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THE MIXED RACE EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA: DOUBLE EXCLUSION

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Abstract

The mixed-race population is the fastest growing minority in the United States. The current racial stratification system does not adequately account for the diversity of this group nor properly recognize multiracial minorities. This flawed system leads to social and cultural exclusion for this population as well as a lack of recognition in race-based policies. With inaccurate or non-existent data, the multiracial population is not properly protected or served. In addition, the current political trend around race is becoming more conservative and less open to discussions beyond the white/non-white binary. This trend will continue to leave out multiracial Americans from the racial narrative and have implications for race-based policies in the future.

This paper aims to illuminate the growing needs of the fastest growing American minority. This paper shines a light on the struggle of mixed race people in America’s rigid, dated, racial system and also acts as a wake-up call to lawmakers, pointing to a lack of inclusive policies, recognition and protections that will need to be addressed as this population grows.

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“I am large, I contain multitudes”
—Walt Whitman

I. INTRODUCTION

The year 2000 was the first time in over 200 years of collecting data on race that the United States census included an option for choosing more than one race. Since that first year, the multiracial population has grown significantly – in terms of numbers, prominence and visibility. In 2013, the U.S. Census Bureau announced that about 9 million Americans chose two or more races in the 2010 census, a large increase from 6.8 million reported in 2000.¹ This has been a steady trend, as the percentage of multiracial children born in the U.S. jumped from 1% to 10% between 1970 and 2013.² Between 2000-2010, the number of individuals who chose white and Asian grew by 87% and the number of white and black biracial Americans more than doubled.³ In that same decade, the nation elected a biracial president Barack Obama – a man born to an African man and a white woman from Kansas. There are also many other prominent American public figures of mixed race such as Tiger Woods and Collin Powell. With interracial marriages also on the rise, experts predict that this trend will continue, making the population of mixed-race Americans the fastest growing minority.⁴ As reported in a 2015 Pew Research Center report:

¹ Pew Research Center (2015). “Multiracial in America: Proud, Diverse, and Growing in Numbers.” Washington, D.C., June. at

<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/>

² *Ibid.*

³ Jones, Nicholas A. and Bullock, Jungmiwha (2012). “The Two or More Races Population: 2010 / 2010 Census Briefs.” U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Sept.

⁴ Pew Research Center (2015). “Multiracial in America: Proud, Diverse, and Growing in Numbers” Washington, D.C., June. at

<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/>

*“Multiracial Americans are at the cutting edge of social and demographic change in the U.S.—young, proud, tolerant and growing at a rate three times as fast as the population as a whole.”*⁵

This shift in recognition of mixed raced people in 2000 seemed to strike down the notion that the American tradition of the ‘one-drop rule’ (or hypodescent) persisted. It fell in line with the changing norms of racial equality fostered by the civil rights movement and the landmark case *Loving v. Virginia*, which struck down miscegenation (anti-racial mixing policies) in the 1950s and 60s. Today, it would seem, especially with a biracial president, that acceptance, recognition, and inclusion of this growing population is also on the rise—that being of mixed race is widely seen as ‘normal’.

However, 17 years after the Office of Managements and Budgets introduced official recognition of multiracial people, this group reports discrimination at similar rates as monoracial Americans.⁶ People of mixed race experience social discomfort in interpersonal settings; their ambiguous physical features often invite unwarranted assumptions about their identity or origins; and they are sometimes subjected to ‘authenticity tests’ to prove their loyalty or membership in one of their racial groups in order to gain acceptance.

The difficulties faced by multiracial Americans in social and cultural settings are also reflected in official and legal structures. The option to choose two or more races does not actually ensure that multiracial people are recognized as a group or as a minority. When official governmental agencies report on various sectors of society, such as education levels, mixed race Americans are often absent from the reports. Without proper

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Campbell, Mary E. and Herman, Melissa R. (2010). “Politics and policies: attitudes toward multiracial Americans”. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33:9, p.1511- 1536.

recognition or accurate data, race-based policies and programs do not actually apply to multiracial people.

Evidently, multiracial identity is not as widely accepted in American culture – socially, culturally, or legally – as it might seem: the multiracial population is America’s invisible minority. To develop a theory of ‘double exclusion’, this paper will tackle the challenges that the mixed-race community faces under the current racial stratification system to demonstrate that the framework does not adequately recognize, protect, or serve this rapidly growing population. A two-pronged approach will be employed as the framework to examine the *de jure* and *de facto* experiences of this racial group. First, a discussion of how the current system is inherently set up to exclude persons of mixed race will exemplify exclusion ‘from above’, or official exclusion. Second, in the shadow of this flawed system, exclusion ‘from below’ will be discussed --within society, both socially and culturally. After establishing ‘double exclusion’ from above and below, there will be a review of how current racial policies and programs do not properly protect or serve this population. This paper concludes with a brief look at current trends in the national racial narrative, which are becoming increasingly insular and siloed (the re-rise of the white ethnic group and rise of the Black Lives Matter movement), moving away from inclusion of mixed race Americans.

This paper seeks to identify a blind spot in society – both officially (from above) and social/culturally (from below), which leaves this population vulnerable and without proper rights or legal recourse. The dated 5-box racial classification system is failing this group and actually perpetuating a monoracial preference. Being the fastest growing minority, this group will require more attention from lawmakers and neighbors alike.

Background

The racial makeup of the U.S. population had changed dramatically after the Immigration Act of 1965, the civil rights movement, and various waves of immigration in the 1980s and 1990s, but the official racial categories had not been updated since the 1930s.⁷ As a result of the changes, the conversation around reorganizing racial categories and mixed races re-opened towards the end of the 20th century.⁸ In the 1990s, many civil society groups began lobbying for the adoption of multiracial reporting on the census since this group was increasingly writing in ‘multiracial’ onto the census’ ‘other’ line and quickly outgrowing the dated categories.⁹

Thanks to the advocacy of such groups such as the Hapa Issues Forum and the Association of Multiethnic Americans, and even the influence of a *Mademoiselle* magazine article in favor of recognizing multiracial people, in 1997, the Office of Management and Budgets (the governmental body in charge of racial definitions and data collection) released a new set of categories and definitions of race known as the OMB Directive 15.¹⁰ The five new racial categories released to better accommodate racial diversity were: white, black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (with an additional option to

⁷ Rose, Peter I. (2006). *They and We: racial and ethnic relations in the United States*. 6th ed, Paradigm Publishers, Boulder. p.73.

⁸ Hochschild JL, Powell BM (2008). “Racial Reorganization and the United States Census 1850-1930: Mulattoes, Half-Breeds, Mixed Parentage, Hindoos, and the Mexican Race.” *Studies in American Political Development*, 22(1):59-96.

⁹ Root, Maria R. (1996). *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, p. xx.

¹⁰ Office of Management and Budgets (1997). Federal Register Notice: Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity, October 30.

choose ‘Some other race’).¹¹ The new federal standards also allowed for an option to choose two or more races.

II. CHAPTER 1: EXCLUSION FROM ABOVE

European colonialists were among the first to hypothesize that physical variation accounted for racial difference, thus developing a theory of racial hierarchy.¹² Some argue that race has been used to develop a rationale for regarding certain races as inferior.¹³ The late 18th century German scientist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach divided humans into five “natural varieties” to classify human variation: red, yellow, brown, black, and white.¹⁴ Since then, geneticists have proven this theory to be erroneous. The concept of race evolved long before science was advanced enough to break down human biology on a molecular level.¹⁵ Nonetheless, as reported by race scholar Ian Haney Lopez, all humans share the exact same genetic make-up and only groups that live in relative isolation, such as Eskimos, account for slight variation.¹⁶

The Census Bureau itself is aware of the flawed nature of using race, disavowing any intention to “define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically.”¹⁷ Still,

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Mamdani, Mahmood (2001). *When Victims Become Killers*. Princeton University Press, p. 44.

¹³ Williams, David R. (1999). “The monitoring of racial/ethnic status in the USA: Data quality issues.” *Ethnicity and Health*, Aug, p. 121.

¹⁴ Funderburg, Lise (2013). “The Changing Face of America.” *National Geographic*, Oct., at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/10/changing-faces/funderburg-text>

¹⁵ Mamdani, Mahmood (2001). *When Victims Become Killers*. Princeton University Press, p. 44.

¹⁶ Lopez, Ian F. Haney (1994). “The social construction of race: some observations on illusion, fabrication, and choice.” *Harvard Civil Rights Civil Liberties Law Review*, Winter, p. 153.

¹⁷ Funderburg, Lise (2013). “The Changing Face of America.” *National Geographic*, Oct., at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/10/changing-faces/funderburg-text>

living with race is essential in the United States and pervades all parts of American society. Racial data is used to track health and other issues, and to enforce equality and protections. The introduction of an option to choose more than one race on the census was a step towards recognition, inclusion, and self-determination for multiracial Americans. Like other minorities who experienced a change in recognition when the racial categories and options changed, mixed race Americans expected as a result to be included in the racial narrative and hold a position in line with other minorities. However, more than 20 years since the update, it is clear that the current system does not adequately recognize or include multiracial people. Without a dedicated ‘mixed-race’ category, this population remains largely invisible. This section will address how the over-simplified racial stratification system excludes multiracial Americans ‘from above’ by creating a narrow perception of racial existence.

A missing category: mixed-race

As stated in the OMB Directive 15 standards, the purpose of collecting data on race is not only to report on the population’s racial makeup, but “all levels of government need information on race to implement and evaluate programs, or enforce laws, such as the Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act, Fair Housing Act, Equal Employment Opportunity Act, and the 2010 Census Redistricting Data Program...”¹⁸ This is the government’s way to ensure that minority groups all have equal access to governmental programs.

¹⁸ Office of Management and Budgets (1997). Federal Register Notice: Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity, October 30.

The movement to include a ‘mixed-race’ or ‘multi-racial’ category that gained momentum in the 1980s purportedly succeeded in 1997 when the federal government introduced the option to choose two or more races on the 2000 census. This breakthrough was considered a huge win for the mixed-race movement. For the first time since data on race was first collected in 1790, multiracial people were able to choose two or more races. Despite the praise that it received, the update actually did little to recognize multiracial people, leaving in place a racial stratification system inherently structured to exclude multiracial people.

When an individual chooses one or more races on the census or any governmental form, it is unclear how these data are accounted for. Evidence cannot be found as to whether an individual is counted as $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, etc. of each racial category, or if they are counted as one whole person in each racial category. For example, a person who has one white parent and one black parent might mark both black and white on an official form. It is unclear whether that person is counted as $\frac{1}{2}$ of a black person and $\frac{1}{2}$ of a white person or one whole person in the black and white categories. When racial statistics are reported, there are no halves or fourths reported. There is no clear data on a ‘multiracial’ or ‘mixed-race’ group, as a category, or how the collected data affects monoracial data. The system is obscure in this regard.

To be fair, there is indeed data on how many people chose two or more races. The federal government publishes periodic reports on race in various sectors (health, economy, etc.) and even releases a report on the mixed population entitled: “The Two or More Races Population.”¹⁹ The ability to choose two or more races, however, does not

¹⁹ Jones, Nicholas A. and Bullock, Jungmiwha (2012). “The Two or More Races

definitively indicate that the multiracial population is considered to be its own race, ethnicity, or minority group. One official governmental report per year on “The Two or More Races Population” does not signify group recognition or inclusion in the racial system. This paints a blurry picture of the status of this group.

