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IN BLACK AND WHITE, LIVING ON RACIAL BORDERS: RACE AND COMMUNITY

by

HEATHER M. DALMAGE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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HEATHER MARIE DALMAGE

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Date

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7/24/96
Date

Executive Officer

William Kornblum

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

ABSTRACT

IN BLACK AND WHITE, LIVING ON RACIAL BORDERS:
RACE AND COMMUNITY

by

Heather Dalmage

Adviser: Barbara Katz Rothman

Binary opposites are always set up such that one side has predominant power and is the norm against which the less powerful "other" side is judged (Anzuldua, 1987; McLaren, 1993). The politics of the binary racial categorizing has a distinctive history in the United States, grounded in the particularities of U.S. slavery and the 'one drop rule.' Race, for many in the United States, is perceived as a common-sense and 'authentic' condition which gives information about a person's family, friends, values, beliefs, norms (i.e. culture), abilities and intelligence. It is believed that a person's race can be discovered either through one's appearance or through genetic and biological history (Omi and Winant, 1994; Zack, 1993; Davis, 1992; Appiah, 1990). Based on interviews conducted in the New York City and Chicago areas with 47 Black-White Multiracial family members and participant observations in Multiracial family organizations, I examine the ways in which Black-White family members living on the

racial border contend with the racial binarism in the United States. Some folks grow up monoracial and marry into the border, some are born into the border, others are adopted and raised into the border. Multiracial family members are coming together and creating community (see Root, 1995). Many fear that a publicly recognized and claimed Multiracial location will blur the lines between Black and White thus blurring the lines between the "oppressed and oppressor" (see also Paula Rust, 1993). The challenge for the Multiracial community is to create a comfortable space that is also anti-binary. Such a space requires the creation of a new language that is able to accommodate anti-binary thinking. I explore specific practical issues such as how we find housing in a segregated housing market; how we educate single-race people about the pitfalls of racial essentialism; how we build community that is both politically engaged (i.e. able to create counterhegemonic discourse) and yet remains inclusive; and, how we think about and respond to two very contentious political issues: the possible addition of a Multiracial category to Census 2000 and issue surrounding transracial adoptions.

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INTRODUCTION
NAMING SPACES, CREATING LANGUAGE

> A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes bring us to the end of rape, violence, of war -- Gloria Anzuldua, from *Borderlands*

> The contemporary presence of racially mixed people is unmatched in our country's previous history[1]. Interracial families and Multiracial individuals are changing the face of America and the meaning and utility of race (Root, 1995b: xiv).

The Black-White racial classification system in the United States, created through ideological and historical forces, is perceived as an "authentic" condition which gives information about a person's family, friends, culture, abilities and intelligence (Appiah, 1990). For many, race is understood as "common sense," and it is believed that a person's race can be discovered either through one's appearance or through genetic and biological history (Omi and Winant, 1994; Zack, 1993; Davis, 1991; Dyson, 1994). Once an individual's race is "discovered" all kinds of demands and assumptions are made about how this person should act and with whom they should interact. Racial essentialism is grounded in the belief that race is an authentic condition located within individuals and once located it can give clues about who that individual *really* is. Within such a racial framework Black/White Multiracial families face ostracism and

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[1] Mixed race people have been part of the U.S. landscape since the beginning yet it is only in the past decade that these folks are **claiming** a Multiracial location in large numbers.

discrimination from "both sides." Everyday decisions about where to eat, shop, live, and socialize must be well planned in a racially divided world where people are supposed to "stick with their own." Because Multiracial families are situated on the border we are continuously debunking essentialist myths. The border allows us and forces us to break out of the binary thinking (hierarchical either/ors) that has dominated Western practices for so long. Binary oppositions are always set up such that one side has predominant power and is self-defined as the norm against which the less powerful "other" side is judged (Anzuldua, 1987; McLaren, 1993). Recognizing that individuals, families, and communities live in this space called the border requires a recognition of the inherent flaws of single-race and binary thinking. The experiences of Multiracial families can tell us a great deal about the taken-for-grantedness of racial categories, the social distance and inequalities between Blacks and Whites. Through in-depth interviews and participant observation I examine the role of Multiracial, Black-White family members in shaping racial discourse for the twenty-first century.

This dissertation emerged from my own converging personal, intellectual, and social experiences. I came to this study after living on the border for about a decade. Prior to this study I knew very few people who shared this location and often wondered how other Multiracial family

members live in a racist and racially divided nation. I had heard the question, 'What about the children?' so often that I decided to explore it. In the fall of 1993 I began speaking with Multiracial adults about their lives and race. As I listened to and discussed with these individuals I began to recognize many similarities between their experiences as Multiracial people and my experiences as an interracially married person. In the summer of 1994 I spent a great deal of time researching, discussing and writing about families created through transracial adoption. It was becoming clear that Multiracial people, transracially adopted people, and all members of Multiracial families share many experiences vis-a-vis the Black-White racially dichotomous and hierarchical social relations.

In this dissertation I am drawing upon both in-depth interviews with 47 Multiracial family members and participant observation in three organizations in the New York City and Chicago areas[2]. I conducted a two-part recorded interview with each person; each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes (3 hours total). I followed a modified version of Seidman's 'three-part interview' (1991). The first interview was open-ended and unstructured allowing people to express when, where, why and how race is important in their lives. The open-endedness permitted individuals to unfold their

[2] See Appendix 1 for a chart outlining various characteristics of each person who participated. See Appendix 2 for a brief written description of each person who participated in this study.

lives in their own terms and sequences. The second interview generally followed within a week and was helpful in many ways. First, I was able to ask questions about the experiences upon which opinions and beliefs expressed in the first interview were based. This gave interviewees a chance to clarify their reflections of their experiences. The timing of the second interview was to ensure that the first interview remained fresh in our minds, yet gave us each enough time to reflect upon it. The second interview often began with the interviewee mentioning something they thought of after I had left the previous interview. Because I answered any questions asked about my life and my Multiracial family a level of trust and comfort also developed throughout the interview process (see Oakley, 1981). In addition, the fact that I had transcribed the first interview and thoroughly reviewed it before the second interview was primary in displaying the seriousness with which I was treating each personal story. Each person shared with me the challenges they face and explained how they survive and thrive on the border. I walked away from each interview feeling like I had lived with asthma for the past ten years and all of a sudden I could breath clearly and deeply again. I stopped apologizing. I stopped feeling defensive and I stopped explaining myself. It felt very good to have a named and claimed location, one that is shared with many others who were kind enough to pick it apart in the interviewing process. Sometimes I felt like I had

finally found a home after living in the racial streets for so long. Other times I learned that as good as it feels to claim a Multiracial location, it is not everything. Universalizing the Multiracial experience meant I was guilty of the same old game that sent me on this intellectual and daily chase for answers. Even when I knew this in my mind I wanted to let myself feel like I belonged. I liked hearing those, "we's" and "they's." I liked hearing, "Well you know what it's like." I like being accepted and being part of something. In my attempts to feel like I have a place in a racially divided society I was willing to play the "single-race they" versus "Multiracial we" game. The problem is that the "they" is complicated and filled with issues of power and cannot be reduced to a single, single-race they. Further the "us" is complicated and cannot be readily reduced to an "us" for us is them and them is us. It's the wonder and conflict of the border. We bring conflicting binary communities together and it is the conflict that makes the Multiracial community an "us." It is the conflict of Black and White, monoracial and Multiracial that does not allow us to easily essentialize our community[3].

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[3] The Multiracial community is in no way limited to Black-White family members. There are many Multiracial families and Multiethnic families that come from backgrounds other than Black/White. I chose to focus on Black-White families members for a several reasons. First, Blacks are the only group that have been held to the 'one-drop' standard; Whites are the only group for which "purity" is believed to be the admission ticket. Second, Black-White Multiracial families have a unique history in the United States because of the legacy of slavery. Third, Black-White

The research developed in this dissertation suggests that Multiracial families contend with a world that assumes that people can and should claim single-race identities. For many, because of who they are in relation to their family, a single-race identity is not always desired or possible. When a single-race location is refused we face "borderism," a unique discrimination grounded in the racist practices fundamental to U.S. society. This unique discrimination includes being harassed by the police, being treated badly in White business establishments and, at times, in Black business establishments, being verbally or physically assaulted, and the less harmful, albeit irritating, perpetual stares and comments. These incidences are linked directly to institutional and individual White racism, yet many Blacks also patrol community borders and act in hostile ways toward Multiracial families. The primary difference is that Blacks do not have institutional and systematic control backing their actions (Feagin and Vera, 1995), and thus must continue individual and united struggles for liberation within a White supremacist nation.

NAMING A LOCATION

> *Multiracial, mixed-race, Biracial, mulatto, interracial, half-Black, half-White, half-breed, half-caste, half and half, multiethnic, blendo, Vanilla Swirl, Chocolate*

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familial relations (or the regulation of such relations) has been inextricably linked to White supremacist and patriarchal power in the United States. For these reasons I chose Black-White families as the lens through which to begin a refocusing of race questions in America.

Swirl, Black and White, African American and Caucasian, human, zebra, oreo, sell-out, race-traitor, yellow-boy, red-boy, wannabe

Terms, terms, and more terms. Some are meant to be sensitive, others are meant to hurt, all are meant to include every person somewhere in the racial classification system of the United States. As people who do not quite fit in current officially named and socially recognized categories, members of Multiracial families are constantly fighting to locate 'ourselves for ourselves.' A large part of naming a location is giving that location a title.

Our perception of people and experiences has everything to do with the language with which we have to think about the world (McLaren, 1993). Marie Root, a pioneer in creating an opening to talk about Multiracial America suggests that,

> The average American's limited ability to think about race results in a limited ability to converse about race. Our racial vocabulary provides border markers that are rigid reflections upon our history of race relations and racial classifications (1995b:xxiii).

Our racial vocabulary has rigid borders and is set up into binary oppositions (for example, Black/White, male/female, gay/straight). If our discourse is set up in binary oppositions, then it becomes difficult, maybe impossible to think about those living on the border. For those of us living in this space it means having to create our own language to express who we are. Of course much ambivalence surrounds the naming of a location that is not based on the binary discourse in which Western societies are grounded

(Harding, 1993; Young, 1990; Bondi, 1993). Naming ourselves in a racially unjust and divisive society is difficult because there is not language available to express a solidarity against Whiteness and at the same time express a location outside of the racial dichotomy. Current binary opposites are premised on an assumed biological condition. Daily we are given information about the discovery of a new gene -- the gay gene, the breast cancer gene, the colon cancer gene, the anorexia nervosa gene. Likewise the search continues to explain social factors through claiming race as a genetic phenomena (see for instance James Q. Wilson). In popular usage the idea of race is still very much tied to notions of genetic inheritance. White is still defined as 'pure' and Black defined by some version of the one-drop rule. Multiracial family members who refuse or defy binary categories are constantly asked to explain and defend their thoughts and actions.

Some Multiracial family members do claim single-race locations from time to time and perhaps for extended periods of time (Root, 1995b). Most move in and out of various racial locations, that is, they travel (Lugones, 1990). Such traveling is not well tolerated in a society built on a racial hierarchy with defined borders. The language used to describe people who travel is generally negative (sell-out, wannabe, mixed-up). The assumption is that traveling indicates confusion, a weak self-esteem and a lack of firm politics.

Multiracial family members choose to and are forced to travel between and within single-race categories and communities. That is how the world is set up.

While we are contending with single-race assumptions and social institutions, we are likewise attempting to claim a language that reflects more clearly (and positively) our border location. The process of naming ourselves is unending. The self is not a static entity but rather a reflexive process. Thus we are continually reflecting on and describing ourselves vis-a-vis the ever changing micro and macro social relations. This happens in all areas of life. Yet for single-race people, race may be a taken-for-granted identity (i.e. assumed to be biologically based, universal and static) that is seen as interacting with other changing identities. Multiracial family members contend consciously and regularly with naming and claiming a racial location in daily interaction with single-race people.

Because of the combination of the lack of language and contested racial meanings, Multiracial family members are constantly mulling over and renaming ourselves. As we travel and examine our claimed location, we often change the language we use to describe ourselves. For instance, Andrea is a 24 year-old self-identified Biracial woman living in Brooklyn. She grew up in a predominantly White section of the Bronx and was the youngest child in an White Irish American family and is the only Biracial sibling. She has never known her father

and has had very little contact with Black Americans. She explains why she currently prefers the term Biracial.

> Well originally I called myself Interracial. Then with all the animosity I was seeing in my family and the world around me -- "Inter" implies that there is a meshing and a coupling and I didn't see a whole lot of that. For me there's definitely two races in existence. I wanted a term that would define both races without having what I perceive to be a charade.

For Andrea her named location signifies the racial world, split, contentious and unequal. She later reflected that while the world is split, perhaps she still could be interracial but at this point in her life she wanted to express herself as a reflection of her collective experiences in a racially divided and hierarchical world. Interestingly, the reason she cites for claiming a Biracial location is the very reason many folks cite for not calling themselves and their family Biracial. For instance, Silvia, a 29 year-old Mixed-race PhD candidate living in Brooklyn, New York, shares:

> I say "Mixed." I guess to me "Biracial" sounds half-and-half, rather than mixed which is all mixed up (hand motions). In me it really is all mixed, I suppose this is really esoteric but it's like that with me.

Silvia sees herself as all Mixed, as taking the best from both worlds yet grounding herself in African American culture, politics and history. Many Multiracial family members talked about the way their claimed location changed over their life course. Daphne is a 35 year-old 'Mixed-race' woman who was adopted by White parents and lives outside of New York City, she shares:

> I used to always call myself Black, but now I call myself

> Mixed because it's more defining. It's what I am and I think it's important to acknowledge the fact that I'm not just Black -- I think that's an important part of who I am. I used to call myself Black and now I've gotten more into acknowledging that I'm racially mixed.

Like many, Daphne's choice of language is an attempt to reflect her lived experiences. Adopted by White parents she grew up in a predominantly White environment. As a light-skinned woman she feels 'not all the way there' when talking with darker skinned Blacks about discrimination. Likewise Jessie a 38 year-old woman who grew up in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, reflects on her recent shift to a 'Mixed-race' location.

> I am of Black people, I am recently mixed. All of us are mixed right? So I don't want to say, "I'm mixed and that Black person over there is pure," 'cause that's not the case either. I don't want to draw that kind of line, but there is this thing that has been obviously important in my life that my father is Black and my mother is White and so that means I'm mixed and that I have a unique experience.

Many individuals suggested that age was a predominant factor in claiming a Multiracial location. Lauren, a 42 year-old 'Multiethnic' woman who lived on Chicago's South Side during part of the Black Power Movement suggests that lived experience causes individuals to identity differently and thus we should not draw conclusions about the Multiracial location based on one age group.

> How I felt at 20 is very different than how I feel at 42. Some of this has to do with the turbulence all teens feel in trying to find themselves. I am disturbed when people talk to the 15 to 30 year-old set of people and ask about their experiences and then don't go back and talk to them later because they'll find that those answers are going to be very different as you mature, as you experience

> more of the world, as you understand how you are a part of the world.

Multiracial people adopted by White parents were particular aware of their changing claimed racial location over time. Several Multiracial individuals is more difficult for a family with two White parents to help a child understand what it means to claim a mixed-race location. Several Multiracial people who were adopted by White parents stated that it was not until they began to interact outside the family that their claimed location shifted. Elizabeth a 24 year-old mixed-race woman, living in Hyde Park (Chicago) speaks to the way in which her claimed racial locations have changed and were influenced by her White adoptive parents:

> I considered myself Black when I was younger. It wasn't until I was older that I understood what it was to be mixed-race. It's harder when your parents are both White and they try to explain that to you.

Marguerite is a 29 year-old mixed-race woman who lives in a predominantly White suburb west of Chicago. She too was adopted by White parents and speaks to the role this has had in the racial identities she claims:

> I remember my parents identifying me as Black. From my parent's perspective that's how everyone was going to identify me anyway. It's the easier way to deal with society. And with my parents being White they never said, "You're denying part of your heritage." Growing up it was either one or the other, either Black dolls or White dolls, you didn't go into the store and look for Biracial dolls.

As Marguerite points out society traditionally has not provided a space for identifying outside of the Black-White dichotomy. While most people address their continually

changing racial location over the long-term, others also spoke of the way they shift within the context of daily interactions. Louise, a Biracial 30 year-old woman living in Chicago, laughingly admits that when she is around Whites she becomes the most militant Black and when around Blacks she becomes the 'Uncle Tom' because she is constantly presenting and thinking about 'both sides' of every issue.

Most individuals point to their social experiences across time and space as factors in their claimed racial location. Yet many times arguments made by and for recognizing Multiracial people as 'both/and' often draw on the fact that these individuals have two or more heritages (i.e. they are biologically mixed). Such arguments are grounded predominantly in biological notions of race rather than pointing out the salience of the social world. For example, Marie Root set forth the BILL OF RIGHTS for Racially Mixed People as follows (1995b):

I HAVE THE RIGHT...
Not to justify my existence in this world.
Not to keep the races separate within me.
Not to be responsible for people's discomfort with my physical ambiguity.
Not to justify my ethnic legitimacy.

I HAVE THE RIGHT...
To identify myself differently than strangers expect me to identify.
To identify myself differently from how my parents identify me.
To identify myself differently from my brothers and sisters.
To identify myself differently in different situations.

I HAVE THE RIGHT...
To create a vocabulary to communicate about being Multiracial.
To change my identity over my lifetime -- and more than once.

To have loyalties and identification with more than one group of people.
To freely choose whom I befriend and love.

This Bill of Rights is a wonderful example of claiming and naming the border as a location from which we can travel, but it stops short by not including all family members who live on the border. This is not unique to this *Bill of Rights*, in fact most theorists assume Multiracial family members who cannot claim a genetic mixedness remain monoracially located. The pervasive thinking has made it very difficult for Interracial parents/partners to name a new location. Further such thinking makes it more difficult for Multiracial families to claim a shared location, as a family, vis-a-vis the single-race world.

Interracially married people have no "mixed" genetic inheritance to call upon -- our newly claimed and ever changing racial location is created through and premised upon lived experience. Given the discrimination against Multiracial family members from 'both sides' as well as our ability and need to negotiate in both White and Black single-race circles, interracially married people often talk of *feeling* mixed-race or Multiethnic. For instance, Lionel a Black interracially married father living in Montclair, New Jersey stated, "I think because of my experiences, although I am not mixed race, I think I can identify to some degree with a mixed-race person." Likewise Jane a 65 year-old White woman living in a predominantly Black neighborhood on Chicago's

South Side can "identify to some degree." Now widowed she lives in the same house she and her Black husband purchased in the 50s and in which they raised their three mixed-race children. She reflects on her own racial location:

> I identify as Multiethnic because I feel that in terms of environment I've become Multiethnic. I don't want to say Multiracial because race involves, or is generally considered to involve, genetic inheritance. I have lived in a Black neighborhood for more years than I lived in a White neighborhood -- ever since I was married. My experiences are much different than the experiences of White families.

Both Lionel and Jane feel the need to qualify their claimed location in a society that has historically and continually thinks of race in biological terms. As members of Multiracial families we continually call into question such common sense understandings of race.

In the United States an individual is considered White to the extent that her or his family tree is White (Zack, 1994). Thus to be a White person in a Multiracial family means being 'no longer White' yet there is no new *racial* location to be claimed and named. As Jane points out, within common sense frameworks, race is still thought of as a biologically reducible condition. Based on such thinking Multiracialism can only be claimed by those with known genetic ancestry from two or more socially defined races. Because of this pervasive linking of biology and race, Jane chooses to claim a *Multiethnic* location. In doing so she attempts to move away from biological notions of race. Stuart Hall (1995) also prefers the term ethnicity to race. He explains that, "If the

Black subject and Black experience are not stabilized by Nature or by some other essential guarantee, then it must be the case that they are constructed historically, culturally, politically - and the concept which refers to this is 'ethnicity'."

While the meaning and use of *ethnicity* may disrupt essentialist thinking (the basis of binary thinking) the terminology does not hit racial essentialism head-on. That is to say, if we change our language to *ethnicity* we are not disrupting traditional understandings of *race* as a biological condition. For this reason I choose to use 'race' to refer to the historically, politically and socially created categories which are used to determine the distribution of resources and power. When directly quoting or referring to individuals lives, I will use their own preferred terminology. However, in my general analysis I will use Multiracial, Black and White. I capitalize these terms to indicate that I am talking about socially created categories with political, historical, cultural and ideological significance. They are much more than colors and they are not biological designations. In addition, I choose not to rely on terms such as, Caucasian, European American and African American because Multiracial families more often spoke to the difficulties of negotiating the hostility and ignorance based on single-race Black or White assumptions, not on some vague cultural attachment to supposed lands of origin. Not all Blacks consider themselves

African American, some come from places in the Caribbean and prefer 'Caribbean American.' Very few Whites come from the Caucasus of Eastern Europe and to state 'European American' does not address the invisibility and terror of Whiteness and the privileges granted to Whites in the United States. Further it strikes me that the terms listed above are the 'polite' terms saved for mixed crowds. Race is anything but polite in the United States. Arguments can be made in many directions about the choice of terms. I want to highlight Black and White as dichotomous and hierarchical social relations. I agree with Silvia, (the PhD candidate from Brooklyn) who asserts:

> I like the terms Black and White because they are both equally impossible. Just as there are no coal Black people, there are no snow White people either. And so you can see they've been constructed to mean what they mean.

The Interview: Border Conflict and Ambivalence

On the border we are forced to address the inherent conflicts and ambivalence of race in the U.S. The border houses individuals who are 'both/and' as well as those who are 'either/or.' Toward the end of each set of interviews I asked each individual, "What influence has the fact that I'm an Interracially married White woman had on this interview?". Using my question and my relation to the border as a lightening rod of sorts, I was able to discover the conflicts and differences that come together in this space called the border. In terms of my methodology the question allowed

participants to directly locate themselves in relation to me as the interviewer. The responses I received were based on minimal information -- race, gender, familial ties -- the same information used by borderists and single-race people to judge Multiracial family members. A few individuals suggested that they always try to connect as humans and thus my race, gender and familial ties had little to do with their responses. More often responses followed a pattern -- the individual would explain our point of connection and then begin to outline our many varied locations. Interracially married White women, White men, Black women, Black men and Multiracial people each spoke of a different sense of connectedness to others on the border.

White Women. White women typically responded to my question similar to the way Ingrid did:

> It was lovely to meet somebody else in this situation, that was a comfort...if you were a person in a same-race marriage I would have been a little more on guard because they wouldn't see my point of view, they would be looking at the issue in a different way, they wouldn't know exactly -- you know, we're in the same boat kind of.

The assumption is that our socially defined race and gender interact with our marital status in very unique ways. The explicit statement is that White women married to Black men share a universal experience. Look at the way Nancy, a White mother of two Mixed-race sons responded to the question:

> Because we are both White women in an interracial relationship I could assume that we share many of the same feelings and fears. I think it just makes me think that you understand. I would wonder more what a person in a same-race relationship would be thinking, it would be

harder.

This sense of connectedness can be explained in a couple of ways. My interviewing style is empathetic, not at all confrontational. Thus at points when I may have viewed a situation differently, unless asked, I did not volunteer my perspective. At the same time, White women in interracial relationships do share common experiences vis-a-vis the patriarchal White supremacist society and the racial binarism. Educational attainment, economic and social class and age moderate our experiences. Yet race and gender remain the two most visible locations and become the primary characteristics used by borderists to de-legitimize and question the experiences of Multiracial family members.[4]

White men. White men also spoke of a connection yet race and gender intersect with our familial ties to set our experience apart. While there is a level of comfort based on sharing the border location, there are differences based on our gender and on the historical constructions of Black male-White female relationships and Black female-White male relationships. Because of the differing historical accounts and images we face different forms of borderism. Further White men remain

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[4] On the Census, Question #3 asks for each person's sex and Question #4 asks for each person's race. The only questions that take precedence over these are: Question #1 asks for each person's name and Question #2 asks for how each person is related to the person filling out the questionnaire (i.e. familial ties). In other words the only information that takes precedence over our sex, race and familial ties is our name. I do not think the order in which questions are asked on the census are coincidental.

connected to White patriarchal systems of power. Peter, a White interracially married father spoke to our similarities and differences:

> You understand the issues and problems that I bring up. I don't have to explain or when I do you know exactly what I'm talking about. Although someday I would like to do some writing on the differences between Black male/White female and White male/Black female relationships.

