THE FORGOTTEN PEOPLE:
MULTIRACIAL INDIVIDUALS

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Abstract

This paper offers an extensive review of the literature pertaining to the identity formation and experiences of multiracial people in the United States. Much of the attention they receive in the literature tends to be directed toward discussions of either the U.S. Census or identity issues. Offered in this critique of the literature is a discussion of the problems which arise when the government attempts to classify multiracial people into monoracial categories, an acknowledgment of the challenges which individuals of mixed race face while forming and developing their multidimensional identities, and an overview of conceptualizations of race.

Keywords: multiracial, identity development, marginal peoples

"What Are You?" For many people this question may seem insignificant, or easy to answer, still others may not know where the question is leading. This may be because many people are not faced with the question, "What are you?" in any regularity. There is, however, a growing population of individuals with mixed racial backgrounds who are constantly faced with this question. The question may become burdensome to an individual with a complex identity, which may eventually lead to confusion of identity. This is why the problem multiracial individuals face when their ethnicity is questioned and how they address and cope with such inquiries, needs to be explored more fully.

This paper focuses on a diverse group of people who make up a growing segment of the United States' population (Spencer 1997; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1995). Specifically, the paper presents an extensive literature review and analysis of the existing material on multiracial people. This analysis includes various academic disciplines, with a focus on the field of sociology.

Issues facing multiracial individuals and the multiracial population, as a whole, are many and varied. In order to fully understand the core points to this discussion, the paper focuses on the following: 1) conceptualizations of race in academia; 2) a theoretical framework to address multiracial identity development; and 3) the issue of categorizing persons of a multiracial identity. We assert these three areas are of significance not only in the study of multiracial populations but in the development of racial studies as a whole. It is also important to address these issues in order to gain public recognition and initiate discussion that will assist in exposing stereotypes which may lead to further discrimination and alienation of multiracial individuals.

Our work consists of an extensive literature review, which draws from the work of scholars, journalists and multiracialists. Due to the limited research done on people of mixed race we rely on a diverse assortment of materials, which address a variety of issues and facets of life. Race literature predominantly focuses on only one racial group and fails to mention people of mixed race. Much of the published literature on race deals with racial conflict and racism (Smith and Feagin 1995; Hooks 1995). However, more relevant to our discussion is the material centered on interracial relationship/marriage and racial identity formation, which also tends to focus on one racial identity and neglects multidimensional identities. The emergence of "ethnic revivals" and "ethnic studies" demonstrate this reality (van den Berghe, 1981).

It was the lack of research on multiracial individuals in scholarly publications that led to our analyzing more closely the field of sociology in respect to mixed race individuals. In the review of the literature,

matter was found primarily in books edited by psychologists addressing race and ethnicity issues for counseling individuals and case studies (Root 1992; Rosenblatt, Karis and Powell 1995; Salett and Koslow 1994); and material on acculturation issues pertaining to Native American "mixed bloods" from the field of Anthropology (Faiman-Silva 1997; Nagel 1996). Nonetheless, the field of sociology does have a long tradition of study regarding matters of race and identity.

ACADEMIA AND RACE

The existing research on the study of race is diverse in nature. The study of race has crossed all academic disciplines. Research and discussions on racial issues can be found in social science, natural science and business textbooks. A brief explanation and historical background of the construction of race is important for understanding the problems which surround the concept of race.

Historical Background of Race

Before addressing the multiplicity of race, it is important to have an understanding of race as a single component. The idea of race is a complicated topic. There are hundreds of books and articles written on issues dealing with, and relating to, race (Fishkin 1995). Race has been the object of many heated debates and the explanation for many social conflicts. The concept of race and racial classification has an interesting history.