The collection of data on race is used as a tool to both govern and organize. Under this model, racial and ethnic groups must be defined in order to be recognized or reported on, and to access certain programs and protections. Therefore, by defining racial categories, the government sets the tone from above on how groups should identify in order to enjoy full participation of rights. The white/non-white binary is still the predominant racial narrative with the majority of Americans still choosing white (though projections show the whites to be in the minority in the next 30 years).²⁰ In the shadow of the current white majority, non-white minorities are the ‘other’ racial and ethnic categories, but the terms ‘mixed-race’ or ‘multiracial’ are not seen in any racial reporting or documentation, which in practice excludes the mixed race population from the system. Mixed race people are not considered a minority group or groups.

Official statistics

A brief survey of how race is used in official statistics in various fields illuminates how the lack of a ‘multiracial’ category leaves those of mixed race out of the racial discussion. To frame this discussion, the following statistics will be examined with regards to race: labor, health, and education.

Population: 2010/ 2010 Census Briefs.” U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Sept.

²⁰ El Nasser, Haya (2015). “Whites projected to become a U.S. minority.” Al Jazeera America, June, at <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/6/25/whites-on-target-to-become-a-us-minority.html>

Under the United States Department of Labor, the Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes a series of Economic News Releases that report on the ‘employment situation’ for Americans based on various demographics. They include employment status based on race, sex, age, ethnicity, civilian population, veteran status, educational attainment, industry, seasonal work, etc. Of the 25 demographic tables listed that examine labor statistics, only two deal with race or ethnicity: ‘Employment status of the civilian population by race, sex, and age’ and ‘Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age’.²¹

In the table that reports on race, white, black or African American, and Asian, are the only categories reported on –there are no mixed race statistics.²² There is a footnote that indicates that not all race groups are presented, but would be released at a later date. However, since mixed race is not considered a racial group, the employment status of multiracial Americans will not be reported on. There is no data on the employment status of multiracial Americans.

Health statistics on race reveal a similar trend of leaving out mixed-race data. The Center for Disease Control releases statistics on adult obesity. In the reports section of the CDC website, the second headline reads: ‘obesity affects some groups more than others’:²³

²¹ United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016). “Economic News Release, Employment situation.” United States Department of Labor, Oct 7, at: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.toc.htm>

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Overweight and Obesity, Data & Statistics website, at: <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>

“Non-Hispanic blacks have the highest age-adjusted rates of obesity (48.1%) followed by Hispanics (42.5%), non-Hispanic whites (34.5%), and non-Hispanic Asians (11.7%).”²⁴

There is no mention of mixed race statistics in the entire abstract of the above report. The National Institute for Health also uses the five official racial categories and one ethnicity to describe obesity rates, but does not report on multiracial obesity rates.²⁵ This dearth of data on multiracial people’s health is concerning. Either multiracial people are perfectly healthy, the data are subsumed into monoracial categories, or the data are simply not reported at all.

In the education sector, the National Center for Education Statistics is the official body that reports on high school graduation rates. As suspected, in the May 2016 table on race and ethnicity, there is no mention of mixed race:

“Asian/Pacific Islander students had the highest adjusted cohort graduation rate (89 percent), followed by White (87 percent), Hispanic (76 percent), Black (73 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native (70 percent) students.”²⁶

These official reports reveal the shortcomings of national statistics and the 5-race framework. In all of the above reports, no information on the status of mixed race people can be found regarding their employment status, health, or education levels. This gap in information leads to uncertainty with regard to how mixed race people are accounted for in national statistics. This gap also confirms that multiracial Americans are not considered an official group worthy of being reported on. The government is not

²⁴ Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Kit BK, Flegal KM (2011-2012). “Prevalence of Childhood and Adult Obesity in the United States.” *JAMA*. 2014; 311(8):806-814.

²⁵ National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (2012). “Overweight and Obesity Statistics.” Oct., at:

<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-statistics/Pages/overweight-obesity-statistics.aspx>

²⁶ National Center for Education Statistics (2016). “Public High School Graduation Rates.” May, at: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_coi.asp

monitoring the status of this growing population or its possible needs for assistance in these various sectors, which can be problematic when it comes to legal protections (to be discussed in Chapter 3).

Civil Society

The current racial stratification system not only defines the racial categories and framework for data collection in official data and statistics. This system also determines how civil society discusses race. News media outlets and non-profits use these categories to conduct research, discuss, and report on race. They reference and report on official governmental reports that lack multiracial data and adapt their frames from them. For example, in February 2016, news outlet NPR did a special segment on the black population and unemployment because of recently released governmental data.²⁷ NPR did no other such reports on the multiracial population and unemployment (or any other minority). StatofObesity.org, a health-related NGO, reports on obesity trends and focuses strictly on these categories: ‘non Hispanic-white’, ‘non Hispanic-black’, ‘non Hispanic-Asian’, ‘Hispanic’, ‘American Indian /Alaska Native’, ‘Asian’, ‘black’ ‘Latino’ and ‘white’.²⁸ Multiracial Americans do not appear in this list. Media outlets are simply reporting on official reports released by the government, think tanks, and NGOs. For example, the New York Times reported on racial disparities in death rates and only

²⁷ Glinton, Sonari (2016). “Unemployment May Be Dropping, But It's Still Twice As High For Blacks.” National Public Radio (NPR), Feb., at <http://www.npr.org/2016/02/05/465748249/african-americans-face-uncertain-reality-despite-low-unemployment-rate>

²⁸ State of Obesity.org (accessed 2016). “Obesity rates and trends overview.” Web. Source: CDC/NCHS, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2011-2014, at <http://stateofobesity.org/obesity-rates-trends-overview/>

mentioned the five races.²⁹ However, the CDC report that the article was based on had no mention of mixed-race data either. Similarly, in its guide on responding to bigotry, the Southern Poverty Law Center includes nothing on mixed race, yet displays what appears to be a photo of a multiracial family on its page on the topic.³⁰

The 2016 presidential campaign was another illuminating example. President Donald Trump often referred to certain racial and ethnic minority groups as focal points for his platform. Mr. Trump referred to ‘black youth’ when discussing education rates,³¹ and to Latinos and Hispanics when referring to unemployment rates:

“If you look at what’s going on with Latinos, Hispanics - tremendous unemployment rates. You look at what’s going on with so many groups. We’re going to make it great for everyone.”³²

Democratic nominee Sec. Hillary Clinton also addressed minority group struggles.

Neither presidential candidate focused on the mixed race population as a group, category or voting block. This population is nowhere on the presidential agenda. Why? The clear answer is that mixed-race Americans are *not* officially a defined and delineated group.

There are a few takeaways from this brief analysis. The only races that ‘exist’ in an official capacity are the five set out in the census and the one ethnicity. This system

²⁹ McNeil, Jr. Donald (2011). “Broad Racial Disparities Seen in Americans’ Ills.” New York Times, Jan. 13, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/14/health/14cdc.html>

³⁰ Southern Poverty Law Center (2015). “Speak Up: responding to everyday bigotry.” Jan, at: <https://www.splcenter.org/20150126/speak-responding-everyday-bigotry>

³¹ Fiske, Warren (2016). “Trump misleadingly puts black youth unemployment rate at 59 percent.” Politifact, June 20, at <http://www.politifact.com/virginia/statements/2016/jun/20/donald-trump/trump-misleadingly-puts-black-youth-unemployment-r/>

³² Capehart, Jonathan (2016). “What Trump gets horribly wrong about black unemployment.” Washington Post, Jan 19, at https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2016/01/19/what-trump-gets-horribly-wrong-about-black-unemployment/?utm_term=.33f0d616c38

that is set up to account for the entire American population in five broad categories is leaving out mixed race individuals. In the political arena, they are not seen as a political voting block. In terms of reporting, they are nowhere to be found in national statistics in various sectors. And in civil society, the terms set by the government also frame the discussion and general culture around race. In virtually all of these areas, the mixed-race population is absent. It is unclear what is even done with the data on those who chose more than one race other than to make one report on them per year. They are not incorporated into all sectors of society.

A monoracial preference

The current system perpetuates a monoracial preference. That mixed race people are not being reported on in labor, education, health, etc. statistics sends a definitive message: one should identify monoracially to be accounted for in official data. The numbers of people surveyed are supposed to account for the entire U.S. population. It seems possible, then, that mixed-race data is subsumed into the larger racial group data, reinforcing a monoracial preference. This is the case in civil society as well. The mainstream narrative on race is first about the black/white binary, then all other ‘normal’ minority groups: Asian, Hispanic, American Indian, and Pacific Islander.³³ Mixed race individuals are left to ‘choose’ one of their races in order to have a political voice or identity. Otherwise, they have to choose another issue area to identify with in order to have a political voice – i.e. gender issues, student issues, climate change, etc. Again, this

³³ Hispanic/Latino is officially recognized as an ethnicity, not a race. It is widely considered to be a minority group.

reinforces that monoracial identity is preferred and made even to seem possibly ‘easier’ to manage from a governance perspective.

Conclusion

Without a multiracial category, mixed race people will continue to be left out of the racial conversation. The introduction of an option to choose multiple races instead of having a dedicated mixed-race category resulted in the continuation of mixed race people being left out of official data and reporting. This dated system also sets the tone for how race is discussed and reported on by civil society. The change in options to choose more than one race evidently did little to move the mixed race agenda forward. The American population cannot possibly incorporate mixed race individuals into the narrative if they are not officially grouped as such. This is troublesome.

There is a growing population whose needs remain unknown and are possibly being unmet. The mixed race population may have different needs than monoracial groups. Health rates for a mixed race community may differ from those of a monoracial community. The gap in the system may have affects we are unaware of still. Without official recognition, multiracial people have no political voice in order for their needs to be heard. Choosing two or more races as an option is not sufficient enough to qualify this group. A functioning system in which accurate data is collected would be the first step in assessing possible needs of this population.

This discussion illuminates the official space in which multiracial people reside with regard to the racial stratification system. There are no proper terms for civil society to even employ to bring them into the racial discussion. This is exclusion ‘from above’.

This rigid racial system affects the American culture and how minority groups form their own identities and boundaries. Due to current framework, minority groups form themselves in such a way to be recognized by the government. This can lead exclusion for multiracial people in social settings. The next chapter will address how the system has affected the greater racial narrative and culture, minority group formation, and social exclusion within society ‘from below’.

III. CHAPTER 2: EXCLUSION FROM BELOW

While the last chapter established a shortcoming of the racial stratification system at the *de jure* level from ‘above’, this chapter draws upon the insights gleaned from the preceding chapter to assess the impact of the current system on the societal position of multiracial people at the *de facto* level, from ‘below’. This chapter will address how the current racial structure negatively impacts the lives of multiracial people by setting an exclusionary tone for race at the societal level. The discussion will include the following main areas that leave multiracial people susceptible to exclusion within society: terminology, perception of interracial couples, social discomfort, fluid identities, minority group boundaries, and a monoracial preference.

