

Multiracialism and the 2000 Census

Perceptions of Multiracial Individuals and Identity
Construction

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The aim of this article is to examine the perceptions of multiracial individuals by both individuals from monoracial and multiracial backgrounds, in particular African-American and biracial individuals from black and white backgrounds. By examining the congressional hearings from the Office of Management and Budgets(OMB) Federal Measures on Races' 1997 regarding multiracial categories on the census. The committee's vote to allow individuals to "check all that apply," was seen as a compromise by many, but it was the first time that multiracialism was recognized on the United States Census. At the center of the debate was the question of should multiracial individuals be recognized by the government as a separate category, or still part of the race which they choose to identify. By analyzing the context of individuals from both the multiracial movement towards an exclusively multiracial category and monoracial individuals groups resistance to the multiracial category, the goal is to see how these views at the macro-level affect identity construction, a micro-level occurrence. These debates are analyzed through the theoretical work of symbolic interactionist George Herbert Mead, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's notion of color blind racism, and W.E.B. Dubois' double consciousness. This article examines the effects of the OMB's decision not only for monoracial individuals, but the possible implication for multiracial individuals, in

particular African-Americans and bi-racial individuals with African American backgrounds.

“A fully functional multiracial society cannot be achieved without a sense of history and open, honest dialogue.”

Cornel West

Introduction

The multiracial movement is relatively new in the scope of American politics. The movement has arisen from several multiracial individuals, as well as parents of multiracial children, demanding that individuals of mixed race should not be classified into one particular racial category. When anti-miscegenation laws were officially terminated in the United States in 1967 after *Loving v Virginia*, the number of interracial relationships grew tremendously. The product of these interracial relationships was an increase in the number of multiracial individuals in the U.S. According the Pew Research Center, as of 2008, 14.6% of all new marriages in the United States were interracial marriages. This has been a steady increase since 1960 when 2% of all marriages in the

United States were interracial. Also there has been a steady increase with the rise in new interracial marriages being 4%, 7%, 8%, and 11% in 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 respectively (Pew 2010).

The issue surrounding multiracial individuals is a question of identity construction. Multiracial individuals are presented with the issue of constructing a racial identity that fits into either a singular race based upon historically rigid categories of race (i.e. black, white, Asian, or Hispanic) , to develop an identity that recognizes both races, or to construct an identity completely different from the current social constructions of race.

This paper focuses on how multiracial individuals perceive multiracialism in terms of identity construction, as well as how individuals from monoracial background perceive multiracialism. I examine how these perceptions possibly factor into the identify construction of multiracial individuals from a symbolic interactionist perspective.

For this study, I reference a brief history of miscegenation and interracial relationships, to place multiracial identity construction within a sociohistorical framework. To understand identity, I give a working definition of how race will be used, in particular the fundamental sociological work of Omi and Winant on racial formation. From there I examine the debate surrounding the 2000 census and the 1997 decision of

the Office of Management and Budget institute the directive of “mark all that apply.”

Since there is not much research done on how monoracial individual view multiracialism, the debate surrounding the census provides a macro-level political analysis surrounding the issue. From there, I examine how this affects a multiracial individual’s identity construction from the symbolic interactionist paradigm, particularly the work of George Herbert Mead (1934).

Although this paper does not particularly focus on the history of miscegenation, a brief history of miscegenation in America is relevant in understanding the controversy surrounding the 2000 census debate. The “check all that apply” option allowed, for the first time in history, individuals to select more than one race. This change defied the 400 years of race rigidity and categorization that has been the norm in United States especially in the public policy of race and legislation. The statistics resulting from the 2000 census were 2.4 %, or 6.8 million individuals selecting more than one option. Of those 2.4 %, 93 % had selected two races (Jones and Smith 2001). For the first time multiracial individuals were somewhat recognized by the United States government.

Historical Context

Racial Identity has been a critical part of the African-American experience in the United States. With institutions such as slavery, and the oppression that followed,

African-Americans developed a separate and unique culture. Race, in particular phenotype or skin color, has long been a point of importance for black individuals. Since the days of the “brown paper bag rule” in which individuals of lighter skin color were often given privilege over individuals of darker skin color. In the antebellum south, light skin blacks often worked in the house, while blacks of darker skin color were often forced to perform more labor intensive field work. Also in the United States, the de jure, then soon de facto rule, was known as the “one- drop rule”. The one drop rule stated that an individual was black, even if there was only 1 % African American in their heritage. By looking at this in relation to the different types of bi-racial identity that are most common, it can create macro-level vehicle in understanding how certain structural and cultural factors effect identity construction, a micro occurrence (Korgen 1998).

