2004). *Mixed Race Students in College: The Ecology of Race, Identity and Community on Campus*. Albany, NY: SUNY
- Reuter, E. B. (1918). *The Mulatto in the United States including a Study of the Role of Mixed-Blood Races Throughout the World*. Boston, MA: Richard G. Badger.
- Riley, N. (2006). The Risks of Multiracial Identification. *Chronicle of Higher Education,*
- Rincon, B. (1971). La Chicana: Her Role in the Past and Her Search for a New Role in the Future. *Regeneracion, 1*(10), 15-17.
- Rockquemore, K. A., & Brunsma, D. (2002). Socially Embedded Identities: Theories, Typologies and Processes of Racial Identity Among Black/White Biracials. *Sociological Quarterly, 43*, 335-356.
- Rockquemore, K. A., & Brunsma, D. L. (2004). Negotiating Racial Identity: Biracial Women and Interactional Validation. In A. R. Gillem & C. A. Thompson (Eds.), *Biracial Women in Therapy: Between the Rock of Gender and the Hard Place of Race* (Vol. 27, pp. 85-102). Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.
- Rockquemore, K. A., & Laszloffy, T. (2005). *Moving Beyond Tragedy: A Multidimensional Model of Mixed-Race Identity, Raising Biracial Children*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Rodriguez, R. (2008). Navigating New Definitions of a Multiracial Identity [Electronic Version]. *Public Broadcasting Service,*
- Root, M. P. P. (1992). *Racially Mixed People in America*. Thousand Oaks, Ca:

- Sage.
- Root, M. P. P. (1996). *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as a Significant Frontier in Race Relations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Rosaldo, R. (1989). *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Rowe, D., Bennett, S. K., & Atkinson, D. R. (1994). White Racial Identity Models. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 22(1).
- Ruebeck, C., Averett, S., & Bodenhorn, H. (2008). Acting White or Acting Black: Mixed-Race Adolescents' Identity and Behavior. *National Bureau of Economic Research*, 13793(February).
- Ruiz, A. S. (1990). Ethnic Identity: Crisis and Resolution. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 18(1), 29-40.
- Sabnani, H. B., Ponterotto, J. G., & Borodovsky, L. G. (1991). European American (White) Racial Identity Development, Mental Health, and Prejudice. In D. W. Sue, R. T. Carter, J. M. Casas, N. A. Fouad, A. E. Ivey, M. Jensen, T. LaFramboise, J. E. Manese, J. G. Ponterotto & E. Vazquez-Nuttall (Eds.), *Multicultural Counseling Competencies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Saks, E. (1988). Representing Miscegenation Law. *Raritan: A Quarterly Review*, 39(47).
- Sandoval, C. (1991). U.S third world feminism: The theory and method of oppositional consciousness in the postmodern world. *Gender*, 10, 1-24.
- Sandoval, C. (2000). *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Sandoval, C. (2004). U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Differential Oppositional Consciousness. In S. G. Harding (Ed.), *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Sax, L. J., & Astin, A. W. (1997). The development of 'civic virtue' among college students. In J. N. Gardner & G. Van der Veer (Eds.), *The senior year experience: Facilitating integration, reflection, closure, and transition*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Scheurich, J., & Young, M. (1997). Coloring epistemologies: Are our research epistemologies racially biased? . *Educational Researcher*, 26(4), 4-16.
- Schwartz, W. (1998). *The Schooling Of Multiracial Students*. New York, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education.
- Sedgwick, E. K. (1990). *The Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Sedgwick, E. K. (1993). *Tendencies*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Sellers, R. M., Rowley, S. A. J., Chavous, T. M., Shelton, J. N., & Smith, M. A. (1997). Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity: A Preliminary Investigation of Reliability and Construct Validity. *Journal of Personality*