Terminology

Language is very important in shaping culture. Words are used to define concepts and create norms. They define who we are and where we fit. When it comes to defining a group and attribute identity, there is nothing that holds more meaning than words. The first official words used to account for people of mixed race or ethnicity were introduced into the census as a means to define purity, enacted through the ‘one-drop rule’. The one-drop rule was used as a way to identify those who were impure. One drop of black or

African blood meant black, not mixed. In the 1850s, the term ‘mulatto’ was introduced to identify mixed race people³⁴—a term widely regarded as a derogatory. Leading into the 1890s, other terms were introduced such as ‘octoroon’ and ‘quadroon’ to reflect the exact amount of black or African American blood an individual possessed -1/8th or 1/4th. This further placed mixed race people in a light as being ‘not full’ or half-breeds. In an official comment in 1890 on the volume of quadroons, octoroons, and mulattos, the census report stated, “[t]hese figures are of little value.”³⁵

These terms cast a negative shadow on multiracial individuals. The first official term ‘mulatto’ is derived from the Spanish term ‘mullato’ which is used to describe a mule, or an “infertile hybrid between a donkey and a horse”.³⁶ These words were employed as a way to label individuals as ‘non-white’ and relegate their existence to that of animals –a form of dehumanization.

Maria P. Root, an expert on multiracial identities, conducted a survey in Hawaii in the early 90s, which had the largest proportion of mixed race people of any state.³⁷ Root asked respondents to report words used to describe someone who is racially mixed. Of the 30 most common terms, the majority of terms referred to some animal or were derogatory in nature, such as ‘mutt’ or ‘mongrel’.³⁸ All of these terms bear connotations

³⁴ Hochschild JL, Powell BM(2008). “Racial Reorganization and the United States Census 1850-1930: Mulattoes, Half-Breeds, Mixed Parentage, Hindoos, and the Mexican Race.” *Studies in American Political Development*.;22(1):59-96.

³⁵ U.S. Census Office (1890). “Report on Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890.” Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, p. xciii.

³⁶ Root, Maria R.(1996). *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*. Sage Productions, Thousand Oaks, CA, p x.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.xxiii.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

of not being whole, or of being dirty, or impure. There are not many words that are neutral that can be used to describe multiracial people.

In some cases, individuals come up with more playful terminology to fill this void. A 2014 photo journal report on the changing faces of America in National Geographic reported on some interesting self-ascribed monikers used in informal settings:

“On playgrounds and college campuses, you’ll find such homespun terms as Blackanese, Filatino, Chicanese, and Korgentinian. When Joshua Ahsoak, 34, attended college, his heritage of Inupiat (Eskimo) and midwestern Jewish earned him the moniker Juskimo, a term he still uses to describe himself (a practicing Jew who breaks kosher dietary laws not for bacon but for walrus and seal meat).”³⁹

These varied terms display the varied combinations of racial mixes in existence. Mixed people really are a blend multiple languages, cultures, and ethnicities.

In the 2016 NPR article *All Mixed Up: What Do We Call People Of Multiple Backgrounds?*, author Leah Donnella tackles current issues of terminology.⁴⁰ Donella looks deeper into U.S. history of mixed-race terminology to reveal a variety of past labels used including: “muwalladeen, mulattos, mestizos, mestiços, blended, biracial, interracial, multiracial, multiethnic, gray, high yellow, half-breed, mixed-breed, cross-breed, mutt, mongrel, mixed blood, mixed race, mixed heritage, quadroon, octoroon, hapa, pardo, sambo, half-cracker but a nigger, too.”⁴¹ Donella points to other countries having their own terms as well. In Japan, ‘haafu’ is employed for half Japanese people

³⁹ Funderburg, Lise (2013). “The Changing Face of America”. National Geographic, October, at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/10/changing-faces/funderburg-text>

⁴⁰ Donnella, Leah (2016). “All Mixed Up: What Do We Call People Of Multiple Backgrounds?” National Public Radio (NPR), Aug. 25, at <http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2016/08/25/455470334/all-mixed-up-what-do-we-call-people-of-multiple-backgrounds>

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

and until 2001, the term ‘half-caste’ was still found in official documents in the U.K. The author recounts personal issues of being born to an American Jewish father and African American mother. She claims that being called mixed is dehumanizing and intrusive.⁴² Today, it is not easy to decipher whether ‘mixed’ is considered a slur or not. Some multiracial people feel that it is derogatory considering its origins and implication of impurity. This article reveals the confusion even *within* the multiracial community about what terms to use to describe mixed identity. This is could be due to these terms having had a long history of negative connotations and as recently as the year 2000, interracial marriage still being technically banned on some American soil (Alabama).⁴³ There has been little time for this identity to become ‘normal’ and for terminology to catch up.

Root describes the importance of language to the issue of race relations.⁴⁴ Words are the first step to understanding a concept. Root indicates that new terminology and bilingualism are what account for cognitive flexibility. When there are no words or no positive words, there is no understanding of this group of people.⁴⁵ This exclusionary racial system has affected the position in society of multiracial people today, starting

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ While banning interracial marriage at the federal level was officially overturned in 1967 in the Supreme Court case *Loving v. Virginia*, some states never overturned state-wide bans on interracial marriage. However, these state-level bans were essentially moot. See: Blake, Aaron (2015). “Alabama was a final holdout on desegregation and interracial marriage. It could happen again on gay marriage”, Washington Post, Feb 9, at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/02/09/alabama-was-a-final-holdout-on-desegregation-and-interracial-marriage-it-could-happen-again-on-gay-marriage/>

⁴⁴ Root, Maria (1996). *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*, Sage Productions, Thousand Oaks, CA, p x.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

from the negative words used to describe them. OMB Directive 15 states that the current standards have “provided a common language to promote uniformity and comparability for data on race and ethnicity for the population groups specified in the Directive.”⁴⁶ The government is indeed creating the language around race, which excludes terminology for those of mixed race.

Perception of interracial couples

‘Miscegenation’ is a term originally introduced at the start of the American Civil war in the 1860s to describe interracial procreation.⁴⁷ After the abolishment of slavery in 1865, states began to pass anti-miscegenation laws barring interracial marriage. Race studies author Philip Kadish writes “...miscegenation's scientific connotation — and the fact that it has the same prefix as ‘mistake’ or ‘misbegotten’ — planted the notion that races represented different species that should be separated.”⁴⁸ It was not until 1967 landmark Supreme Court case of *Loving v. Virginia* that anti-miscegenation laws were deemed unconstitutional.

The Pew Research Center study from 2012 found that between 1980 and 2010 interracial marriages had doubled, and only 11 percent of respondents had disapproving opinions of interracial marriage.⁴⁹ Despite apparent growing acceptance of mixed race couples and growing numbers of interracial marriages, a recent study conducted at the

⁴⁶ Office of Management and Budgets (1997). Federal Register Notice: Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity, October 30.

⁴⁷ Donnella, Leah (2016). “All Mixed Up: What Do We Call People Of Multiple Backgrounds?” National Public Radio (NPR), Aug. 25.

⁴⁸ Kadish, Philip (2014). “The race-mixing hoax that dogged Lincoln.” CNN.com, Feb 18, at <http://www.cnn.com/2014/02/15/opinion/kadish-lincoln-hoax/>

⁴⁹ Wang, Wendy (2012). “The Rise of Intermarriage: Rates, Characteristics Vary by Race and Gender.” Pew Research Center, Feb 16.

University of Washington study points to lingering skittishness towards racial mixing. The study found a bias towards disgust and an association with dehumanization with regard to mixed race couples.⁵⁰ Due to the relatively recent legality of interracial marriage at the federal level, the perception of interracial marriage is often negative and couples are still subject to social discomfort today. The researchers conducted three experiments surrounding participants' willingness to enter into an interracial relationship, recording neural activity when being shown pictures of interracial couples, and an implicit association test. Findings showed negative correlations in all three experiments with neural activity being activated in the parts of the brain as disgust.⁵¹

Interracial couples also report social discomfort and difficulty being accepted by family members and friends. It is unsurprising to learn of these findings when the historical context is considered. With the one-drop rule, anti-miscegenation, and interracial marriages still being deemed illegal in some states as recently as the early 2000s,⁵² this relatively newly recognized racial group has not had much time to shed negative connotations or even find words to self-identify.

Social discomfort

In a highly racialized society, much emphasis is placed on race as a main organizational tool, even in interpersonal settings. Because the social construct of race is

⁵⁰ Bach, Deborah (2016). "Study finds bias, disgust towards mixed-race couples." University of Washington Today, August 17, at <http://phys.org/news/2016-08-bias-disgust-mixed-race-couples.html>

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Blake, Aaron (2015). "Alabama was a final holdout on desegregation and interracial marriage. It could happen again on gay marriage." Washington Post, Feb 9, at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/02/09/alabama-was-a-final-holdout-on-desegregation-and-interracial-marriage-it-could-happen-again-on-gay-marriage/>

based on physical attributes such as skin tone, the American racial system places value on one's phenotype in determining identity. This arguably is the starting point for what Americans *should* look like. Race is often the first identifier registered when encountering another person –known as the 'eyeball test'. A 2014 National Geographic article reports:

“A study of brain activity at the University of Colorado at Boulder showed that subjects register race in about one-tenth of a second, even before they discern gender. In May researchers reported that political conservatives are more likely than liberals to categorize ambiguous black-white faces as black. We assign meaning in the blink of an eye.”⁵³

Race (skin color and phenotype) are often the first identifiers used to place one's self in relation to others. In an article addressing integration and assimilation of minority groups, Richard Alba discusses the confusion that race introduces because of its bases in phenotype. Alba touches on the work of Ian Haney Lopez when making the point that all other variables equal (such as educational attainment and income levels), phenotype usually is of great importance when being judged. He also discusses the challenges of whether race is exogenous or endogenous when describing how context, such as community, heavily influence racial identity.⁵⁴ This touches on whether race is self-determined or imposed by external factors which will be explored later.

Oftentimes displaying ambiguous features due to their ethnic blends, multiracial people disrupt societal expectations where monoracial identity is the norm. A certain hair color or texture, paired with a face shape, skin color, or bone structure that is out of the

⁵³ Funderburg, Lise (2013). “The Changing Face of America.” National Geographic, Oct., at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/10/changing-faces/funderburg-text>

⁵⁴ Alba, Richard (2005). “Bright vs. Blurred Boundaries: Second Generation Assimilation and Exclusion in France, Germany, and the United States.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28, 1: 2049, p. 19.

ordinary can set off a chain of questions and lead to fetishization. As a result of a lack of understanding and presumption based on race, multiracial individuals can often be subjected to social discomfort. It arrives in comments such as ‘what are you?’, ‘you don’t look’, ‘you can’t be...?’, ‘where are you from?’ etc.⁵⁵ Encounters then take a defensive tone or launch into an authenticity test where the mixed person has to prove their membership to a certain group. In a recent article from VICE news, an author collects accounts of being branded as exotic or attractive while dating a mistaken monoracial complexion or unusual blend of features.

*“This is what it's like to be a mixed-race girl on Tinder [a dating app]. Out of the hundreds of conversations I've had on the app, about half of them have involved a man tokenising me for my ethnicity. And if they're not harping on my race and calling me "black beauty," then I'm often expected to respond to their pretty gross sexual messages...”*⁵⁶

This further echoes the earlier point of this group being dehumanized or objectified.