Definition of Race

To understand multiracialism and the debate surrounding the 2000 census debate, there must first be a working definition of race. For the purposes of this paper, race is viewed in the context of racial formation theory (Omi and Winant 1994). This theory rejects the notion that race is a purely biological function, but is a fluid changing construction influenced by social, political and economic forces (Omi and Winant 1994).

Race is a fluid social construct that can change over time in which unimportant physical features are given value.

Looking at race in terms of a social and political movement also plays into racial formation theory. Race is a “de-centered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle” (Omi and Winant 1994). “Through political contestation over racial meanings,” racial meanings “intertwined”, and “formed and transformed over time” (Omi and Winant 1994). The state has the right to enforce race throughout the culture through anti-discrimination policies, etc. These policies can erect or change structural forms of oppression throughout the society.

Types of Multiracial Identity

When looking at racial identity construction for bi-racial or multiracial individuals, Brunnsma and Rockquemore offer four main identities for bi-racial individuals:

1. Singular identity (singular black or white)
2. Border identity (exclusively bi-racial)
3. Protean Identity (sometimes black, sometimes white, sometimes biracial)
4. Transcendent identity (no racial identity) (Brunnsma and Rockquemore 2001).

The two of main forms of identity for this paper are a singular identity and a border identity. These identities are the opposing ends of the spectrum in the multiracial

debate. Multiracial activists are seeking to create a new category, while African-American groups want the census to only acknowledge a single race.

Census Debate

The “mark all that apply” debate surrounding the census culminated in the decision of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to change Statistical Directive 15, which was established in 1977. The purpose compiling racial statistics on the census is to allow government institutions to gather statistics on whether or not there is institutional racism in a given institution. It does not definitively state if there institutional racism, but by the analysis of the diversity within an institution, it informs individuals whether an institution needs further evaluation (Spencer 2003). Statistical Directive 15 created a system in which individuals were forced to pick the socially constructed monoracial responses based upon community perception, not self-identification (Williams-Leon 2003). Then individuals lobbied from the multiracial movement, in particular the Association of Multiethnic Americans (AMEA), and Project RACE (Reclassify All Children Equally), the OMB rejected the notion of creating a multiracial category. There were three major reasons for the OMB’s rejection of a multiracial category, with the main reasoning being that there was no solid definition of what multiracialism, especially in terms of being able to quantify the category for census purposes (Congressional Hearings 1997). Eventually, in 1997 the OMB decided to implement “mark all that apply”

(MATA) for the 2000 census (Spencer 2003). This implementation allowed for individuals surveyed to mark all of the races to which they felt applied to them. This was considered somewhat of a victory for the multiracial movement, but did not necessarily create any difference in the way that racial statistics are gathered and analyzed (Spencer 2003).

One of the main issues for the multiracial movement as a whole coming into the census debate is self-identification. It became a debate of whether self identification is a right for Americans on the census form (Thornton 2009). The reason this could change the census is that it would be based upon how the individual identifies themselves, rather than how the community as a whole identifies them. For example, an individual who is multiracial with a dark phenotype may be perceived by the community as black, but to the government the individual would be considered multiracial. Thus, the social reality for the individual may be different their self identification. So an individual who is black to the community would essentially be removed from black demographics because of their preference in self identification.

On the other side of the debate, the African American delegation challenged the creation of a MATA, but more precisely the creation of stand-alone multiracial category. Also, many African-American organizations felt that the establishment of a multiracial category would undermine the directive and purpose of creating a race category on the

census in general. Many of the individuals in the monoracial side of the debate were unsure the damage that MATA would create.

I analyze the Office of Management and Budgets Federal Measures of Race and ethnicity and the implications for the 2000 Census. This debate surrounding the category of a multiracial category offers insight from leaders of both the multiracial movement and individuals from monoracial backgrounds including traditional African-American organizations, and legislators. The use of these hearings is due to the lack of research involving the views of multiracialism from monoracial individuals. Also, it allows for clear insight from representatives both for and against the multiracial category on the census.

Framing the Debate: Multiracialism in the 1997 Congressional Hearings

The following is based upon Congressional Testimony given in 1997.