Historically, race was a biological taxonomy conceptualized by Carolus Linnaeus in 1758. He created his model as a way to classify human beings, just as a biologist would classify any other species. His document of racial taxonomy, entitled *Systema Naturae*, identified four racial categories: Americanus, Europaeus, Asiaticus and Afer. The categories were geographically based and originally had no intended rank order. It was a student of Linnaeus, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, who is responsible for the hierarchical creation of

racial categories which are imbedded into modern day American society, as well as world wide. Blumenbach took the racial classification a step further by adding a fifth group, the Malays of Polynesia. His five-race model established in 1795, was based on geography as well as appearance. His classification stemmed from the "perceived beauty" of the Caucasian people (which he named after a mountain range in Russia). Situated on a continuum below the Caucasians (Europeans) were the Mongolians (Asians), Ethiopians (Africans), Americans (Native Americans) and Malays (Polynesians), all of which he perceived as less beautiful than the Caucasians (Gould 1994).

Biologists were responsible for the creation of racial classifications, but now many biologists are abandoning the idea of "scientific" racial taxonomy. Throughout the last two hundred years, the criterion for biological classification of race has changed dramatically. The original four racial categories have been repeatedly challenged by other scientists who cannot identify single traits which are race specific. Physical features do vary from region to region but they do so independent of other traits (Shreeve, 1994:58). Therefore, no race can be identified as possessing traits which are solely attributed to a single race. Webster (1992) and Pettigrew (1998) point out the inconsistency in the number of accepted racial categories which vary greatly depending on the scientist. Harris (1964) asserts that racial identity, scientifically speaking, is ambiguous. He goes on to note that:

> In the United States, the mechanism employed is the rule of hypo-descent. This descent rule requires Americans to believe that anyone who is known to have a Negro ancestor is a Negro. We admit nothing in between . . . The reason for this absurd bit of folk taxonomy is simply the great blundering machinery of segregation cannot easily adjust itself to degrees of whiteness and darkness (p. 56).

There is a belief that the classifications are "unscientific" and "erroneous," not only

among biologists, but social scientists as well. Sociologist S. Carl Hirsch identified the problem:

> Some scientists see only three races while others list three hundred. Most estimates are somewhere between, the common numbers being five, six, nine, and thirty. There is an important group of anthropologists who have abandoned the term "race" altogether. They see it as "a dangerous four letter word," more troublesome than useful. One leading biologist states that most of the world's people are so racially distinct that they are members of no race (Webster 1992, p.34).

Though the biological base may be nothing more than the origins of a failed classification system, the concept of race is still at the core of sociological principles. For the most part, race is now viewed as a social construction which has become ingrained in our society. Race, as a construct, developed an identity and autonomy of its own (Smedley 1999). In 1958, sociologist Brewton Berry identified the importance of race to the study of society:

> Race has always been one of the major concerns of sociologists. The first two sociological books published in the United States, a century ago, dealt with the problem . . . Sociologists were fascinated by the task of classifying mankind, of studying the physical and mental characteristics of races, and of measuring these differences. They spent their efforts in the futile attempt to explain social phenomena in biological terms. The second period witnessed a shift to a cultural frame of reference (Webster 1992, p.75).

Spencer (1997) describes race as a "sociopolitical construct . . . that was created and had been maintained and modified by the powerful to sustain their group as a privileged caste" (p.I). Smedley (1999) agrees with this point by asserting that:

> Historical evidence shows that race as it originated and evolved in the American experience was not a mere objective sorting of human physical diversity into convenient categories, and it was not a scientific term invented and given substantive meaning by scholars. Race was a folk concept that was

elevated to the ranks of scholarly discourse when scientists began developing rationalizations and justifications for existing social realities (p.321).

The concept of race has become so accepted and embedded into our society that many Americans believe that race can define "the very nature of people" (Spencer 1997, p.I).

Conceptualization

For the purpose of our paper "race" is conceptualized as a sociological construction, not as a biological fact. Sociologist Diana Kendall (1997), defines a "race (as) a category of people who have been singled out, by others or themselves, as inferior or superior on the basis of subjectively selected physical characteristics such as skin color, hair texture, and eye shape" (p.3). Sociologist Robert Park, who has been credited as the founding father of the sociology of race relations, as well as sociologist Martin Marger have chosen to stay away from the controversy of biological classification of race. They, however, continue to focus their attention on the social meaning of race (Webster 1992, p.79). Consistently, the term race is used to refer to a group that is socially defined but on the basis of physical criteria (van den Berghe, 1978).