Multiracial people endure being fetishized in other ways as well. There are many articles about fetishizing mixed race children in hopes of having an attractive child. Mixed children are considered more beautiful in some settings.⁵⁷ The ideology of racial fetishization involving being attracted to a race other than one’s own, leads to the objectification of that racial group.

⁵⁵ Root, Maria R. (1996). *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, p.xxii.

⁵⁶ Brinkhurst-Cuff, Charlie (2015). “This is what it’s like to be a woman of color on Tinder.” VICE, May 15, at: https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/this-is-what-its-like-to-be-a-woman-of-color-on-tinder-514

⁵⁷ Basnight, Carmie (2016). “The problem with fetishizing mixed children.” The Odyssey Online, Eastern Connecticut State, Jun 14, at <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/problem-fetishizing-mixed-children>

Alternatively, it is sometimes difficult to discern whether a person is clearly multiracial or monoracial. In the case where a mixed person displays features that appear to be monoracial, they can be mistaken for a minority or another race altogether. They can be treated like a minority and subjected to racial slurs that possibly do not correlate with their actual racial identity at all. For example, a person of mixed Indian and white descent could be mistaken for Hispanic and subject to derogatory names for being Hispanic. Or similarly, that same person could be heckled for not speaking Spanish when being mistakenly identified as Hispanic. These types of experiences reveal how a multiracial person's identity does not easily fit (or does not fit at all) into society's norms.⁵⁸

Parents of multiracial children report having to 'prove' that they are indeed parents of their children who may have a completely different skin color than theirs –like with author Donella above. It can come in everyday moments like at the checkout counter of a market when asked why a light-skinned child is with a parent of a different race, or by people on the street asking if a parent is in fact their own child's nanny.⁵⁹

Multiracial people have to reassert their existence and combat a racial structure imposed on them in a specific way that monoracial people do not.⁶⁰ Monoracial people are easily accepted into their *own* racial groups and identifiable according to their racial performance.

⁵⁸ Root, Maria R. (1996). *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, p.xxii.

⁵⁹ Markle, Meghan (2016). "I'm more than an 'other'." *Elle UK Magazine*, Dec.22, at <http://www.elleuk.com/life-and-culture/news/a26855/more-than-an-other/>

⁶⁰ Daniel, G. Reginald (1996). "Black and White Identity in the New Millennium: Unsevering the Ties that Bind." *The Multiracial Experience*. Sage Publications. p. 121-139.

Fluid identities

Through research by national think tanks such as Pew Research Center, we are learning more about the fluid nature of mixed race identity. People of mixed parentage may identify differently at different times, growing closer to one racial or ethnic identity over time (during college, for example).⁶¹ Self-identification may also depend on context, like what their communities were like growing up. Siblings with the same parents may identify differently. One may feel more attached to one parent's culture than another.⁶² Race scholar Ian Haney Lopez himself is of mixed descent (white and Hispanic). Lopez describes in his article about the social construction of race how his brother was more likely to be mistaken as Hispanic, simply because his name was 'Jose' (ironically, Jose identifies more with the white side of their family).⁶³ Some may speak multiple languages in addition to English that may not correspond to either of their ethnic groups.

Identity is a highly nuanced concept, especially for mixed race people, with many influences including religion, politics, geography, as well as how the person thinks the answer might help or hurt them in any given situation. They may feel closer kinship with a parent that was more present or a loyalty to the more dominant culture in the household. Interviewees share their personal experiences from the National Geographic article:

“ “I just say I'm brown,” McKenzi McPherson, 9, says. “And I think, Why do you want to know?” Maximillian Sugiura, 29, says he responds with whatever ethnicity provides a situational advantage”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Pew Research Center (2015). “Multiracial in America: Proud, Diverse, and Growing in Numbers” Washington, D.C., June.

⁶² Lopez, Ian F. Haney (1994). “The social construction of race: some observations on illusion, fabrication, and choice.” Harvard Civil Rights Civil Liberties Law Review Winter, p. 153.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

“Yudah Holman, 29, self-identifies as half Thai and half black, but marks Asian on forms and always puts Thai first, “because my mother raised me, so I’m really proud of being Thai.”⁶⁵

This shows that racial data might change according to how individuals self-identify. In Pew research interviews conducted with multiracial people, many felt discomfort in discussing their mixed backgrounds and felt more comfortable identifying themselves in other ways other than racially: ‘male’, ‘Californian’, ‘gay’, etc.⁶⁶ According to a 2015 Pew Research Center survey of multiracial Americans, “a majority (55%) say they have been subjected to racial slurs or jokes, and about one-in-four (24%) have felt annoyed because people have made assumptions about their racial background.”⁶⁷

Barriers to entry within minority groups

The space that mixed race people live in is shaped by negative words or a lack of words. They experience social discomfort and discrimination. They have to prove or explain their existence. Whites are the majority and the mainstream racial norm. Therefore, mixed-race people are left to find a space to identify partially in the white group and/or in more than one minority group norm. Multiracial people experience exclusion within the minority group context –another area of exclusion.

The U.S. racial stratification system affects group identity. As stated previously, the state confirms that the collection of racial data is carried out to ensure access to governmental programs and ensure equality. In order to equally access rights such as civil rights, voting rights, the right to nondiscrimination and more, the government must

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Pew Research Center (2015). “Multiracial in America: Video: Multiracial Voices on the Question: ‘What Are You?’ ” June.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

recognize the individual or group as being in the minority. By the very nature of this system, minority groups are forced to define themselves, in order to enjoy certain rights. This structure leaves people who do not identify with one of the 5 boxes or multiple boxes susceptible to exclusion. Racial and ethnic minority groups define themselves by gravitating towards others, continuing cultural practices and sometimes to preserve their culture, but also out of necessity to access rights. This is the case for Native Americans, for example, who have a specific set of rights accorded to them based on their indigenous identity. It is also possible that groups define themselves in order to move along the hierarchy of a group's track (i.e. Italian and Irish Americans becoming white) in the broader white/non-white system.⁶⁸

It is necessary to recognize the importance of the innate need for belonging and recognition. According to Ira Gelman, a person's ethnic identity provides an individual with a sense of belonging and emotional stability.⁶⁹ Gelman explains the significance of group membership:

*"Of all group memberships, ethnic affiliation is one of the most significant aspects on an Individual's sense of self [internal citation]. Research demonstrates that the way minorities fuse their subculture's unique qualities with mainstream cultural identity has a direct impact on their psychological functioning and sense of self-worth (internal citation: Cote, 2006; Schwartz, 2007 Cote, & Arnett, 2005)"*⁷⁰

Acceptance within an ethnic group is a very important part of developing one's identity and sense of belonging. Much like the research of Root, Gelman reports on groups feeling superior or inferior to other groups. Gelman reports that ethnic identity is

⁶⁸ Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo (2004). "From bi-racial to tri-racial: Towards a new system of racial stratification in the USA." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.27, 6,931-950.

⁶⁹ Gelman, Ira (2014). "The impact of gender on how adolescent Jewish-Americans experience." *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, p.11.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p.12.

solidified in adolescence whereas according to Root's work on multiracial people, it appears that mixed race people change their affiliation through context and time. Both authors touch on this affiliation being linked to feelings of self-worth and self-esteem, especially for groups that are not the majority. According to Gelman, there has been substantial research that demonstrates that 'individuals assess and evaluate themselves based on their group's societal position.'⁷¹ They are aware of the stereotypes that society casts on them and evaluate themselves according to the stereotypes. This is a glimpse into how group acceptance affects an individual.

White is the mainstream majority race with specific 'entry criteria'. These criteria determines who is in the 'in-group' or 'out-group'. These criteria for the primarily Anglo-Saxon whites has changed over time. At the turn of the 20th century, Jews, Italians and Irish were not considered white, whereas today, they have been widely accepted into the white category. This can be attributed, according to various authors, to similarities in phenotypes and similar Judeo-Christian values.⁷² Other non-white minority groups are left to form their own identities in the majority's shadow.

Minority groups also have their own sets of entry criteria and norms.⁷³ In the case of the Jewish community, many ultra-religious sects require Jewish matrilineal descent to

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Alba, Richard (2005). "Bright vs. Blurred Boundaries: Second Generation Assimilation and Exclusion in France, Germany, and the United States." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28, 1: 2049. p.11.

⁷³ For the purposes of this paper, Jewish identity will be considered an ethnic minority group since OMB Directive 15 considers ethnicity (like race), a social construct and this group has its own cultural (not racial) customs. See Office of Managements and Budgets (1997).

be considered Jewish at all.⁷⁴ It has been shown that minority immigrant groups often display more salient cultural or religious traits when they are outside of the majority.⁷⁵ This may be due in part to efforts towards cultural preservation, as demonstrated by the efforts of the Jewish community to re-engage its lost members who have inter-married and assimilated into the greater American mainstream. There is a movement within the Jewish community to accept ‘Jews of Color’ which are non-white Jews that are often the result of mixed-race marriages.⁷⁶ There are strict criteria for who is Jewish in this community which is now being challenged. This reveals that within minority groups there are norms that mixed-race people are faced with. Not only are they faced with larger monoracial norms, but they are then presented with challenges proving their membership within minority groups as well. People who are mixed race find difficulty being accepted into one or more of their racial or ethnic groups because 1) they do not ‘look’ like other monoracial or mono-ethnic members, 2) their loyalty can be questioned, or 3) the minority group norms have (as Alba would say) bright boundaries⁷⁷ and entry criteria that mixed race people do not fill.

Monoracial preference

The discomfort experienced in the multiracial community further reveals a monoracial preference in society that began with the one-drop rule. Within the very strict

⁷⁴ Sorek, Susan (2002). “Mothers of Israel: Why the Rabbis Adopted a Matrilineal Principle.” *Women in Judaism* 3.1 p. 1-12.

⁷⁵ Peek, Lori (2005). “Becoming Muslim: The Development of a Religious Identity.” *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 66, No. 3, Autumn, p. 218.

⁷⁶ Dreyfus, Hannah (2016). “Jews of Color press for acceptance.” *The Jewish Week*, Oct. at <http://www.thejewishweek.com/news/national/jews-color-press-acceptance>

⁷⁷ Alba, Richard. (2005). “Bright vs. Blurred Boundaries: Second Generation Assimilation and Exclusion in France, Germany, and the United States.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28, 1: 2049.

white/black or white/non-white binaries that dominate the racial narrative, mixed race people are sometimes forced to choose one group to identify with in order to feel accepted. A recent New York Times article about racial tensions and free speech on college campuses reported that:

*“Racially ambiguous students said they had trouble fitting in. “I’ve been called Rachel Dolezal,” said Kaelan McCone, a freshman from Greensboro, N.C., referring to the white civil rights activist who identified as black. Mr. McCone, whose father came from Ireland and whose mother is African-American, said classmates had demanded that he show them family photos to prove that he is black.”*⁷⁸

This demonstrates the difficulty that multiracial people sometimes face in fitting into their respective minority groups. They are subjected to ‘authenticity tests’.