Oscar, a 61 year-old interracially married father responded, "because you're interracially married I guess it gave me a certain comfort level that I wouldn't have had otherwise." He later explained that our age and gender also meant that our experience vis-a-vis the border are different. Further he is a social worker and felt that the interview technique (i.e. the individual) is far more important than ascribed characteristics. Several White men disregarded race and gender as salient factors in the interview and instead made claims to individualism. As such the issue of power that is wrapped up in gender and racial binarisms was also disregarded. In short, it appears that for these men the privileges granted to Whites and Males remain veiled.

Black Women. Black women expressed a connection based on our interracial relationships yet they kept an eye to our differing racial location. As women of color, Black women cannot ignore or take-for-granted the issue of power in their daily experiences and within the larger community. Where White women expressed a connection with me based on race-gender and marital status, Black women (with the exception of

one) spoke of feeling the need to edit and censor some of what they were saying and how they said it. Some women expressed an attempt to be sensitive and thus 'bit their tongue' on occasion, others said their piece and then apologized. Lisa, a Black interracially married mother stated:

> Well at first I had some reservations about dogging the White community and even though I have expressed some things there is a reservation in me to do it, although I did it to a degree and I hope I didn't offend you in anyway. But because you are interracially married you know where I'm coming from (laugh).

Parsia a Black interracially married mother shares:

> I have felt less of a need to justify or explain certain things or I felt easier about explaining things than had you been in a same-race marriage. I guess I felt that some of the things that I described, I felt, 'Oh yeah, she must have had those experiences, she must be aware, so I don't need to explain in greater depth and detail.'

Parsia, like several other Black women, suggested that she would have used a different language to describe her experiences if a Black woman was interviewing her. As Parsia phrased it, "a sister-thing would have happened early on." Therefore while a connection does take place, we are constantly aware of our differences based on our intersecting locations.

Black men. The Black men I interviewed with the exception of one each addressed the gap that remains between Blacks and Whites, particularly White males. Julien, a Black interracially married father shares the basis of our bond as people on the racial border and then speaks to the gap that still remains between Blacks and Whites in the Multiracial community.

> You being a White lady married to a Black man I'm more at ease with you. If you were a Black person I would probably be more militant, there are things I wouldn't even say to my wife because I don't want to hurt her...if you were a White man, I doubt that I would ever let a White man interview me, I wouldn't do it, because I couldn't say what I really want to say.

George, a Black interracially married father also addresses the similarities and the differences:

> Being interracially married you can understand and sort of relate to what I'm talking about. I'd suggest that you have to be involved with a Black man to understand. But if you were a White guy I'd probably have one eye open and one eye half-closed looking at him strangely wondering why he's doing this and how much he's trying to profit from this, you know. I wouldn't trust him.

As I stated earlier, Interracial partners and parents move to the borders later in life. Interracial parents/partners are making great strides in transcending and working through essentialist understandings of race. Yet as people who were raised with single-race assumptions, raised in monoracial families and currently living in a racially divisive and unjust society, we have many issues to contend with. Our attempts to bridge previously held and remaining single-race understandings of the world do not go unnoticed by Multiracial people who also share the border.

Multiracial People. Multiracial people spoke level of 'connectedness' based the difficulties of negotiating the Black and White racial binarism, but also warned that Interracially married people shouldn't assume their experiences are the same as those of Multiracial people. This warning was particularly directed at White interracially

married people who do not contend with direct racism. Marguerite, a mixed-race woman living outside of Chicago explains:

> The fact that you are in an Interracial marriage you have had exposure to a lot of the issues I'm talking about. That made me more comfortable. I don't think I held back any negative generalizations I had about Whites, I laid them out for you. Someone Biracial can understand certain things, there are some things that I wouldn't have tried to articulate and define because I think there was an underlying understanding. I also brought up what I thought Whites didn't understand.

Marguerite recognizes that our experiences have some commonalities. At the same time we have differences based on our upbringing and experience, our skin color, physical features and the way society thinks about and interacts with us. Likewise Kimberly, a mixed race woman living in Manhattan, shared:

> To be quite honest I probably would have bashed White people a bit more. I was trying to be sensitive to you so I didn't. I think that you being in an interracial marriage made it easier because you don't have those single-race biases. I think a Multiracial person would have understood more, I wouldn't have had to elaborate so much and they may have disagreed with me because they felt differently. Obviously you have a sensitivity to it and an interest in it or you wouldn't be doing this, you're not looking to put down people of Interracial families.

Louise, a Biracial woman in Chicago, shared similarly:

> Because you're interracially married I felt more comfortable, like you could understand. There were things that I didn't need to explain because you knew what I was talking about. I find that interracially married people understand because they are also crossing the race line, but they don't understand completely what it's like because they are still single-race and a lot of times parents will assume they understand what their child is facing, but they don't really because it is different in some ways...also there were things I tended to explain in

> more detail than if you were Black because I don't know what your experiences have been.

Again, our shared experiences are acknowledged. Several Multiracial people located our primary differences in the fact that Interracially married people are generally raised as monoracial and when apart from their family are still treated as single-race people. Further Multiracial people continually differentiated between single-race Whites and single-race Blacks. This is something I address more fully in Chapter Three. Throughout the interviews each particular 'group' expressed a connection based on Multiracialism and at the same time (barring a few) also expressed a greater bond or sense of understanding based on the racial and gender location in which they were socialized. Because Black and White are dichotomous and hierarchical categories, where we enter the border matters. Thus as I speak of Multiracial family members I am speaking of a shared border location as well as our many varied locations. For this reason I identify the race and gender of each family member and at the same time refer to our shared challenges vis-a-vis a racist and single-race world.

EXPLORING THE BORDER CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

When interracial marriage is discussed vis-a-vis Multiracial people it is generally a demographic citation to explain the increasing number of Multiracial people. Parents/partners are assumed to remain monoracially located. Gaining an understanding of the borders means exploring the experiences of all people sharing such a location and

disrupting the assumed biological basis of race. Repeatedly, the White partners/parents talked of being 'no longer White.' This statement reflects the awareness that in many cases they no longer have the freedom to move in society as they did when they lived as single-race Whites in single-race White families and they can no longer take race and racial privilege for granted. Yet such a comment raises the ire of Whites and Blacks who often angrily respond, 'What do you mean you are no longer White -- of course you are, you are just confused.' This supposed confusion is then stretched to explain the motives and reasons this person is in an interracial relationship. Black interracially married partners/parents sometimes spoke of feeling 'mixed race.' Others express movement away from earlier essentialist understandings of Black unity and have developed an articulation of race that is not limited by genetic inheritance. Such notions anger many Blacks and Whites who then claim that this person is confused and 'trying to be White.' Again the supposed confusion explains why this person is in an interracial family. In short, the common sense understanding of race prevalent in our society is that Whites interact and marry with other Whites, Blacks interact and marry with other Blacks and Mixed-race people are *really* Black. To claim any other location signifies self-hate or some other problem that needs to be analyzed on Freud's couch.

In Chapter One I explore the specific experiences of

those who move to the border through marriage. Most of these individuals were raised in monoracial areas, learned the taken-for-granted single-race assumptions of the world, and were accepted as single-race people. Their interracial union forced the individuals to move away from single-race understandings of the world. Through their lives together they discover and uncover the flaws of racial thinking in the U.S. Interracial couples and family members face *borderism*, a unique form of discrimination that comes from 'both sides,' yet remains grounded in the racism fundamental to every institution in the United States. Borderism is the act of discriminating against people who live on and claim the border. Borderism consists of *borderpatrolling*, *rebound racism* (Frankenberg, 1993) and *intensified racism* and draws on historically created images that denigrate Multiracial family members. In light of borderism, interracial parents/partners move away from essentialist understandings of race and begin to create a new language and framework from which to negotiate the single-race world.

In Chapter Two I examine the housing market as experienced by Multiracial family members. The 'redline' drawn around certain neighborhoods on maps by mortgage lenders, realtors and insurance providers is the blatant marker of the way the White supremacist system maintains a border between Black and White. Those within the redlined area are denied equal access to mortgages and insurance. The

U.S. has a dual-housing market that is, a separate and unequal housing market that continually privileges Whites (Squires et. al, 1987). It is within this dual- housing market that Multiracial families find difficulty locating comfortable places to live. We have three basic choices, Black neighborhoods, White neighborhoods and racially-mixed neighborhood. Multiracial families have all kinds of reasons for choosing single-race Black or White neighborhood. The choice is made in light of the lack of stable racially mixed neighborhoods and the high cost of living in the few communities that do exist. Many of the middle-class Multiracial family members with whom I spoke do in fact live in Multiracial neighborhoods, while working-class families tended to live in single-race areas. Within single-race neighborhoods the families discover they are given conditional or guarded acceptance. Multiracial adults who grew up in single-race neighborhoods, especially White neighborhoods, urge parents strongly to make all necessary sacrifices to find racially mixed areas. By analyzing housing through the experiences of Multiracial family members we can begin to understand how ideological and objective racial conditions converge to maintain the racial hierarchy and dichotomy.

Chapter Three is an exploration of the way Multiracial families contend with single-race and borderist assumptions in their day-to-day interactions. Questions of who to educate and how to educate are central. How we contend with single-

race people has a great deal to do with the locations we claim, our physical appearance, our age, the specificity of the situation and our own mood. In addition, the location(s) claimed by single-race people matter. Whites have institutionally backed power and privilege, Blacks do not (see Feagin and Vera, 1995). For this reason many Multiracial family members weigh the larger context of borderism prior to responding. By understanding how Multiracial family members negotiate single-race assumptions and borderism on a day-to-day basis we can also understand the subtle and blatant ways in which the racial binarism is recreated in daily interactions. Further we can see the struggle that is taking place to shift underlying discourses of power that feed and are fed by the binary categories of race.

In Chapter Four I highlight how Multiracial family members create and claim spaces of comfort. There are times when single-racedness gets to be too much. At these times Multiracial family members may either spend time alone or we may retreat to into our families and/or toward other Multiracial family members. It is through the creation of community with other Multiracial family members (and with people who do not essentialize race) that we gain strength in a society that labels us pariahs and continually sends messages that we are "wrong." The Multiracial community faces a unique problem in its attempt to come together and assert a new way of understanding race. Not only do we encompass great

diversity and conflict, many of us have been excluded or felt outcasted in single-race events. Because of this many Multiracial family members choose not to join groups or organizations that exclude people for any reason. All defined boundaries are seen as exclusionary and hurtful. Yet without some definition of community, political action is nearly impossible. In this chapter I look at informal and formal mean of community building as Multiracial family members attempt to locate spaces of comfort.

In Chapter Five I consider the theoretical aspects of two very contentious items on the political scene -- the addition of a Multiracial category to Census 2000 and the issue of transracial adoption. Both of these debates call on and bring out the various strands of single-race thinking in the United States. The bottom-line is that when these issues are debated from the perspective of single-race people there is essentialism on both sides. When Multiracial family members step into the debate we bring to the table the ambivalence of the borders. Answers are not so cut and dry, not so Black and White. Because of our location we experience the hurtfulness of the dichotomy, we also recognize the unjust distribution of power and resources along race lines. We sit at the intersection of the hierarchy and dichotomy and our attempts to subvert both at the same time are difficult. This dissertation is an exploration of our shared and varied struggles and achievements.

CHAPTER ONE

MOVING INTO THE RACIAL BORDER, CLAIMING THE RACIAL BORDER

I know it's suppose to be soothing and wonderful to be a part of a community, but when you don't fit in with either White or Black and when you're right in the middle, it's uncomfortable. You have to deal with opposing forces, two different armies. -- Ingrid, a White woman speaking about the Border.

It seems that when White people marry Black people they become aware of race in ways they weren't before. They know first hand about things that they can't read in a book or hear from someone else. It seems to me they have a special kind of knowledge that is not afforded the rest of the White population and it's kind of the reason why certain other White people like to avoid them. -- Katey, a Black woman speaking about the Border.

Because I'm married to a White woman, Blacks figure my culture is gone, it's shot. -- George, a Black man speaking about the Border.

The Loving Decision in 1967 marked the end to the last anti-miscegenation laws which had declared it illegal for Blacks and Whites to marry.[1] Today estimates of the number of Black-White married couples in the U.S. ranges slightly from 200,000 to 250,000.[2] According to Roger Sanjek (1994) less than 1% of Whites are married to Blacks and 3% of Blacks are married to Whites. The numbers are small but the number of such marriages continues to grow (Root, 1992;

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[1] Anti-miscegenation laws also regulated other marriages. Depending upon the state, Native Americans, Asians, Mexicans and socially defined "races" could only marry within their own "race." This meant, for instance, that Native Americans and Blacks could not intermarry in some states.

[2] Roger Sanjek (1994) estimates about 211,000 such marriages while Marie Root (1992) estimates about 218,000, while Paul Rosenblatt et al. (1995) estimate 246,000.

Stanfield, 1995). In 1997 we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Loving Decision and yet we still find great prejudice and discrimination directed towards interracial families and couples. The sentiment against those who cross the "colorline" is strong and acted upon. The ideology backing such actions is that race is somehow essentializable and that people can be and should be separated into racial categories.

In this chapter I outline what I mean by the term 'racial border.' The border becomes the site where much of race is created and recreated as borderpatrollers take a side in the racial war of position. Interracially married Blacks are patrolled by other Blacks and are thus forced to rethink formerly taken-for-granted essentialist notions of unity. Interracially married Whites discover Whiteness and the terror caused by Whiteness and are thus forced to rethink taken-for-granted notions of fairness and equality in the United States. It is these discoveries that lead interracially married people to claim and name a border location. While most literature to date has attempted to explain the motives behind interracial marriages, I move the discussion to questioning how interracial couples overcome the many obstacles presented to them by a racial hierarchical and dichotomous society and how they grow in their racial thinking in the process.

When talking about the Black-White racial border, I am

speaking of a social location created through introspection and lived experience. All members of Black-White Multiracial families who live each day traversing the Black-White line are privy to both sides yet bound by neither and thus live on the border. In other discussions of Multiracialism, interracial marriage is only cited as a demographic explanation for the increasing number of mixed-race people. In following chapters I will introduce the voices of Multiracial people who are born into the borders and transracially adopted people who are raised into the borders. In this chapter I will highlight the specific experiences of Interracial couples who are generally born and raised in monoracial families and communities.

GROWING UP MONORACIAL

> When you're born interracial, I think it's something you do your whole life, when you're a White person walking into an interracial relationship, so much of a new world opens up to you and you have not experienced some of these things because of the privileges that come from the color of your skin --Robin, a White woman living in New Jersey with her Multiracial daughter.

> Society is suffused with racial projects, large and small, to which all are subjected...Everybody learns some combination, some version of the rules of racial classification, and of her own racial identity, often without obvious teaching or conscious inculcation. Thus we are inserted in a comprehensively racialized social structure -- Omi and Winant (1994:60).

Most Whites grow up around and interact predominantly with other Whites. Within these single-race worlds most Whites do not recognize the privileges they are granted within the racial hierarchy. Race is an unconsciously lived

experience that informs a single-race taken-for-granted understanding of the world. Most Blacks grow up around and interact with other Blacks. Yet Blacks are designated "other" in a system of Whiteness and thus race is a consciously lived experience for Black Americans. In each instance socialization means of process of internalizing race as a politically, culturally, socially and ideologically significant identifier. Children plan for a world that resembles their own in many ways and develop taken-for-granted understandings about how the world works. As children, interracially married people, like most monoracially married people witness and live in single-race worlds. Whites and Blacks tend not to socialize in the same places or in each other's homes. Children internalize the lessons of "Love thy neighbor" and, "Stick with your own." These messages fit well together in the United States; we can love our neighbor without concern for the other race because our cities are highly segregated. The border between Blacks and Whites has been institutionalized through the housing, education, and job market. Individuals socially defined as White and individuals socially defined as Black have little contact with each other outside of formal settings. Given the continued segregation, people in the U.S. know little more than negatively stereotyped images of the "other" race and the images continue to be recreated and recirculated within given socio-political climates.

Images and institutionalized segregation influence us to marginalize those defined as being outside the perimeters of our own socially defined race.

Blacks and Whites growing up in single-race neighborhoods envision and take-for-granted single-race networks, however the basis of the visions are entrenched in the racial hierarchy. Blacks gain security and safety in the Black community against the constant terror produced by a system of Whiteness. "You can't trust White people" and a desire for a "strong Black family" are two of the many ways in which this was expressed. To think about marrying "outside the race" is to marry into the system that maintains mass inequity and causes terror. Interracially marrying also means betraying the community that provides a sense of strength and humanity against the dehumanizing racist world. Parsia, a 35-year old, Black, interracially married mother explains,

> Everybody grows up with a dream and a fairy tale of what your life will be like as an adult. Mine was always a strong Black family dream or fairy tale, it was really a part of what I wanted to be. It was very important dream to me, to have a very stable relationship with a Black man and raise strong intelligent Black children.

Similarly, Julien, an interracially married Black man who grew up in Southern Illinois in the 1950s shares,

> I never dreamed as a kid that I would be in an interracial marriage. I think as a kid you take for granted that you'll marry in your race. I would marry a Black lady and have kids and live happily ever after...because a Black kid growing up in America, you think that you can't trust most White people. When I

> walked into this I was against Blacks marrying outside the race because I was listening to older Blacks in the neighborhood.

Unlike Parsia, Julien and other Blacks who grew up in communities that reinforced their culture and strength in a society hostile to Blacks, most Whites grow up unconscious of the importance of community and race. Whites are raised to think of themselves as individuals first and community members second (if at all). Rather than citing a sense of solidarity with other Whites or a sense of fear as the basis for single-race world views, interracially married Whites often explained that single-race dreams sprung from a lack of "experience" or "contact" with Blacks and other people of color. For instance, Jane a White recently widowed mother in her mid-60s who had been interracially married for about 40 years reflects,

> I had very little experience with Black people because the town I grew up in had no Black people, it was a small town in Missouri of about 300."

Peter, a 40 year-old White interracially married father living on Chicago's South Side shares,

> We grew up in Western New York State and there were very few Black people. Growing up I had very little contact with any people of color, period."

The single-race dreams upon which White people reflected clearly reveal the invisibility of Whiteness. Whites have institutional mechanisms that reproduce privilege and power thus race need not be a conscious factor in life choices. Blacks cannot take race for granted and it

is a conscious part of childhood plans for the future. Yet each side takes-for-granted that they will marry into a same-race family. A Multiracial family is not part of the plan.

In addition to living and interacting within single-race networks, rarely, if ever do Blacks or Whites see positive images of Multiracial families in the media. More often, negative images are tossed around about people on the racial borders. What we do see in the movies, in popular imagination and in books is that interracial relationships are reducible to sexual stereotypes and status seekers who are outside the purview of social control mechanisms. Dreams for a single-race family are reinforced through almost all micro and macro social relations.

WHAT IS THE BORDER?

Many borders exist in life. Any time a set of practices or physical markers are used to identify community boundaries, we will find people who do not fit comfortably in those boundaries. In fact, we will find that most people cannot identify with all markers for many are contradictory. The Black-White racial border I am addressing is produced through the creation of community boundaries within a White supremacist system. The Black-White racial border is found at the intersection of the racial hierarchy and dichotomy (i.e. binarism). The border is a metaphor for the institutionally and individually patrolled and reproduced

space between Black and White. All Multiracial family members spend time on the border yet not all Multiracial family members claim the border. When claimed and named the border is a location from which people can create counterhegemonic, anti-Whiteness, anti-essentialist discourse (see Anzuldua, 1987). Life on the border is not always comfortable, it means a constant pressure. Life on the border means living with aggravation, but it also means living with a special insight. It means needing to be alert and suspicious while simultaneously being sensitive and open. People on the racial border have both similar and varied experiences based on intersecting locations such as, gender, class, culture, education level, sexual orientation and race.

Individuals have always lived on the racial border and race has always been contested in the United States. However, it is only within recent constructions of race that the border has become a location that is recognized and claimed (see Anzuldua, 1987; McLaren, 1993; Root, 1995). At other historical times, such a location was not tolerated by the White supremacist system. Slavery and reconstruction were historical periods dominated by the "racial war of maneuver" in which Blacks were denied any form of state legitimized power and had to struggle for physical survival (Omi and Winant, 1994). During the racial war of maneuver, the dichotomy (and of course, hierarchy) was defined and

imposed by Whites through legal and extralegal forms of violence. Any perceived transgression by Blacks against the White supremacist system was met with violence and/or death. Regardless how Blacks situated themselves economically, educationally, or culturally, they would never be granted the same privileges bestowed to Whites in the newly forming "democracy".[3]

Political power, fully in the hands of White men, was maintained through physical violence and the violence of images. This system was and is based upon the disempowering images of the "cult of true [White] womanhood," and upon the sexualized and dehumanizing images of Black men and women (Mullings, 1994). Images were created to sustain a patriarchal system of Whiteness that privileged people with White skin. These images further enabled Whites to define themselves by denying any shared traits with the folks held in bonds of slavery (Fanon, 1986; West, 1990). On the one side were the "pure" White folks and on the other(ed) side were all those considered non-White. Because of the terror and horror created by the mixture of physical violence and the violence of images, people defined as Black and thus potential slave, began to suppress differences and build a basis for unity (Omi and Winant, 1994).

As Blacks began to unite to fight for survival, the

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[3] Howard Winant refers to this as the "herrenvolk democracy."

racial dichotomy was solidifying on both sides. At the same time Whites were employing any means necessary to maintain the racial line (and thus White power), Blacks were patrolling their community border as a way to fight White power. For instance, the Black community sanctioned Blacks who were coerced or "chose" to interact with Whites in ways that threatened the community. In fact, in his historical exploration of interracial relationships, Paul Spikard reports that, "slaves frequently marked off a woman who had chosen the role of concubine and refused to have more than perfunctory dealings with her" (1989:253)[4]. While the dichotomy and hierarchy were imposed by Whites, Blacks responded to the violent conditions by unifying. Unity required some way of patrolling community boundaries.

The unifying of the Black community, along with various other factors such as Northern industrialization, forced a shift in the balance of racial power. By the late 1950s the community had mobilized into the Civil Rights Movement. As Blacks began to stake a claim on state legitimized power, White lawmakers were forced to retreat from the most overt forms of discrimination. In response to the outcome of the Civil Rights Movement, White privilege became more covert, institutionalized and invisible. Whiteness as an invisible

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[4] Black women did not just make such "choices" but were rather coerced and given a limited set of opportunities; to imply otherwise is to romanticize the dehumanizing system Black women were forced into.

and invidious racial system replaced chains, ropes, hoses and overtly racist laws. Whiteness is, as Ruth Frankenberg defines it,

> a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination...To look at the social construction of Whiteness, then is to look head-on at a site of dominance (1994:6).

Others have suggested that those considered White are homogenized, and ethnic identities must be traded in to receive the privileges granted through Whiteness (Roediger, 1994; Roman, 1993). Peter McLaren suggests that Whiteness is the "invisible culture of terror." He explains that "the supposed neutrality of White culture enables it to commodify Blackness to its own advantage and ends. It allows it to manipulate the "other" but not see this "otherness" as a White tool of exploitation" (1993:114). For Whites then, it is not skin color that's invisible, rather it is the benefits granted because of their White skin and the exploitation of "otherness" that remains invisible. By defining Whiteness as dominance and privilege, the institutional benefits granted to people with White skin are "outed" (Davy, 1994). This is very important in a post-Civil Rights Era. By outing Whiteness, the privileges that people with White skin receive can be brought to the table for discussion. This is a discussion that continues to be muted by the economic and political crisis of late capitalism. In fact, beyond being muted as a discourse of

privilege, being White is seen by many as a liability in the labor market (Gallagher, 1995). Therefore many Whites actively strive to regain and/or maintain the taken-for-granted White privilege.

Racial meanings are continually challenged. Certain historical times can be identified when these challenges created a major shifts in the balance of racial power. The past thirty years or so, starting with the Civil Rights Movement, can be considered such a shift. Whereas the racial war of maneuver was about physical survival for Blacks and complete physical domination by Whites, Omi and Winant (1994) suggest that we are now in a racial war of position. Drawing on Gramsci's term, war of position, Omi and Winant argue that the racial war of position can be understood as,

> political and cultural conflict, undertaken under conditions in which subordinated groups have attained some foothold, some rights, within civil society; thus they have the leverage, the ability to press some claims on the state (Winant, 1994: 45).

Despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Blacks have struggled to create a politically viable community. Community strength, in this war of position, is largely dependent on sheer numbers and politically motivated actions by individuals who both identify *themselves* as and are identified by others as community members.[5] In order to remain a viable contender in the racial war of position, the

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[5] I will explore this issue further in Chapter Five as I discuss the debate surrounding the possible addition of a Multiracial category to Census 2000.