The majority of research which has been conducted on racial identities focuses on individuals of one specific race. Many researchers have ignored individuals who do not fit into one "neat" category. A common view in the United States is that "each person belongs to one and only one race" (Russell 1994, p.103). Multiracial people are often placed into one racial group, while researchers often neglect the other components of their identity. We, however, have chosen to focus on these "forgotten" people who do not fit into a specific racial category.

There is currently a debate about the proper terminology for people of mixed race, especially in regards to the U.S. Census' racial categorization (Spencer 1997;

U.S. Bureau of the Census, May 1995; Evinger 1996; Beech 1996; Eddings 1997; Norment 1995). However, for the purposes of this paper, we have chosen to use the term "multiracial". Matsumoto, Acosta and Gonzales (1997) describe some of the currently accepted terminology, including multiracial. Multiracial people can be defined as people who are of two or more racial heritages. All individuals of mixed race are included in this conceptualization as well as all biracial individuals. For some individuals, multiracial or even biracial may be too broad, vague or inclusive a term. Different terms and language are used to identify one's heritage more specifically. Individuals vary in their preference of word choice, some examples of more commonly used terminology include individuals who describe themselves as *half* Pacific Islander and *half* Spanish, or *both* black and white, or *50%* Irish, *25%* Ethiopian and *25%* Japanese (Matsumoto, Acosta and Gonzales 1997). Among Native Americans, degree of ancestry (e.g., "mixed blood" or "full blood") becomes salient to claims of ethnic legitimacy (Nagel 1996).

Semantics is very important, especially for individuals who are made to choose an "either-or" racial identity rather than a "both-and" identity which is more inclusive. The concept of "passing" is also relevant to this study and refers to a person of mixed racial heritage who denies or misrepresents their racial background so as to "fit in" to a certain social group or context (Matsumoto, Acosta and Gonzales 1997). The racism which was exhibited within Mexican culture, and found its way into the United States demonstrates the significance of the usage of words to this topic. Van den Berghe (1978) notes how

> An elaborate terminology was applied to various mixtures of Negroes with Indians and Spaniards and to the resulting shades in skin color and differences in other physical traits . . . Several of these words are names of animals, and of course, the term mulatto itself is derived from mule, implying a cross between different biological species (p.52).

In reality, a term such as mulatto is an ideal type and could not ever actually be applied to individuals according to strict ethnic/racial criteria (MacLachlan and Rodriguez 1980).

In 1991 sociologist F. James Davis stated that the "one-drop rule," referring to individuals with "one drop of black blood" be classified as black, was here to stay (Spencer 1997, p.8). The one-drop rule did become increasingly accepted by blacks and mulattoes. As Russell (1994) notes, mulattoes merged with the larger black society, usually to the top of economic, political, and social positions of the black community. However, Russell (1994) states that "with the number of resulting first-generation cross-racial persons increasing, there could well be a questioning of the cultural legacy of the one-drop rule" (p.181).

Sociology and the Study of Multiracial People

Concerns have been expressed about sociologists' limited discussion of the various issues pertaining to race (McKee 1993; Webster 1992). Multiracial or mixed race individuals have, until fairly recently, been generally overlooked in the work of sociology and academia on a whole. Why is it that sociology, which is responsible for accepting race as a social construct, provides minimal attention to the experience of multiracial people?

McKee (1993) believes that sociology began to decline in the study of race when sociologists failed to predict the racial events of the 1960s. This shows that "sociologists did not understand what was transpiring in the world of racial interests and actions" (McKee 1993, p.3). Not only did the field of sociology fail to foresee the Civil Rights Movement, they did not see the Multiracial Movement's development or acceleration. Although it is clear that the debate about "racial mixing" and how to classify multiracial people has arrived, it is seldom mentioned in a sociology text on race. Spencer (1997) reinforces McKee's point by noting that:

. . . it may surprise us that we did not see it coming long before now. But some movements seem to work that way: We do not see them coming, but when they are here we can see that they were coming all along. This multiracial movement, then was no sudden development . . . (p.13).