- and *Social Psychology*, 73(4), 805-815.
- Shih, S.-m. (2008). Introduction to the Essays on Racial Formation in the United States. *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 123(5), 1540-1541.
- Smedley, A. (1993). *Race in North America: Origin and evolution of a worldview*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Smith, D. G., Gerbick, G. L., Figueroa, M. A., Watkins, G. H., Levitan, T., Moore, L. C., et al. (1997). *Diversity works: The emerging picture of how students benefit?* Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(23), 23-44.
- Spencer, J. M. (2000). *The New Colored People: The Mixed Race Movement in America*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
- Spencer, M., Icard, L., Harachi, T. W., Catalano, R. F., & Oxford, M. (2000). Ethnic Identity Among Monoracial and Multiracial Early Adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 20(4), 365-387.
- Spencer, R. (2006). *Challenging Multiracial Identity*. Boulder, CO: L. Rienner Publishers.
- Spickard, P. (1992). The Illogic of American Racial Categories. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *Racially Mixed People of American*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Spickard, P. (2003). Does Multiraciality Lighten? Me-Too Ethnicity and the Whiteness Trap. In L. I. Winters & H. L. DeBose (Eds.), *New Faces of Changing American: Multiracial Identity in the 21st Century* (pp. 289-300). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Spina, S., & Tai, R. (1998). The politics of racial identity: A pedagogy of invisibility. *Educational Researcher*, 27(1).
- Spivak, G. (1990). *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. London, England: Routledge.
- Stake, R. E. (2000). Case Studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stanfield, J. H. (1985). The ethnocentric basis of social science knowledge production. *Review of Research in Education*, 12, 387-415.
- Stanley, L., & Wise, S. (2000). But the empress has no clothes! *Feminist Theory*, 1(3), 261-288.
- Steele, C. M., Spencer, S. J., & Aronson, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Contending with group image: The psychology of stereotype and social identity threat* (Vol. 34). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Stephan, C. W. (1992). Mixed-heritage individuals: Ethnic identity and trait characteristics. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *Racially mixed people in America*.

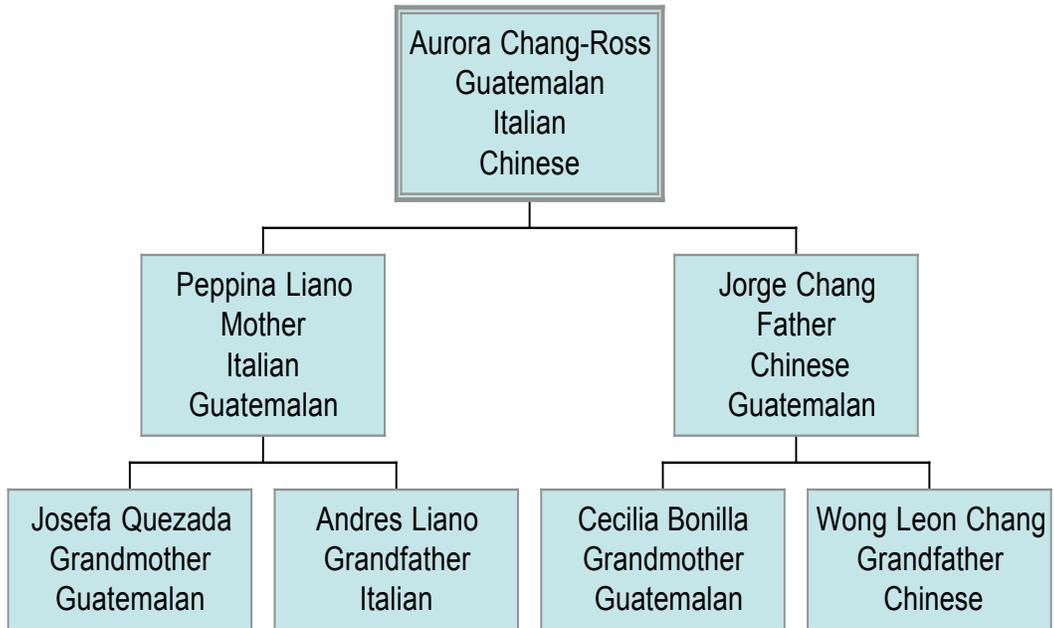
- Newbury Park, Ca: Sage.
- Stern, M. (2005). *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Sue, D. W. (2003). *Counseling the culturally diverse*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.
- Sue, D. W., Carter, R. T., Casas, J. M., Fouad, N. A., Ivey, A. E., Jensen, M., et al. (1998). *Multicultural Counseling Competencies: Individual and Organizational Development*. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.
- Sullivan, N. (2003). *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Takaki, R. (1993). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America*. Toronto, Canada: Little, Brown and Company.
- Tatum, B. (2003). *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? and other Conversations about Race*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Tellis, E. E., & Lim, N. (1998). "Does it Matter Who Answers the Race Question?: Racial Classification and Income Inequality in Brazil". *Demography*, 35(4).
- Thornton. (1996). Hidden agendas, identity theories, and multiracial people. In *The multicultural experience: Racial borders as the new frontier* (pp. 101-120). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research *Review of Educational Research*, 45(1), 89-125.
- Torres, E. (2003). *Chicana Without Apology: The New Chicana Cultural Studies*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Tracey, T. J., & Sedlacek, W. E. (1987). A comparison of white and black student academic success using noncognitive variables: A LISREL analysis *Research in Higher Education*, 27(4), 333-348.
- Traub, V. (1995). The Psychomorphology of the Clitoris. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 2(1-2), 81-113.
- Treisman, U. P. (1985). A Study of the Mathematics Performance of Black Students at the University of California, Berkeley. *PhD Dissertation, University of California at Berkeley*.
- Trinh, T. M.-H. (1989). *Woman, native, other: writing postcoloniality and feminism*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Urrieta, L. (2003). Las Identidades También Lloran, Identities Also Cry: Exploring the Human Side of Indigenous Latina/o Identities. *Educational Studies*, 34(2), 148-168.
- Urrieta, L. (2006). Community identity discourse and the heritage academy: colorblind educational policy and white supremacy. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(4), 455-476.
- Urrieta, L. (2007). *Figured Worlds and Education: An Introduction to the Special*