Black community must be mindful of people on the border. Such mindfulness raises questions of who is an authentic member and where community boundaries should be drawn. Questions of racial authenticity have always loomed large. They were central in the Black Power Movement and various Nationalist Movements of the 60s and 70s (and earlier Garveyites). In the 90s, the Thomas-Hill case and more recently, the OJ Simpson trial publicly raised the issue again.

In recent years attempts to define Blackness and Black community apart from essentialist understandings of race have exploded (Hall, 1989; Marable, 1992; hooks, 1992; West, 1993). This exploration comes at a time when postmodern debates have questioned essentialist understandings of all community formations. The primary concern is one of including difference without fragmenting the fight against White supremacism and the fight for the freedom of all Black people. Michael Eric Dyson suggests that, "The proponents of racial unity have often operated on the assumption that Black people have one overriding vision, purpose, and destiny" (1994:221). Cornel West points out that universalist notions of race are being, "stretched too far when viewed in a *homogenizing* way that overlooks how racist treatment vastly differs owing to class, gender, sexual orientation, nation, hue and age" (1993:211). Black intellectuals and activists have been working to include

differences rather than split into fragments. Simultaneously, the gains people of color have made within the racial war of position are being reversed; Civil Rights gains are being eroded through claims to colorblindness and reverse discrimination. At the same time many poor Blacks are facing devastating life conditions. Thus Blacks must continue to examine definitions of community and many feel a life-threatening need to beef-up borderpatrolling. Creating anti-essentialist notions of unity in a White supremacist nation is a struggle in the Black community. Each time a Multiracial family, couple or person is seen, this struggle becomes more real and heartfelt for many Black Americans.

Both Blacks and Whites patrol the border. Yet the border is more than the individuals who patrol it. In the following section I will explore the unique discrimination faced by interracially married people on the border. Here I will not be addressing institutional ways in which the border is (re)created, but rather the individual, overt forms of discrimination faced by interracially married Blacks and Whites. In future chapters I will explore institutions, such as the housing market, through which the racial border is reproduced.

BORDERISM: BORDERPATROL, REBOUND RACISM, AND INTENSIFIED RACISM

Interracial relationships are different than same race relationships because of the things you're concerned about like acceptance from family, acceptance from community and where you're going to live. You can pick certain areas if you are same race -- you don't get that choice really if

you're interracial. Also where you're going to raise your children -- it has to be someplace comfortable. Same race couples don't have to worry about being stared at, we do. We have statements thrown at us just because we are interracial. So you have to be constantly alert and it gets to be a crazy situation sometimes -- Barbara, a White women living in a South suburb of Chicago.

As a couple, interracially married people face a unique form of discrimination because of their location in the racially dichotomous hierarchy. Whites and Blacks who would otherwise be cordial or inattentive, now respond with hostility or stares. The discrimination is fueled by institutional racism, yet it comes from "both sides" in everyday life. The border, and attempts to stop people from claiming such a location, has been an American obsession since the nation formed. Borderism, like racism, is part of the United States culture, polity and society. Scenarios such as getting seated in the back of a restaurant or not being seated at all, being pulled over by the police, being followed by store security, not being able to find a church that will accept the family, not being able to obtain desired housing, being physically and verbally assaulted by single-race people on 'both sides,' facing rejection (subtle and blatant) from family and friends, and being fired from a job or not getting a promotion or job all stem from borderism. The less significant, albeit annoying form of borderism is the perpetual stares and comments.

Interracially married Whites and Blacks each face borderism although as individuals they face specific forms

of discrimination based on their race and other intersecting locations or communities. Borderism consists of three interacting components: borderpatrolling, rebound racism and intensified racism. Depending on the specifics of a situation the three components converge in some situations and act individually in other situations. Both Blacks and Whites contend with borderpatrollers. In addition, interracially married Whites face rebound racism while interracially married Blacks face intensified racism. I will explain each in detail shortly, but first a quick word on the meaning of racism is necessary when exploring borderism. After more than 500 years of White systematic control I argue that only Whites can be racist. Blacks can act on prejudice feelings and they can discriminate, but they do not have systematic institutional control. I agree with Joe Feagin and Hernan Vera who suggest that, "Black racism would require not only a widely accepted racist ideology directed at Whites, but also the power to systematically exclude Whites from opportunities and rewards in major economic, cultural, and political institutions" (ix-x:1995). Thus, from the Black community interracial couples contend with people who actively patrol community borders precisely because they do not have the institutionalized forms of power.

Borderpatrolling. A friend of mine was recently visiting friends in Austria who live close to the German border. She

went for a hike by herself in the mountains one morning and lost her way. Without warning she was met by a borderpatroller. Gun at his side he informed her that she had just crossed a national border and was now in Germany. She explained in her best German that she was an American visiting in Austria and had gotten lost while hiking. He directed her back to the Austrian side and that was the extent of it. A few months earlier in the United States a truck carrying a dozen Mexican citizens was chased at high speeds down a California highway by the police. The chase ended in a crash and police beating of the truck's driver and a passenger. The incident, caught on videotape, was played across the nation allowing Americans to see first hand how the southern border of the United States is patrolled.

The term borderpatrol conjures up many images. The type of patrolling that takes place depends upon which border is being 'protected' and the amount of inequity the border divides. Protecting a border is always about the issue of power. In terms of race Whites patrol to maintain power, Blacks patrol to shift the balance of power. Borderpatrollers use various means to enforce single-race community boundaries depending upon where they sit in the racial hierarchy. Racial borderpatrollers are those single-race individuals who believe that Blacks and Whites can and should "keep to their own." They assume they can

distinguish "authentic" members from "sell-outs" and "cross-overs." Borderpatrollers draw upon images that denigrate interracially married people and all members of Multiracial families. These images have been developing for hundreds of years (Rogers, 1945; Williamson, 1984; Davis, 1991; Spikard, 1989; Hernton, 1986, hooks, 1990) and have been created at the intersection of race and sex to keep Blacks and Whites, females and males, in separate and unequal relationships with one another (Rogers, 1945; hooks, 1992, Mullings, 1994). In a post-Civil Rights Era, images once used historically to maintain White patriarchal privilege have now been adopted and rearranged by variously situated groups. Whites draw upon images that maintain their privileged position in the racial hierarchy. Blacks draw upon images that subvert the racial hierarchy and create community strength. The motivations are very different and at odds, yet "both sides" draw on images that maintain the boundary between Blacks and Whites. It is impossible to talk of borderism without addressing the underlying images that feed the thoughts and actions of borderpatrollers. I will highlight White and Black borderpatrollers as distinct from each other and will discuss the underlying images each draw upon within the racial hierarchy.

White borderpatrolling. Institutional mechanisms are in place to safeguard "Whiteness" yet many Whites still feel both the right and obligation to patrol the border and act

out against interracial couples. When racist Whites see an interracial couple together it calls into question the White onlookers own racial location. In order to maintain a sense of superiority vis-a-vis the racial hierarchy, the racist must attempt to locate motives and explain the actions of the White partner in the interracial couple. White women and White men face different forms of borderpatrolling based on gender and they themselves recognize sexualized racial images differently. The borderpatrolling directed against White women is bound to notions of the "good woman/bad woman" imagery and is seen as a "protection of White womanhood." Historically it has been argued that White women should be "protected" for they are the gatekeepers of "racial purity" (Zack, 1994; Williamson, 1984). That any White women would trade in her privileges of Whiteness and her connections to private patriarchy, must be dismissed as unnaturally "bad" and bizarre, in order to keep the racialized patriarchy in place. Julie, a White, recently divorced mother with a Biracial daughter, has had to contend with White borderpatrolling and the underlying images. One specific, albeit not unusual, incident occurred while she was on a date with a White male medical doctor.

> I was on the date and he asked to see a picture of my daughter and I handed it to him. He was very clever, he asked, "Is her dad from the U.S.?" I think he was praying her dad was Spanish and he could deal with that, anything but Black. I could tell it bothered him, so I said, "Listen, I can see by the look on your face, that there is obviously a problem here, so why don't we just talk about it right now." He said, "You want to

> know the truth? Well I have a real problem with the fact that you slept with a Black man." Then he went on with the whole, "You're such a pretty and intelligent woman why would you marry a Black man?"

The doctor was drawing on the inextricably linked imagery of race and sex and what it means to be a good White woman. In his attempt to explain away this White woman's behavior, he searches for motives and implies that only unattractive, unintelligent White women marry Black men. Further, the fact that she slept with a Black man has made Julie no longer an eligible White woman, she is somehow essentially changed. Further the doctor states his concern with the fact that she slept with a Black man. Could it be that he fears that his 'White purity' will be contaminated with Blackness through this bad White woman?

Candace, a White interracially married mother of five who has been married for more than 25 years, has faced similar patrolling and fear from other Whites, albeit in terms of friendships and professional obligations.

> Basically I think White women are terrified of having a relationship with me and White men dismiss me completely as being out of my mind. And when I do present myself as someone who is capable of doing something, they find it very threatening. I've had situations where I've been the head of organizations and White men will back down completely and not deal with me at all because they find it very threatening.

These women are highlighting the underlying images that enable racist Whites to cling to a sense of superiority. Borderist Whites are so entrenched in the racial hierarchy, that in order for their world view to make sense, they must

attempt to explain away people on the racial border. Nancy, a White businesswoman living in suburban New Jersey commented:

> I think America still hates [White] women who sleep with Black men and when they see you with these children they want to believe you adopted them which is usually the first question people will ask, "Did you adopt them?" I always just say, "No, I slept with a Black man.

In fact several White women reported that this question comes up often. Many respond similar to Nancy with statements such as, "No, I used the 'good-old fashion method." Such statements show the resistance of these White women to the borderpatrollers who attempt to explain them away as unnatural or bizarre. White women in interracial relationships are treated as aberrant, as misguided White trash, and as being in the relationship for sex, rebellion, or money and status. Barbara, a White woman from Chicago actually went to great lengths to avoid being stereotyped by the police when with her husband.

> I actually put on forty pounds because I got tired of being mistaken for a prostitute. It's assumed that the only reason you're involved in the relationship is because you're sexually depraved. It's because of this stereotype that African American men are all sexual power machines and that you've got to be the dregs of society to get involved or you want to hurt somebody. Even the priest that married us assumed we wanted to hurt our families.

Images of Black men exist regardless of their interracial involvement. The images and stereotypes Barbara and other interracially married White women contend with are "achieved" when they betray their "protectors."

For White women in interracial heterosexual relationships, the stereotype of Black male sexuality converges with the myth of "White womanhood." White woman consciously contend with the intersecting race-sex discourse. White men contend with a different type of borderpatrolling because of their location in the patriarchal system of Whiteness. In the literature, White men who actually interracially marry are reported to have come from the lower economic classes, were designated crazy and in some states put in jail (Williamson, 1984; Zack, 1994; Spikard, 1989). The more common image White interracially married men contend with today is that of being in the relationship only for the sex. Because of the history of rape and sexual exploitation that Black women (and some men) faced at the hands of White men, this imagery is particularly strong in the African American community. Yet interestingly, the White men with whom I spoke were split on the importance of and even the *existence* of images and borderpatrolling. Unlike Black men, Black women and White women, White men did not consistently speak of racialized images. Some of the responses I received to the question, "As an interracially married man, how do you think others view you?" included the following:

Joe, a White man living outside of New York City shared,

> I can't worry about what other people think. For along time my wife worried, but once she got over that, we had a big wedding...It took a lot to convince her that that's how we should think about it and I think she's

more comfortable with that.

Likewise, Raymond, a White man living on Chicago's Northside declared:

> I don't know and I don't care, I never thought about it. I don't think about it. What do they think when they see my wife and I together? Pardon my language, but I don't give a shit what they think, I just don't give a shit. I go for months and that never occupies my mind.

These men may be responding defensively and thus verbally disregarding racial images. However they repeatedly made claims to the idea that race does not matter. Instead, they suggested, the focus "should be on ethnic backgrounds" or on the fact that "we are all Americans." Men who did not recognize racial images also tended not to recognize the privilege associated with Whiteness and rather drew upon notions of meritocracy. In these cases the recognition of power was the missing thread -- whether or not differences were recognized, power was not.

Other White men did recognize the salience of racial images and borderpatrollers. The common thread for these men was that they had friendships and networks with other Blacks prior to meeting their spouse. Further these men were in occupations in which they were directly threatened by White boderpatrollers. Clancey, a 50 year-old White man who grew up outside Chicago had Black roommates and friends in college. By time he met his wife he understood from his "buddies" the effects of racism in society. He spoke quite

a bit about the borderpatrolling he faced from the White teachers at the Chicago elementary school in which he taught after getting married.

> My wife and I walked into a meeting with the White teachers and the people from the neighborhood and it sent those people into conniptions. I won't forget that, it was my first year teaching there and from then on it was like, 'God have mercy on my soul.' I was a dead person in that school and that stayed with me for 17 years - the whole time I was there.

In this case, Clancey's teaching position was continually threatened by White borderpatrollers. In another case, Peter, a White minister living on Chicago's South Side had gone to a Black seminary in the South. As the "only White" in many situations, he was immersed in Black culture and Whiteness was made visible. He too recognizes and addresses the borderpatrolling he encounters from Whites. In the following case, he had just been named the pastor of a White church in a working-class neighborhood in Cleveland.

> I had gotten moved to a White church. That turned out to be three years from hell. The church did not want me to be appointed there, they actually had a special meeting after they got wind of who was coming -- 95% of the church did not want me there because I was interracially married. The first church meeting I was at the Chair asked for further motions and one person said, "I make a motion that the Reverend resign from this church" (laugh)...The first sermon, attendance was over 100, everyone came out to see the show, from then on, attendance never got above 60, so basically about 40 people boycotted the whole time I was there. I had people who still attended but resigned all their offices.

In addition, church members began a campaign of letter writing to the Bishop and began accusing Peter of various

wrongdoings such as the time they claimed he had taken all the bibles out of the church. Peter and his family eventually left that church in Ohio and came to Chicago. He later learned that the folks who had resigned their offices while he was there, returned to their offices upon his departure.

Privileges granted to people in society with White skin have been institutionalized and made invisible to the benefactors. With overwhelming power in society, why do individual Whites insist on borderpatrolling? I would suggest that White supremacism was created in the battle over resources and built on the "super stud" image of Black men, "super loose" image of Black women and the cult of "true [White] woman hood" and the 'all powerful image of White men.' Today as economic insecurity heightens, distrust and desire to scapegoat people of color, especially the poor, also heightens. As many Whites are losing economic footing, they are claiming White skin as a liability. Far from recognizing Whiteness as privilege, "White" has become conscious only when defining Whites as victims of "unjust" laws (i.e. Civil Rights legislation). As Whites become more insecure in society they cling to images that promote feelings of superiority. This, of course, requires a racial hierarchy and dichotomy. Images of interracial couples serve to maintain boundaries and White supremacy.

For both Blacks and Whites on the borders, patrolling is moderated by intersecting locations or communities. White women and men are patrolled by other Whites yet their experiences differ primarily because of the intersection of gender.

Black borderpatrolling. Black men and women in interracial relationships share a similar view of themselves vis-a-vis the borders and Black borderpatrollers. For some Blacks in the interracial relationship this is the first time they are feeling prejudice and hostility from the Black community. Others experienced borderpatrolling prior to their marriage, either because of their hobbies and interests, class, politics, educational goals, skin tone, vernacular or friendship networks. However, patrolling takes on new proportions when they go the "other way" in marriage. Previous to their interracial marriage, the Black community was the place most called home, the place from which they gained a sense of humanity and cultural and personal affirmation. A common concern raised by interracially married Black men and women is that they are viewed as having lost their Black identity and culture and thus being seen as "no longer really Black." In an essay entitled, "Essentialism and the Complexities," Michael Eric Dyson suggests that,

> Loyalty to race has been historically construed as primary and unquestioning allegiance to the racial quest for freedom and the refusal to betray that quest to personal benefit or the diverting pursuit of lesser

> goals. Those who detour from the prescribed path are labeled "sellouts," "traitors," or "Uncle Toms" (1994:222).

Based on his experiences, George an interracially married Black man working in Manhattan, agrees with Dyson. He recalls a conversation that took place with "Bill," a Black male co-worker, about the possibility of marrying a White woman after which George was ostracized by other Blacks at work.

> Bill said, "I couldn't marry a White woman, how about you?" I said, "I am married to a White woman." "You joking me George! Big strong handsome brother like you!" I said, "Yo man, I don't know what all that handsome stuff you comin' with." He said, "All jokes aside, George you telling me you went the other way?" I said, "There's nothing wrong with that." And he's like "Oh George, I don't believe it." He was just solemn after that and looked down, so I said, "Bill does that mean we're not going to be friends anymore?" He goes, "No man, you still my man." He gave me the ol' handshake, I said, "Bill, no man, you frontin' now." He said, "I'm just surprised you know. You never told me about your wife."

The implication here is that a "strong brother" would not sell-out his community and go "the other way" -- only weak men do that. Prior to this confrontation George had been an integral part of many conversations about race and racism in America. After this conversation, George lamented, "They'll be talking about something totally in the Black culture. I come into the room and be listening and when I would put my opinion in, the conversation would end -- just like that. The room goes empty."

Parsia, a Black interracially married woman living outside New York City addressed a similar issue when

explaining why she prefers not to bring her White husband along with her to some areas in Harlem.

> African Americans do view interracial relationships as kind of "turncoat." There is a pervasive belief in the African American community that it is much more difficult to maintain your identity in an interracial relationship...I believe that once Blacks see me as an interracial couple, it changes their perception of me right away, they would disrespect me as another Black person and then they would just disregard my belonging to the community and suddenly I become the outsider - an outsider, because I am with him.

The imagery underlying the actions of borderpatrollers in the Black community, is that an interracially married Black person is someone who is trying to make it in White American at the expense of the Black community or someone who has made it and "gives it to Whitey." Further, it is believed that these individuals are trying to escape their Blackness. Katey, a Black interracially married mother living on Long Island has confronted the underlying imagery. She suggests that, "It is a stereotype that people who date or marry interracially move away from their own background and I think the opposite must be true for the individual involved, they must be very firm in their beliefs."

Both Black women and Black men recognized and addressed similar underlying imagery. While there is much overlap in the imagery, it is not the same. Sexual myths have been created by White America to justify slavery and the continued exploitation and control of Black bodies and minds. Black women have faced a history of sexual exploitation and simultaneously a lack of "access to the

means of mass communication," and thus have been unable to draw on their "history of abuse as a corrective to stereotypes of rampant sexuality" (Painter, 1992:212). Thus when a Black woman is seen with a White man, it conjures up unchallenged images in the minds of both Blacks and Whites. The rape and exploitation of Black women has been analyzed through the discourse of the emasculation of Black men. Black feminists such as, Angela Davis (1983), Leith Mullings (1994), Nell Painter (1992), Rose Brewer (1993), and Patricia Williams (1991) have begun to challenge previous interpretations and write their own stories. Yet still today, Black women who choose to be in a relationship with a White male are construed as betraying Black masculinity and the Black community in general.

Rebound Racism. Borderpatrolling, one component of borderism, takes place intraracially and moves directly from a White to a White or a Black to a Black. Borderpatrolling occurs because people have crossed the race line. Another component of borderism is 'rebound racism' (Frankenberg, 1993). As with borderpatrolling, it occurs specifically because individuals are living on the racial border. In the case of rebound racism it is interracially married Whites who are being discussed. Ruth Frankenberg defines rebound racism as,

> "a force that owes its existence and direction to an earlier aim and impact, yet retains enough force to wound...while it is hard to measure pain, it is safe to say both that the racism that rebounds on White women

> has spent some of its force in the original impact it made on their nonWhite partners and that White women nonetheless feel its impact." (1994:112).

Candace, like the other Whites with whom I spoke, found that when she is alone, away from her family she is treated "perfectly alright" by Whites. However, when she is with her family, "it's a whole different thing." The *whole different thing* Candace is experiencing is rebound racism. Nancy, a White woman living in suburban New Jersey describes the experience of rebound racism and how she inadvertently began to recognize Whiteness because of the experience.

> The worst thing is getting a cab in New York City, that is the worst feeling I have ever had with my husband. It was having to get a cab on my own and then when he would come up they would drive away. Oh, that to me is the worst because then I could almost feel his pain and feel how awful it must be to deal with this in every aspect of your life, everyday. It was so humiliating and so demeaning. I hate those cab drivers. But they would pull up and as soon as he came up they would drive right away. I mean just leave you standing there with your hand stretched out.

The pain caused by this particular incidence is directly related to what is happening to her Black partner. Rebound racism is especially noticed by White women because they lose their connections to private patriarchy. Major purchases such as a car, home, or any other large appliance, take on an added burden, because they do not have a White male who can front the deal for or with them. The White female-Black male couple must decided if they will go together to make these purchases and face borderism; if the White woman will go alone and at least get some privileges

of Whiteness; or depending on the area, if the Black male will go alone. For the Black female-White male couple, there is still a connection to private patriarchy through the White male as long as he is not seen with his family. Lisa, a Black woman living on Chicago's South Side explains how she and her husband actively avoid rebound racism and thus maintain privileges of patriarchy:

> When we bought a car, he went by himself. He went looking for houses by himself. When the car gets repaired he goes by himself. We had a flood and the insurance person came out to appraise the damage. I was at work when the appraiser was there. We got a fair amount of the insurance benefit, I don't know how much it would have been if he would have seen me, because they saw him as a White man and it was his house.

Such an analysis highlights not only rebound racism, but also one of the many differences between Black male-White female couples and Black female-White male couples when negotiating the racial border.

Intensified Racism. While the White partner experiences rebound racism, the Black partner often faces escalated forms of racism which I call "intensified racism." Intensified racism is another component of borderism that occurs because of the interracial relationship. In this case, racism normally directed at Blacks is intensified because they have dared to cross the race line through marriage (or partnership). Intensified racism is most often spoken of by Black males. This is nothing new. During Reconstruction White southerners were manic in their attempts to stop miscegenation. The protecting of "White

womanhood" and racial hygienic platforms were central in this pathological mania. The racial hierarchy and dichotomy was formed in large part through the rape and exploitation of Black women and then the simultaneous lynching of Black men for supposed crimes against White men's property, that is, against White women. Julien, a Black man living outside of Chicago speaks to the intensified racism he faces because of his interracial relationship and he explains why his wife has never been to his workplace.

> I have no way to prove this, but if they were to find out I was interracially married I would have been fired because there were some incidents where Black guys were going out with White girls and actually brought them to work and I just learned from that experience not to bring her--they got fired. The Black guys who were dealing with White girls, they trumped up charges and fired them. She's never been to my work and she never will.

Clearly Julien is describing a system that is based on the intersecting racist, classist and sexist "protection of White womanhood" from Black men. Within such a system same race relationships are accepted. It is assumed that Julien has a Black wife. Only by hiding his interracial marriage has he been able to avoid losing his job.

Interracially married people are not born into the borders and therefore they must learn to negotiate this location. Blacks learn to negotiate a racist society as part of their socialization, however, borderism is a unique form of discrimination and has new subtleties. Lisa, a Black interracially married woman living on Chicago's South

Side had only been married for a short time when she began teaching in a local school. New to the racial borders she was still figuring out how to negotiate single-race people. She decided during a discussion with a group of teachers to reveal that her husband is White. Later she met a wall of silence. "There were White and Black teachers there, I'm not sure why I said it but I wanted it out in the open, and I guess they didn't like that. There was gossip about me, they started talking about me." Unlike Julien who learned to hide his interracial relationship, Lisa had no interracially married role models and had to test the waters herself -- thus facing the intensified racism and borderpatrolling head on.

Barbara, a White woman who met her husband in the mid-70s recalls a situation early in their relationship when the police hassled her and her husband at an El stop in Chicago. Her ex-husband was singled-out to face police harassment because he was with a White woman -- it was the interracial relationship that caused intensified racism from the police.

> Suddenly they are out of the squad, have him against the wall, have their guns drawn, the other cop has got me and they were just standing there laughing. And I didn't know any better so I just burst into tears and said, "What the fuck are you doing?" I just started crying and said, "Why are you doing this to us?" And when we got onto the UIC station he was shaking and we got on the train tears just streamed down his face. I thought to myself, 'What kind of a world is this where it's okay for the cops to just do whatever they want to and treat you like dirt?'.

Not only is Barbara addressing the intensified racism faced

by her ex-husband, she is also describing the rebound racism she experienced and her own process of discovering Whiteness. As Barbara points out, she was forced to question her taken-for-granted understandings of fair, just and equal treatment for all. This is one taken-for-granted privilege of Whiteness she could no longer use in formulating her world view. Rather than receiving the privilege granted to people with White skin, she is facing the terror of Whiteness -- something few Whites ever face.