When examining the multiracial side of the debate, it is important to recognize why that many multiracial individuals wish to self identify. In the 2008, Congressional testimony Susan Graham of Project RACE stated that MATA was only a compromise from the view of the African-American lobbyists, and that MATA also presents issues for multiracial individuals. She states:

Under the current recommendation, my children and millions of children like them, merely become “check all that apply” kids, or “check more than one box” children, or “more than one race” persons. They will be known as “multiple checkoffs,” or “half-and-halfers,” or as John Hope Franklin, chairman of President Clinton’s Race Relations Commission referred to them, “half-white Negroes and half-black whites. They are none of the above. They are multiracial children.”

(Federal Measure of Race and Ethnicity, 1997).

Graham cites the type of identity construction issues that many multiracial individuals experience in the U.S. She alludes to the potential for negativity expressed by the white and black communities for not having a singular identity, and being simultaneously ostracized for having a border identity. She holds a common view that many biracial individuals will be marginalized as being part of neither community. Again she touches on the effects of MATA:

You must understand that the proposal, in effect, says multiracial persons are only parts of other communities; they are not whole. When I was in school, one-half plus one-half equaled a whole. I think it still does, unless you’re multiracial

(Federal Measure of Race and Ethnicity, 1997).

AMEA president Ramona Douglas perceives that the multiracial community as exiled by the African-American community in terms of civil rights. On the multiracial community she testified:

Some people say that we are not a community, because our colors do not match.

Therefore, how can we claim community rights and issues? I speak all over the United States at student organizational conventions. Those conventions include people who are Asian, African, European, Native American, and mixtures, that call themselves a community. (Federal Measure of Race and Ethnicity, 1997).

The testimony again demonstrates that supporters of the multiracial movement are looking for the government to recognize multiracialism as a separate community. This is where the historical tension of the United States and Statistical Directive 15 arise. These issues conform to the historical rigidity of race in the United States, and the difficulty of breaking the conformity of the social construction.

Another issue raised by members of the multiracial movement is to look at race in terms of cultural experience than to just those of biological phenotype. The testimony of Nathan Douglass in regards to his 8-year old son expresses this concern.

Regardless of what some would have you believe, race remains essentially a biological construct in our society. When my son was born and Vital statistics

wanted to know what he was, the issue of culture was never mentioned. It did not matter how he was raised, or with which social group he might identify in the future. It was about my wife's genes and my gene's. (Federal Measure of Race and Ethnicity, 1997).

Douglass later goes on to question the civil rights lobby of following traditional biological terms of race.

Ironically, among those still supporting the "One Drop Myth," and opposing the new multiracial category, are many in the civil rights establishment. I saw to these folks, brothers and sisters, this is a civil rights issue, and you are clearly on the wrong side of it. How can you suggest that a group of your fellow human beings, no matter how large or small must be denied their right to identify accurately, in order to accommodate the status quo?...The violation of multiracials' right to self-determination should ring loud warning bells for every believer in civil rights.(Federal Measure of Race and Ethnicity, 1997).

The supporters of the multiracial movement tend to focus more on border identity or creating an identity is based contextually. Their focus tends to be on creating a new and different group. They ultimately hope to revise the structure and view of race in the U.S. by creating a category based more upon culture than phenotypes.

Framing the 2000 Census Debate: African American Stance in 1997 congressional hearings.

In opposition to the individuals of the multiracial movement's want for a multiracial categories, were those who supported a more monoracial view including representatives from traditional civil rights organizations. Harold McDougall of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) testified that the organization respects an individual's rights to self-identification, and self-determination, but he did not believe that the census was the appropriate forum for this stating that American race relations are based primarily on phenotype rather than self-identification (Williams-Leon 2003) . He testified, "The social discrimination and segregation of this society is a matter of how you look, not a matter of what you call yourself" (Federal Measure of Race and Ethnicity, 1997). Douglass went on to state that race in the United States is "a matter of semantics not just words" (Federal Measure of Race and Ethnicity, 1997).

Also many individuals were concerned about the statistical directive to enforce equal protection. Rep. Carrie Meek states:

The proposed regulation does not answer in detail a critical question—how will the data be tabulated and presented if individuals can check several racial categories on the census form...I applaud OMB's decisions to not create a

multiracial category. But I am very troubled by OMB's alternative to letting people check as many racial categories as they desire, I understand that this alternative allows the children of racial-mixed marriages to avoid choosing between their parents when answering the census questions. But we must remember that the primary purpose of the racial questions on the census is to permit enforcement of both the equal protection provision of the 14th amendment of the Constitution and the anti-discrimination that past Congresses have enacted (Spencer 2003).