- Issue. *The Urban Review*, 39(2), 107-116.
- Urrieta, L. (2007). Identity Production in Figured Worlds: How some Mexican Americans become Chicana/o Activist Educators *Urban Review*, 39(2), 117-144.
- Valdes, F., Culp, J. M., & Harris, A. P. (2002). *Crossroads, Directions and a New Critical Race Theory*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Vidal, M. (1972). *Chicanas Speak Out. Women: New Voice of La Raza*. New York: Pathfinder Press.
- Villalpando, O. (2003). Self-segregation or self-preservation? A critical race theory and Latina/o critical theory analysis of a study of Chicana/o college students. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(5), 619-646.
- Villenas, S. (1996). The colonizer/colonized Chicana ethnographer: Identity, marginalization, and Co-optation in the field. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(4), 711-731.
- Walker, A. (1982). *The Color Purple*. New York, NY: Harvest Books.
- Wallace, K. (2001). *Relative/Outsider: The Art and Politics of Identity Among Mixed Heritage Students*. Westport, CT: ALEX Publishing.
- Wallace, K. (2004). *Working with Multiracial Students: Critical Perspectives on Research and Practices*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Wardle, F. (1987). Are you sensitive to interracial children's special needs? *Young Children*, 42(2), 53-59.
- Warner, M. (Ed.). (1993). *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Weber, M. (Ed.). (1978). *Economy and Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Weeks, J. (1977). *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*. London, England: Quartet Books.
- Weitzman, E. A. (2000). Software and Qualitative Research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Werner, O., & Schoepfle, G., M. (1987). *Systematic Fieldwork: Vol. 1 Foundations of ethnography and interviewing*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Wijeyesinghe, C. L. (2001). Racial Identity in Multiracial People: An Alternative Paradigm. In C. L. Wijeyesinghe & B. L. Jackson (Eds.), *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: A Theoretical and Practical Anthology*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Wijeyesinghe, C. L., & Jackson, I., B.W. (1992). *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: A Theoretical and Practical Anthology*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Williams, K. M. (2006). *Mark One or More Civil Rights in Multiracial America*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