Discovering Whiteness. At the same time Whites experience borderism (rebound racism and borderpatrolling) they also step outside Whiteness and discover the privilege and terror of Whiteness in ways that other Whites do not. Many Interracially married Whites spoke about the experience of rebound racism and learning to negotiate racism for the first time in their lives as being both traumatic and eye-opening. Julie, a White woman living in the Chicago area reflects on the discovery of racism:

> As Whites, when we walk out we're just assuming everyone will accept us. And as an interracial couple you suddenly realize they don't and you've never had these experiences before and they're ugly and traumatic and they'll shock you.

Candace, the White mother of five explains how Whiteness has become visible, even blatant, through her more than twenty-five years in a Multiracial family. Several times she and her husband have been called to the police station about one or another of their sons who had been

picked up for no apparent reason (other than appearance). She and her husband have filed harassment charges against the police in several towns. Amidst all this, one rainy day Candace was driving home alone from the train station in a car that had only one headlight. She inadvertently exited out of an "entrance only" road at the train station. As she turned onto the street she noticed a police officer watching her from his car. The officer began to follow her. Certain she would be stopped for a double traffic violation, she began to reach for her license and registration. The officer followed her about a mile until she turned into her home -- she was not stopped. "I was so mad when I came in the house because I knew my boys would have been stopped. I know my husband is stopped all the time, I know by rights I should be stopped and I'm not, and there's an anger that sets in." Candace certainly was not soliciting a ticket, but each time she receives such privileges while her husband and children face harassment, she recognizes the privilege granted to people considered White. This puts a new twist on the racist statement: "Once you go Black, you never go back." I suggest that for most interracially married Whites it is the case that, "Once you go Black -- you become conscious of Whiteness; you never go back -- to taking White privilege for granted."

Black partners often talk of moving away from essentialist understandings of racial unity and begin to

think about community in new ways. White partners discover Whiteness. It is through these discoveries that interracially married people who were born, generally into single-race families and communities, begin to name and claim the borders. In the following section I will explore how borderism effects interracial couples attempts to stay together and 'make it' in a society that is racially divided. Much of the literature has focused attention on explaining the motives of people who enter into such relationships (Merton, 1941; Davis, 1941; Heer, 1966; Kalmijn, 1993; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan, 1990). The predominance of motive-seeking literature puts the burden of race on those attempting to subvert pathological and essentialist notions of race in their own lives. Rather than continuing the motive-seeking line of analysis, I will address the obstacles and hurdles interracial couples must overcome in a racially divided society.

ALL WE NEED IS LOVE... (REALLY?)

Borderism takes a toll on interracial relationships. Blacks and Whites in interracial relationships have different concerns and face different pressures and yet both find themselves in the battleground called the racial border. The racial dichotomy and hierarchy is reproduced both consciously and unconsciously through individual and institutional mechanisms. Because of the racial segregation, for many, their interracial relationship

represents the first time they are entertaining a "tight" personal network outside their socially defined race.

In the 60s and 70s, among the individuals I interviewed, interracial couples generally met at the workplace and needed to keep the relationship clandestine so each person could keep their job. In the 80s and 90s, college campuses and nightclubs have become additional places where couples have met. Blacks and Whites come into contact in many places, yet not many people interracially marry. In a society that rejects people who cross racial lines, people involved in such relationships have much to consider prior to making a permanent commitment. The basic choice is whether or not to stay together in the face of borderism. Several individuals claimed that there was no decision, they fell in love and that was it. However, for many others, life on the borders did not look all that inviting, and in fact was enough to cause a temporary break up[6].

Prior to the Loving Decision in 1967, Black and White couples were separated by law in many states. Today there are no legal sanctions against interracial marriage, however there are many defacto sanctions. At times, family and friends exert pressure to break-up. At other times it may be the borderism of strangers. Even if the relationship is

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[6] Certainly many folks break-up permanently. However I interviewed individuals who eventually made the decision to commit to each other despite the borderism.

clandestine, thoughts of how friends, family members, co-workers and employers and the general public might respond can often deter people from moving forward. In each of the following cases the couples did get back together eventually but each took some time away to make this life choice.

Lisa, a Black interracially married woman shared,

> Being at a Black College in the South and being the only female in the Jazz orchestra, there were all these Black guys saying, "Why are you with this White guy!" And one band member would make racial comments about "Don't marry Whitey, don't trust Whitey, don't do this for Whitey." He tried to talk me out of marrying Peter. I had some apprehension so I broke up with Peter and told him I did not want to develop a relationship.

Barbara, a White woman shares,

> I met my husband he was the sweetest, kindest, he was a wonderful human being, everything I was looking for except for the color and at one point I was really apprehensive about it. The race thing really bothered me, 'cause I didn't like being stared at and I didn't like people hating me and I didn't like how Black women viewed me and to White men I was a possession it's like, "You crossed the line." You know the feeling, like you have to be the lowest of the low to be with an African American. "Who are you trying to hurt?" It was just really sick, so I went away for awhile.

For these women it was a combination of specific comments people directed towards them and the impact of hurtful borderist images. There are some differences of course. African Americans spoke of not wanting to betray their family and community, while Whites did not like being ostracized and made into the pariahs of society. Blacks certainly speak to the feeling of being made pariahs because of the relationship, and while they are not losing privileges of Whiteness (because they never had them), there

is the added burden of feeling like they are betraying the community. Because of the racial and gender hierarchy and dichotomy Blacks and Whites sacrifice differently when entering an interracial relationship. White women give up the privileges of private patriarchy and Whiteness. White men give up some of the benefits of Whiteness. Blacks must consider that they may be giving up acceptance in the Black community and it is this fear that leads to a "pulling back" when the relationship seems to be getting closer. Parsia, a Black interracially married mother shares,

> When I met Joe I was really resistant to dating across racial lines. No way would I do that. It took me a very long time to get over that and deal with those feelings, biases, and expectations. I expected friends would feel very uncomfortable socializing with us. I still do believe that there is a certain language that Blacks have when we are apart from other races, when we are "alone" socially. That's a very important part of my life and I expected that I might lose that and that was a very fearful thing for me. The more I felt him getting closer, the more I started seeing the possibility of longevity in the relationship, the more afraid I got. I was terrified that I would be in an interracial relationship for the rest of my life, so I pulled back in a big way and we broke up. There was definitely a shame and a guilt I had to get over, because I felt that by dating interracially I was betraying Black men.

In many cases parents are there to remind the children that "crossing over" is just not acceptable. Quisha explains the pressure exerted on her when she told her mother of her new beau.

> I was really excited about him and told my mom and she just had a heart attack because he was White. I totally did not expect this from her. She would call everyday and was just hammering it into me to just forget this - and so I really badly and abruptly broke it off with

> Raymond. He was a real gentleman, he kept calling to find out what happened and I totally blew him off.

Both Parsia and Quisha eventually married the men they had left, but it took time to think through the risks and their own understandings of race and what it means to be a strong Black person in America. The fears, comments and internalized images break-up relationships, but in the end, those who do "make it" cite that it is shared values that matter most in the decision to get back together.

Making it work

> I can't say I ever thought that I was going to marry Julien, there's always this stereotype that, "If you marry a Black man, it's because you have a thing for Blacks and you've dated Blacks you're whole life and you're this cheap tawdry dumb woman." Well that's so far from reality it's not even funny. Both Julien and I were questioning if we should even pull this off anyway because this was so strange and new to us, it was because we truly were in love and our friendship that we were able to entertain possibilities of making our lives together and I will never regret a moment of it -- Candace, a White woman who has been interracially married for over 25 years.

Clearly people do make the decision to work it out despite the borderism. People cite various reasons for making it work including, personal strength, exposure to others, and education. In some cases, race took a back seat to religion and in other's shared values played the central role. For some it's a matter of shared interests that helps the couple overcome the stress and strain of the borders. Kelly, a Black woman who has been interracially married for nearly thirty years explains the importance of shared values in the relationship.

> You'll hear, "Why did you pick a White man?" It's not a matter of picking a color, it's a matter of picking a person with similar qualities and values. We more or less came from two parent families, we both had religious backgrounds and we both wanted the same things for our children.

After a great deal of reflection and time away from the relationship (nearly a year), Parsia was able to make a commitment. Through the year Parsia had to think through notions of community, unity and family. In the end she decided to make the relationship work.

> The big thing I've discovered is that we agree on the fundamentals. On the basics, we are in the same place. We have the same value system, we have the same belief in family, and same priorities in terms of what's most important. We are both very responsible, so we have the foundation and base that keeps us solid.

Owen, a Black interracially married man living near Chicago in the racially mixed town of Oak Park talks about how his relationship is able to stand up to the stresses and strains of the border. Similar to Parsia, a fundamental friendship is the foundation that keeps them strong on the borders.

> Not only do we really truly love one another, we *like* each other. We have our differences and fuss and fight like everyone else, but we have so many common things we like to do and enjoy doing them together.

Single-race couples do not need to think through the same issues nor with the same intensity. In a world where race is a central organizing principle, much is at stake when we go against the institutional and ideological rules of race. Many suggested that because issues of race and community were forced on the couple, they had to question

all aspects of the relationship. By time the final commitment was made, most felt certain of their "solid foundation." In fact, Julien asserts that not only do they share a strong foundation, but that it is made stronger yet because,

> We really aren't accepted by any community, but I think that's brought us closer together. As everyone rejects you, you have to come together to fight.

In a couple of cases, religion was cited as a more important factor to extended family than was race. And thus religion served to dull the race issue at least for the moment and for the immediate family. Peter, a White man, reflects back to the early 80s when he told his family:

> When I first told my parents, there first question was, "Is she a Christian?" From their conservative orientation that mattered more than race. That didn't surprise me at the time, but looking back it seems kind of strange.

Barbara, a White woman, had a similar experience when she met her in-laws for the first time back in the early 70s. She explains,

> We dated for about two years and decided we wanted to get married. I introduced him to my family and they took it really well because he was such a nice person. I was terrified to meet his family. My father-in-law was a boxer so he had hands on him and he took my hand and said, "Are you Catholic?!" and I said, "Yes sir I am" and he said, "Are you a born into the faith Catholic or are you a convert?" "I was born into the faith, sir." And he was like, "So you're the young lady that's going to marry my son." (laugh).

Candace shares a similar experience when she told her parents back in the early 70s:

> My father said, 'Well does he love you?' I said,

> 'Yeah.' And he said, 'Does he love the Lord?' I said, 'I think so.' So he said, 'Well then, I give you my blessing'. And he turned to my mother and said, 'We have to make room for these kids, I know a lot of interracial couples on the Northshore and they're wonderful people, they'll do just fine'.

Once the couple has worked through the pressure of the borderpatrol and their mutual respect and shared values become central the actual wedding ceremony becomes the issue. When Jane, a White woman living on Chicago's South Side, decided to get married, interracial marriage was still illegal in many states, she shares:

> When I got to the point of wanting to get married that's when I learned that we could not get married in many states. A Black and White couple could not get married. And my parents were in Missouri and it's usual for the couples to get married in the woman's home state. I remember calling about the marriage license in the City of St. Louis and asking whether a Black and White couple could get a marriage license and this woman, I can still hear her tone of voice, she said, "No, ma'am, they may not!" So we just got married in Illinois. My father located a church in Chicago that he felt we might feel comfortable in and we were married there.

By 1967 interracial marriage was legal in every state, yet several couples recalled the difficulties they faced when applying for a marriage license. Candace shares the difficulties she and her husband faced in the early-seventies when they first making the decision to get married.

> In June of 1970 we made a commitment to each other but we couldn't get a marriage license. We kept going down to the office to get our license and every time we went they told us we needed a different piece of paper or that we didn't fill out the right things. We would go home and get what they asked for and they'd say, "Well no, we need this too." So it got to the point that we

> knew we weren't going to get a marriage license. So we went beyond our personal beliefs, even though we knew this would upset our families and in June of 1970 we committed to each other for life and we didn't need a sheet of paper because we weren't going to get it anyway. We couldn't even get a pastor to talk to us.

In the end, a friend located a pastor that would perform the ceremony and they drove into Chicago "and got the paperwork completed and they never even asked a question, they gave it to us immediately." Today, interracial marriage is legal and people in State offices rarely so much as comment. A scant few mentioned that family and friends have stepped-in and attempted to stop the marriage. Lisa, a Black interracially married woman shares the pain she experienced because her friends refused to come to her wedding.

> We had a wedding at my church. It was kind of awkward at the reception. A lot of my colleagues from school did not come because they thought it was a big mistake. When I got back to school the next day I cried. But in retrospect those people they don't even matter, they don't even matter. I just knew that our marriage was ordained by God (laugh).

Fortunately, this experience seems to be an anomaly. Most interracially married people have been able to sort through supportive and unsupportive friendships and family members. By time they marry, supportive networks have usually been developed and many talk about having large and memorable weddings and receptions. In fact, one interracial/interfaith couple had greater difficulty working out the arrangements for their interfaith marriage. But once it was taken care of they had a huge and festive wedding.

Growing and Learning. Repeatedly couples talked about the fact that through their relationship and exposure beyond a single-race view of the world they developed into better people. Candace, along with many others, speaks to the feelings of growth and broadened understanding of humanity that does not take race for granted, but likewise does not draw on essentialist notions of race.

> I have grown tremendously through this relationship. I understand the privilege of skin color. I might have known what that concept was if I would have read it in a book, but the reality of understanding that in life -- if I was in an all White marriage, I think I would have taken an awful lot for granted and I wouldn't be as sensitive to many things. I often think, "How could I have missed that before?" and because it's suddenly placed in front of you, you're more sensitive.

Likewise, Parsia shares the growth she has experienced:

> I used to be real concerned about how I would be perceived, and that as an interracial female I would be taken less seriously in terms of my dedication to African American causes. I'm not nearly as concerned anymore, I would hold my record up to most of those in single-race relationships and I would say, "Okay, let's go toe to toe and you tell me who's making the biggest difference," and so I don't worry about it anymore.

Community and unity does not need to be based on a set of essentialist based rules. Instead, it is based on who we are politically, socially and culturally. Being interracially married does remove people from their single-race perspectives of the world. Likewise, being interracially married means, for many, moving to and claiming the border as a place from which we can fight White supremacism and essentialist thinking. In the next chapter I will explore how Multiracial families contend with some

practical issues such as finding housing. This can be a difficult process in a racial segregated housing market.

CHAPTER TWO

SHELTERING OURSELVES: Multiracial FAMILIES AND THE SEGREGATED HOUSING MARKET

Mortgage lenders act as expediters for Whites and gatekeepers for Blacks -- Paul Hancock, Chief of Housing and Civil Enforcement at the U.S. Department of Justice (1996)

The Grand Concourse is a major boulevard in the Bronx and pretty much splits the Bronx down the middle and you keep moving up to avoid what's going on. We lived on 166th and then on 170th and we made a jump all the way uptown to this predominantly White neighborhood. My parents didn't choose the neighborhood by how they'd fit in, they moved to keep me and my brothers in good schools and safe neighborhoods and they put themselves in tough situations for us. It was tough moving into an Irish neighborhood as an Interracial family. They felt more socially accepted in our old neighborhood but the neighborhood was going to hell -- Steven, a 30 year-old mixed-race college student living in the Bronx.

Entire neighborhoods are discriminated against because of their racial make-up. When entire neighborhoods are discriminated against it is known as 'redlining,' named for the red line drawn on a map around neighborhoods considered too risky for mortgages, loans and insurance. Without the mortgages, loans and insurance homes cannot be bought, sold or fixed up. Existing businesses in the area, denied loans and insurance, collapse one after another (Taylor, 1996). In other words, redlined neighborhoods are forced into deterioration no matter how hard residents fight. Those who own property in these areas watch their homes being devalued and underappraised. As property values drop, so too do property taxes upon which school funding is largely based. Thus the schools and other area institutions begin to decline. Housing discrimination effects all people living in the area,

renters and owners alike.

It seems to me that redlining is precisely the place to begin a discussion of Multiracial families and their search for housing. The redline represents the color and class line in American. It is a stark illustration of the way White capitalist privilege is reproduced at the expense of "others."

Housing, race, class and gender have always been inextricably linked in the United States. Accumulation of private property, the basis of capitalism, is the path through which Americans have dreamed of attaining financial security. Yet many Americans are denied the opportunity because of various ascribed characteristics. The effect of unfair housing and lending practices has meant the creation of a dual housing market, that is distinctive housing markets for Black and Whites (Squires et al, 1987). Linda Crane, Professor of Law, argues that the dual housing market is really about attempts to concentrate "wealth, power, prestige and access within specific privileged communities through land ownership" and is a way to control and regulate unequal land ownership, which in turn maintains class and race inequalities (1996). She cites the fact that banks will lend Blacks $30,000 to buy a car, a piece of property that will only depreciate, yet will repeatedly deny a $30,000 loan for a housing purchase.

New York City and Chicago, the two cities in which I concentrated my research both share a history of racist housing practices. While many historical and social

differences exist between the two cities, they are surprisingly similar in their level of housing segregation (Massey and Denton, 1993). This can be explained in part because New York City was created development by development, through a process of slum clearance and redevelopment. This process created a large displaced population, mainly Black and Latino (Schwartz, 1993). In Chicago Blacks were held to the overcrowded and inferior housing in the "Black Belt." As the Black population grew and demanded more and better housing, Whites were violently reluctant. As Blacks pushed for affordable housing, Whites fled out toward the segregated and federally subsidized suburbs. According to Massey and Denton, from 1970 to 1990 Chicago's segregation index dropped from 91.9 to 85.8 while in that same time period New York City increased slightly from 81 to 82.8.[1]

As I stated in the previous chapter most people in the United States grow up and move in predominantly single-race areas. Arguments have been made for the disadvantages and advantages of maintaining segregated neighborhoods. These arguments are generally made along single-race, White *or* Black lines. There are several arguments made as to why Whites should fight to end segregation. First, it is argued that Whites are "dwarfing their minds" by not living with people of

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[1] The index used by Massey and Denton is known as the "dissimilarity index." A number of 91.9 reflects that given the population as a whole 91.9% of the population lives in census tract that does not represent the racial balance of the area.

color because they do not have exposure and access to cultural diversity (Saltman, 1990; Myrdal, 1944). Second, it is argued that segregation, maintained by White controlled institutions eliminates opportunities for intergroup relations needed for a smooth functioning society from which Whites currently benefit disproportionately (Hirsch, 1983; Wood and Lee, 1991; Johnson, 1941). Third, it has been argued that segregation creates a situation where Whites do not have access to housing in the entire city (Squires, et al., 1987). There are several arguments as to why Blacks should not accept segregation. First, segregated neighborhoods mean that Blacks are denied equal economic and educational opportunities (Hacker, 1993; Massey and Denton, 1993; DeMarco and Galster, 1993). Second, many important services such as health care, libraries, all private business are restricted in segregated Black neighborhoods (Frazier, 1957).

Arguments made for and against segregation come from the perspective of single-race people and communities. Multiracial families look to racially mixed neighborhoods for all the reasons cited above, but they also search for these neighborhoods because it is where they can have a sense of safety and comfort. In this chapter I will explore the following: Where do Multiracial families choose to live and why? What is the process of obtaining housing? What does the choice of neighborhood mean to the parents and children in these families? Given the history of segregation in the

United States, mixed race families face a housing market offering three basic choices; the Black neighborhood, the White neighborhood and the racially mixed neighborhood. Participants in my study were fairly evenly spread throughout these neighborhoods, although a slight majority live in racially mixed areas.[2]

DECIDING WHERE TO LIVE

The more common types of neighborhoods in the United States are the predominantly Black or predominantly White neighborhood. There are a couple of explanations as to why the segregation continues: first, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy played out through institutional mechanisms such as redlining; second, individuals choose to "live among their own." Whether in the form of redlining, steering, intimidation or the more institutional barrier of economic differences, Blacks are held out of White neighborhoods and thus held out of the schools that receive a disproportionate amount of funding and attention, and are also denied networks and connections needed to get the "good jobs." Further, given the history of violence against Blacks, many Blacks choose not to pioneer into the White neighborhoods and rather opt to stay

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Type of nbrhood:	Mixed Race	Black	White	Urban	Suburban
Chicago	10	6	5	11	10
New York	17	3	6	10	16

The breakdown of neighborhood type of the 47 interviewees.

where they are physically comfortable and culturally supported. The racially mixed neighborhood is by far the least common. Juliet Saltman defines stable mixed-race neighborhoods as those that have seen, "relatively little change in the past decade" (1991:421). These neighborhoods are often "split race" in that Blacks and Whites live and socialize in different geographical locations within the community. While mixed race communities that are split are not ideal for Multiracial families, they are, as one interracially married mother in Montclair, New Jersey voiced, "the best you're going to get." At least in such areas Multiracial families can go places like the grocery store, library and downtown area without much incidence. Many factors intersect to determine where Multiracial families will decided to live. Some factors are such as racism, borderism, class are outside the families' control. These factors intersect with personal choice factors such as comfort and convenience in the final housing decision.

One previous study has suggested that Interracial couples and families live in neighborhoods that match the husband's/father's race (Porterfield, 1978). Based on this notion we would expect to find White male/Black female couples live in White neighborhoods and Black male/White female couples in Black neighborhoods. Based on my study, class and age appear to be much more of a factor than gender. For couples who were married during or prior to the Civil Rights

Movement, the Black community was the safe choice. Couples married after the Civil Rights Movement found that White, Black and Mixed Race communities became available options. For these families, economics coupled with convenience, comfort and concern for the children become primary deciding factors. This is not to say that discrimination no longer occurs in the housing market, yet federal housing legislation and enforcement has opened housing markets as never before. In fact I will begin this section by taking a look at the way Multiracial families are treated by realtors and landlords. I will then explore how Multiracial families living in single-race communities came to such a decision. I will conclude with a brief historical look at four stable racially mixed neighborhoods in which many Multiracial families reside. These neighborhoods have many similarities that help to maintain stability.

Realtors and Landlords

It is one thing to make decisions about where we would like to live however getting past the inherent discrimination in the housing market is entirely another. Multiracial families face both racism and borderism in the market. Given the lack of mixed-race communities in the U.S., Multiracial families have much to juggle in their search for housing. Realtors and landlords are one part of the juggling act. Since 1968 housing markets have opened slightly. At least enough so that developers, landlords, real estate agencies and

mortgage lenders don't get sued.

Testing, also known as a "Fair Housing Audit" is a regular activity undertaken by organizations concerned with monitoring Fair Housing legislation in the U.S. Testing is a way to discover and track "differences in the quality, content, and quantity of information and service provided to potential homeseekers by real estate firms, landlords and real estate agents, banks, insurance providers, and others" (Seymour, 1996). Tests (or audits) are conducted by individuals or groups called 'testers,' who are trained to act and present themselves in such a way that skin color and physical features appear to be their only difference. The testers go out pretending to be interested in renting or buying; they take exacting notes about the treatment they receive. After dozens of tests comparisons are made, reports are written and charges are filed if necessary.

Multiracial families often find themselves conducting unofficial and, many times, unintentional fair-housing audits. For example, Dorothy a White interracially married mother of two, recently bought a home in Montclair, a stable racially mixed community in New Jersey. She shares,

> I walked into the real estate office and my husband stayed in the car. I told the agent I was looking for a house and she gave me a map and said, 'You don't want to look on that side.' She actually said that. Then when she saw the two of us, she steered us toward the Black area, she brought us to this house that was a total wreck. If your Black and White, there's an assumption that you're White trash, he's Black, and they assume you don't have any money.

Such fair-housing tests are conducted informally all the time by Multiracial family members. In the end, Dorothy and her husband were able to purchase a home in a racially mixed block in Montclair. While they experienced steering and borderist assumptions, conditions are somewhat improved relative to the house hunting experiences of the mid-70s. The mere fact that a mixed-race suburban community is available for those who can afford it, is a drastic change from what Multiracial families faced in the 70s. Twenty-five years ago and 800 miles west, in Chicago, the housing market was racially charged and divided. Marches, violence and riots were recent and daily news. However, Civil Rights Legislation had been passed and realtors and lenders were being held to greater scrutiny than they were with prior federal Fair Housing Act of 1968. Candace and her husband David took advantage of this time, and moved into a newly developed, predominantly White subdivision in Joliet, a far-west suburb of Chicago. It was not easy. Fearing borderism Candace and her husband decided to hide their relationship until the final closing date. She shares,

> When we bought our house we did it separately. We figured my husband would go because at least they would know it was someone Black walking in. I did not see the house until it was completely done. When we finalized the house the man sat there and said, 'You two think you've really pulled this off and that this is the first time we realized that you're an interracial couple. Well we knew it before and we had a discussion whether we wanted you in the neighborhood or not and quite frankly, we wouldn't want a lot more couples like you in the neighborhood, but we will let you move in because we do have to have representatives of various nationalities and races or we'll get closed down.'