These views are common among individuals who feel that there is possible that damage could be done from instituting a multiracial category, and that having a multiracial category would not change the function of racial statistics on the census (Spencer 2003).

A third view on the problems with a multiracial comes in 1993 from then chair of the U.S. commission on Civil Rights, Arthur Fletcher:

I can see a whole host of light-skinned Black Americans running for the door the minute they have another choice. And it won't necessarily because their immediate parents are Black White, or whatever, but all of a sudden they have a way of saying "I am something other than black." Now, what kind of problem that will produce I don't know, but I am ready to bet that if that [multiracial] category were added you would see a significant diminution in the number of

Black Americans who under the present set of circumstances are identified as Black. (Spencer 2003).

His views are again based-upon phenotype, but he sees the view that a multiracial category would be detrimental to blacks due to the fact that they would be “leaving” the race, which if tied to the other testimony would create a diminution of numbers of blacks statistically.

Literature Review

It is first important to look at the way in which multiracial Americans deal with multiracial identity construction. Since the debate is already framed in accordance with examining both sides of the debate, there are implications to this type of constructed identity.

Brunsma and Rockquemore (2001) look not only at particular phenotypes, but look to what they refer to as “push factors.” Push factors are based upon negative treatment from a particular group and how this reaction affects identity construction. Even for individuals, who have dark or light phenotypes and identify with one particular racial group, this push factor can change the group in which the person chooses to identify. Brunsma and Rockquemore observed that when dark-skin biracial individuals who have negative experience from blacks, 31.4% of these individuals adopt a singular identity, in comparison to the 42.6% who experienced negative treatment from whites.

The opposite held true for individuals with a light-skin phenotype. This shows that negative treatment from individuals may cause some biracial individuals to not adopt a singular identity.

When looking at individuals from biracial backgrounds, there is also some research that shows that adheres to many biracial individuals decision to disclose their identity. Some individuals from monoracial backgrounds hold the view that follows the traditional categorizations. Bonham and Sanchez (2009) examined a university and applicants of a minority fellowship. They looked at two individuals whom were equally qualified, one black and the other biracial (black/white). The debate was whether individuals would choose their own personal self-identification or choose the race that they perceive as most advantageous. They found that students who identified themselves as monoracial received a warmer reaction than individuals who chose to identify as biracial. This shows that the choice of a border identity may be detrimental to multiracial individual's success.

When looking at the census debate and the larger context of the issue of multiracialism, there is a question of how the group establishes itself. Minority groups "often shuffle for social policies that support their economic, social, and civil interests in the larger society (Pittinsky and Montoya 2009). This is where the struggle for emergent

groups to establish themselves from traditional minority groups, and multiracial individuals are trying to establish themselves outside of a group that is depending on traditional racial categories (Pittinsky and Montoya 2009). Like individuals negotiating these identities these individuals, groups must establish their identity at the macro-level.

Pittinsky and Montoya (2009) cite multiracial as this type of group. The complexity surrounding multiracial as an emergent group may pose the same problem that many in the OMB's denial of a multiracial category; there is no solid definition of multiracialism. Pittinsky and Montoya observe what it means to have an allophilia for a group to develop social policies and support.

Thornton (2009) draws upon several resources examined three publications of mainstream media sources, and three black media. Of the mainstream media 22% reported some advocacy for the multiracial movement to only 10% of the black media sources. There was also more media coverage of civil rights opposition. 63 % of mainstream sources reported on a "New Era" in comparison 2.2 %. This is the most telling statistic that was found. The "New Era" are "mentions of a new racial movement where the importance of race is changing, clearly an idea of White-American newspapers. Essentially, this "new era" refers to a changing perception of race. This has implications

that race is changing from a group identity to a more individual identity (Thornton 2009).

This coincides with Bonilla-Silva calls "color-blind racism" (Bonilla-Silva 2006).