Within the last twenty years, more multiracial people have begun to demand attention, but have received very little recognition. Due to their similar struggles, issues, and the discrimination which they have had to face, many multiracial people are beginning to bond together for support. Multiracial individuals, across all disciplines, have written articles, introduced publications, created support groups and initiated a Multiracial Movement (Spencer 1997). The Multiracial Movement has gained much of its press and attention from issues dealing with the 1990 census. Many of the articles emerging focus on the lack of recognition from the public and the U.S. government. Many multiracial individuals have bonded together and centered their attention around the census debate. The debate was initiated by multiracialists to find a way to represent people of mixed race in the U.S. census by exploring the possibility of adding a new "multiracial" category to standardized forms. This has brought about more general awareness of the issues and discrimination which people of mixed race face. What affects most multiracial people directly is the way they have been labeled by others, usually based on the color of their skin or appearance, in order for society to categorize them.

This external labeling demonstrates the significance of identity to this population of people. Interracial, biracial, or multiracial children often have a troubling experience with identity as race dictated by the arbitrary rule of hypo-descent. The "intermixture of races" in effect produces a synthesis race (Russell 1994). The classic statements of early sociological theorists can offer insights to understanding this synthesis of race as it impacts multiracial identity development.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

We offer that Charles Horton Cooley's (1902) Looking-Glass Self; W.E.B. Du Bois' (1903) conception of twoness; and Georg Simmel (1950) and Everett V. Stonequist's (1935) marginality theory serve as the starting point for a sociological understanding of multiracial identity.

Cooley's (1902) Looking-Glass Self theory focuses on an individual's perception of his or herself based on how others perceive them. Members of society, especially one's peers, are a great influence on identity. Appearance, actions, personality, friends, and so on are all reflected in the looking glass. Cooley identifies three key principles in order to understand the looking-glass self more clearly: 1) the imagination of the way one appears in other's eyes; 2) the way others judge that appearance; and 3) how an individual feels about the way he or she is perceived by others. The final perception can be negative or positive, either of which may result in an individual taking pride or experiencing shame in the way that others view them. Cooley (1902) explains what effect other's opinions may have on an individual at an emotional level by stating that: "[It] is evident from the fact that the character and weight of that other, in whose mind we see ourselves, makes all the difference with our feeling" (p.205). Cooley's theory offers much to an analysis of multiracial individuals.

If one applies the Looking-Glass Self to an individual living in a racially segregated area and compares the results to that of a person living in a large cosmopolitan city, the outcome is likely to be different. An example of this is the experience which a person of mixed race might have living in a conservative area in which he or she is judged harshly by peers due to it being a highly discriminatory environment. His or her self-esteem is more than likely going to be low. On the other hand, a child who has been brought up in an open, diverse and accepting environment with positive feed-

back from peers, is more likely to have pride in who he or she is. The second example is more apparent in individuals who are affected by globalization. Globalization encourages diversity and "multiculturalism"; still others are affected by the racial division which is polarizing our country and as a result may feel shame or try to deny one or more of their races (Smith and Feagin 1995). Yet in rural areas, issues of multiracial identity formation are also evident. As an example, legitimacy of membership among Native American groups often hinges on issues such as authenticity of one's identity (Nagel 1996; Snipp 1996).

Arguably one of America's greatest social theorists on race, W.E.B. Du Bois, was not until recently recognized by the field of sociology (Lemert 1993). Much of his work addresses the social conditions of African Americans. Du Bois (1903) explores the experience of the "Negro" in America:

> . . . -a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p.179).