Candace, like Dorothy addresses borderism faced by Multiracial families looking for housing. The agent and those he represented were concerned about an interracial couple moving into the neighborhood. Would a same-race Black couple have faced a similarly hard time? Most likely, although they would face direct racism instead of the entangled racism and borderism. In one study of an interracial community in Philadelphia in the early 60s, conducted by Grier and Grier they note that single-race White families were "worried about the effect which the presence of mixed marriages among the residences might have on the children" (1960:198). Same-race marriages, Black or White are viewed as okay, it's the Multiracial marriages that present "danger" (i.e. visible border crossers). Other studies reflect discrimination faced by Multiracial families. Ernest Porterfield conducted interviews with 40 couples in Illinois, Ohio, Alabama, and Mississippi in the late-70s. He states:

> In attempts to obtain housing, many families had problems. On the other hand, a few had no difficulties whatsoever. But in order to move into the neighborhoods of their choice, numerous mixed couples have had to resort to deception. When the agent or owner is known to be White, the White spouse makes the contact and negotiates for it. If he [or she] is Black, then the Black partner handles the arrangements (1978:137).

More recently, Rosenthal et al. reported that of the 21 couples they interviewed in the St. Paul-Minneapolis, Minnesota area, only two spoke of facing housing discrimination. They suggest that the difference between their findings and Porterfield's could exist "because of

changes in laws or in public attitudes or because the Twin Cities are different from the communities in which Porterfield interviewed..." (1995:141). My study of 47 Multiracial family members reflects that most individuals suspected they had been discriminated against or had made decisions to avoid certain areas for fear that they may be discriminated against. Many people spoke of "knowing which areas to avoid." Unfortunately discussions of steering and other forms of discrimination faced by Multiracial families can only be spoken of anecdotally because statistics are kept in Black and White, not Multiracial.

Included in the anecdotes are the experiences of Jonathan, a White-appearing mixed-race man and his family. Now in his late-twenties he grew up in a family that rehabbed old homes as one source of income which meant they moved quite frequently. He shares one example of what it was like to work with a realtor when moving into a White neighborhood outside Chicago.

> We had a real estate agent who helped us and when we moved from one north suburb to another. Without informing us she sent a letter to all the neighbors telling them that a Biracial family was moving in and asking if they were going to have any problems with it. She did that because she was afraid that we were going to move in and people were just going to start doing all this hate mail and stuff. I always had mixed emotions about that because on the one hand, yes she was doing it for us in a way, but in another way it just seemed like such a crappy thing to do.

Realtors often come from the areas in which they are showing prospective buyers. Fear of reprisal from possible

future clients, realtors "protect" areas from invading outsiders (Perrin, 1977; Squires et al., 1987). It could also be argued that the letter was the basis for panic-peddling. In fact, the letter sent by this realtor is in violation of the Fair Housing Act which specifically states:

> It shall be unlawful -- ... (c) To make, print, or publish... any notice, statement, or advertisement, with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling that indicates any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, or intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination [1989: Sec. 804, 42 U.S.C. 3604]

One family avoided the realtor by purchasing their home from a relative. Ingrid, a White interracially married mother living on Long Island shares,

> We avoided that whole thing, we just bought my brother's house. We didn't go to a real estate agent because they would never steer us to this working-class community - no way, no how. This place was built, it's practically a by-law, nobody of color is suppose to live here. It was built for returning servicemen as long as you were White.

On a more positive note several members of Multiracial families are now realtors. With the growth of Multiracial family organizations, Multiracial families are now able to better network and do business with a member of the Multiracial community. One Multiracial family currently living on Long Island got lucky when they happened upon an interracially married realtor. Katey, a Black interracially married mother recalls the stroke of luck,

> I called what is equivalent to Open Housing out on Long Island and spoke to the director and he said it's almost impossible to find a mixed community out on Long Island

> but he did name a few. And then luckily and quite by accident the agent we were using happened to be interracially married. I said to her, "Look we are an interracial family and we are looking for an interracial neighborhood." As soon as I said that she said, "Oh, I am interracially married too." She found us a really nice place.

This is not to say that a sense of solidarity drives Multiracial families to do business with each other. However, a Multiracial family can feel comfortable knowing they are not going to face borderism. There is a sense that they will not have to dissect each conversation or each slight and figure out what is race-based and what is not. Such a sense of comfort and relaxation is hard to come by in a society dominated by single-race taken-for-granted rules.

SINGLE RACE NEIGHBORHOODS

I think being in an interracial neighborhood is the number one thing that you need because people I've talked with who had problems growing up Biracial have grown up in monoracial neighborhoods, White or Black, it doesn't matter, monoracial - Katey, a Black interracially married mother.

The single-race (or monoracial) neighborhoods I am addressing are either predominantly White or predominantly Black. In the above quote, Katey warns Multiracial families against moving into a monoracial neighborhood. However monoracial neighborhoods differ greatly, not only along class lines, but many families find comfort in single-race Black neighborhoods. In other words, not all monoracial neighborhoods have the same outcome on Multiracial family members. I will begin by exploring the experiences of Multiracial families who choose to live in White

neighborhoods.

White Neighborhoods. The mere thought of living in predominantly White neighborhood led to a range of reactions from Multiracial family members. Some people talked of feeling *a little scared or uncomfortable*, others talked about feeling downright *terrified*. Prior to moving into a White neighborhood, Multiracial families must decide if they can deal with the hostility that could mean continual isolation and/or possibly erupt into violence. Parsia, a Black interracially married mother shares her thoughts prior to moving to a predominantly White town in Connecticut,

> I was absolutely terrified. I said to my husband, 'Do you realize Connecticut has the third highest KKK membership in the nation? We can't possibly live there, the trees go right up to the house, the Klan could be hiding and we wouldn't see them until they were on the deck.' I had these horrible feelings about it. We had put money down on this house way out in the sticks and I woke up in the middle of the night, "I know it's a great house - I can't do it! It's too far from Black people.

Candace and her husband are ready to retire and have concerns about where to live. Like Parsia, the fear is influencing their choice. Candace laments,

> Where do you go that you can get a guarantee that nobody's going to burn a cross on your front lawn? And you really have to be so careful...But that makes me angry because we are starting another stage in our lives and we want to live in a place that's conducive to our lives and we want to have a choice, but it's scary, so we don't know where to go.

The fear sometimes dissipates after the family has been in a neighborhood for awhile, yet the fear deters many from even entering such areas. These fears are grounded in events

reported in the media periodically. One woman recalled a relatively recent bombing of two new homes in the Chicago area owned by interracial couples. Just two years ago a Multiracial family living on Long Island had their home broken into with racial slurs spray painted on the walls. In the Long Island case it was the home of a single White mother raising her young Multiracial children. Based on such incidences occurring in White neighborhoods, while rare, many Multiracial families still will not even consider living in predominantly White areas. For instance, Anna is a 42 year-old Multiracial woman with ambiguous racial features is married to a darker skinned Black man and lives on Chicago's South Side. She states,

> I can go into the White community if I want to but I don't feel comfortable there. I don't feel like I belong. I stay in the Black community. I wouldn't dream of trying to move into those areas because I know my place and it's not in their community. I'd go visit, but I'm very careful about making sure it's safe because if I go with my husband I wouldn't want any problems.

Yet in light of the fears some Multiracial families still opt to live in predominantly White areas. From those I interviewed several reasons were given including: the importance of being geographically situated near work; affordability of housing; physical safety from crime; and, access to good schools. Families who opted for a White neighborhood generally cited *convenience* to work as the primary reason for doing so. Julie, a White recently divorced mother of a Multiracial daughter lives in a working-class

White neighborhood outside Chicago. Economics constrain her from moving to a mixed-race community, but she cites convenience to work as a strong selling point for her current location.

> This is centrally located, I'm in sales and marketing and I like the fact that I can catch every artery in and out of the city. This is a high-end blue collar neighborhood, and it's safe there are no gangs, you can walk the street. We do get some stares and whispers and people snicker, but it's not so bad.

In the end, Parsia the woman who expressed feeling terror at the thought of living in a White, thinly populated area, moved to a predominantly White town on the ocean in Connecticut. Economics was not a constraining factor for her and her husband when they made their choice. She chose the location because she and her family wouldn't be pioneers and because it was accessible to work.

> One of the reasons we did move here is because there is a Black couple across the street. Now this town has its fair share of racists, but it was the best of the alternatives, we're each within 30 minutes of work. We had to do it.

Parsia and her family live in an upper-class community. Whites who live there can afford, at least on the surface, to accept the few Blacks in the area. That is to say, the housing market places economic constraints on who can afford to live in such an community. Because race and class are inherently linked in the United States, by controlling the class of people able to purchase and live in such a town, immediately controls the number of Blacks able to live in such an area is controlled. Wealthier communities have the

"protection" of institutional racism and classism. Racial tipping, the idea that as Whites move out, Blacks will move in and eventually the neighborhood will become predominantly Black is not a fear for homeowners in wealthier areas because they tend to have both capital and political connections in place. Wealthier communities are generally built in desirable geographic locations and have amenities people look for, such as good schools, museums, shops, access to transportation and parks. People are willing to pay for such amenities -- people who can afford to pay for them. As housing costs escalate in particular areas, concerns of 'racial tipping' diminish.

Historically, White working-class neighborhoods have responded with greater hostility to Blacks moving into "their" community (Hirsch, 1983). Having bought into the racist ideology that feeds the "invasion-succession" pattern and threatened with the prospect of being redlined, White working-class communities have been highly susceptible to tactics of panic peddling. Working-class communities may also have been more susceptible because they often lack the political and economic clout to ensure their home values. This takes on great significance for working-class families for whom the house represents their lifesavings.

Families find that once they have gotten past the realtors, landlords and/or lenders and have lived in a neighborhood for sometime, they may become the family that White liberals want to get close too. Many Multiracial family

members suspect that this is a way for these Whites to prove how liberal they are[3]. By becoming friends with a Multiracial family, they can live on the edge, racially speaking. Candace, a White woman in suburban Chicago recalls,

> We moved in and we had several neighbors move immediately. Another neighbor started a gossiping, it got really bad. Other than that we lived there for 23 years and were the couple to know if people wanted to prove they were liberal. It was funny because my husband and I would sit and watch people, there was one lady in particular, she knew us when she needed us, if she was going to be with a group of people and didn't want them to know she knew us, oh boy, she didn't even look in our direction. Other times she would come running pall mall! So we've either been the couple to know or not to know, we were never quite sure what the status was going to be.

Nancy, a White mother in Montclair shares,

> In this town people want to show how liberal they are so these good-looking biracial children are really sought after because it allows you to have friends of color--and your children to have friends of color, without them being too dark and also you have a Caucasian parent to relate to if your uncomfortable with African Americans, you've got this White mother in my case - I'm 'acceptable'.

Daphne, a mixed-race and transracially adopted woman in her mid-30s, who grew up in a predominantly White area speaks to the "not too Black" acceptance she receives from Whites.

> It's easier for White people to deal with me because not only am I lighter skinned but to the degree that they know what my background is, I come from a world similar to their own.

Marguerite, a mixed race and transracially adopted woman

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[3] When Multiracial family members refer to White liberals, most are not commenting on a political orientation but rather what seems like a common desire on the part of these folks to be able to make claims to friendships with Blacks.

in her late 20s who grew up in a predominantly White area outside of Chicagoland shares a similar idea,

> I think I am less threatening to Whites than someone who is darker and had more Black culture. I firmly believe it is much harder for Black males. I saw it in my own ex-husband, I know it's different for me, I know Whites are more accepting of me. I grew up in their environment, I talk the way they talk.

What begins as a feeling of fear or terror often becomes one of suspicion and doubt about the type of acceptance the family receives. Some families did not concern themselves with the type of acceptance but rather viewed themselves as bridges for Whites to better understand race. These folks viewed their acceptance as synonymous with the breaking down of racial barriers. Yet Candace warns these families need to be more careful when interacting with Whites who live in predominantly White areas because, "Once they've gotten past the stereotypes of us, that doesn't mean they've stopped stereotyping." She elaborated the warning by sharing her experience:

> What was really scary was that people who appeared to have accepted our family and have walked with us and talked with us and ate in our house, still carry around stereotypes...we kind of become the "exception to the rule."

Candace and her family lived in the same house for 23 years and experienced borderism. Jonathan, a mixed race man, and his family moved every couple of years. Jonathan appears White, his younger sister is visibly mixed, his father is Black and his mother is White. His parents would buy a 'run down' home in predominantly White areas, fix it up, sell it and begin the process again. Based on his many experiences

over the years Jonathan recalls,

> When we moved into a neighborhood people would look at us funny and there would be prejudices there and they'd say, 'Oh God that house is going to be even worse because look shiftless Black people and White Trash are moving in,' and then as soon as we started fixing up the place people started really liking us, 'Oh wow, look what they're doing' and then as soon as our house started looking better than everyone else's, some people didn't like that so much.

Jonathan also warns of that Multiracial families should be careful when they are moving in predominantly White neighborhoods. In these cases he became aware that his family was looked down upon by the White neighbors. He also found in several of the moves that he was accepted and invited over other children's homes until they found out who his family was racially. He recalled losing school friends after his parents or sister would come to his school. In this case the acceptance he received from Whites in the neighborhood and at school was dependent upon his unintentional passing something I will address in future chapters.

Black Neighborhoods. The process of becoming a part of a Black neighborhood is substantially different than becoming part of a White neighborhood. The reasons Multiracial families cited for living in a Black community were based on a combination of economic need, social comfort and convenience. Some families explained that they had attempted to move to a stable racially mixed neighborhood which turned out to be a "transitional" or "changing" neighborhood and decided to stayed. In Chicago in particular these unstable

racially mixed areas were never given a chance to stabilize. A couple of White interracially married women I interviewed recalled being contacted by realtors who were warning them of the impending take-over (invasion) and prompting them to sell (succession). Of course the realtors had no idea who they were *really* talking to. Families in Black neighborhoods did not often speak about overt hostility from neighbors, although some spoke of a cool reception and the arms length acceptance. Jane, a White woman who moved into Lawndale on Chicago's south side in the mid-50s with her Black husband and three sons shares,

> I don't think I ever felt completely accepted in the neighborhood, but I'm a bit of a loner anyway and one thing that I liked about it was that people sort of left me alone to do what I wanted to do. I didn't have these feelings of obligation. I think we try to look on the bright side of things I mean in any situation where you find yourself there can be advantages and disadvantages, so we might as well emphasize the advantages.

While Jane didn't face overt hostility, neither did she face acceptance. When she and her husband bought their home they did not even consider a White community because these areas were extremely hostile and closed to Black and Multiracial families.

According to the folks with whom I spoke, single-race Black neighborhoods are easier to live in for Multiracial families, with the exception of one particular time -- during the Black Power movement. Lauren a Multiethnic woman with racially ambiguous features recalls,

What it boils down to is that this was the 60s, the era

> of "Say it loud, I'm Black and I'm proud." And it was not enough to be Black, you had to prove it, always and if you were a light-skinned Black, then you had to prove it more than anyone else.

Neighborhoods were turning inside out and upside down, Whites were panicking and realtors were peddling. Blacks were trying to keep their head above water as they fought for their freedom. Multiracial families were caught in the cross currents. The story of living in single-race Black neighborhoods is one tightly connected to Black activism and the strength of identity politics at various moments in history. Families who did not quite fit into the Black community were sometimes treated badly. Multiracial family members who grew up during this time recall many difficulties because they just could not "prove" enough. Anna, a 42 year-old mixed-race woman shares her experiences during the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement in her changing neighborhood on Chicago's Southside. Her parents attempted to move to a mixed area, but like many neighborhoods, particularly on Chicago's South Side, the neighborhood was predominantly Black within a few years.

> I was at a party one of the High School clubs gave and this was a year the Blackstone Rangers were getting big. This one guy came over and said something to me about being White. And I said, 'I'm not White, my father's Black and my mother's White, you don't know anything about me so don't talk to me.' Next thing I know, some friends are whisking me off to this room and told me to stay there because there was going to be some trouble. Next thing, the party was over. It was scary because they were looking to beat me up.

Similarly, Vincet shares the difficulties he encountered

growing up in the Robert Taylor Homes on Chicago's South Side.

> The Black kids used to make fun of my hair, "Did you dye your hair?" They wanted to touch and feel it. I was always segregated by the teachers. It didn't bother me that much because if I was segregated people weren't picking on me...I remember getting in a lot of fights in the play yard. You end up fighting a lot for reasons that you don't even know, people just challenged me.

After repeated fights and having grown tired of being hassled "for reasons you don't even know," Vincet decided to take matters into his own hands for a while.

> An uncle left a gun in our house. I knew where it was and was so sick of being picked on all the time. So I carried it around for a week and I couldn't believe it, but no one bothered me for that whole week. I put the gun back where I had found it. Then I got a knife and decided to carry that all the time. I was so sick of being picked on. But in my mind I was thinking, 'No you don't need this, this is not right' so I threw the knife away.

Both Vincet and Anna were growing up in Black neighborhoods during the Black Power Movement, a time when Blacks were attempting to name and claim a unified racial location. This meant the community boundaries were being defined and drawn. A belief in Black authenticity grew out of the various nationalist movements. Light-skinned folks had to prove they belonged. Light-skinned, mixed-race kids were even one more step removed and had a tougher and almost impossible task of proving they belonged. Lauren, a 42 year-old 'multiethnic' woman adopted by White parents recalls some of the difficulties she had living in a predominantly Black neighborhood on Chicago's South Side and attending the same school in which her White adoptive father was a social worker.

> We lived in a changing neighborhood on the South Side, it

> was predominantly Black when we got there. I had to deal with other people's attitudes, "Well I thought you said that you were mixed, I thought you said you were Black, I saw your father." Also, my dad and I used to take the El to school, our stop was at 63rd, well that was an all Black area. I didn't have any problems when I would go through there, but when I would go through with my dad, there would be hate stares. There were times I would say, "Sorry dad, I'll meet you at school." And I would walk on the other side the street...

Katey, a Black interracially married woman in her early 40s speaks to the way in which demands were placed on her and other Blacks who did not and could not prove enough:

> Biracial people and light skinned Blacks are used a lot. Other Blacks want you to prove you're Black, so they have you do this that and the other thing and of course you don't want to be perceived as not being Black, so you do whatever strange or crazy thing that's being asked of you and I saw that happening all the time. That's another reason Biracial people must have a strong foundation in their culture because they have to know that typing someone's term paper is not going to make them more Black.

Multiracial families that formed in the 80s and 90s tell a different story with regard to living in Black neighborhoods. It is a story of guarded acceptance, but acceptance nonetheless. Christopher, a mixed-race man in his mid-20s agrees with Katey that mixed-race people are still asked to "prove," but acceptance is granted more easily in the 90s than it was in the 60s. Christopher lived with relatives in a predominantly White area for his first two years of high school. He explains that he was never really accepted in the predominantly White high school. He decided to live with his mother and siblings in a predominantly Black city for the final two years of high school. It was during the transition

that he felt the strongest demands to "prove" his Blackness.

> Sometimes I'd have to prove I was Black, either by fighting or by playing the dozens, things like that. Like, "I am Black, I understand the language and everything." When I first got there I had a rough time, because I was coming from a predominantly White school and it's like, "What's up with the new kid, he thinks he's all that, he thinks he's White." But after about three months I fit it. The first couple months were fights, getting jumped, going to football practice and getting beat on, things like that. It was like I had to prove that I was Black and I was from the neighborhood and this is why I'm here. They got over it and ever since then it's just been an easy ride.

Steven a 30-year old mixed-race man living in the Bronx recalls his comfort in neighborhoods that were predominantly Black and Latino. The level of acceptance and comfort was never present in the White neighborhoods. Given the limited options for mixed-race neighborhoods, Steven believes that his life would have been easier had he live in Black and Latino neighborhoods.

> I was always conscious that I had a Black father and a White mother, but I was never embarrassed by it until we moved to a White neighborhood. I grew up in the South Bronx and the neighborhood was 99% Black and Latino and it was not big deal to have a White mother and Black father. Then in third grade my parents got a new apartment uptown, near Yonkers. The neighborhood was predominantly Irish and Italian. I just always felt more accepted in a Black setting.

In both Christopher's and Steven's cases, they were more comfortable and felt more accepted in Black and Latino neighborhoods. I suggest that the lack of comfort Multiracial family members feel in White neighborhoods has a great deal to with the myth of racial purity. There is no way to "prove" one is authentically White outside of appearance backed by a

White family tree. However the Black community uses a different burden of proof, one in which 'understanding (and speaking) the language' is necessary. Because the Black community does not call upon the myth of purity they can (and do) open their borders to include a broader group of people as long as they can prove their Blackness. Nonetheless various versions of the one-drop rule still play an important role in the granting of acceptance.

In Black neighborhoods today there is a level of community acceptance not found in White neighborhoods, yet not all is smooth sailing. The cool reception some Multiracial families talk about facing is a form of borderpatrolling that becomes overtly expressed from time-to-time. Lisa, an interracially married Black mother living on Chicago's South Side encountered overt hostility from a woman who called and threatened to kill her family. While this incident was extremely terrifying for the family, particularly since they have two grammar school age children, Lisa confirms, "We have been very comfortable in the Black community." Her husband Peter stated, "I feel like I adopted the Black community and have been adopted by the Black community." Similar to Peter, Barbara, a White woman living in an "all Black suburb" of Chicago shares how her neighbors not only accept her, but have helped her out on many occasions.

> After my divorce someone noticed my daughter needed a winter coat and for Christmas and left one for her. There's a man up the street who acts like a father-figure to my son. That sense of community is nothing I ever felt

in the White community.

RACIALLY MIXED AREAS

In Chicago the well known racially mixed areas are, Evanston, Oak Park, Beverly, and Hyde Park; each of these communities are also known to expensive places to live. New Yorkers also contend with the choice of a few racially mixed areas, such as Montclair, NJ, Park Slope in Brooklyn, Lower Manhattan and the Upper East and West side. Similar to Chicago, the stable mixed-race areas are also tend to be very expensive places. Multiracial families who are not quite middle-class are forced to choose single-race neighborhoods or sacrifice a great deal to live in a stable racially mixed community. Many Multiracial families who currently live in single-race neighborhoods do so because they simply cannot afford to live in stable mixed race communities. Responding to my question, "How did you decide on the community you live in now?" Barbara, a White mother of three, living in a predominantly Black South suburb of Chicago replied quickly and matter-of-factly, "I couldn't afford Hyde Park." Hyde Park is the home of the University of Chicago and a well known mixed race area in Chicago. Julie, a White woman living in a predominantly White working-class suburb of Chicago stated,

> If I had my druthers I'd live in Evanston, but that's very expensive.

Lisa, a Black interracially married mother of two, living on Chicago's South Side stated,

> It would be nice to be someplace that's more integrated

> but I don't even know if there are any integrated communities that have houses we can afford at this time.

In other words, many Multiracial families live in single-race areas by default. Mixed-race couples have all kinds of reasons for moving into single-race neighborhoods, not least of which is the fact that stable mixed race neighborhoods are expensive and difficult to locate. Yet Multiracial and transracially adopted adults who grew up in single-race neighborhoods spoke both urgently and strongly that parents should make a greater attempt to find affordable and stable racially mixed areas. Parents venture outside the neighborhood for work and friendship networks. The children however tend to socialize generally within a few block boundary and at the local school. Thus while parents may not have to face the day-to-day contact with single-race and borderist neighbors, the children do.

Quisha, an interracially married woman now living on Chicago's North Side, grew up outside of New York City. She reflects on her experience as a member of a Black family in a wealthy, all-White part of town.

> A friend of mine and I took the bus home one day and she got off and I went to get off behind her and the bus driver said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I live here." He didn't believe me and my friend had to vouch for me. This was 1980! Then the Black kids didn't like me because I wasn't Black enough and I would never be White enough, I mean that's impossible. One thing I did decide, I will ***never*** raise my kids in an environment where they're the only one. I would never ever do that, never, that more than anything.

Mark, a mixed-race, 30 year-old man currently living in

Montclair, NJ noted his experiences in a neighboring White town.

> I didn't have any friends until we moved to Montclair which was something I couldn't believe because I was coming from Bloomfield where there were no Black kids in my school. So then when we moved to Montclair and there were so many different people, it was great because nobody asked them anything.

Sheri, a 19 year-old mixed-race mother living in the racially mixed town of Montclair, N.J. shares:

> Well I don't want to live in a predominantly White neighborhood because I don't want to go through that again. I'd like to live in a mixed or Black neighborhood. A place like this town. I want more kids and would like to raise them in a mixed neighborhood.