The notion of the elimination of the acknowledgement racial categories as a whole is addressed by Bonilla-Silva (2006). Bonilla-Silva raises the concept of color-blind racism. Bonilla-Silva argues that the racial climate will morph from a two group system (whites and minorities) to a triracial form of stratification similar to that in Latin America. This new system will contain the groups of whites, honorary whites, and a collective black (Bonilla-Silva 2006). The whites group will consist of whites, new whites (immigrants predominantly from eastern European countries), assimilated white Latinos, some multiracials, assimilated Native Americans, and some Asians while the honorary white group will consist of light-skinned Latinos, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Chinese Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, and most multiracial. The Collective black in future American will be Vietnamese Americans, Filipino Americans, Hmong Americans, Laotian Americans, Dark Skinned Latinos, Reservation-bound Native Americans, New west Indian and African immigrants as well as blacks. This will lead to what he calls a "pigmentocracy" or a system based on the darkness of an individual's skin not necessarily their background. This will allow these groups to have some sort of mobility as each group looks to gain upward mobility by whitening the heritage. This

will then lead a technique of color-blind racism that allows individuals to place themselves under the veil of “we are all Americans” and allow the class in power to state that society is beyond race (Bonilla-Silva 2006). The implication of a system in which race is not acknowledged could lead to there being a lack of discussion with the historically oppressed systems with no place in society for discourse. This would lead to the end of affirmative action policies, and a complete neglect in acknowledging institutional racism like the one that statistical directives of the census were designed to evaluate. Multiracials would debate that the system is completely based on the sociohistorical implication from such policies as the “one-drop rule.”

The census debate and the creation of a solely multiracial category could be considered a first step in the dissolution of racial. By removing themselves from being part of particular minority group’s multiracial individuals could be perceived as transcending racial categories. It is reasonable to see how these individuals would be judged solely upon their phenotype with light-skinned individuals receiving privilege in society, at a level similar or beyond previous era's pre-civil rights.

Conclusion

Looking at multiracial identity through the lens of a macro-level could put specific pressures on an individual to have difficulty in establishing an identity with which they are comfortable. Although this paper did not look at all of the contextual

factors involved with race, there could be societal pressures for certain individuals to establish an identity and have a positive self-concept. The media plays a role in expressing the political debate that is happening in the political arena.

To have any level of identity construction one needs to negotiate. Negotiation of from a symbolic interactionist perspective would involve two parties. This is relevant in the political arena since it involves a particular notion of power (Allahar2001). Therefore the distribution of power allows for individuals to impose their ideas and definitions of race over another individual. Many groups tend to force individuals to assimilate into the dominant culture (Allahar 2001). In the case of multiracial individuals the dominant group is actually the dominant minority group. The resistance from individuals from monoracial backgrounds to allow individuals who want to identify as multiracial further marginalized given the situation in American race relations. Even though multiracial individuals have a distinct identity there are still forced so the margins by the dominant minority group. The reason that they would be on the margin is that individuals with a border identity are still split between the group in which they choose to identify (monoracial or multiracial). Race still exists as a social reality, and if individuals are perceived (particularly those perceived as minorities) then they are again removed from a group; simply left on the periphery of society in terms of race. The problem is that

multiracials are still and emerging group and due to structural conditions many individuals still adhere to a singular identity. Although there are forced categories, many individuals may have “distinct identities that function independently of these forced categorizations (Pauker and Ambady 2009).

Since from a symbolic interactionist perspective argues that people know things by their meaning and through interaction, one could evaluate the political debate surrounding the 2000 and media coverage as symbols that are internalized. These symbols shown to individuals are one that given the context of the social structure, that an individual should adhere to a singular identity. Simultaneously push factors could remove and individual further from a particular racial group with which they are willing to identify.

When addressing the issue of multiraciality in the United States in terms of policy, it will eventually permeate to the individual level. Identity is constructed at this level, and this message is not only conveyed in media coverage, but also in the census form itself. The census form for many individuals is simply a way in which they self-identify, and they report their racial identity to the government.

The fundamental work of George Herbert Mead (1934) elaborates on how individuals are socialized. Looking at the context of Thornton (2009) and the role of

media, Mead writes, "The vast importance of media of communications such as those involved in journalism is seen at once, since they report situations through which one can enter into the attitude, and experience of other persons (Mead 257). For the individuals of the multiracial community, depending on the publications that these individuals read, it would affect the outcome of the attitude that they share. An individual must make the decision of whether they feel that the multiracial community could be detrimental to the African-American community, and may change the way in which they self-identify, not only on the census but in their daily lives.

The media and the census form can also convey significant symbols, especially through the language. Mead writes, "the gesture in general, and the vocal gesture in particular, indicates some object or other within the field of social behavior, an object of common interest to all the individuals involved in the social act thus directed toward or upon that object" (Mead 1934). To Mead language is essential to the roles that individuals take in society, and these

gestures become significant symbols when they implicitly arouse in an individual making them the same responses which the explicitly arouse, or are supposed to arouse, in other individuals, the individuals, to whom they are addressed; and in all conversations of gestures within the social process whether external (between different individuals) or internal (between a given individual and himself), the

individuals consciousness of the content and flow of meaning involved depends on his thus taking the attitude of the other toward his own gestures (Mead 47).