- Williams, P. (1993). *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*. Camden Town, England: Virago.
- Williams, T. K., Nakashima, C. L., Kich, G. K., & Daniel, G. R. (1996). Being different together in a university classroom: Multiracial identity as transgressive in education. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *The multiracial experience: Racial borders as a significant frontier in race relations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Williams-Leon, T., & Nakashima, C. (2001). *The Sum of Our Parts: Mixed Heritage Asian Americans*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Willis, P. E. (1981). Cultural production is different from cultural reproduction is different from social reproduction is different from reproduction. *Interchange*, 12(2-3), 48-68.
- Winfield, A. G. (2007). *Eugenics and Education in America*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Winters, L. I., & DeBose, H. L. (2002). *New faces in a changing America: Multiracial Identity in the 21st century*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wise, T. (2010). *Colorblind: Barack Obama, Post-Racial Liberalism and the Retreat From Racial Equity*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Publisher.
- Yang, P. Q. (2000). *Ethnic Studies: Issues and Approaches*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Young, A. (1992). Out of the Closets, Into the Streets. In K. Jay (Ed.), *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Zack, N. (1993). *Race and Mixed Race*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Zack, N. (1995). *American Mixed Race: The Culture of Microdiversity*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

**APPENDIX**

# A Brief Genealogy



## Email to Potential Participants

Dear Student,

I would like to invite you participate in a research study. If you identify as a Multiracial UT college student, you are eligible to participate in this study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and I welcome any of your questions. Below you will find specific information regarding your participation.

Title of Research Study: Multiracial College Students and Identity Production: Meaning Making through the Construction and Negotiation of the Racial Self

The purpose of this study is to gain a beginning understanding of the factors that contribute to the identity production of Multiracial students. This study is significant because it can expand the way in which we consider race in educational settings, such as higher education, and further consider and incorporate this emerging community into the conversations, curricula, policies and theories around race. If you decide to participate, you will be asked questions about your personal experiences as a Multiracial individual and how you see your Multiraciality as it relates to your daily lived experiences. The interview will be recorded. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin. The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential.

As a participant of this study, you will be asked to fill out a consent form which outlines your rights and responsibilities as a participant. The benefits of being in this study are that your contributions on these issues will help develop the existing literature, knowledge and understanding of Multiracial college students and its impact on education. You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits for which you may be entitled. Throughout the study, I will notify you of any new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or if you have complaints, concerns, or questions about the research, please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support and Compliance at (512) 471-8871.

If you would like to participate and/or have any questions about the study, feel free to contact me. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Aurora Chang-Ross

[changross@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:changross@mail.utexas.edu)

512-239-8778

## **Interview Question Guide**

1. How do you think about yourself?
2. How do you describe yourself?
3. Would you describe yourself in different ways/different terms on occasion?
4. How do you think others perceive/have perceived you?
5. What are your thoughts on the term, “Multiraciality”?
6. Do you currently identify in a specific way as it pertains to your racial/ethnic/cultural background?
7. Do you know how do your family members identify?
8. What racial categorization box(es) do you check on forms? How do you make that decision?
9. Do you feel a stronger affiliation with one particular race? Why or why not?

## **Prompts**

1. What do you mean by ?
2. Would you explain . . . ?
3. What did you say when . . . ?
4. What were you thinking about when . . . ?
5. Give me an example of . . .
6. Tell me about the time . . .
7. Take me through the experience when . . .

**Informed Consent to Participate in Research  
The University of Texas at Austin**

Dear Participant,

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This letter provides you with information about the study. I will provide you with a copy of this letter to keep for your reference and am available to answer your questions and/or concerns. Please read the information below. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Title of Research Study:**

Multiracial College Students and Identity Production: Meaning Making through the Construction and Negotiation of the Racial Self

**Principal Investigator(s) (include faculty sponsor), UT affiliation, and Telephone Number(s):**

Principal Investigator: Aurora Chang-Ross, Graduate Student, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, 512-239-8878

Faculty Sponsor: Professor Luis Urrieta, Assistant Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, 512- 471-5942

**What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this study is to gain a beginning understanding of the factors that contribute to the identity production of Multiracial students in a relational fashion, from an insider perspective (how a student perceives him or her self), from an outsider perspective (how others actually perceive Multiracial students), and from an insider-outsider perspective (how a student perceives that others perceive him or her self). This study is significant because it can expand the way in which we consider race in educational settings, such as higher education, and further consider and incorporate this emerging community into the conversations, curricula, policies and theories around race. Ten subjects will be included in the study. You are being asked to be in this study because you identify as a Multiracial college student.