Four Mixed Race Areas. In 1965 Taueber and Taueber argued that the "invasion-succession" model, that is, as Blacks move in, Whites flee leaving a segregated neighborhood, was common in U.S. cities. Massey and Denton point out that the process starts by the first racist White family in the neighborhood moving out, as that family moves out, another Black family will move in, this pattern will continue until the invasion-succession model appears to be in effect happening. Wood and Lee (1991) argue that neighborhoods change largely because of a self-fulfilling prophecy. If Whites believe the invasion-succession model is a matter of fact, they will sell their homes. Blatant forms of panic peddling have been outlawed by the Fair Housing Act of 1968, yet many Whites cling to the racist imageries that create an inevitable succession model. These imageries include the beliefs that housing prices will drop, crime rates will rise and school standards will decline.

Therefore Whites pull out, mortgage lenders begin to redline and together make the invasion-succession model a reality (Massey and Denton, 1993; Goodwin, 1979). Based on what has been called an inevitable process, many have argued that mixed race neighborhoods are really just transitional neighborhoods (Farley, 1987; Taueber and Taueber, 1965; Massey and Denton, 1993). Some mixed-race neighborhoods are indeed only mixed during the transition phase and are thus hostile areas on the way to becoming re-segregated. Relying on 1940 and 1950 census data Taueber and Taueber, concluded, "If racial succession were inevitable and irreversible, Stable Interracial Areas would appear infrequently, and, in fact, such areas are uncommon in the ten cities [studied]" (1965:106). Now 40 years later, some are suggesting that we need to reassess the assumption that all mixed neighborhoods will change (Saltman, 1991; Wood and Lee, 1991). Instead of a direct race related phenomena, a changing neighborhood has been tied to many factors, not least of which is class and political clout (Saltman, 1991).

After completing a five year study of National Neighbors, an organization created to facilitate the process of housing integration nationally, Juliet Saltman (1990/1991) identified factors contributing to the success or failure of integrating communities. Four primary factors lead to the success of integration: the presence of prideful amenities, the city taking a central role fiscally and promptly, the schools were

desegregated and public housing deconcentrated. Without school desegregation and public housing deconcentration, what she calls the "killer variables", the community will not be able to form as a stable racially mixed community. In addition, Saltman suggests that other interrelated factors such as regional housing availability, and the ranking of the educational system play a role in which communities are able to stabilize.

THE NEW YORK AREA

Montclair, New Jersey

> Montclair is a place where interracial couples have gravitated because they know they will not have to deal with tension in the grocery store, it's one way interracial families cope. The train connects us to New York City. Where you live has everything to do with being able to survive as an interracial couple. We are purposely in reach of New York, it is like a life line, I know it's there and the spill over from New York is here -- Mina, a White interracially married mother.

According to the Historical Society in Montclair, the city developed as a mixed race community without the aid of a particular organization. Montclair has been integrated since before the Civil War as slaves and freedmen worked in the wealthy White homes of Upper Montclair. These homes sit on a hill from which, on a clear day, New York City's skyline can be seen. After the Civil War, the Black population grew for several related reasons. Montclair, originally called Crane Town, had a railroad running through town which offered access to transportation and jobs. The wealthy families of Upper Montclair also offered employment. Finally, the schools in

Montclair have always been integrated, thus contrary to the pervasive Jim Crow world, in Montclair Blacks could find employment and their children had access to good schools. The town has always been considered affluent with high taxes going to their well-rated school system. The city has in its limits, a college, beautiful homes and a rail system that runs direct to New York City. Montclair has neither of the "killer variables" (Saltman, 1991), that is Montclair does not have public housing concentrations and they have "good schools."[4] Housing prices have remained high and so have school taxes. Most families reported feeling very comfortable in Montclair although several did speak to the racial tension in the town and specifically in the school system.

Lower East Side of Manhattan (New York City)

> I lived on the Lower East Side. We really stayed in the same neighborhood which has always been mixed. In the 60s and 70s it was a big hippy hangout, but it's been a neighborhood where anyone can live. You're not really breaking any barriers -- Oscar, a White interracially married father of 3 grown sons.

The Lower East Side has always provided a haven for people not

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[4] The "good school" issue is extremely sensitive in two of the racially mixed communities I conducted interviews. It appears to Multiracial families living in these communities that the schools work for White students who have White parents. Black students are repeatedly tracked into the non-college bound courses. In fact several White women felt their Multiracial children received better treatment than children with two Black parents. Rev. Steve Saunders, a residence of Oak Park and a board member of Operation PUSH/Rainbow Coalition, stated in a recent interview:

> We have a two-tiered, White-Black, gifted-remedial, apartheid like tracking system in the High School that separates White kids from Black kids. To me this is symbolic of the problems of integration, because people here are selectively concerned about exclusivity and inclusivity (West, 1996:27).

conforming to society in a variety of ways. This was the area in which the Beat generation developed. Leroi Jones (a.k.a. Amiri Baraka) and Heddy Jones lived as a Multiracial family on the Lower East Side. It is of little wonder that Oscar and his family were able to live comfortably. The history of New York City's mixed-race neighborhoods is interesting. Created during the post-World War II redevelopment mania, the neighborhoods were planned. Several organizations including the Marshall Field Foundation, the New York American Jewish Committee, and the Pan-American Neighborhood Forum were on the forefront of working with politicians and community leaders in an attempt to create racially-mixed housing (Schwartz, 1993; Hirsch, 1983). Public housing which was meant to be integrated was created along the East River, from the Lower East Side to about 14th Street[5]. Unlike Chicago, where many of the neighborhoods being fought over were filled with either single family homes or "two flats," in Manhattan the redevelopment plans included mass clearances, followed by the construction of large apartments, co-op complexes or public housing (Hirsch, 1983). New York and Chicago experience similar segregation indexes (Massey and Denton, 1993) in part because of the way housing was created in Lower Manhattan. The mass clearances in Manhattan meant that the populations

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[5] Upper Manhattan, and parts of Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens also became targets for the mass redevelopment plans which including constructing integrated housing.

occupying the area were displaced. The mainly Black and Latino populations were pushed toward specific areas. A political battle took place over who exactly the new developments would cater to. In fact, Stuyvasent Town, one of the larger developments on the Lower East Side did not originally allow Blacks to rent apartments. Yet today the Lower East Side does provide a comfortable space for Multiracial families. Further the area has many desired amenities such as shopping, museums, access to transportation, restaurants and proximity to employment opportunities.

THE CHICAGO AREA

Hyde Park

> I grew up in Hyde Park, in a very liberal mixed race world. It was really no big deal, everyone was just like me. My best friend was White and my all my other friends were mixed. Like I said, it was never any big deal to have all different kids because Hyde Park was all mixed. - Mary a 30 year-old mixed race woman.

Hyde Park, a racially mixed area on Chicago's South Side has been a subject in several books (see, Hirsch, 1983; Ralph, 1993; Cayton and Drake, 1962; Taub et al., 1984; Squires et al., 1987), and is home to the University of Chicago. Like the Lower East Side in New York City, Hyde Park owes its racially mixed neighborhoods to the overt, albeit at times dubious efforts of organizations. The Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference (HPKCC), was created in the late 40s to combat the housing shortages and panic peddling. In 1952 the University of Chicago backed the creation of the South East Chicago Commission (SECC). The involvement of the University

has been controversial from the start. It has been suggested that the University acted out of the fear of being engulfed by the Black Belt which stretched across Chicago's South and West sides (Hirsch, 1983; Cayton and Drake, 1962). Hyde Park had a wide economic range of housing availability and thus became a place where Blacks, who wanted to escape the overcrowded and inferior housing conditions of the ghetto, could go. The Marshall Field Foundation provided $100,000 to the University of Chicago for the purpose of working toward stabilizing the neighborhood[6]. A mass clearance of housing was approved by 1958. Low-income housing was leveled and replaced with higher income housing thereby creating a racially mixed community that was economically homogeneous[7]. Hyde Park is a beautiful area that abuts the beaches of Lake Michigan with highrise housing and tree-lined streets. Hyde Park has desired amenities with a quaint downtown area, it is the home of the famous Museum of Science and Industry and of course, the University of Chicago. For Multiracial families who can afford to live there, Hyde Park provides a haven in an otherwise racially divided and hostile city. Unfortunately for many, Hyde Park also retains its high priced housing

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[6] This is the very same Foundation that had a large role in the funding the creation of interracial housing in New York City's Lower East Side.

[7] "...638 structures containing 6,147 dwelling units were marked for demolition. More than 4,000 families were slated for relocation, and reconstruction of 2,100 new homes resulted in a net reduction of nearly 4,000 dwelling units for the entire area." (Hirsch, 1983:161).

market.

Oak Park

> Oak Park is pretty and convenient. I love Oak Park, the Multicultural feeling, the proximity to Chicago, the transportation, the shopping. We feel comfortable here. Our neighbors are interracial, he's White and she's Black and they have two kids. We love our neighbors, which is a problem because we'd like a bigger house but we don't want to leave the neighborhood. We didn't even look anywhere else. I don't see us moving out of Oak Park -- Gail, a White interracially married woman

Oak Park a middle and upper-middle class racially mixed community in which Frank Lloyd Wright homes are proudly displayed, shares a border with Chicago. It has been the focus of many articles and a book (Goodwin, 1979). Oak Park is situated near the El train and a major expressway into the Loop. It flaunts not only the home of Frank Lloyd Wright and over a dozen of the homes he designed but also the home of Ernest Hemingway. In addition it has a "high level of cultural activity" (Goodwin, 1979:35). In 1973 the Oak Park government passed an official policy of maintaining diversity in Oak Park. In Oak Park appointed a Commission to monitor housing practices. City government wanted to ensure equality and diversity within Oak Park thus passed an Equity Insurance plan meant to alleviate White flight. Oak Park, like Montclair, is a suburb and thus has its own city government and does not rely on big city bureaucracy. Because of this the town can more easily monitor the school systems and other institutions to keep them attracted to homebuyers (which includes overseeing Fair Housing practices).

The various racially-mixed areas do provide a haven for Multiracial families wanting to escape single-race communities. Yet even these mixed-race communities are hotbeds of racial and racist activity. As I will discuss later, in Montclair, NJ a Multiracial family organization was created after some youths vandalized the home of an interracial couple. Further city government and the schools continue to be bastions that reproduce power in the hands of Whites. City government in both Montclair and Oak Park remain predominantly White. According to Roberta Raymond, the founder of the Oak Park Housing Center, the continuance of the White dominated government is a point of great concern.[8] Schools have internal segregation. Even in racially mixed areas, Multiracial families face a racial hierarchy and dichotomy.

The dual-housing market reflects the racial binarism in which White is the privileged and Black is the disadvantaged. Multiracial families find that the objective conditions of housing in America merely reflect the borderist and racist

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[8] I interviewed Bobbie Raymond in 1990 while researching community organizations such as the Oak Park Housing Center (OPHC). The OPHC was created by Bobbie Raymond who wanted to actively integrate Oak Park and stop the invasion-succession pattern so well known in Chicagoland. In 1969 after completing her Masters degree she formed the OPHC which acts as a liaison between realtors, brokers, the city and potential homebuyers and renters. The OPHC does what Raymond calls "affirmative marketing" which means suggesting homes to Blacks in predominantly White neighborhoods and suggesting homes to Whites in predominantly Black neighborhoods. In short the OPHC is attempting to maintain a racial balance in Oak Park.

ideology upon which the U.S. was built. Regardless of where we live we contend with single-race and borderist people who want to make their racial pathology our problem. In the next Chapter I will explore how members of Multiracial families contend with single-race and borderist people in their daily interactions.

CHAPTER THREE

PLEASE IDENTIFY YOURSELF!: SINGLE-RACE PEOPLE JUST DON'T GET IT

Even before people will ask me my name they'll ask, "What are you?" Whenever people say,"Can I ask you a personal question?" I know exactly what they're going to ask -- Daphne, a 35 year old, mixed-race woman adopted by White parents.

We utilize race to provide clues about who a person is. This fact is made painfully obvious when we encounter someone whom we cannot conveniently racially categorize -- Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the U.S.*

They don't want to know me, they just want to know if I'm in the group that it's okay to associate with. If I belong to a certain group then I'm okay and if not then I'm not acceptable -- Anna, a 42 year-old, 'Multiethnic' woman.

Broadened horizons of racial experience and more sophisticated conceptions of racial identity make the articulation of a single, unitary, racial goal highly problematic -- Michael Eric Dyson, *Essentialism and the Complexities of Racial Identity*

We live in a society in which race is a central organizing principle. Race extends beyond individual thoughts and actions. Skin color and physical features are signs used to identify and locate people in a racially divided nation. Confusion, anger, concern, pity, hostility, curiosity, and superiority are some of the reactions single-race people experience when meeting someone who does not seem to fit neatly into a preset racial category. The degree to which single-race people react to individuals on the borders highlights the investment and comfort single-race people have in existing categories. Borderists, those who believe "races" can and should be separated and are essentially different, react with hostility or disgust and may actively work to

maintain racial categories or divisions. Single-race people may lack exposure and awareness and thus act on single-race assumptions but, if not borderists, they are not necessarily hostile toward those on the borders. Some single-race people, especially Whites, do not even recognize the borders as a problematic location in a racially divided world. This tends to be heard most strongly in the "colorblind" arguments. Single-race people will often say things like, "I don't care if you yellow, pink or green" as if such colors have any meaning in a White supremacist and dichotomous system. Blacks generally recognize the borders as a problematic location precisely because it blurs the line between the oppressor and oppressed. Further given the White imposed racial system in the United States the Black community has always struggled with the many issues of skin color variation, physical feature differences and claimed or unclaimed White ancestry.

Because of the binary opposition with the inherent issue of power inequity, Multiracial families express a different relationship to single-race Blacks and single-race Whites. I will discuss this in greater detail shortly. As people who live on the racial border we must also decide if we are interacting with a borderist (a hostile borderpatroller) or a single-race person (a curious and perhaps confused individual) or another Multiracial family member.

Micro level social interactions are informed and guided by the racial category in which individuals have placed

themselves and in which others have placed them. When Blacks are with other Blacks and when Whites are with other Whites, immediately several layers of self-consciousness are peeled away and people feel they can relax, take a breath, and let it all hang out -- racially, that is[1]. Likewise when Multiracial family members are with other Multiracial family members they can relax. When an individual cannot be readily categorized or refuses common-sense understandings of race, single-race people may get upset, uncertain how they should reflect upon their own choice of words, thoughts and actions. Locating ourselves in conversations and interactions depends greatly on locating others. This occurs precisely because race is central to our social location(s), those places from which we think about and speak about the world.

In 1963 Erving Goffman wrote Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity in which he explores the way "normals" and the "stigmatized" interact with each other and think about themselves. The normals are those individuals who fit into a non-discredited category. The stigmatized have some discrediting attribute. Much of the discussion in this chapter could be textbook Goffman with a couple of exceptions. Goffman talked of stigma as a binary opposite to normal. Yet when we talk about Multiracial family members the binary oppositions are challenged and can no longer be understood as

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[1] It goes without say that the level of comfort is mediated by class, gender, education level, culture, religious affiliation, sexual orientation and for Blacks, skin color.

either normal *or* stigmatized because they are both normal and stigmatized. Let's take the case of a Black interracially married woman. First she is stigmatized vis-a-vis a system of Whiteness. Next she is stigmatized vis-a-vis the Black community when she is with her family because she did not "stick with her own." Further she is stigmatized vis-a-vis a society that assumes single-race families and friendship networks[2]. Yet when by herself in a Black area, she is seen as a single-race Black woman (i.e. normal). If she brings her family with her she is no longer a normal, she becomes an "outsider." Next, take the case of a White interracially married woman. She is a normal in a society that privileges those defined as White. When seen with her family she is stigmatized as a member of a Multiracial family in a society that assumes single-racedness and privileges Whiteness. Further she is what Goffman would term "the wise" around Blacks. The wise are,

> persons who are normal but whose special situation has made them intimately privy to the secret life of the stigmatized individual and sympathetic with it, and who find themselves accorded a measure of acceptance, a measure of courtesy membership in the clan (1963:28).

The border location is one that brings together the wise, the normal and the stigmatized into one location. Members of Multiracial families are not always granted a "measure of acceptance" and rather face borderism from both sides. For

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[2] She is also stigmatized as a woman in a society in which "man" is the norm.

example, the other day my husband and I were walking down the street and a Black woman asked for some change. We didn't have any at the time and told her so. She began to castigate my husband telling him that he should stop walking around with that White woman and he should stick with his own race. He was being patrolled, I was being disregarded (not granted a measure of acceptance) and because we were together we were stigmatized. In short, because we are on the border our reference points are constantly shifting. How we are thought of by others depends upon the specifics of each situation -- that is, are we apart, together, among friends, among strangers, are we White, Black, Multiracial, are we male or female, straight or gay, in a White area or a Black area etc.

When we place 'stigma' in the arena of culture, politics and ideology, then stigma and normal are constantly negotiated and highly politicized concepts. In such cases 'normal' and 'stigmatized' depend upon one's social location. When stigma is subverted, the borders open up. That is to say, prior to the stigmatized group naming and claiming their own location, the 'normals' maintain the power to define the boundaries. Once the stigmatized claim a location they too define boundaries -- this is when the border is created and this is where Multiracial families live. With these two concepts in mind, I will highlight the experiences of Multiracial people vis-a-vis a world that functions along taken-for-granted single-race and hierarchical understandings of the world.

LOCATING A MULTIRACIAL PERSPECTIVE

The same sense of comfort single-race people feel when they are "among their own" is talked about by Multiracial family members when around each other. We have so many different intersecting communities yet, the border location brings us together. Like most people on the borders, Katey, a Black interracially married woman, feels a sense of comfort with Multiracial family members.

> As interracial families we feel we are ordinary everyday people but if we were we wouldn't turn heads and stir up hatred. So when we're among ourselves we feel we can let our guard down - even though we're not always aware our guard is up, I think it is. When we're together we can truly relax; we don't have to be afraid that somebody is thinking some kind of stereotypical thought about us. We can say what we want to say.

Repeatedly, people spoke about the comfort they feel around those who understand and/or share their racial location. I will explore this further in the next chapter. What is important here is that while people on the borders recognize the shared location, there is a conscious effort to move beyond all types of essentialist and reductionist group identities. While people on the borders share many experiences vis-a-vis the racial dichotomy and hierarchy, we also recognize we are variously situated by the intersecting communities of gender, class, sexual orientation, culture, age, religious and skin color. Recognizing individuals does not preclude group identification, it just means not holding people to some essentialist notion of unity. Thus we can enjoy our comfort together, away from single-race people, but not

reduce our identity to that location, and likewise recognize the diversity we bring to our community.

Most people who identify as 'single-race' have not had experiences that challenge socially reproduced essentialist understandings of race. Single-race and borderist people tend to problematize those with ambiguous racial locations rather than problematizing existing racial categories. Thus a search for clues takes place to find out how this racially ambiguous person identifies. The search generally involves asking, either aloud or silently, questions such as; how do they dress, what is their hair texture, where do they live, who are their family, what music do they listen to, who do they date, what is their name, or how do they speak? People with racially ambiguous features are asked, 'What are you?' on a regular basis. Interracially married people and people who appear single-race are generally just 'assigned' to a category and then spoken to as a single-race person. All kinds of decisions must be made by people on the borders about how to respond to single-race assumptions and demands.

In this chapter I will explore the ways in which people on racial borders are addressed by single-race people. In the first section of this chapter I will show through the experiences of people on the borders the pervasive essentialist thinking that leads many single-race people to argue with and/or dismiss those who will not claim an "acceptable" racial location. I will also show how single-

race people take for granted single-race family networks and how people on racial borders are privy to and thus hurt by essentialist thinking. People on the borders are not passive recipients of essentialist thought, in fact, we often aggressively assert our anti-essentialist location -- which extends beyond race. In the second section of this chapter I will examine how people on the borders respond to demands and assumptions of single-racedness; how and who do we educate, and finally, I will explore situations in which Multiracial family members don't bother to educate, preferring instead to ignore, avoid and/or lead by example.

IT'S A RACIAL RORSCHACH

> What are you? Puerto Rican? Are you Black? Chinese? Mixed? -- Christopher, a mixed-race man from the New York City area recalling questions from single-race people.

> There is such an overwhelming need to stick you in a box and if there's no one else in the box, they don't know how to act towards you and if they can't deal with it, they end up putting you in one of the other two boxes and then they deal with you on whatever level they can -- Daphne, a mixed-race woman adopted by White parents.

A Rorschach test is an analysis of individuals' responses and interpretations of an abstract ink stain. How they make sense of these abstractions of ink can tell us a great deal about how individuals think. A Racial Rorschach is presented to single-race people each time they encounter someone who cannot be easily categorized. Multiracial family members and single-race people all attempt to figure out where individuals locate themselves. For some it is a matter of curiosity, for some it is the hope of finding other people who share there

location. Jessie, a mixed-race woman who often refers to herself as a Blendo explains what the racial rorschach means in her life.

> I'm always looking for other Blendos so actually at this point I don't feel enraged when if someone wants to know what I am. I feel enraged about the inequality that makes race matter so much, but when I started realizing my own desire to know if someone else is a Blendo then I realized we are a country obsessed with this. I mean right now, it may change at some point, it has changed over the years, but I get more angry at people's reactions to my mixedness than I do the question. The curiosity doesn't bother me, but what it means to people does.

How individuals interpret and respond to people with ambiguous racial features and/or locations can tell us a great deal about micro and macro-level racial thinking in the United States. Omi and Winant suggest that analyzing stereotypes reveals the always present, already active link between our view of the social structure -- its demography, its laws, its customs, its threats -- and our conceptions of what race means" (1994:60).

Most people do not go out of their way to make Multiracial family members uncomfortable in life. They may not like what they see, they may not "approve" of what they see, but outside of staring and harmless, albeit irritating comments, very few act out physically against members of Multiracial families. Very often people act in ways they think are polite and appropriate. In a world in which races are not supposed to and generally do not mix the taken-for-granted norm is that people have single-race families and

networks. Single-race family networks are so taken-for-granted in society that even when a Multiracial family is together, single-race people often assume they are not related in any way. When an individual's racial location is not easily solvable within given categories, single-race people feel compelled to question, demand and perhaps even argue. The direct "What are you?" question is by far the most popular for single-race people attempting to identify people with racially ambiguous features. Nancy, a mixed race woman living in Chicago explains the typical response to people with racially ambiguous features.

> I live in a predominantly Latino community and they all think I'm Latina. Cab drivers think I am whatever they are, "You must be Pakistani!". If I'm in a Black community they assume, Black, but it really depends on where you are. A lot of people ask you what you are, they don't know where to fit you into a category.

When people on the border do not fit themselves into the pre-defined categories it will, at times, upset single-race people. Often what follows will be an argument or insult. People with racially ambiguous features are walking Racial Rorschach tests; their features are constantly being interpreted within existing categories. The process of interpretation differs for people on the border who appear single-race. In these cases the Racial Rorschach test comes out through the interaction (e.g. "Funny, you don't seem like the type who would go the other way"). In either case, when we try to live and claim the border, single-race people intentionally or unintentionally tell us how we should analyze

and locate ourselves in a racially charged world.

One intentional method used by single-race people is to comment or question and then argue with the person(s) on the borders. Jerome, a mixed-race 19 year-old living in Brooklyn and attending school in Manhattan, shares the kinds of response he gets when he attempts to assert his racial location.

> People will come right out and ask and I'll say, "I'm Black and White." Some people don't believe what I tell them, they try to tell me what I am, they try to put words in my mouth. "You're not Black and White." But I don't really care what they say, "If you don't believe me, don't believe me."

To think about someone being both/and in a society that demands either/or, calls into question the single-race assumptions and the single-race person's identity. There is much at stake, personally and politically when individuals disregard binary racial classification and claim both locations simultaneously. Silvia, a White-appearing, mixed-race woman, finds that people, particularly White people, feel the right (and need?) to argue with her at any time.

> The thing about my blue eyes, I tell people that I'm mixed and they don't believe me and insist that I'm wrong, which pisses me off more than anything. I say, "I'm mixed, my father's Black." And they go, "No you're not." (Laugh) "Yes I am!" Then they say, "But you have blue eyes." And I say, "I don't care what color my eyes are, I'm mixed!"