In particular, for individuals of mixed African American descent, there are oftentimes difficulties fitting into the norm established by African American groups. This is sometimes referred to as *colorism*. As a means of forming group identity, some groups have adopted a ‘racial purity’ framework, based on color. This could be partly due to the hierarchy of whiteness that was imposed onto citizens to identify non-whites since the era of slavery. Lighter-skinned blacks were thought to have been better off than other blacks because they might have been mixed with white blood and treated less harshly by slave owners.⁷⁹

Another example is of a mixed race individual named Alex, the son of an African American mother and a Jewish American father. While conducting research for her essay

⁷⁸ Hartocollis, Anemona (2015). “With Diversity Comes Intensity in Amherst Free Speech Debate.” New York Times, Nov 28, at https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/29/us/with-diversity-comes-intensity-in-amherst-free-speech-debate.html?_r=0

⁷⁹ Bennett, Geoffrey (2007). “For light-skinned only?” National Public Radio (NPR), Oct. 16.

‘Romantic Management of Racial Identity’, Frances Widdance Twine interviewed Alex.⁸⁰

Alex decided that his racial identity was monoracial and black when he got to college and that he would only date black women from that point on. This demonstrates firstly the changing racial identity of mixed people and secondly as Twine states:

“...his recently acquired monoracial black identity requires him to perform certain types of cultural work in order to demonstrate to both himself and the black community that he is unequivocally located socially in the black. His allegiance to brown-skinned women who are integrated into the black campus community and, more important, publically recognized as black.”⁸¹

This shows that in regards to the norm for the black minority, one criteria for entry is to only date black women. This is a requirement in order to be socially accepted into this minority group. This is the minority group norm. But Alex grew up in a mixed household. He may have felt the need to choose a monoracial identity in order to fit in. This exemplifies the challenges that mixed race people face when trying to be accepted at the minority group level.

The most famous example of choosing a monoracial black identity is President Barack Obama. President Obama did not have the ‘typical Black American’ experience. His black heritage did not descend from slaves. Obama can trace his African roots to his father’s homeland of Kenya.⁸² He grew up in Hawaii and abroad, not in an African American community on the south side of Chicago, which is where his political identity and platform was formed. He is oftentimes compared to ‘pure’ African American leaders

⁸⁰ Widdance Twine, Frances (1996). “Heterosexual Alliances: The Romantic Management of Racial Identity.” *The Multiracial Experience*, Sage Publications, p. 291.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Obama, Barack (1995). *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. Broadway Paperbacks, New York, NY.

such as Malcom X and Martin Luther King, Jr.⁸³ That very word, ‘pure’ demonstrates the difficulty that even a biracial president faces in gaining access and acceptance into a minority cultures. If Obama was born in the 1850’s, according to the census and the majority of whites at that time, the one-drop rule would apply and Obama could be only Black in government and society’s eyes.

Not having a Jewish mother, not dating black women exclusively, or not practicing a particular cultural ritual is enough for a multiracial person to be barred from entry to a minority group. A multiracial person’s own racial or ethnic groups may not even recognize that they belong simply due to ambiguous phenotypes. They have to prove their authenticity and membership into groups that sometimes have strict entry criteria.

Multiracial people are excluded from easily entering minority groups due to the factors outlined above. The strict, non-representative, five race stratification system creates a hierarchy and a norm structure. Because white is the mainstream norm, every other race is a subgroup with their own subgroup norms. These subgroups are forced to define themselves to the government in order to gain access to certain rights. As a result, they can perform their racial identities in a more salient way to secure a place in the racial pecking order. Multiracial people are subsequently subject to resistance when ‘applying’ for acceptance into their respective groups or are forced to choose –a challenge that monoracial Americans do not experience.

⁸³ Taghadomi, M. J. (2012). “Barack Obama – A Biracial Individual and the Dilemma of Race Transcendence During the Post-Civil Rights Era.” *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, 5(2), 111-123.

A deeper look: Barack Obama

In 1967, only six years after Obama's birth, the Supreme Court struck down laws that made miscegenation, or interracial sex and marriage, illegal, deeming them unconstitutional.⁸⁴ At the time when Barack Obama might have first confronted his racial identity, choosing more than one race on the census was not an option. A multiracial identity did not exist in a *de jure* or *de facto* form. The government did not legally recognize mixed race, and in society, one was either black or white. In 2010, Obama marked black as his race on the census. He has said, "...But I self-identify as an African American. That's how I am treated and that's how I am viewed and I'm proud of it."⁸⁵ This is a loaded statement that allows a glimpse into the history of race in the U.S. Obama self-identifies according to how he is treated and viewed by others. Phenotypically, Obama may appear to be biracial, but this statement tells us that he was perceived as black, and therefore identifies as such. The black identity was imposed onto him, despite the fact that he was raised by a white mother and grandparents, and that his African father and African culture was largely absent from his upbringing. This recalls Alba's earlier questioning of race being exogenous. Because he wasn't 'pure' white, Obama was seen as black by his community and treated as such, heavily influencing how he chose to self-identify.

Proponents of multiracial identity harshly criticized Obama's census choice. It had been 10 years since mixed race became an option on the census when Obama chose a

⁸⁴ "*Loving v. Virginia*. 1967" *Oyez*. Chicago-Kent College of Law at Illinois Tech, n.d. accessed Dec 20, 2016. <<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1966/395>>

⁸⁵ Chang, Elizabeth (2010). "Why Obama should not have checked 'black' on his census form." *The Washington Post*, April.

monoracial identity. Mixed race identity was becoming more and more normal and forming its own identity amongst other minorities. Critics state that Obama missed an opportunity to amplify the voice of the mixed race population and bring this minority group into the broader conversation around race. One interviewee from a Washington Post article states:

“I am the mother of biracial children (Asian/Caucasian) and believe that multiracial people need to be accepted and acknowledged -- even celebrated. The president's choice disappoints me, and it seems somewhat disingenuous. Obama, who has also referred to himself as a "mutt," made a big deal during the 2008 campaign of being able to relate to Hawaiians and Midwesterners, Harvard grads and salespeople, blacks, whites, Latinos, whatever -- precisely because of his "unconventional" background and multicultural exposure. On the census, however, he has effectively said that when it counts, he is black.”⁸⁶

Critics of his census choice contended that he had passed up “an opportunity to articulate a more nuanced racial vision for the increasingly diverse country he heads.”⁸⁷

In a study done specifically on the reaction to Obama’s choice to self-identify as monoracial, the overwhelming result, by a large margin, was that he should have identified as both black and white on the census.⁸⁸ Of the respondents who were simply asked what Obama should have done (before being given information about his family’s background), 58% of all subjects said he should have identified as black and white while only 27% said he should have identified as black only.⁸⁹ Once information was introduced on the background of Obama’s parents, the result was still overwhelming that

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Rodriguez, Gregory (2011). “President Obama: At Odds with Clear Demographic Trends Toward Multiracial Pride.” Los Angeles Times, April 4, at <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/apr/04/opinion/la-oe-rodriguez-column-obama-race-20110404>.

⁸⁸ Citrin, J., Levy, M. and Houweling, R. P. V. (2014). “Americans Fill Out President Obama's Census Form: What is His Race.” *Social Science Quarterly*, 95: 1121–1136.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

he should have identified as black and white (the number of respondents who said he should have chosen black only dropped to 13%).⁹⁰ These results point to widespread public acceptance of multiracial identity from people of many varied backgrounds –even for the President of the nation.

It is understandable that mixed race individuals could be offended that their President did not choose to identify as they would. It could also be perceived as disingenuous because part of Obama’s platform while running included the fact that he could identify with both of his racial groups. However, it is *possible* that Obama identifies as monoracial as a result of the legacy of all the anti-mixing legislation and norm shaping throughout his upbringing. Obama chose black because he was treated as black and ‘looked’ black. He had no choice –literally and figuratively – and wanted to fit in. The conversation around race when Obama was growing up was based on the census’s narrow categories of race. When the census opened up racial options in 2000, only then did the conversation around race begin to reintroduce the mixture of races. It is unfair to criticize Obama who grew up at a time when the *de facto* state of racial identity was forcibly narrow and monoracial. The census choice is also a personal one that every citizen is allowed to decide on his or her own.

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to examine how the strict 5-box racial stratification system shapes the racial culture and social exclusion with regard to mixed-race people. It has been demonstrated that multiracial people are excluded at the *de facto*, inter-personal level. They live a particular existence. In a society that prefers monoracial

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

identity and easily identifiable phenotypes, multiracial people create a disruption and experience discomfort as a result. People who straddle the line into many boxes do not find easy acceptance. There are no agreed upon terms for this group to self-identify or be identified by. The increasing diversity within the multiracial community further complicates defining it. There are infinite possibilities for racial mixing and experiences depending on the racial groups, ethnic groups, the generation in which the person was born and the state of the mixed norm at that time, context (community, family makeup, etc.).

The rigid tone set from above in the official structure impacts culture and social interaction. As Susanne Wessendorf discusses in an article about the ‘ethos of mixing’ in a London suburb, “...attitudes towards diversity are shaped by a public discourse that positively celebrates diversity, but also by the way in which groups participate in public and associational space.”⁹¹ The system has created solid boundaries for each racial group from above and left no room for participation from the mixed population. The mixed population’s participation in the public space usually is not tied to their multiracial identity, but to another aspect of their identity. Little room for participation coupled with a long history of anti-mixing rhetoric is a troublesome place for mixed race people. Consequently, public discourse revolves around the five recognized racial groups and excludes multiracial Americans. Multiracial people have to confront this tone and overcome it in their quotidian life. After not being recognized from ‘above’ in official structures, they have to confront exclusion for feeling like their existence is on the fringes

⁹¹ Wessendorf, Susanne (2013). “Commonplace diversity and the ‘ethos of mixing’: perceptions of difference in a London neighbourhood.” *Identities*, 20:4, 407-422, DOI:10.1080/1070289X.2013.822374.

in social settings, and are presented with challenges within their own ethnic and racial groups from ‘below’. They are doubly excluded.

IV. CHAPTER 3: PUBLIC POLICY AND PROTECTIONS

The preceding chapters established that the mixed race population is being treated as an invisible minority group from the top down, and subjected to exclusion and discomfort from the bottom up. Finding themselves in the narrow middle of the two levels, this population’s vulnerability to exclusion leaves open-ended questions about legal recourse or access to programs, as public policy is shaped by both data and public discourse. This chapter will discuss legal protections and policy in light of how they are shaped – in the middle (data from above and public discourse from below). This chapter will assess whether current policies properly protect, and serve multiracial Americans considering the particularities of their existence.⁹²

Interracial policies -a historical snapshot

A brief overview of the history of interracial policies helps set the frame for discussing legal protections and policy. In 1883, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the state of Alabama’s anti-miscegenation statute in the case *Pace v. Alabama*.⁹³ This was possibly the first Supreme Court case involving interracial relations. Each state has had various statutes concerning anti-miscegenation throughout history. The policies were mainly focused on keeping the white race ‘pure’. In California, anti-miscegenation laws forbade whites from marrying blacks, Asians and Filipinos until 1948.⁹⁴ In other western

⁹³ *Pace v. Alabama* (1883). U.S. Supreme Court. 106 U.S. 583 (1883).

⁹⁴ Euse, Erica (2016). “When will people finally accept interracial dating?” VICE, Nov. 6, at https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/loving-movie-when-will-people-accept-interracial-dating

states such as Utah and Wyoming, similar anti-mixing policies stayed on the books well into the 1960s.⁹⁵ In 1958, Richard Loving and a pregnant Mildred Jeter, a white man and black woman, wed in Washington D.C. The Lovings circumvented their home state of Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924, which prohibited interracial marriage, sex, and the birth of children.⁹⁶ The Lovings were arrested upon returning to Virginia and sentenced to 25 years of living outside of the state. The case made it to the Supreme Court. The ban against interracial marriage was finally struck down by the landmark case *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967. Before this case, the Lovings' children would have been considered bastards and not eligible for public services or the inheritance of property.