**What will be done if you take part in this research study?**

You will be asked questions about your personal experiences as a Multiracial individual and how you see your Multiraciality as it relates to your daily lived experiences. **If you agree to participate as a participant in one of seven case studies as part of the study, you will be asked to submit one photograph of yourself to be used as part of future data presentation.**

**The Estimated Project Duration is:** March, 2008 – March, 2009

**What are the possible discomforts and risks?**

There are no apparent risks in the study however if you encounter any concerns, please contact me directly at 512-239-8778.

**What are the possible benefits to you or to others?**

The benefits of being in this study are that your contributions on these issues will help develop the existing literature, knowledge and understanding of Multiracial college students and its impact on education.

**If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?**

No

**Will you receive compensation for your participation in this study?**

No

**What if you are injured because of the study?**

If injuries occur as a result of study activity, eligible University students may be treated at the usual level of care with the usual cost for services at the Student Health Center, but the University has no policy to provide payment in the event of a medical problem.

**If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to you?**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin.

**How can you withdraw from this research study and who should you call if you have questions?**

If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you should contact the principal investigator: Aurora Chang-Ross, 512-239-8778. You should also call Aurora Chang-Ross regarding any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research. You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits for which you may be entitled. Throughout the study, I will notify you of any new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or if you have complaints, concerns, or questions about the research, please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support and Compliance at (512) 471-8871.

**How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?**

The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed with this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study. The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and members of the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

All information that you disclose will be held private and confidential as indicated below.

- (a) the interviews and/or sessions will be audio or videotaped; (b) recordings will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them; (c) interviews will be kept in a secure place (e.g., a locked

file cabinet in the investigator's office); (d) interviews will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the principal investigator (Aurora Chang-Ross) and her associates; and (e) interviews and/or sessions will be erased after they are transcribed/coded.

If the results of this research are published or presented at scientific meetings, your identity will not be disclosed. We may wish to present some of the audio / videotapes from this study at scientific conventions or as demonstrations in classrooms. Please sign below if you are willing to allow us to do so with your recorded data.

**If in the unlikely event it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review your research records, then The University of Texas at Austin will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.**

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have any questions about the study, please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and email addresses are at the top of this page. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support and Compliance at (512) 471-8871 or email: [orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu](mailto:orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu).

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Aurora Chang-Ross

**Signatures:**

**As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:**

---

**Signature and printed name of person obtaining consent**

**Date**

**You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.**

**X**

---

**Printed Name of Subject**

**Date**

**X**

---

**Signature of Subject**

**Date**

---

**Signature of Principal Investigator**

**Date**

## VITA

Aurora Chang-Ross attended De Anza High School, Richmond, California. In 1991, she entered The University of California at Berkeley in Berkeley, California. She received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English from The University of California at Berkeley in Berkeley, California in May, 1995. She continued on to graduate school and received the degree of Master of Arts in Education from Stanford University in Stanford, California in June, 1996. During the following years she was employed as a public school teacher in San Francisco, California; as an outreach coordinator and academic coordinator at The University of California at Berkeley's Early Academic Outreach Program; as an educational manager at the College Board; as the Director of the Preview Program and Graduate Research Assistant at The University of Texas at Austin and as an instructor at Austin Community College in Austin, Texas. In June, 2004, she entered the Graduate School at the University of Texas at Austin.

Permanent Address: 710 Harrison Avenue, Beloit, WI, 53511

This manuscript was typed by Aurora Chang-Ross.