The basis for arguing can be explained in a few ways. First, it could be that Whites who interact with Silvia and other White-looking mixed-race people, have taken the unconscious Racial Rorschach test and are interpreting

themselves as sharing the same social location as Silvia. The discovery that Silvia's blue eyes and other physical features are disguising some assumed fundamental difference makes these single-race people quite uncomfortable. At stake here is there sense of themselves vis-a-vis race and social power (which extends to and modifies other claimed locations). Second, for many single-race people, claims to mixedness case confusion and perhaps anger. In Jerome's case, by claiming he is both, he is not playing by the racial rules that demand people fit themselves into a box. In short, when individual understandings of race are challenged -- personal and social identity is also challenged.

The arguing extends beyond those who claim the border through parentage. In fact, most interracially married people are considered single-race by others when apart from their family. Barbara, a White mother of three mixed-race children, who lives on Chicago's South Side explains,

> I was in a drugstore going through this bargain bin and found this Black hair care stuff and I pulled it out. This older lady says, "That's for colored people." I said, "My daughter is African American." "But how could that be?!" (laugh) She was just so irate that I would be buying it and that irritated me because she just couldn't make the connection -- a lot of people can't make the connection.

Not making the connection happens for many reasons, not least of which is the idea that race is a static, biological and singular phenomena. The idea that humans can move between and within these categories is surprising to some and upsetting to others. Parsia, a Black interracially married

mother faces anger from some Black males when they learn she is in a Multiracial family and does not shun the borders.

> Some Black men have been shocked to the point of being appalled. One guy said, "I was devastated that you were married to a White guy. I didn't really believe it and then I saw the picture and knew it must be true, but I couldn't accept it at first, I really couldn't see you with a White guy." "Why?" You start to break it down to the fact that he can't see me with the White guy he had visioned in his mind in terms of set assumptions and expectations that he has for White people in general and particularly White men. His is a one dimensional view of what this White male is.

As Parsia indicates, arguments are often based on essentialist notions of who belongs where in society and that based on physical features all kinds of assumptions are made. Upon finding out that this person who appears single-race, is in reality, living on the borders, conjures up interpretations and images about who this person *really* is. Whether in a restaurant, the library, or at the children's school, Multiracial family members must continually assert their racial location. Multiracial family members can not take race for granted because the underlying assumptions of race in America do not make room for "Multiracialism." For instance, within the school system many families find themselves having to assert their racial location. Ursula, a White mother of three grown mixed-race children recalls:

> I went in for a conference for Davina, and the teacher said, "Julie is doing really great this year!" (laugh) I said, "Who the hell is Julie?" He said, "You are Mrs. so and so aren't you?" I'm like, "No I'm Davina's mother." "Oh I'm sorry let me get her file"...He was amazed. I guess I did not fit the picture he had painted (laugh).

Similarly, Nancy a White mother of two mixed-race sons

shares:

> When I went for Segal's conference this year, there were four teachers sitting there. When I walked in to the room they looked at me and said, "Can we help you? Are you lost?" I said, "I don't think so." "OH! Come sit down!!!!" They couldn't get up fast enough to shake my hand (laugh).

Will the fact that this child is a member of a Multiracial family change the treatment received in school? Many parents expressed concern. Nancy argues that as a White parent she will be treated better and her demands heard. However, given the discrimination interracially married teachers have faced many expressed concern. They fear that their children are not being treated well in the classroom and at minimum are facing insensitive teachers.

Many Multiracial family members reported facing the question, "Is you child adopted?" This is particularly so for the White mother of a mixed-race child who does not appear to be White, or for the Mixed-race child who is with a parent that does not appear to be the same race. As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, this is in part to explain the situation so the White womanhood is not threatened. Candace, a White mother of five mixed-race children:

> So many people ask, "Are these your adopted children?" The kids get so mad when people say, "Is that your mom, how can that be?" And we look alike, but people don't look for that. I had one woman tell me, "You left your baby out in the sun too long!" (laugh). "No that's his color" "Is your husband Italian?" "No" (laugh).

Julie, like other interracial parents has faced the questioning everywhere, including the grocery store.

> I was at the store and this lady said, "What a beautiful baby, is she yours?" I said, "Yes." "Did you adopt her?" I said, "No I had her the old fashion way, Blacks and Whites can have children we're not separate species." And she said, "I wasn't, I mean, I wasn't, I didn't, I wasn't!" She was not being nasty, she was just stupid! No one would never ask a White woman if her White baby is hers.

Each of these seemingly innocent and harmless displays of single-racedness get tiring for Multiracial family members. They must decide whether to educate, ignore or chastise, which means figuring out if the single-race person is a borderist or just as many put it "lacking exposure." In some situations people make it clear where they stand. Based on assumptions about how people should act and which locations they should claim, some single-race people attempt to assert their interpretation of the Racial Rorschach test through insults. When an individual cannot be located as the single-race person would like, insults are used in an attempt to deny those on borders the opportunity to name and claim their own location. Kimberly, a mixed-race woman living in Manhattan explains:

> I get offended when people say, "Do you consider yourself White, because you really act White." I'm like, where did that come from? Or "Do you date Black men?" What makes you think I wouldn't? Or when people say, "She doesn't count as a Black person, she's just a wannabe." You know,"She couldn't be Black if she wanted to." It hurts because it comes down to that instead of *who* I am, it's what people want me to be. You know, what society deems what a Black person is and how a Black person should act and that's how I should be.

Similarly, Jonathan, a White-looking mixed-race man shares the hurt and anger that comes from others denying his claimed racial location.

> I always bring up that I'm half Black and the standard response is, "No, you're kidding," or "No, not really." I don't blame people if they don't see me as Black because I don't look it, but after I tell you, I want you to accept it. I am not making a joke of this. I've been through a lot of shit and at least I deserve to be recognized for what I say I am. I carry around a picture of my family so I can say, "Do you want to see a picture of my family?" I do that before they get a chance to say, "You're not really Black," and the "Are you adopted?" crap.

Blacks are generally more aware that Multiracial families and people exist, yet the "crap" comes from both-sides. For Whites, questioning racial classificatory scheme means questioning their own internalized notions of superiority. They must either rethink their understanding of race, convince themselves that the Multiracial family member is lying, or use selective perception to re-categorize this person. Often times single-race Whites will make claims to racial colorblindness, "We are all human beings." Denying that society is racialized means not having to question the racial hierarchy that privileges people with White skin. For Blacks, questioning racial categories means needing to re-examine taken-for-granted notions of racial unity around which community understandings are developed.

You Shouldn't Judge a Book...

In a country where race is so divisive and taken-for-granted, most people assume single-race family relations. With the relatively low percentage of intermarriage it is of little wonder that Whites assume they are "among their own" when around others who appear White and Blacks assume similarly

when around those who appear Black. However the assumptions play our much differently. To be assumed White by Whites means receiving privileges and opportunities and being privy to White supremacist discourse. To assumed Black by Blacks means being privy to anti-White and/or anti-Whiteness discourse. The former is directed at all Whites based on stereotypes, the latter is directed at the system that privileges people with White skin and exploits those who have been "othered."

Members of Multiracial families often spoke of feeling like spies among Whites. Whether in school, the courtroom, or in the streets, White-looking mixed race people and White Multiracial family members get an inside look at the micro-level recreation of White power. When these individuals claim the borders they become conscious of the blatant and subtle ways race is reproduced. Mixed-race people spoke of a desire for darker skin so that they wouldn't be mistaken for White. Likewise, interracially married Whites often spoke of wanting some way to let others know they are a member of a Multiracial family so they would not have to assert their racial location. Nancy, a White mother of two mixed-race sons shares:

> You live with that awkward feeling of being a spy. The scariest thing for me is that people are so sure of the racism that they don't mind coming up to a perfect stranger and talking about "niggers this or that." They just assume everybody thinks the way they do and so you feel like you almost have to wear a button that says, "I am not White" (laugh) I mean obviously I know I'm White, but I'm not White.

Multiracial people can claim a biological or ancestral

tie to Blackness, regardless of appearance. White members of Multiracial families often claim to feel 'no longer White' yet at the same time, there is not another location to be claimed. After all, 'no longer White' is not a location, it is an anti-location. Dorothy, a White woman from a Multiracial family also struggles with the difficulty of naming her location vis-a-vis other Whites. She explains a conversation that took place during a dinner for Social Workers.

> I was at a table of all Whites. One woman said, "The school I'm in is 99% White." Another social worker said, "You're so lucky, I don't see a White face all day long." Now they said that and I'm there and it's like, "You think I'm just like you because I'm White, but I'm not like you at all and now I know how you really think." I'm allowed in like I am one of them. I can listen in and can use that information against them as well. I feel like I'm a spy, they really don't know what I am. I may look White, but I'm not. It's like I'm not really White, you know? I'm White, but I'm not really one of you.

Being a spy and feeling like there is no home can often times be painful, tiring and lonely[3]. This predicament is not limited to the White partner/parent, in fact, mixed-race people with White or ambiguous features have similar experiences. Vanessa, a mixed-race woman with ambiguous features agrees that it can be difficult.

> Being the complexion I am, especially if my hair is straight, people will open their mouths and run, run, run, and I'll sit there and make them feel stupid and open their eyes. I feel like a spy sometimes because their perception of me is totally different and then they see and it's too late.

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[3] Whites are disproportionately present in Multiracial organizations which may have much to do with their feeling like they have no racial location. I will explore this more in Chapter Four.

As an attorney, Jonathan, a White-looking mixed-race man has been privy to racist conversations in judges' chambers.

> I've been in judges chambers where they didn't know I was half Black and comments were made and you know those comments are made because they think everyone in the room is White. They just wouldn't be made if someone of color was there.

In each of these cases the individuals were assumed to be single-race and support views and actions that reinforce White power and privilege in society. When folks assume these individuals are single-race Whites, it can mean benefits, in that the doors opened to Whites will be opened to them. It can mean great discomfort and having to decide when to speak our and when to wait. It can mean sadness because skin color and race are so allied in the United States popular thinking that they are forced to constantly assert themselves and risk rejection from both sides.

White-looking members of Multiracial families face difficulties because they are often privy to White supremacist thinking and rejected by Black Americans. People with racially ambiguous features contend with the issue of Whites assuming their White and Blacks accepting them as Black. In other words, they are privy to both sides and/or held at arms length by both sides. Anna and Daphne, each mixed-race women with racially ambiguous features talk about the experience of being privy to "both sides." Anna, a 42 year-old woman highlights why so many people wish their own racial location was more obvious.

> It's been hard for me because of my coloring. I look White to most people, so you get yourself in situations where you are uncomfortable because you hear White people saying things about Black people or Black people saying things about White people. At least you learn where they're coming from and it's good because then you don't waste time building up a relationship.

Daphne, a 33 year-old woman talks about the difficulties of being an insider to both sides. Likewise she speaks to the way in which her light skin color sets her experiences (hence, set her) apart from darker skinned Blacks.

> Sometimes you're in conversations with Black people who are having a conversation about skin color and you know you can't be all the way there because you haven't had the same experience. And on the other side you can be in a White situation where people don't know what you are and so then things are said and you're just not comfortable, it's fairly hard.

The issue of power is central to the way in which Multiracial family members decide to respond. Whites have institutionally backed power, Blacks do not. Thus White borderist sentiment and actions are institutionally backed while Black borderism is not. Repeatedly Multiracial family members made a distinction between the way they deal with Black borderism and White borderism. Further when assumptions are made about an individual's racial location, response varied depending on the race of the person making the assumption. Lauren, a 'Multiethnic' woman suggests,

> I tend to correct Whites very firmly, more firmly than I correct Blacks. I don't go out of my way to correct Black people, but I definitely go out of my way to correct White people and that probably comes from the perception that White people find light-skinned Blacks less threatening or somehow more acceptable and I don't want them to find me acceptable because who they think I am.

Living on the borders means juggling a racial binarism (hierarchical dichotomy). Thus individuals distinguish between personal attacks based on stereotypical thinking and attacks directed at institutional productions of racist power. Nancy, a 'Biracial' woman explains that when she is around Blacks who are making comments about Whites, she differentiates between those that are directed at institutional power and those that are individual insults.

> I don't like personal attacks. If comments are about the glass ceiling for Blacks, I won't say anything, because that is there, but if it's "Don't trust Whitey." Well I'm sitting there thinking, "Don't trust my mom? Don't trust my relatives?" Then I might speak up.

Here Nancy is making the distinction between anti-Whiteness and the stereotyping of all White folks. Multiracial family members may often feeling like inadvertent spies privy to conversations they would rather not have to hear. Yet they do and therefore decisions are constantly being made about how to respond. Being a member of Multiracial family is not a "secret" we are protecting. We are privy to such conversations because of assumptions single-race people make about the world. And then when Multiracial family members do assert their location, single-race people sometimes misinterpret and think they are now privy to an awful secret.

It's Not a Secret

Some people on the borders such as Jessie, a White-looking, mixed-race woman, do not mind being asked about their

race. They recognize their own curiosity about others, but they are annoyed by certain reactions. Often, Whites will assume that by asserting their racial location, people on racial borders are sharing an awful secret. Jessie shares:

> If someone is curious and asks me and they don't have any other information about me and they infer all kinds of things about me or say things like, "Oh, I'll always think of you as White" (laugh), I get really mad then. It's as if they think I have shared a secret with them.

Jessie is addressing the underlying notions of White as 'pure' and the belief that all kinds of important information can be gleaned from knowing about an individual's ancestral and familial ties as they relate to race. Ingrid, a White interracially married woman, recalled a time when a stranger approached her and her mixed-race daughter in a mall and "consoled" Ingrid by stating, "It's okay, you know, I'm divorced." The message of course being that they were exchanging "awful secrets." For many single-race Whites the belief that a secret is being disclosed is tied to the belief that mixed-race people want to 'pass for White' and that interracially married Whites want to hide their family but have instead been 'found out.' Such ideas are inextricably linked to the belief that White is the most desirable location in society and Black is the least desirable. Jonathan, a White-looking mixed-race man shares the way in which this concept was relayed to him:

> One of the administrators at Northwestern came to me and said, "Jonathan, can I have a word with you?" When I got to her office she said, "I'm afraid we've made a horrible mistake" and I always remember that, *a horrible mistake,*

> "We have you marked down as Black." I said, "Well I am (laugh) - it's true" (laugh). She's like, "Oh-Okay-great-well then we haven't made a mistake!" (laugh) I said, "That's it?" and she said, "Well yes. I'm glad you're here at Northwestern, congratulations."

Certainly these statements, coming from Whites, are grounded in assumptions that White is good and Black is not. The comments are coming from a particular racial location. It is such comments that lead Multiracial family members like Lauren to "correct Whites very firmly." Some Multiracial family members stated that they "always respond" because they feel a sense of responsibility. At the same time many people burn out and place other responsibilities ahead of educating single-race people who are not open to thinking about racial complexities and power. Many situations exist when people on the borders just let single-race assumptions slide.

When We Let it Slide

In 1948 Walter White wrote, "I am a Negro. My skin is White, my eyes are blue, my hair is blond. The traits of my race are nowhere visible upon me" (1948:3). As a White-looking Black man, Walter White risked his own life to investigate lynchings in the south. While investigating in Arkansas in 1920 he narrowly escaped being lynched himself by catching the next train out of town. On his way to the train a White man approached him and said, "...your leaving, mister, just when the fun is going to start...There's a damned yellow nigger down here passing for White and the boys are going to get him" (1948:51). Walter let this White man's assumption

slide. For Walter White 'letting it slide' was a matter of life and death, not only for him. As secretary of the NAACP and an activist, the lives of thousands of Black folks' lives rested on the outcomes his investigations. Walter White was continually mistaken for White, a racial location he did not claim.

Multiracial family members today are continually mistaken for single-race people and family members. For us 'letting it slide' is based on the specificities of the circumstances and our own moods: fear, exhaustion, and a belief that single-race people cannot be educated means we let the single-race assumptions slide. Some Multiracial family members believe that single-race people are not open enough to think through anti-essentialist ideas. Some people who live on the racial borders are just tired of explaining. Some places are just not appropriate to make the borders conscious and palatable to single-race people. Sometimes negotiating race and other life issues means letting single-race assumptions slide. Each time a Multiracial family member is faced with a comment or situation that is obviously in need of an anti-essentialist perspective, they must decide if it is worth the time and energy to respond. Mark, a 25 year-old, mixed-race man laments,

> I've been offended in so many ways that I don't usually respond. Regardless of what I say they think what they want anyway. Rather than confuse people more than they already are, let them believe what they want. I say, "What do I look like" and if they say "Black" then that's fine, I'm Black. "Oh, you look kind of White" "Well

> whatever you want to call it, call it, I don't want to hear it.

Marguerite, a Biracial woman, has found that for some Blacks, being mixed means being seen as "not really one of us." When she comes up against this perspective she chooses not to bother educating directly, but chooses to teach others by living her life.

> If I meet someone who already has an attitude against "mixed" people, I can only be who I am and they can make their decision about whether they think they don't like "mixed" and whether you fit in and can understand. I don't necessarily try to break down boundaries, the only way I can break through boundaries is by meeting more people and if they get the opportunity to understand me better that will change some of their perceptions.

Julien, a Black interracially married father agrees,

> I teach by example, I educate by the way I act, as far as talking, it's useless, some people are so backwards. I just let them talk and don't even answer them back.

Katey, a Black interracially married mother shares a similar manner of dealing with borderists. She suggests that until single-race people are exposed to Multiracial family members, they will not be open no matter how she approaches an explanation.

> When people make comments about Multiracial families and interracial couples and you tell them something, they don't listen, it's like you said nothing. I think people have their set ideas and they're going to think what they think regardless of what you say - unless they find out differently by having an experience themselves, or being close to an interracial family. That's why I don't even bother anymore, I don't even waste my breath.

There are, of course, some situations that warrant a response. Likewise, there are situations when it is to the benefit of the Multiracial family members benefit to let

single-race assumptions slide. Generally when other business is being attended to in single-race groups, speaking about being on the border may hinder the business at hand. In specific situations, such as a Black association meeting, a predominantly White town meeting, or when an individual Multiracial family member is among a group of borderists the Multiracial family members may let single-race assumptions slide.

The Black Association. In some cases Black interracially married people talked about not letting on that they are a member of a Multiracial family for fear of reprisal by family, friends or Black business associates. For example, Parsia, a Black interracially married mother does not bring her White husband to some professional events and does not mention her racial location because it may get in the way of other business.

> For club events like the National Black MBA Association or things of that sort - I haven't taken my husband because I think it's Blacks gathering to give advice, promote and network with other Blacks. I think the fact that I'm in an interracial relationship would be more disruptive than not, so I've chosen not to bring him to a race specific kind of club.

A Black MBA Association meeting is not a place Parsia feels comfortable educating people. Further she acknowledges the very real need for Black Americans to network with each other. In other words, although the community boundaries are hurtful to those on the border, they are necessary in a White supremacist society. This is one of the many examples of the

ambiguities of maintaining a life on the racial border. Parsia stated that she would never deny her family but in this case she will let single-race assumptions slide.

The White Town Meeting. Many interracially married Whites speak about being dismissed by other Whites once it is learned they are part of a Multiracial family. White-looking mixed-race people speak of a similar experience. Mina, an interracially married White mother living in suburban New Jersey explains why she would not bring her husband or son to a Town meeting because,

> they already have problems with me because I am one of the leaders of a group opposing some landscaping projects -- if they saw that I was interracially married then they would peg me as a raving revolutionary liberal and I think it would uncomfortable to walk in with my husband because I already know their attitudes.

In this case Mina lets the assumptions slide because she does not want to lose negotiating power in a predominantly White situation. Interestingly, Mina lives in Montclair, NJ, a town in which many Multiracial families find some level of comfort. Yet even here Multiracial families find it best to let single-race assumptions slide sometimes[4]. Both Mina and Parsia 'let it slide' as they attempt to accomplish business with single-race groups. In addition, Parsia has a strong sense of solidarity with the Black community and feels that talking about her family would somehow destroy the solidarity other

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[4] The "all-White" town meeting also reflects the fact that even in towns, such as Montclair, NJ that are considered racially mixed, Whites still maintain the governmental power. This is something I address in Chapter Four.

feel to her and each other.

The Workplace. Many Blacks and Whites do not mention their interracial families for fear of reprisal from co-workers and bosses. Being passed over for promotions, being 'let go' or being harassed are just a few ways in which interracially married folks have been treated in the employment sector. The fear of speaking out comes either from lived experience or having heard stories of others. Some Multiracial family members let borderists in the workplace speak unchecked so that when the borderist finds out that they've been talking to a Multiracial family member they'll be forced to rethink their racism and/or borderism. Jonathan, a White-looking mixed race man explains why he chooses not to respond immediately to racist comments made in the judge's chamber.

> I could say something about the remarks but I let them pass. That's happened to me in social situations and I let it pass and then later I let it come out that I'm half Black, you know what I mean, then people can reflect upon it later and change it if they want. Because maybe nothing will come of it if you confront them right then and there.

Raymond agrees with Jonathan in that confrontation is not always the best approach to educating single-race people. He will also let it come out later so that racists/borderists can reflect on their own thinking.

> I've been places and a White guy makes race-based comments. I don't say, "I'm married to a Black woman" I'd rather wait and have him feel like an idiot when he meets her. It's like, "You can't judge a book by the cover, pal, you may say that to me thinking that I'm one of the 'good old boy' White men, and that I'm going to think the same way as you - well that's YOUR mistake!'(laugh).

ON OUR OWN TERMS: HOW, WHO AND WHEN WE CHOOSE TO EDUCATE

You get people who are uncomfortable about it and then I always decide to myself if I'm going to be amused by their discomfort and play it up or if I'll let them off the hook and make them more comfortable that kind of thing -- Parsia, a Black interracially married woman.

I don't get on a soap box and preach unless asked, then I express my views, but I don't go out of my way. If a conversation comes up I might grab the opportunity to educate people, it might be at work or a party, but you have to have time and the arena you need to get your point across -- Owen, a Black interracially married man.

Often times we are forced to respond to other people's comments and actions. The decision must then be made about how to respond. People who live on racial borders all spoke of *feeling a responsibility to educate single-race people*; yet doing so can be extremely tiring and stressful, particularly when addressing single-race people who don't want to hear it. The borderists and racists are most often viewed as rigid and uneducable in the area of race. It is assumed that until they have a life experience that changes their perceptions, no amount of discussion will change their views. In these cases, people on racial borders will draw on humor or perhaps just walk away and not waste time and energy. Further, because people on the borders are so privy to single-race conversations they are suspicious of single-race responses. That is to say, when people think they are with "their own," conversations are often markedly different than when in mixed crowds. Because Multiracial family members tend to be privy to both sides, we are often suspicious of what single-race people say in mixed company. Thus getting on a soap box is

not the response of choice. Rather Multiracial family members often choose to lead by example and wait until the right time and place to educate single-race and/or borderist people.

Among those who have the time and energy to educate single-race people, the question of how to do so becomes central. There is an attempt to shift the arena to one in which the Multiracial family member is comfortable. This means perhaps letting comments slide and then approaching individuals later -- outside of a group setting. It also means preparing people ahead of time. Many individuals think of ways to let single-race people know about their Multiracial family so that single-race questions and ideas can be fielded in advance. Multiracial family members then have the chance to educate in their own way rather than having to address borderists in a group setting and/or being forced to the defense after a comment is made.

Group Education Just Doesn't Work

As Owen stated above, he does not get on a soap box unless asked. If asked about Multiracialism he will share his views. However the "arena" must be appropriate or the individual might not be receptive. One arena that most agree does not work is the group.

> It might be better to get a person away from the group so he or she will listen because if you say it in a group, everyone will hear it, and then they will be influenced by the fact that it's being said in front of a group, so they might not be in the best mood to receive what I have to say, so why say it at all if you're not going to get through?

Daphne agrees that the arena in which the she approaches people who have made borderist comments is central to how they will be received.

> I try to deal with things tactfully because it wouldn't do my any good to stand up at a lunch table and say, "That's such a stupid thing to say." I was annoyed with a comment this man made at lunch the other day, but I didn't berate him in front of the whole group, but I did approach him later and said, "Do you understand why what you said was inappropriate?" But I try not to make things like that the focus of everyday life, it's negativity and it's not productive.

There is a common understanding among people interested in educating single-race people and that is, if someone is going to be open enough to listen, we should not attack them. And the converse is also true, if we attack someone, they will surely not listen. All of this takes a great deal of fore planning and mental and emotional energy. One way many Multiracial family members have found they can effectively educate or diffuse borderists is by "prepping" them. By prepping I mean the process in which Multiracial family members approach single-race people with single-race assumptions and tell them of their family. Goffman spoke of a similar process in Stigma, yet again, for Multiracial families this also takes on a political dimension. Yes, Multiracial family members seek comfort for themselves and their families, but there is also a concern for educating the world and helping people think about race in non-essentialist ways.