Sadly, the concern for mixed marriages and children did not end after the Supreme Court ruling.⁹⁷ In 1994, a case was brought against a high school principal in Wedowee, AL for forbidding interracial couples to attend prom and calling mixed race students "a mistake."⁹⁸ As recently as 2009, a justice of the peace in Louisiana refused to issue a marriage license to an interracial couple.⁹⁹ This demonstrates some of the discrimination and legal hurdles interracial people and couples have faced in recent times.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Gross, Jane and Smothers, Ronald (1994). "In prom dispute, a town's race divisions emerge." New York Times, Aug 15, at <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/08/15/us/in-prom-dispute-a-town-s-race-divisions-emerge.html?pagewanted=all>

⁹⁹ CNN (2009). "Justice stands by refusal to give interracial couple license to wed," CNN, Oct 18, at <http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/10/17/interracial.marriage/>

Discrimination

As discussed in the previous chapter, there is widespread evidence of discrimination experienced by people of mixed race. In a 2008 survey reported on by Campbell and Herman, multiracial people reported discrimination at similar rates to that of monoracial minorities. Multiracial people reported experiencing discrimination in intimate contexts (such as among family and friends), in public contexts (such as with store clerks – 34%) as well as from neighbors (19%).¹⁰⁰ The study also shows that multiracial people are also more likely to experience discrimination from one of their own racial groups.¹⁰¹ Evidently, multiracial people can experience discrimination or prejudice from the general public *and* within their own racial or ethnic groups when having to ‘prove’ their membership. Should protection from discrimination be required on the basis of being mixed race, there is actually no legal recourse –to be discussed in the next section.

Legal protection and access to services

Passed in 1868, the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution specifies equal protection under the law at the state level, irrespective of differences such as race.¹⁰² The Federal government is constitutionally bound not to discriminate under the 5th Amendment Due Process as well.¹⁰³ In theory, equal protection under the law applies to all American citizens, including multiracial people.

¹⁰⁰ Campbell, Mary E. and Herman, Melissa R. (2010). “Politics and policies: attitudes toward multiracial Americans.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33:9, p.1511-1536.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 2.

¹⁰³ U.S. Const. amend. X, § 2.

Affirmative action policies present a legal grey area with regard to multiracial access and protection. Affirmative action is a concept codified into policies, which are meant to address structural inequities based on race and minority status. According to CivilRights.org, Affirmative action is: “the conceptual recognition of the need to take affirmative, or positive legal action to redress discrimination’s impact, rather than simply ending discrimination, has been around since the Civil War.”¹⁰⁴ A survey of over 1500 people revealed that 20-40% of whites support affirmative action policies in favor of blacks.¹⁰⁵ The survey questions were broadly phrased. When the questions became more specific (i.e. do you favor affirmative action policies, such as scholarships, for minorities and women), the percent of those in favor dropped. The majority of respondents even reported that they have a multiracial friend whom they see at least once a week.¹⁰⁶ This survey shows that despite the favorable feelings towards multiracial people, “the 2006 respondents were unlikely to support including multiracial people in anti-discrimination laws and affirmative action policies.”¹⁰⁷ The authors reveal a cleavage between the accepted nature of multiracial people in society and the lack of support in including multiracial people in racial anti-discrimination laws and affirmative action policies. The

¹⁰⁴ Civil Rights.org (2001). “Affirmative Action, Civil Rights 101”, The Leadership Conference, at <http://www.civilrights.org/resources/civilrights101/affirmaction.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>

¹⁰⁵ Krysan, Maria. (2000). “Prejudice, politics, and public opinion: understanding the sources of racial policy attitudes”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 26, pp. 135_68 *2008 ‘Data Update to Racial Attitudes in America’. An update and website to compliment *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations*, Revised edition, Howard Schuman, Charlotte Steeh, Lawrence Bobo, and Maria Krysan, 1997, Harvard University Press. <http://www.igpa.uillinois.edu/programs/racial-attitudes/>

¹⁰⁶ Campbell, Mary E. and Herman, Melissa R. (2010). “Politics and policies: attitudes toward multiracial Americans.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33:9, p.1511-1536.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

authors address this seeming gap by positing that the greater society is unaware of the discrimination being faced by multiracial people and therefore unaware that they may need protections. There could also be a number of social, political, or cultural reasons. The authors cite three possible insights: political conservatism, simple racism, or self-preservation of in-groups. Because there is no multiracial category confirming their status as a racial group, current policies that serve or protect citizens based on race do not apply to this population.

The lack of a multiracial category on federal forms has ripple effects in many areas where equal protection is needed. For example, if an employee of the United States Army or the Air National Guard wishes to file a complaint alleging racial discrimination based on being mixed-race, there is currently no legal recourse. Employees are limited to identifying only one of the five officially recognized races, with no indication that selecting more than one race is permitted. There is no designated mixed-race category.¹⁰⁸ This is also the case for a hate crime based on being mixed race.

The mixed population is also affected by lack of equal access to public services and benefits. At the state level in New York, for instance, when applying for a minority businesses owner certification or as a ‘Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise’, the form only allows for one selection of racial categories, none of which are multiracial.¹⁰⁹ This forces multiracial people to choose one of their races and misrepresent themselves in order to be recognized and gain access to his service. Similarly, when filling out college application forms at state-run universities, even if

¹⁰⁸ Committee Report of the Governmental Affairs division, Committee on Governmental Operations and Committee on General Welfare, New York City Council, (May 11, 2015).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

there is an option to choose more than one race, students are often faced with the question of which of their races is *more* of a minority to improve their candidacy. Again, they are forced to choose one of their races and misrepresent themselves.

Civil society activism and its effects

The 1997 federal update to the OMB document may have only created an illusion of recognition and inclusion that pacified mixed race proponents while reinforcing a system of monoracial preference. Civil society responded to this seeming disparity with activism. ‘Reclassify All Children Equally’ or ‘Project RACE’ was founded to unify national advocates for a multiracial society in 1991. In 1993, Project RACE co-founders Susan and Ryan J. Graham (mother and son) testified in front of the House Subcommittee on Census, to advocate for a multiracial category on the census. Unsatisfied with the OMB 15 Directive, they did so again in 1997 in front of another committee, and appealed most recently in 2016 to the Chief Statistician of the Office of Management and Budgets.¹¹⁰ Project RACE has advocated for progressive legislation at the state level ever since and represented the multiracial community at national conferences and in committee hearings.

The continued multiracial movement and advocacy of groups like Project RACE have impacted the State of New York, specifically New York City. The City Council of NYC was made aware of gaps in the inaccuracies of data used by the Department of City Planning who is charged with providing services to New Yorkers. At a joint hearing of the Governmental Operations and General Welfare Committees in May 2015, members

¹¹⁰ Project Race (2016). “A Letter from Ryan J. Graham” Project Race Blog, Nov., at <http://www.projectrace.com/blog>

of the Mayor’s Office of Operations and the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs testified before the New York City Council regarding the introduction of three bills that sought to disaggregate demographic data collection in the course of interactions of residents seeking city services. The three bills introduce broader data collection for gender identity and sexual orientation, the disaggregation of the “Asian/Pacific Islander” ethnic category, and the inclusion of a multi-racial/ethnic category.¹¹¹ These Introductions were proposed to better track New York City’s population and more accurately provide services.

A look into the Committee reports and testimonial hearings on the proposed inclusion of a multiracial category provides helpful insight into why a multiracial category is imperative to providing proper services at the city level. An important component mentioned throughout committee reports and testimony is identity. In a hearing testimony report of 96 pages, committee members state that “an individual’s identity may affect his or her awareness of or receptivity to services, ability to access those services, and how outreach is conducted by the City.”¹¹² This demonstrates a progressive awareness on the part of City officials of the importance of recognizing how the collection of data affects an individual’s identity and reciprocally, affects the way a citizen gains access to certain services. Identity plays an important reciprocal role here, echoing the discussion in the previous chapter of the importance of identity in

¹¹¹ Committee Report of the Governmental Affairs division, Committee on Governmental Operations and Committee on General Welfare, New York City Council, (May 11, 2015).

¹¹² New York City Council Joint Hearing of the Governmental Operations and General Welfare Committees, Testimony of the Mayor’s Office of Operations (May 11, 2015).

governance. The absence of language on forms leaves multiracial people without an option so self-identify. Without data on where multiracial people reside, how many comprise the population, and how they self- identify, the City also cannot accurately create policies and services to protect and serve them. There is a double negative: no identity, no services or protections. Multiracial people are not widely aware of this failure due to the lack of inclusion of mixed-race issues in racial narratives.

The City of New York recognized a gap that the federal government does not. Various city agencies and civil society organizations that serve the diverse population of New Yorkers testified in support of adding a multiracial category stating that without accurate and specific information, mixed-race people remain an invisible population and policy makers are not able to accurately allocate funds to programs that might benefit them. In background of this bill, it reads:

“Demographic data provides an essential evidence base for the thoughtful development and evaluation of policies.^[1] To improve the lives of individuals, policy and fiscal decisions should rely on data that gives lawmakers and others a real sense of the makeup of a particular community, where and how certain individuals live, and how their lives are changing.^[2] It is in part through the collection and dissemination of data that communities can define themselves, identify inequities, challenge misconceptions, and gain access to valuable resources.^[3] ¹¹³

The background goes on to outline why official statistics and data-sets are used and needed:

“Statistics provide quantitative or qualitative information on various areas across diverse populations, including economic and social development, living conditions, health, education and the environment. Accessible data can even serve as a public good, as it can be useful for policy decision-making, evaluations, and assessments.^[5]”¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Committee Report of the Governmental Affairs division, Committee on Governmental Operations and Committee on General Welfare, New York City Council, (May 11, 2015) p.3.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

New York State has over 500,000 mixed race individuals in its population, and New York City has a growing population of over 325,000 and a mixed-race mayoral family in Gracie Mansion.¹¹⁵ The City of New York comprehends the importance and necessity of accurate data as a tool for governance. The report recognizes that the state and local governments have not made significant efforts to quantify and qualify this population. This is far beyond what the federal government has done for this population. The report even included a provision of said bill that urges the federal government to also make this adjustment to its data collection system.

In the final committee hearing and report, the committee read its final arguments in favor of including a mixed race category, citing national and local statistics on the growing mixed race population. The report points to a gap at the federal and state levels whereby forms do not reflect these trends and lived experiences. From an ethical perspective, the committee testifies that it is unfair to ask those who belong to one or more racial groups to force them to misrepresent themselves.¹¹⁶ Most importantly, the testimony closes with recognition of a failure in not including this growing population:

“Whereas, Failure to include multiracial identifiers on state and federal forms can also have broader consequences, as it produces an inaccurate picture of the state’s and the country’s racial diversity; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the state and federal governments to amend their official forms and databases to accommodate multiracial identification in all instances where racial identification is required.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ United States Census Bureau (2012). “2010 Census Shows Multiple-Race Population Grew Faster Than Single-Race Population.” Press Release, Sept. 27, at <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/race/cb12-182.html>

¹¹⁶ Committee Report of the Governmental Affairs division, Committee on Governmental Operations and Committee on General Welfare, New York City Council, (May 11, 2015), p.18.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

It is remarkable that the city of New York, not a state or federal government, has such a progressive understanding and stance on accurately recognizing, protecting, and serving this growing population.