Du Bois' concept of double-consciousness or twoness stems from his experience of being both American and black, an experience he felt was full of conflict. Conflict in identity exists for many multiracial people whose heritage is composed of both the "oppressor" and the "oppressed." Examples are found in many black-white biracial individuals who struggle with "conflicting" identities (Zack 1993; Rosenblatt, Karis and Powell 1995; Gibbs and Hines 1992). Many of these children are not accepted into either the white community or the black community. They experience much of the racism that other black children encounter, as well as experience resentment for their dual membership (Rosenblatt, Karis and Powell 1995), yet they will still be alienated by both groups. Smedley (1999) notes how struggling with identity has lead to a "morass of problems" for Native Americans/Indians of mixed decent as well. She describes how they have " . . . experienced psychological trauma and distress as a result of the confusion of biology and culture"(p.332).

Du Bois, however, is also able to view his duality as a strength which keeps him from tearing himself apart. He is driven by his goal and desire to merge his two selves into a better and truer self. His description of twoness can be seen in the experience of biracial individuals in this country and can be expanded to include individuals with multidimensional identities. Du Bois details that by blending two identities you must not give up either identity; you must simply create "two souls, one self." He wants to make it possible for an individual to maintain both parts of the old selves, because in order "to attain a place in the world, [people] must be [themselves], and not another" (Du Bois 1903, p.181). Du Bois was very aware of the conflict of identities which multiracial people face. He was also conscious to the fact that by embracing all parts of one's identity life is more harmonious. Du Bois' ideas are echoed in many of the personal stories of multiracial individuals in their struggle to be recognized completely and not simply by a single racial classification, which they may feel has been imposed on them.

Connected to group membership and identity is the concept of marginality. Developed by sociologists Georg Simmel (1950) and Everett V. Stonequist (1935), marginality theory has been added to and revised throughout the years. At the core of the concept of marginality is the status that many individuals experience when alienated by others. A marginal status can lead to a mental state which affects one's state of

being, as Mörner's (1967) analysis of acculturation in Latin America found, by noting that persons of mixed ancestry are probably more frequently "marginal men"(p.6). Grant and Breese (1997), define six reactions to marginality: affected, emulative, defiant, emissarial, withdrawn, and balance. Affected individuals shy away from conflict, are sensitive and self-conscious, and may have inferiority complexes. Emulation is the rejection of one's own culture and the shift toward association with the dominant culture. The concept of "passing" would be included in this reaction. Those individuals who are defiant blame the system for their marginal status and are hostile. Emissarial individuals take a more positive perspective of their situations and see themselves as interpreters. This is an example of individuals who have a healthy relationship with the various components of their racial identities and will become negotiators as members of two or more groups. Withdrawal may occur when an individual has a very negative experience with a culture. They will completely remove themselves from activities and people who are associated with that particular group. An example of this would be a biracial woman who has African as well as European roots, and who has experienced racism from the white majority. She may choose to no longer associate herself with the white majority. People who are balanced accept and identify with both or all of the components of their identity. They have been raised with role models and experiences from all aspects of their identity (Grant and Breese 1997).

In recent history, a shift has begun to emerge which allows individuals to accept all components of their racial identity (Nagel, 1994b). Not long ago in the United State's history, society's perception of mixed race people was much more severe. The issues that many multiracial people face relate to the historical conception of people of mixed race. "Mixed blood" was very taboo in this country for many years,

and it is only now that beliefs are slowly changing (Wilson 1992; Fish 1995; Zack 1993). Due to these beliefs and the history of race relations, including concepts such as "Separate, but Equal," there exists in this country a duality and separation among the races. This separation of the races and how one is perceived is central to the theoretical framework of this study. Separation of identities is what Du Bois' theory of twoness addresses. The Looking-Glass Self looks at identity formation and how society can play a crucial role in how an individual perceives his or herself. Finally, marginality theory allows us to view a model of possible reactions and behavior characteristics of a person who has marginal status. These principles are all fundamental to the study of multiracial individuals.