Thus a multiracial category would cause multiracial individuals to have an internal conflict within them. The creation of a new group, would essentially create something new with which is not only recognized by the individual, but at the personal level. The multiracial category would create a new significant symbol. This would equal the internalization of a new external conversation, and “the gestures this internalized are significant because they have the same meanings for all individual members of the given society or social group... (47). A creation of a new category would allow for both society and the individual to create a new symbol, the multiracial individual, something different from the traditional categories of race.

The multiracial category allows for the biracial individual to “become something which can function in the organized whole, and thus tends to determine himself in his relationship with the group which he belongs” (160). This is one of the reasons that multiracialism would be detrimental to the community which they currently belong. In the structure of American race, the biracial individual belongs to the black group even if they phenotype is very light. The individual can pass in the white community, but if discovered the individuals skin (the symbol) takes on a role different than it previously

had. This is because the individual is then given the symbol through language of being black, which conveys a different message than the perceived phenotype. By going against a multiracial category it is essentially not allowing a place for individuals to internalize themselves as being different from black.

In regards to push factors, one can also question the validity of a group wanting to maintain members without giving them option of leaving. The fact of negative connotation for multiracial individuals can be framed by blacks being one of the dominant groups that could be seen as oppressing the biracial individuals. The fear is that individuals from underrepresented minorities will become further misrepresented, thus less economic and social justice will be afforded to that group. The question that one must ask: "Should there be social justice for individuals in the multiracial community?"

The more philosophical question for multiracial individual, and the 2000 census debate can be framed through the work of W.E.B. Dubois (2007). The only difference within the debate is that now the individuals conflicted are those of the multiracial community, and oppressed by those who wish them to stay a part of theirs. In Dubois chapter, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," he poses the question "How does it feel to be a problem? (2)" The multiracial individuals can be viewed, for wanting to create a new

gesture on the multiracial landscape, a way to remove power and economic resources of the black community.

Is the multiracial individual the “eighth son”, “born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true-self consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world”?

(3). For the multiracial individual the other world is more complex than that of the black individuals. The multiracial movement struggles with creating its own culture, torn between those that have arisen from racial categories. The debate around the census could force the multiracial individual to ask the question of what is the culture that best suits the individual.

When examining the notion of “double consciousness” the multiracial individual is not caught only in two worlds, but the world with which their heritage is derived. The multiracial individual does not feel a twoness, but more possibly a threeness, fourness or many others. For example the biracial individuals still struggles with their American identity (which is formed mostly through white identity) and is torn between the cultures which compose their mixed blood. The multiracial movement supporters have the same wish as Dubois did for the Negro; they simple “wis[h] to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his

fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face” (3). The multiracial struggles with this, as can be seen in the loss of minority scholarships.

The reason that I pose such questions in the examination of this debate is that I am a biracial American. My mother is black and my father is white, and from the moment that I was born I was different from both. I struggle with how the government recognizes me in comparison of how I recognize myself. I struggle with my own acknowledgement of both my black and white heritage, yet have a bond with individuals from multiracial backgrounds even if their ethnicity differs from my own. I struggle with knowing that I am different and removing myself from the group that was held down by Jim Crow, and I struggle with the notion of race as skin color, and race as culture. Most of all I struggle with the question: Who am I on the American Racial landscape?

One must also recognize the limitations of my analysis. In the racial categorization in American one must realize that phenotype is a large part of biracial identity construction. The fact of the matter is that in a given context, an individual may be deemed black by the community, and thus internalize this. The questions of this research are to look at a traditionally oppressed group, and to examine if they are now becoming the oppressors themselves. Biracial individuals face the challenge of being

exiled to the borderlands, marginalized by those who will deem them black based upon American tradition.

The complexity of the multiracial movement makes it difficult to fully understand how an individual perceives themselves. Most research on biracial perception is done on children. The fact that there are several contextual factors that go into multiraciality calls for further study. Studying individuals from monoracial backgrounds needs to be further examined by the sociological community as a whole. Many multiracial individuals feel torn between separate cultures, and turning the focus to monoracial individuals helps complete the social picture of multiracial identity construction. By not knowing how many individuals feel at a personal level (not just at a government level) would allow more people to understand the pressures of multiracial identity construction at a micro-level. By studying people's perception of multiracialism, it not only gives more insight to multiracialism, but the race in American Society in general.

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