On October 31st 2016, the NYC City Council passed Int. No. 551-A into law,¹¹⁸ officially amending the New York City Charter. The new law will require city agencies who collect data on race to amend their official forms and databases to accommodate multiracial or multi-ethnic identification. The Office of Operations is required to ensure that all forms include the appropriate categories and will be reviewed on a yearly basis. This is a huge step forward for improved identification, protection, and services for the New York City multiracial population.

Conclusion

Current anti-discrimination policies were drafted to redress discrimination experienced by specific minority groups that are *monoracial*. These policies do not currently include multiracial people as a minority. As reported by Williams, there are no specific policies that address discrimination of mixed race people.¹¹⁹ This leaves open-ended questions as to whether mixed race people are eligible for programs such as affirmative action and small business loans for minorities.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Nadal, Phd, Kevin (2016). "A big win for LGBTQ people and communities of color in N.Y.C." The Huffington Post, Nov. at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/581cbc24e4b0334571e09a97?timestamp=1478280846273>

¹¹⁹ Williams, David R. (1999). "The monitoring of racial/ethnic status in the USA: Data quality issues." *Ethnicity and Health*, Aug, p. 121.

¹²⁰ Goldstein, J. R. and Morning, A. J. (2002). "Back in the box: the dilemma of using multiple-race data for single-race laws," in Joel Perlmann et al., *The New Race Question: How the Census Counts Multiracial Individuals*, New York: Russell Sage, pp. 119_36.

Public discourse can shape public policy. Policy is informed by data and civil society; it is not constructed in a vacuum. The current system produces inaccurate or missing data and is coupled with an increasingly diverse mixed population and a civil society that is advocating for inclusion. Arguably, this could be a third area of exclusion. In addition to exclusion above (*de jure*, lack of reporting) and exclusion below (within society at the *de facto* level), the mixed population also lack legal protections and equal access to programs. However, within the ‘double exclusion’ framework, a subject’s relationship to the state and that state’s duty to protect the subject are both part of the *de jure* lived experience. A subject must report to the state and the state must protect the subject. It is all part of the official structure. Therefore, the absence of legal protection and equal access adds additional weight to the *de jure* exclusion in this model.

Sinkink and Finnemore discuss a theory of norms that can be helpful when applied to mixed racial minority groups and public discourse.¹²¹ A norm begins and goes through a life cycle. As the norm grows, it reaches a tipping point at which it becomes so widely accepted that it cascades into a fully accepted norm in stages. The norm is so common eventually, that it is *abnormal* to think of it as different (much like the process that same-sex marriage and the gay rights movement went through recently in the U.S.). For mixed race identity, the journey as a norm only officially began 17 years ago. However, racial mixing has existed since the beginning of slavery in this country. Public discourse will eventually tip the scales to force public policy to ‘catch up’.

¹²¹ Finnemore, Martha and Sikkink, Kathryn (1998). “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change.” *International Organization*, vol. 52(4), pp. 887-917.

Public discourse *is* finally catching up. The 2015 Pew Research Report on mixed race identity and the 2016 release of the motion picture *Loving* chronicling the Supreme Court case *Loving v. Virginia*, have reinvigorated the public conversation surrounding the mixed-race population's life on the margins. The New York Times reported on the growing acceptance of interracial couples in November 2016.¹²² VICE News recently published an article about confusion in terminology used to identify mixed race people previously discussed.¹²³ BuzzFeed, a popular culture website, published an article reporting on the racial slurs that interracial couples have endured because of their relationship.¹²⁴ In December 2016, CNN reported on the vandalism of an inter-racial couple's home in Ohio, which was deemed a hate crime. The couple's mixed race son had also committed suicide on account of bullying he faced for being mixed.¹²⁵

Multiracial identity is moving toward the tipping point of public discourse yet, there is a paucity of proper policies, and a dearth of data on this topic. This group may need more attention from policy makers. The findings show that positive public opinion may not validate legal protections. The need for protection through policy of multiracial people may be going unrecognized. When a mixed race person wants to apply for a

¹²² Foster, Brooke Lee (2016). "For interracial couples, growing acceptance with some exceptions." New York Times, Nov., at http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/26/fashion/weddings/for-interracial-couples-growing-acceptance-with-some-exceptions.html?_r=0

¹²³ Donnella, Leah (2016). "All Mixed Up: What Do We Call People Of Multiple Backgrounds?" National Public Radio (NPR), Aug. 25.

¹²⁴ Tucker, Matthew (2015). "Interracial couples share the appalling things people have said to them." BuzzFeed, Oct. at https://www.buzzfeed.com/matthewtucker/interracial-couples-share-the-appalling-things-people-haves?utm_term=.ewbaYXYVlz#.auxAogo2q3

¹²⁵ Adamu, Zaina (2016). "Funds flood in for interracial couple who were victims of hate crime." CNN, Dec., at <http://www.cnn.com/2016/12/06/health/iyw-interracial-couple-hate-crime-trnd/>

governmental program that protects against racial discrimination, do they qualify? Who determines if a person is a minority *enough* if they are mixed race? What percentage of minority status is enough to qualify? In these cases, this may lead to confusion. The courts system will eventually be challenged with deciding whether mixed race people are considered minorities in the future.

V. FINAL COMMENTS AND CONCLUSION

Challenges to governance

There are no comprehensive federal studies that measure the complexities of mixed race existence --such as how mixed race people identify differently over time, how they are perceived, or if they are accorded accurate rights. Without studies, the needs of this population cannot be determined. Further complicating matters, multiracial people are difficult to categorize. In a 2010 study about the attitudes towards multiracial people, for the first time, it was learned that some mixed race people do not even identify as multiracial.¹²⁶ They may have parents from different racial backgrounds, but only identify monoracially, leading to skewed numbers. This could be because they grew up with only one parent present, or simply because they grew up closer to the family of one parent and shared cultural values with one side of the family. Researchers learned this by asking follow up questions about the racial backgrounds of the parents of the responders. It is shown that people don't always identify as mixed race (i.e. Barack Obama).

There are also a multitude of possible racial combinations, each of which has a different lived experience –different attitudes, social interactions, and variations on how

¹²⁶ Campbell, Mary E. and Herman, Melissa R. (2010). "Politics and policies: attitudes toward multiracial Americans." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33:9, 1511-1536.

the world sees them. The experience of a biracial black/white person may differ greatly from that of an Asian/white person. For example, 69% of multiracial adults who have a black background say most people view them as black and are aligned more closely with the black community.¹²⁷ Biracial white and Asian adults reported a different pattern. They feel more closely aligned with whites than Asians.¹²⁸ A Pew research survey shows how other racial mixes identify:

“Among biracial adults who are white and American Indian—the largest group of multiracial adults—ties to their Native American heritage are often faint: Only 22% say they have a lot in common with people in the U.S. who are American Indian, whereas 61% say they have a lot in common with whites.”¹²⁹

This data reveals that collecting data on being mixed race is contextual with different racial mixtures displaying difference loyalties and identity patterns. Defining their status as a group 1) has not been done officially and 2) is a complex process.

Policies and programs that are based on racial data risk being inaccurate or not reflective of the diversity and fluid nature of mixed race identity. The challenges presented by the difficult nature in defining this group leaves unanswered questions: what unifies this group? They are not a race, considering their varied skin colors and phenotypes. How will they build a political voice? How can you build programs for such a varied group? Is race still a relevant tool for governance?

¹²⁷ Pew Research Center (2015). “Multiracial in America: Proud, Diverse, and Growing in Numbers.” Washington, D.C., June.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

A new paradigm? A comparison from across the pond.

The mixed race experience disrupts the traditional model of race as an organizing tool because it does not easily fit into any one box. The mixed race experience lives between the boxes or outside of them. With the widely accepted belief that race is socially constructed devised as a colonial tool, it begs the question, should the system move beyond race altogether or possibly expand data collection to other traits for the as a form of governance? Multiracial participation in society is already mostly not in a racial capacity. Mixed people shift their identities to fit the context (gender, sexual orientation, alma mater, etc.). Could this be a more progressive form of self-identification?

Despite claims that the election of President Barack Obama signified a new post-racial world,¹³⁰ race is very much still part of the American psyche. As discussed above, a person's race is registered within a fraction of a second. Race is used by Americans as a means to situate themselves and to relate to others ethnically, socio-economically, geographically, etc. Race cannot be erased from the American culture and society. It continues to play a large role in inequities in incarceration, education, and employment rates. However, with the growing interracial mixing and the projection of whites no longer being the majority within the next century,¹³¹ it could be feasible that moving on to collecting data on ethnicity, for example, would be more accurate than race, which is solely based on social construction and hierarchy. Ethnicity ties a group to a specific

¹³⁰ Debussman, Bernd (2016). "After two terms Obama, post-racial-America is still elusive." Newsweek, Oct., at <http://www.newsweek.com/after-two-terms-obama-post-racial-america-still-elusive-506916>

¹³¹ El Nasser, Haya (2015). "Whites projected to become a U.S. minority." Al Jazeera America, June, at <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/6/25/whites-on-target-to-become-a-us-minority.html>

16 What is your ethnic group?

Choose one section from A to E, then tick one box to best describe your ethnic group or background

A White

English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British

Irish

Gypsy or Irish Traveller

Any other White background, write in

B Mixed/multiple ethnic groups

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background, write in

C Asian/Asian British

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian background, write in

D Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

African

Caribbean

Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, write in

E Other ethnic group

Arab

Any other ethnic group, write in

culture that encompasses food, language, customs and rituals, and oftentimes a geographical region.¹³²

The British data collection system provides an example of a more diversified approach.

Like in the U.S., the white British majority is also in decline. Persons of mixed racial and ethnic backgrounds are the fastest growing minority groups in the U.K as well. According to the United Kingdom’s Office for National Statistics (ONS), the mixed/multiple ethnic group in the 2011 census accounted for over 1 million people, or roughly 5% of the British population --this number is projected to double by 2020.¹³³ Yet, the mixed population in the UK reports to be more fully integrated into

British society, as evidenced by studies like “The Melting Pot Generation”, produced by British Future, a national think tank in the U.K.¹³⁴ One main difference in the systems is that data collected on race is complimented with ethnic data as well, providing a more

¹³² Rose, Peter I. (2006). *They and We: racial and ethnic relations in the United States*. 6th ed., Paradigm Publishers, Boulder.

¹³³ Office for National Statistics (2011). “Census analysis: Ethnicity and religion of the non-UK born population in England and Wales, London.”

¹³⁴ Ford, Rob, Jolley, Rachael, Katwala, Sunder and Mehta, Binita (2012). “The Melting Pot Generation: How Britain became more relaxed on race.” British Future.

nuanced picture of the mixed British population. The British system also has a dedicated mixed-race category, which is considered its own *ethnicity*. The mixed category then breaks out into specific mixes, such as ‘White and Black Caribbean’ or ‘White and Black African’ (see figure above).¹³⁵

It is also notable that each monoracial group breaks down to ethnic categories (Asian: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, other). The American system does not collect ethnic data on its racial categories (except for Hispanic), nor does it have a dedicated mixed category or breakout subgroups. Whether or not the British Administration has better programs and protections for the mixed population is a subject for further research. However, at the very least, the British system is capturing a more accurate snapshot of the racial and ethnic makeup of British society – a better starting point for governance of a diversifying population.