Identity Formation
Biracial and multiracial identity formation has been studied more extensively in areas relating to counseling and psychology. Many of the concepts, relating to multiracial identity, have ties to the theoretical framework on which this research is founded. Due to the individual nature of identity, and the variety of outside forces influencing a pluralistic identity, it is important to recognize that many individuals have had very different experiences. Although there is some theoretical discussion of multiracial identity development (Kich 1992), many researchers have chosen to conduct case studies on people of mixed race, in order to gain more in depth information (Jacobs 1992; Gibbs and Hines 1992; Cauce et al. 1992). The diversity of multiracial individuals' backgrounds (i.e. social class, races, ethnicities and geographical upbringing), have encouraged many studies on identity to consist of qualitative, interview-oriented research.

The theory of marginality is discussed by Nakashima (1992) as she addresses how marginal status connects to the perception that others have of a person of mixed race. She describes Stonequist's (1935) ideas

about the "racial hybrid" as a marginal man, in which he recognizes that there are no biological problems with race mixture, only societal problems, which can account for whatever "inferiority" multiracial people might exhibit. Problems resulting from an individual's duality and plurality of her or his racial background surface when one is trying to develop a personal identity (Miller and Rotheram-Borus 1994).

For many multiracial children, home is a very safe and nurturing environment. Parents focus on the uniqueness and individuality of their children. It is when children begin attending school that they are faced with the harsh reality of a racially polarized society. Children's identities are constantly being questioned by their peers, teachers and adults. Parents must prepare their children to face a racist society at a young age (Rosenblatt, Karis and Powell 1995).

A valid concern for multiracial children is that they are not exposed to positive role models with multiracial heritages. It is difficult when the media and peers do not recognize multiracial individuals' complete identities. It is even more difficult when the media portrays people of mixed race in a negative way. There has, however, been a growing acceptance of multiracial people in the media. Entering the spotlight are individuals who identify with more than one race, such as actors Halle Berry and Jasmine Guy; musicians, Mariah Carey, Lenny Kravitz and Paula Abdul; and athlete Tiger Woods. Thus, some have found success in the media's eyes and are becoming positive role models for multiracial people.

Although there are many challenges to being multiracial in a racist society, there are benefits as well. Many multiracial people are proud to embrace every aspect of their identities. They also feel better equipped to deal with diverse groups of people. Nakashima believes that people of mixed-race are "the children of the future-the natural bridges between the artificial boundaries that divide the humans of the world" (Nakashima 1992, p.173). Hall

(1992) expands on the idea of a multiracial individual as a "new race" of individuals,

> . . . able to act as bridges among groups, fostering communication and cooperation. The future role of mixed people may be that of negotiators. Since they belong to many groups, they will be seen as insiders, with vested interests in making plans work for all sides (p.328).

The strength and leadership abilities of multiracial individuals are necessary if these individuals are to embrace all components of their identities. Individuals who develop all elements of their identity exemplify the successful cooperation which can exist between people of all races. The issue remains: how, or should, society categorize multiracial individuals?

ISSUES OF CATEGORIZATION

The concept of racial classification has always been a key theme in the field of sociology. Sociology is known for its dissection of society and categorization of peoples into social classes, races and castes. Sociologists try to generate categories to allow for data to be organized. Yet clear-cut categorization of people becomes problematic, especially in our exposure to diverse and ever-expanding mixed race populations. Birth certificates, passports, school applications and the U.S. Census all require classification of race to be documented. As the number of multiracial people increases, the concept of compartmentalization grows more complicated.

Population Statistics and the U.S. Census
One of the more straightforward ways to identify first generation people of mixed race is to look at interracial marriages and the children which come out of those marriages. The number of interracial marriages is on the rise. U.S. census data shows that there has been an increase from 149,000 interracial marriages in 1960 to 1,392,000 marriages in 1995. Over 35 years, there was an increase of 1,243,000 interracial marriages (U.S. Bureau of the Census, March 1995). Major factors which

contribute to the increase in interracial marriages are assumed to be due to an increase in immigration, a larger U.S. population, and the abolition of miscegenation laws which reflect a growing acceptance of interracial unions. The percentage of marriages between interracial couples has risen from 1.3 percent in 1980 to 2.5 percent of total marriages in 1995 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, March 1995).

Directly related to the increase in interracial marriages is the rise in interracial births which has taken place in the last twenty years. Between the years 1970 and 1990, in what some have labeled the "biracial baby boom," there was a tripling of interracial births, from 1 percent to 3 percent (Spencer 1997, p.4; Futurist 1993). In 1991, the census estimated that there were at least 2 million multiracial children living in two-parent households (Norment 1995, p.108), and this statistic does not include single headed households. It is during the "biracial baby boom" that the U.S. census experienced an increase in individuals who checked the "other" category when marking their census forms. In 1970, only 720,000 people (less than one-half of one percent of the population) checked the other category, while in 1990 almost ten million (about 4 percent of the population) checked the official "other" category. It was the first time "other" was an option which could be selected. Of the eight million people writing in their identity, 253,000 people indicated derivatives of multiracial ("interracial", "black-white," "asian-white," and so on) (Spencer 1997, p.5). The multiracial population is steadily increasing, leading individuals to question the way in which race is classified. Individuals are pointing out the faults in the concept of race, especially those who do not fit neatly into one "box". The significant increase in the size of the multiracial population has brought about a demand for attention and action from many institutions, especially the census, which has a history of requiring racial classification.

The majority of the statistical information generated on multiracial individuals is gathered and compiled by the federal government's statisticians, the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Due to this fact, some caution is advised when accepting census data on people of mixed race. Historically, people of mixed race have not been included under a multiracial or any other inclusive category by the census. The census is historically known for its ability to organize Americans into "neat" categories. In extreme cases, officials have been known to select a racial category for an individual, who has either selected more than one choice or has written in their race, and therefore, does not "fit" into the racial classification choices (Spencer 1997). Census data is used for many purposes, especially in studies focusing on a number of demographic components. The census has historically been a very useful tool, but has also been criticized for its attempt to racially and ethnically classify all Americans into four categories: American Indian/ Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black and White. The ethnicity choices allow for individuals to select one of two options: Hispanic or non-Hispanic. Hodgkinson (1995), who has studied the history and evolution of the U.S. census, points out that racial classifications have changed in almost every census since the first one in 1790.

In recent history the Multiracial Movement has proposed adding a "multiracial" category to census forms in an attempt to be inclusive of all aspects on one's identity and racial heritage. The topic has been heatedly, emotionally and practically discussed by individuals and groups on both sides of the debate. Much of the discussion has been facilitated by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in an attempt to assess the need for and possible ramifications of a "multiracial" category (Office of Management and Budget 1997; Evinger 1996). In opposition to the new category are groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National

Council of La Raza, a Hispanic business group, who receives much of its funding from statistics which indicate racial percentages for the United States (Hodgkinson 1995; Beech 1996; Norment 1995). A new category could also provide unprecedented problems for Affirmative Action groups and other advocacy groups like the Equal Employment Advisory Council who monitor federal antidiscriminatory violations (Beech 1996). Yet other individuals believe that adding another category will "no doubt add to racial tension" (Eddings 1997, p.37) and increase the racial divide already existent in this country. Leading the way for Multiracialists is Susan Graham, founder of Project RACE, who advocates to "Reclassify All Children Equally," by allowing children to be classified how they see themselves, rather than how others see them (Eddings 1997; Beech 1996, p.56). Still others call for a doing away with racial classification on all forms. Smedley (1999) argues that:

> Nothing is more indicative of the plight, and the pathology, of using race/biology as the main form of identity than the efforts on the part of some people to establish a "mixed race" category in the census and thus in American society . . . Having been conditioned to the biological salience of "race" and to the reality of only black, white, and Indian categories, some contemporary offspring of mixed marriages . . . continue [to experience] psychic stress of . . . feeling that they do not know who they are (pp. 331-332).

The OMB continues to work toward retaining their "standards to provide the minimum set of categories for data on race and ethnicity" (Office of Management and Budget 1997, p.2). After gathering data and extensive research the OMB decided to apply the following recommendations:

> When self-identification is used, a method for reporting more than one race should be adopted. The method for respondents to report more than one race should take the form of multiple responses to a single question and not a "multiracial" category (Office of Management and Budget 1997:15).