The New York City model of disaggregating the Asian/Pacific Islander racial category and adding a dedicated multiracial/ethnic category to all official forms is also an example of greater recognition of a diverse population. New York City recognizes its responsibility to better understand its racial makeup in order to better protect and serve it. New York City has now set a positive precedent. The federal government should look to the City of New York and the British model as inspiration for an update to its racial system.

¹³⁵ Source: UK 2011 Census, National Archives, Office of National Statistics. “Image of ethnic group question” (2011) at http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/resources/imageofethnicgroupquestion_tcm77-369575.png

The road ahead

The flaws in the racial stratification system with regard to the mixed race expose a sort of irrationality in its roots in racial purity. The growing mixed race population could act as a destabilizing force in the, as Root phrases it: “ ‘us vs. them’ dynamics of racial conversations.”¹³⁶ Root expands on this point: “Many multiracial people simultaneously represent both the “us” and “them” of white versus black, Korean versus African American...”.¹³⁷ Multiracial people are able to see race through a prism that monoracial people do not and can offer insight and sensitivity towards racial issues, possibly bridging cultural and societal fissures.

However, the black/white binary in racial discussions seems to be becoming less inclusive and more siloed. After the civil rights movement, the end of legalized segregation (Jim Crow), and the election of a black president (or a biracial one), one could assume that there was a progressive trend towards plurality, inclusiveness, and equality. Unfortunately, the 2016 presidential election of Donald J. Trump proved otherwise. Two main racial groups dominated public attention during and after the election: the “white working class” and the Black Lives Matter Movement. According to a recent Atlantic article, the white working class is anyone who does not have a four-year degree with major differences in:

*“...geography, ethnicity and culture...between the coasts—Sarah Palin’s “real America”—who were dubious of the effete, hifalutin types increasingly dominating the party that had once purported to represent the common man.”*¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Root, Maria R. (1996). *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, p.xxv.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Macgillis, Alec (2016). “The Original Underclass.” *The Atlantic*, Sept., at <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/09/the-original-underclass/492731/>

The success of Donald Trump’s largely racist, sexist, and xenophobic rhetoric appealing to this large swath of white Americans between the coasts is what clinched his entry into the White House.¹³⁹ This group is dominating the media due to the surprising nature of Donald Trump’s win thanks to their support. Some argue that his slogan “Make America Great Again” refers to bringing power back to white Americans who at one time had better jobs before the Great recession of 2008. Since Mr. Trump’s election, the number of hate crimes based on race has risen¹⁴⁰ and the media’s attention is on this ‘unforgotten’ ethnic group who have felt marginalized under the Obama Administration.¹⁴¹ Authors like J.D. Vance, who had been writing about this issue long before the election, have catapulted to the front of newspapers and panel discussions to help explain this group’s rise in prominence through the election.¹⁴²

Meanwhile, the social movement Black Lives Matter started to gain traction in 2012 after the defendant in the murder of a young, unarmed black man, Trayvon Martin, was acquitted.¹⁴³ The hashtag #blacklivesmatter on Twitter and other social media outlets spread like wildfire harnessing civil society support for black lives. After the numerous

¹³⁹ Howard, Adam (2016). “Trump’s racial rhetoric on crime puts him in a political bind.” NBC News, Sept., at <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/trump-s-racial-rhetoric-crime-puts-him-political-bind-n651886>

¹⁴⁰ Hatewatch Staff (2016). “Update: 1094 bias related incidents in the month following election.” Southern Poverty Law Center Hate Watch, Dec., at <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/12/16/update-1094-bias-related-incidents-month-following-election>

¹⁴¹ Macgillis, Alec (2016). “The Original Underclass.” The Atlantic, Sept., at <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/09/the-original-underclass/492731>

¹⁴² Vance, J.D. (2016). *Hillbilly Elegy: a memoir of a family and culture in crisis*. Harper Collins Publishers, New York, NY, Jun.

¹⁴³ Sidner, Sara and Simon, Mallory (2015). “The rise of Black Lives Matter: Trying to break the cycle of violence and silence.” CNN, Dec., at <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/28/us/black-lives-matter-evolution/>

similar deaths of other unarmed black Americans (Eric Garner, Akai Gurley, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile) jolted the public's attention to the grave inequities continuously faced by black America, this movement gained notable attention—even from the president himself.¹⁴⁴ Millions have turned out to protest around the country each time another death like this has occurred. Notable authors within this movement have also gained national acclaim for chronicling how racism against blacks pervades every corner of society (Ta-Nehisi Coates and Lamont Hill). The movement has centered attention on the excessive use of force by police on black bodies, as well as other inequities such as in education and employment rates. This movement is at the forefront of the black/white divide.

Both of these movements are constituencies that command a lot of attention in the national racial rhetoric. There are currently no other modern minority movements that have reached national recognition like these two have. Both movements are quite insular. The whites feel aggrieved for the loss their dominant status in today's diverse society (with regard to race, class, education and employment level, etc.). They are tied together by their socio-economic status, conservative (sometimes racist) views, and their whiteness—not an easy boundary to cross. The Black Lives Matter Movement has been accused of being exclusive, with reactions to their movement including an “All Lives Matter” movement and criticism for not being favorable to cross-racial allyship.¹⁴⁵ With

¹⁴⁴ Fabian, Jordan (2016). “Prominent Black Lives Matter activist to attend Obama meeting.” The Hill, Jul., at <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/287593-prominent-black-lives-matter-activist-to-attend-obama-meeting>

¹⁴⁵ Geraghty, Jim (2016). “Obama and Black Lives Matter just means all lives matter.” The National Review, Jul., at <http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/437616/obama-black-lives-matter-just-means-all-lives-matter>

these two massive pillars dominating the racial discussion, there is little room for other racial minorities, let alone a mixed race agenda. Mr. Trump has not been inclusive or friendly towards any particular minority group during his campaign. His conservative appointments, lack of denouncing racists like David Duke, the former head of the Ku Klux Klan (a white supremacist group), and his conservative party's newfound majority in the House and Senate chambers, give a foreboding outlook onto racial issues during the new Administration.

The tipping point moment for the mixed race agenda may be being pushed back in line behind these dominant players on the racial playing field. The continued narrowing of the racial narrative to refocus on black and white agendas could be crowding out the opportunity for a broader discussion on race. This is a vulnerable space for multiracial Americans who have less and less of a voice in this political climate. Any hope of Barack Obama's biracial background and Administration shedding light on challenges faced by the mixed race population seems to be fading.

Conclusion

During research for this paper, a Google Alert¹⁴⁶ on the terms 'mixed-race' and 'multiracial' over six months revealed the overwhelmingly negative frame in which most articles discuss mixed race issues. Many articles listed in the Alert were written on college campuses describing the lack of recognition of mixed race students;¹⁴⁷ in

¹⁴⁶ Google Alerts aggregate popular internet articles that appear on the search engine Google, containing specified terms consolidated into a digest on a timed basis (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)

¹⁴⁷ Salgado, Laura (2016). "Mixed race and mixed reactions." Columbia University Spectator, Oct., at <http://columbiaspectator.com/opinion/2016/10/17/mixed-race-and-mixed-reactions>

community newspapers reporting discrimination or the difficulty of dealing with mixed-race existence;¹⁴⁸ on challenges of being mixed in other countries;¹⁴⁹ celebrities sharing their identity struggles;¹⁵⁰ or were fetishized ads on Craigslist for romantic connections. There were very few articles that captured multiracial existence in a positive light. This informal survey of where popular culture and mixed race intersect shows the negative space where the mixed race agenda resides within the racial hierarchy. The mixed race existence is described in many ways still as a struggle, rather than a norm. Everyday this group is still fighting to find a seat at the racial table.

The racial stratification system was built at a time when the racial makeup of the country was very different and the theory of using racial difference to organize was widely accepted. Today, multiracial and ethnic people are growing in numbers more rapidly than other minorities, transforming society into a colorful mosaic. The complexities of the mixed race experience are clear. Multiracial people shift how they self-identify over time and identify differently among different racial combinations. As

¹⁴⁸ Mansfield, Karen (2016). "Being biracial in America is not as easy as black and white." Birmingham Times, Dec., at <http://www.birminghamtimes.com/2016/12/being-biracial-in-america-is-not-as-easy-as-black-and-white/>
Perschbacher, Emily (2016). "Chicago parents face challenges, joys in raising multiracial children." Chicago Tribune, Dec., at <http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/parenting/sc-raising-multicultural-kids-family-1227-20161221-story.html>

¹⁴⁹ Chevalier, Freedom (2016). "White people, please stop telling me I don't look Asian enough." The Independent UK, Oct., at <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/mixed-race-white-people-please-stop-telling-me-i-don-t-look-asian-enough-a7367216.html>

Junko, Nirmala (2016). "Being haafu in Japan." Times of India, Oct., at <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/voices/being-haafu-in-japan/>

¹⁵⁰ Markle, Meghan (2016). "I'm more than an 'other'." Elle UK Magazine, Dec.22, at <http://www.elleuk.com/life-and-culture/news/a26855/more-than-an-other/>

Noah, Trevor (2016). *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*. Spiegel & Grau, NY, Nov.

societies grow and continue to mix, it may be possible that the first way a person self-identifies is *not* racially at all. The mixed-race population is once again outgrowing the inefficient racial stratification system that still prefers monoracial subject to govern.

Mixed race is emerging as a new norm and constituency, but laws and policies are still ‘catching up’ at slower rate. The system does not see them. This gap is problematic for an excluded population who is left without protections, yet is the fastest growing minority. The norm has not reached its tipping point. The American society was built in such a way that requires citizens to define themselves racially in order to enjoy rights and protections. The system forces mixed race people to choose their relationship with the government without proper information, and to improperly identify themselves. They are largely unaware as to how these socially constructed categories are formed and how their choice on these forms will affect them. Moreover, this is a post-modern society where identities change over time. Career paths can change, people have multiple marriages, and can change their racial identification. With such fluid data, the current structure does not accurately account for such diversity. The system is no longer fit for purpose.

This paper sheds light on the struggle of mixed race people in America’s rigid, dated, racial system and also acts as a wake-up call to lawmakers, pointing to a lack of recognition, inclusive policies, and protections that will need to be addressed as this population grows and as societies become more racially and ethnically diverse. The multiracial experience is at the forefront of change in the U.S. It can serve as a starting point to shift away from archaic terminology and the boxes that citizens are forced to fit into in order to be recognized under the current regime of rights.

“If your inclusion or exclusion from a regime of rights or entitlements is based on your race or ethnicity, as defined by law, then this becomes a central defining fact for you the

individual and your group. From this point of view, both race and ethnicity need to be understood as political-and not cultural, or even biological –identities.”¹⁵¹
--Mahmood Mamdani

¹⁵¹ Mamdani, Mahmood (2001). *When Victims Become Killers*. Princeton, NY, Princeton University Press, p.22.

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