The census forms for the year 2000 will therefore select one of two recommended forms allowing for multiple responses: "Mark one or more . . . " or "Select one or more (race) . . . ". Discussion about the change in the census has sparked many debates about how classification of mixed race people can effect their identity development and self-esteem, as well as the way they see themselves within society.

CONCLUSION

Multiracial individuals are society's cultural and racial delegates. They have the potential to live and thrive between the border areas, which divide society. This in turns offers them the chance to strengthen and cultivate a sense of identity. Du Bois' (1903) conception of twoness expresses the idea of a plural identity, "strength alone keeps (one's identity) from being torn asunder" (p.179). His focus on embracing all aspects of one's identity is central to the struggle which multiracial individuals engage in, in an attempt for recognition of their complete identities.

Race was established based on physical characteristics. The biological basis of race is unfounded, yet the concept of race continues to be studied by social scientists. How can we socially discuss or study an unsupported system based on false assumptions and racist views? By adding multiracial people to the equation we begin to view more clearly the difficulties which surround race.

It is therefore understandable why researchers conveniently leave out people of mixed race in studies on race. To include mixed race persons would compound the problem of establishing categories for people based on physical appearance. Further complications arise when we theorize about how to redefine individuals not based on race. Myriad social problems in the United States are tied to issues relating to the way in which people see, judge and discriminate against each other. Race plays a part in many of the policies of funding agencies and ser-

vice providers which strive to combat racial injustice. The U.S. census is an example of fighting a battle that is already lost due to the construction of race.

A key point to our work is that people of mixed race, a group of individuals who have been alienated from participation in society due to their physical appearance and parentage, would like to be recognized for whom they are. The issues surrounding race are complicated and diverse in nature. It is important, however, that people of mixed race receive recognition from the general public. The media has been an outlet for the census debate, but it is now time for the media to initiate dialog on other issues relating to people of mixed race. As Nagel (1994a) notes, ethnic identity formation is best understood as a dynamic, constantly evolving property of both individual identity and group organization- a dialectic played out by ethnic groups and the larger society. Issues which need to be incorporated into our classrooms and the mass media pertain to the positive aspects of being multiracial, as well as the experiences of alienation and discrimination.

Recommendations for Future Research

Semantics is a key indicator of how people relate and deal with different issues. An important future study might examine the language which is used to describe skin tone. Connected to word choice are the implications and impact on an individual's skin which is never quite the "right" color. A study on perceptions and reactions to skin color could also connect the relationship to racial classification and personal identification.

We also suggest a more in depth examination of interracial marriages. Much of the literature reviewed for this present study dealt with interracial relationships and marriages (Zack 1993, Yasinski 1998, Root 1992). Of the research which has been published, the majority of the studies are on black-white couples. This is due in particular to past laws on miscegenation or mixed marriages. A worthwhile research

project would be to examine the self image of multiracial children who were born to interracial couples prior to the 1967 U.S. Supreme court case of Loving vs. The State of Virginia. This historical court case legalized mixed race marriages throughout the remaining 16 states in which sexual relations and marriage was still illegal, as a result these children would legally be considered "bastards" by the state. A related research question could examine Russell's (1994) claim that "mixed European, Indian, and Asian-decent individuals have fewer problems being accepted as social equals than individuals with partial or full African decent"(p.104). In a review of the increasing rates of ethnic outmarriage/ exogamy, van den Berghe (1981) concludes that "only blacks seem permanently excluded from the great American melting pot" (p.228).

The final and most important recommendation would be to focus on ethnicity and culture in relation to race. Race is a physical description while ethnicity and culture (which may be related to race) are much more diverse and varied in how people make connections and nurture relationships as well as form identities. Further research could identify the diversity among multiracial and multiethnic people based on culture and environment.

Our study presents a groundwork for future research addressing multiracial people: the limitations of standing race analysis to this population, the problematic components of racial categorization, and identity formation and development of multiracial individuals. However, our work serves primarily as an important challenge to the previously published race literature which attempts to categorize and study individuals based on a single race.

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