Prepping Single-Race People and Borderists

I think you should tell people because you don't want them to embarrass themselves, because people will say things that are not so nice, so you just kind of let people know that your wife is Black, at some point and it's always sort of this kind of, you have the upper hand on people because you get to see how they react -- Joe, a White interracially married father.

Comfort of one's own family members is the primary reason Multiracial family members will "prepare" single-race people for meeting with the family (although as I stated, it is not the only reason). Fearing that single-race people will say something or that Multiracialness will overshadow the entire interaction, many decide to prepare co-workers, bosses and acquaintances ahead of time. Candace, a White interracially married mother and teacher has also felt the need to prepare co-workers so that her family would not have to deal with inquisitions or awkward silences from single-race co-workers.

> If I knew my kids or my husband were coming to the school to get me, I might have to tell them, the principal or say something to somebody because I wouldn't have wanted them to have an ugly experience of being pushed out the door.

Parsia, a Black interracially married mother considers both her husband's and her business associates' feelings and makes a point to explain her interracial marriage before an introduction.

> I prepare people before hand because I don't want to show up and have them feel off guard. I usually try to have a lunch before hand, "You know, we're going to be at this event, yeah, I'm bringing Joe, dah, dah, dah, and -- you know Joe is White, right?" Or a lot of times we'll be talking about our families and I'll say, "I went to synagogue" and they'll go, "Huh?" "Oh yeah, my husband is Jewish, he's White." I introduce the concept so they have a chance to say "Really?!" or "Wow!!" Just so they

> don't have to deal with it on the spot, cause I don't want it to be uncomfortable for them or him, especially if it's a situation where we're trying to get business done, because I feel it would just get in the way.

Quisha, a Black interracially married woman living in Chicago shares,

> Maybe it's wrong to do, but I still prep people because I hate awkward silences and I think I can deal with it better one on one. I'd rather just deal with it in my own way and just prepare them....At work I put a picture of my husband on my desk and it's like, "Oh, who's that?" "Oh that's my husband." Or like tanning comes up and I'll say, "Yeah Raymond always turns bright red, it's that Irish in him" and no one ever follows up with that but you can tell it's like, ching, ching, ching, ching.

While Quisha has thought through how she wants to introduce her White spouse to others, she is still quite uncertain as to whether or not this is the best approach. "Maybe it's wrong to do.." reflects the uncertainty of the border location where there are not set rules to follow. We create and claim our border location as we move through life. Many Multiracial family members express a similar uncertainty. Dealing with it "one on one" means dealing with it on her terms, it means that Quisha is choosing the terms in which she will explain her interracial family. If she waits until her husband is there, she is forced then to explain defensively.

Dorothy, a White interracially married mother living in New Jersey, has a similar belief as Quisha. Dorothy suggests that if people want to question her, she refuses to explain because that is forcing her to the defense. Further as she states below, she is not interested in being defined for who she is in relation to her family. She suggests that women

have fought for hundreds of years to be defined as individuals rather than appendages of their husbands, so why would she now locate her politics and social location vis-a-vis her husband? Race and gender collide in the decision about prepping and educating others.

> I never tell people at work that my husband is Black. It's at the point that I'm accepted for who I am and so it's not, "I'll accept you because your husband is Black," but rather, "I'll accept you anyway." And even if it comes up, like "Would you ever marry a Black person" I always turn it around in a sense of - some people at work would ask, "Is your husband Irish." and I say, "No." and then they say, "Where's he from?" and I say, "America." I don't think my personal life should have anything to do with the work I do, unless there's some relevance to it.

She wants to actively name her location when she has time to explain. This is talked of repeated by people who live on racial borders. They "get into it" with a single-race person when they think the person is open to a discussion, when there is enough time for them to explain and when there is a future to this relationship. Prepping can be done on the terms set up by the Multiracial family member. Displaying pictures of family members is another way Multiracial family members prepare single-race people and make them think through their taken-for-granted understandings of race. Jonathan carries pictures to prove he is "half Black," Quisha keeps her husband's picture on her desk, Joe carries around his daughter's picture, Ingrid hangs a picture on her office wall and Lisa, a Black interracially married woman shares:

> I carry these pictures around so there is a picture on my desk at school, that's the easiest way to tell them.

> Maybe it will kind of hit them softly if they see the picture first on my desk or in my wallet and see that I am at ease, that this is my family.

When Multiracial family members have tired of thinking about the most diplomatic and palatable way to educate single-race people and when they think they are around people who won't get it anyway they sometimes draw on humor as a way to educate.

This is Humorous But it is Not a Joke

> I think you've got to use a lot of humor. I was working with this lady and she said "I can't really tell Black people apart, they all look alike to me." I said, "I've got that problem myself, I went to pick up my husband one day and was half way home when I realized I had the wrong man in the car." And she's eating this up of course, as if I wouldn't know who my husband is. I started laughing and she said, "You made that up!!" She was believing me, because this was her belief -- Barbara, a White interracially married mother of three living in a south suburb of Chicago.

This is an example of understanding the stereotypes very well and then bucking straight up against them. Many believe that racism and borderism are so pervasive that there is no hope for educating single-race, "stick to your own," people. Thus some hope that shocking them through humor or statements may at least force them to think about their prejudices. Kimberly, like so many others on the borders, gets tired of hearing the same questions and comments from people. Instead of continually explaining herself, and feeling like she is having to defend herself she chooses to draw on humor to force single-race people to defend their essentialist thinking. Kimberly shares,

> People come up to me and they'll say, "Do you get

> confused between being Black and White?" I say, "Well, yeah, you know, some mornings I wake up with this craving for fried chicken and other mornings I just can't get the beat, I start dancing and can't get the beat." I just want to get them to see how narrow minded they're being. What do you think? One day I like fried chicken and the next I don't, it's not like that. So I try to laugh at it first, I try to make them see what it is they're asking me. But with some people I just won't even bother, let them think what they want.

As Kimberly states, the hope is that people will be forced to think about what they are asking. In one respect, it puts single-race people on the defense in a world that makes "single-racedness" the norm. At the same time, essentialist constructions of race are directly confronted. Humor is one way to get through to people who do not seem to be able to understand the pervasiveness of their own racism and/or borderism. It is also a way to get the point across without having to expend a great deal of time or energy. In short, it puts the ball in the single-race court and makes this their problem again. Ursula, a White mother of three mixed-race children explains how she refuses to make it her problem and at the same time have fun at the expense of borderists, when she and her Black partner went shopping.

> We would go to Macys or Sterns and go to the bedding department and try out the mattresses (laugh) and both of us would jump on the bed - and these salesmen would come flying up to us. We'd say, "Oh, we were just trying out the mattresses." Oh, we used to goof on them so bad. Sometimes people deserve it, I'm sorry, it's like, get over it, it's 1995.

In order to use humor effectively, the Multiracial family member must be well versed on the rules of racial etiquette and also be assured some level of safety. There are many

cases that Multiracial family members just choose to avoid certain places and people.

When We Use Our Multiracial Location

Disclosing our claimed Multiracial location can be tricky. In some situations people are assuming we are single-race family members and treating us in such a manner. We must think about when or if we will disclose to these folks. Some Multiracial family members make it a point to "put it out there" right up front, others pick and choose. One factor effecting the disclosure decision is whether the single-race person will be an integral part of life. Another factor is what it will mean to those whom we are disclosing the information and what it will mean in our own life. In Stigma, Goffman talks about the method of disclosure used by stigmatized people such that some individuals choose to 'voluntarily wear a stigma symbol.' Multiracial family members will sometimes do so because the symbol represents their politically and socially claimed location. For others the symbol means standing by their family without apology. And for some it may mean gaining benefits in some situations. Just as we let single-race people assume we are single-race in certain situations, we make it a point to name our location in others. The benefits might mean that an individual will be granted greater acceptance and be viewed as more of an expert (i.e. their location gives them certain credentials). Take for instance Oscar, a 61 year-old White man who was

interracially married for more than 30 years. He shares the way his Multiracial location gave him greater credibility.

> I remember when I first came to work, the director of the office in Manhattan was kind of intrigued by my interracial family and offered me a chance to work in an out station where I would be working with minorities. But I don't use it anymore, I might have at one time to impress people - to tell them that 'I am one of you' or 'I understand you' but nowadays I just don't bring it up. Either people will accept me or not, but I'm not going to make it the subject of conversation.

Many people spoke of never using their Multiracial location for advantages. More often people spoke of only letting the information come up when it mattered in some way to the business at hand. In a couple of cases individuals intentionally avoided talking about their Multiracial location because they did not want to be categorized by the stereotypes of Multiracialism in this society. Others suggested that if race is so important to another person that they need to know, then they are not worth being around anyway. In almost all cases however, when Multiracial family members met other Multiracial family members they searched for some way to bring up the shared location. At the same time, White and White-appearing mixed-race members of Multiracial families spoke regularly of wanting some way of disclosing their racial location without having to verbally state it.

When we are apart from our families we must assert our claimed location. For interracially married people this means finding a way to let other interracially married people know that we share the border. Most interracially married

individuals spoke of wanting a "sign" of some sort that would let others know of our familial ties. Julien, a Black interracially married father explains what happens when he is away from his family and passes an interracial couple or family in the street:

> I try not to stare but whenever I see another Interracial couple I just smile and let them know that -- I wish I could wear a button that says, "I'm an interracial couple." You know, (laugh) make them a little more at ease.

For Julien, his location as someone on the racial borders is not readily visible when he is apart from his family. His wish for a button to identify his claimed location is shared by many. We want to make ourselves known to each other, to create comfort. At the same time we want to overtly express our desire to subvert the racial hierarchy. Within the racial binarism one is either White or Black. Unfortunately physical features are the primary markers available to strangers to indicate who is Black, who stands in opposition to Whiteness and who benefits. Both Blacks and Whites read physical features. This is problematic for Multiracial family members who appear White yet do not consider themselves White in terms of their politics, cultural practices or familial ties. Interracially married Whites are often viewed with contempt by Black Americans. Interracially married Blacks are seen as 'cross-overs.' The couple, when together or apart must consciously think about ways to fight the system of Whiteness without having to name a single-race location. Many White

interracial parents/partners talked about wishing they could have a sign that reads something like, "I am no longer White." Multiracial people are sometimes thought of as "not really one of us," by some Blacks. Repeatedly White-looking Multiracial people lamented the fact that skin color and race are seen as synonymous in society. White-looking Multiracial people often expressed a desire for darker skin and African features so that their features would signify their claimed racial location and their historical and familial connection to Blackness. Jessie, a White-looking mixed-race woman explains that she is not seen as sharing in Black history, culture and community.

> Feeling like I won't be accepted by Black people is something I carry with me and I do all kinds of things to subtly let people know who I am. I think wearing these bracelets which mark me as West Indian, maybe in New York only, but I never take these off...Some people do see me as Black, but they are in the minority and Black people don't see me as Black I just have to admit to that.

For her the sign is the bracelets. Every person I spoke with had some way or ways to signal that they are not White. No one spoke of wanting to appear more White or be mistaken as White. This desire was often expressed through their hope for their own children to be recognized as Black. Many expressed the hope that their children would have brown skin and African features so that society in general would know without the children having to assert themselves. Kimberly, a mixed-race woman with ambiguous features and light skin shares:

> I have to say I hope I end up marrying a Black man so my daughter has darker skin than me and she knows she's

> Black, so she has an appearance and a background. I think that sometimes and then other times I think, 'I should just marry whoever I deem worthy regardless of color.'

Kimberly is speaking to the difficult and tiresome job of having to constantly name and claim a racial location in a dichotomous hierarchy in which others do not accept and readily see her for who she claims to be. Further she is speaking to the strong connection between skin color and racial location in our society. Likewise, Lauren a 42 year-old 'multiethnic' woman with racially ambiguous features reflects:

> There wasn't much I could do to cover up green eyes. I probably did more than my fair share of laying out in the sun because it did bring me one step closer to where I visually wanted to be. I would prefer that my skin were darker so I wouldn't have to deal with the assumptions or give the explanations. When I was pregnant with my daughter I prayed every night that she would not have to answer the questions. I was so grateful that she was brown and her hair is nappy and is obviously African American.

Physical features often betray claimed racial locations based on the linking of race, color and physical features. Thus Multiracial family members are constantly having to assert their location(s). Silvia, light-skinned mixed-race woman with blue eyes is constantly having to assert her location and now, married to a White man, faces the issue of having children who may not have any African features and thus may not be seen or accepted by others as sharing in Black history and contemporary struggles:

> I really didn't care what color the person was that I fell in love with, but I wanted my kids to be Black and I am married to a White man. I want my kids to have the

> benefit of their Black heritage because we [White-looking Multiracial people] are not seen as Black by a lot of people, so we're not seen as sharing in the whole Black history. I want my kids to know about all the Civil Rights activities of my father and grandfather, but I also want everyone else to know that we are part of that, that whole history, but it's kind of hard when you don't have the skin color.

White is what people see when they look at Silvia. She carries the representation of Whiteness physically, yet wants to be seen as connected to Blackness both culturally and politically. We consciously send out all kinds of signals, drop particular pieces of information into conversations, dress certain ways, and place photographs in particular places or at times, avoiding certain topics or outfits (Nakashima, 1995). These signals are sent out to the world. To Black Americans it is a way of saying, "I'm okay, I'm with you." To White Americans it is a way of saying, "Don't make assumptions." To Multiracial Americans it is a way of saying, "Relax, I understand." It is through various signs and signals that we try to carve out spaces of comfort in our daily interactions. A way to be appreciated by those whom we appreciate and distance ourselves from those we do not want to interact with.

AVOIDING BORDERIST PLACES AND PEOPLE

When Multiracial families are in familiar places they know where and who to avoid. They know the subtleties and intricacies of race and can better pick-out the borderists and decide when and where to confront and when to avoid. Rules of race change across geographic location and our fear heightens

because we are negotiating a terrain we have not before travelled. By rules of race I mean all those taken-for-granted subtleties that guide the ways Blacks and Whites interact with one another. This includes things like, who approaches who, how close individuals stand to each other, choice of words, topics broached and avoided, types of questions asked and statements made, how much we smile, type of service delivered and received, assumptions of acceptance and comfort in actively extending self to future interactions. All of these factors guide and are guided by rules of race (i.e. racial etiquette). When single-race people travel, vacation or socialize they expect some level of acceptance in their respective single-race area. If they find themselves in an uncomfortable racial situation they know they can get to an accepting single-race area. Multiracial families have no such expectation. Multiracial families are highly visible and when together we are visible racial rule breakers who spark curiosity and hostility. Because we are breaking what is seen by many as, the cardinal rule of race we have to be prepared for a myriad of reactions. Further if we are in an area we are not familiar with, we cannot know the subtleties of race nor can we know places of safety. It is the uncertainty that puts fear into Multiracial couples and families.

When borderists act out against Multiracial families, our responses are based on our history of negotiating race, when we go places with different rules, borderism becomes that much

more threatening because we do not have the 'cultural capital' so to speak, to contend with the situation. The fear is compounded by the fact that most interracial parents and partners grow up as single-race people. Now they must learn to contend with the assumptions made about them as a Multiracial family member and they are contending with these assumptions in a terrain where they are not intimately familiar with the rules of race. Parsia highlights the assumptions she has to contend with and the difficulties of not being on her home turf when doing so. One day she and her husband were being verbally harassed as they walked down a street during a visit to Philadelphia.

> If I had been alone and this young brother was hassling me in anyway I would have stopped, turned around and said, "Look, why are you bothering me? What's the deal here? Let's talk about this because I don't get it." But I did not feel at all that I could turn around and have a conversation with this young man, he was so hostile and the source of his hostility was totally his perception of Black-White relationship, and there was nothing I could say to change that perception. I think that to turn around and say anything would have caused him to lash out more quickly as opposed to just keep walking and ignore it and try to get to some space where the opportunity no longer existed for him to attack us -- and that was the hotel lobby.

Parsia is speaking to the way in which the rules of race change because of borderism. If Parsia were alone and seen as a member of a same-race couple she could negotiate the situation in a way she learned as a single-race person growing-up. (Although if she were seen as a member of a same-race couple, this situation would not have arisen.) Now she must figure out how she is being viewed and how she can

negotiate the situation. Because she and her husband were in an unfamiliar locale, Parsia did not know the "safe" places to go. Fleeing seemed like the best alternative and the hotel lobby presented a space of safety. She later stated, "I truly didn't believe there was anyway out of it other than getting to the hotel. If he would have truly lashed out before we got to the hotel I don't know what my response would have been." It is the uncertainty of the situation that can cause fear. This event stands out in Parsia's mind because not a lot of overt incidents have occurred to her and her husband. Yet it was enough to inform Parsia's decision to avoid certain places in the future when with her husband.

If we move in the same circles and spaces we can protect ourselves because we know through experience what to expect. When we step outside our guard is heightened. Mina, a White interracially married mother living in Montclair, NJ agrees:

> Every time we leave our home base I get nervous. It's like I'm getting used to it but it's just there. Like someone could act out against us... we feel safe on this street and we knew this when we moved in.

Multiracial parents are particularly concerned when children are involved. Candace a White interracially married mother of five reflects:

> In Chicago we know the areas not to go. You don't get caught in Cicero, you know these spots, these little enclaves of hatred, you just don't go to them and I feel more comfortable knowing those spots. I don't want to be in a strange town where I suddenly find myself surrounded by people who want to kill us. I'm comfortable knowing the rules of the game, especially when you have kids. It's totally different you don't want your kids caught in that.

Nancy, a White mother of two, explains that before she and her husband had children they were more willing to venture all over the Northeast. Now Nancy does "not leave Montclair with the kids" (although she'll go to New York City) she is primarily concerned for their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being:

> I do not leave Montclair with my children. I'm not that brave, I'm very protective of my children. They're getting to an age that if somebody said something horrible to us they might be able to stand it, but when they were young I was so afraid someone would say something in front of them and make them feel terrible. I can't say that anything really horrible has been said or done, but I just know it's there. I know how people are and my fear is that they will hurt my children.

It is clear we are breaking a cardinal rule by being together as a family. Such a break means we are subjected to situations single-race people do not face, as interracial couples we are not raised to contend with these situations. Nor are books available to help parents raise Biracial/Multiracial children in a single-race identified society. While we learn as we go, we also avoid the situations and areas we know single-race and borderist people would be the majority. This includes all areas known to be hotbeds of racist or borderist activity, including (from a Northern perspective) the South, White suburbs, specific restaurants and churches.

Traveling in the South

We've all seen it. Some lived through it, others have watched the documented footage and heard the stories. From slavery

through Jim Crowism and into present day racism, we've all been forever touched by the violence, the smiling lynch mobs, Birth of a Nation and the Klan, the Freedom walks, the fire hoses and the terror. Periodic reports from the south in the 1990s reinforce the particular fears northern Multiracial families have of traveling in the south. In Widowee, Alabama a school dance was canceled because a principal did not want interracial couples in attendance and told a mixed-race girl that she was a mistake. The incident culminated in the burning of the school. In Georgia, a Multiracial baby died and church ministers ordered her body to be exhumed from the "all-White" cemetery in which she was buried. Each incident reconfirms a deeply embedded fear most northern Multiracial families have of traveling and vacationing in the South. The north is in no way a racial utopia, however the people with whom I spoke were predominantly born and raised in the north. All have lived as a Multiracial family in the north and they have learned through experience how to negotiate the subtle (and not so subtle) rules of race. The rules are different in the South and the places of safety are not known. The North and South are part of the same nation built on the ideals of White supremacy, both are racist and borderist places, the difference is knowing how to negotiate the specifics of race in each area. Candace addresses this issue directly when speaking of her fear of traveling to the south.

> We do not go down south, we do not travel down south but my son is in Dallas now and we've gone down there. When

> Julien and I are down south it's like, "Ahhh!!" We're in alien territory. I do not know the rules of the game down there, we just don't know how to act.

Oscar, a White interracially married father of three grown sons recalls his trips to the south during his 30 year marriage. While he too had fear, his in-laws lived in the south and were able to create a buffer for him and his family because they understood the rules of race.

> Once we crossed the Potomac we figured we were in the south and that was always more threatening. But when we were down south we were being sheparded around by my wife's family and they knew the boundaries. But I was scared because I had never been south anywhere and I had the stereotype that they lynch you. It was just fear, it always worked out fine. When I was there though I was scared and just wanted to get home safe, I was always cautious about the south and I would still be.

Oscar could rely on the judgement and knowledge of his in-laws to keep him and his family safe. Like so many others his fear did not turn out to be reality yet and still he would not feel safe traveling in the south. Katey shares the fear they faced in a small southern town in North Carolina when they stopped for gas.

> I've always avoided going down there but I think that's me because I'm not from the south and everything I've hear intensifies my images. My mother lives in North Carolina now. We had gone to visit her. On our way out of town we stopped for gas. I was in the car with my daughter. My husband went in to pay and the guy goes, "You're from New York, aren't you?" My husband said, "Yeah," and he said, "You're a Jew aren't ya?" (laugh). We were outta there pretty fast. I try not to make judgements but someplaces you just need to be careful.

In addition to not knowing the safe places and specific rules of race, images of the south still remain strong in the minds of northerners who have not had a lot of exposure to the

south. Interestingly the two most popular magazines addressing the needs of the Multiracial community come out of the south. The creators and editors of *Interrace Magazine* live in Atlanta. The creators and editors of *New People Magazine* recently moved from Detroit to Austin, Texas. Further, Peter a White interracially married father living on Chicago's south side had met his wife in Atlanta. He hopes to return to the south, specifically because he thinks, "Interracial families are more accepted there. I felt more comfortable in Atlanta than I have up north." I know of no study that has compared the experiences of northern and southern Multiracial families. Yet I suspect that our level of comfort has as much to do with understanding local rules of race as it does with the level of racism and borderism.

Restaurants, Bars and Clubs

When socializing, whether out to dinner, a movie or just out for drink, interracial couples and families are given few choices about where they can go and relax. Candace and her husband actually go into restaurants to test where they'll feel comfortable:

> If we are going to go to a really nice dinner with family we do not want it spoiled by negative things, so one of us will go in before hand. If it's something that's spur of the moment and we feel the least bit uncomfortable, we'll walk out. Other times we will brace ourselves and go through it. A lot of places we will avoid. We will avoid unknown restaurants and unknown towns.

Barbara, a White mother living on Chicago's Southside does the quick check in restaurants, that is, if she looks in

and sees both Blacks and Whites inside she feels safer entering (borderists tend to behave themselves when in racially mixed places). Dorothy, a White interracially married mother living in Montclair, N.J. shares,

> There are certain bars that we would never go to. We would never go to an Irish bar together. I used to hang out in Irish bars all the time. There was one bar in Hoboken [New Jersey] that was definitely a mixed bar that we went to most often but there are certain places in town that you don't even bother going into because you know what the reaction will be.

Based on a previous experience, Quisha, a Black interracially married mother living on Chicago's northside now avoids "all Black" places when she is with her White husband. She shares one such previous experience:

> We went to a comedy club downtown, I felt very self-conscious and then they start making jokes about "crossing the line" and of course all eyes are on us. I don't think the comedian was being mean-hearted, he just happened to notice us and wanted to point it out, you know he's up for laughs. I don't know what to do when people stare, I recognize it's not a big deal but I get really flustered. I guess I'm kind of intimidated.

A common place referenced by people in the New York area was Sylvia's, a soul food restaurant in Harlem that was featured in Spike Lee's much disdained and borderist film, *Jungle Fever*. Whether or not interracially married people would go to the restaurant it was one place mentioned with regularity. Katey, a Black interracially married mother shares,

> I don't go to Sylvia's and I think it has to do with the scene in Jungle Fever (laugh). Every time I think about that scene where Queen Latifa took their order and really disapproved. Actually I don't think there would be any problem, but I don't want to put us in that position.

Places of Worship

Next to barber shops and beauty salons, churches tend to be the most segregated places in America. That's how several Multiracial families characterized their experience of finding community within religious institutions. In a rare article about Interracial couples in the church, Brad Williamson addresses the intolerance Multiracial families face in traditional places of worship and the growing number of ministries now serving the Multiracial community. He writes, "In a land where Sunday mornings turn out to be the most segregated time of the week, multicultural ministries have become interracial families' shelter in the storm (1995:10). In fact, *A Place For Us*, a Multiracial organization with branches across the U.S. has its origins as a Multiracial ministry, serving families shunned by single-race places of worship. Even in mixed-race communities the churches and synagogues tend to be segregated. Peter, a White interracially married father and a pastor of a predominantly Black church cautions, "Many integrated churches are integrated in appearance only -- look at the distribution of power in the church and look at the style of worship, who are the officers -- that will tell you how truly integrated the church is."

Julien, a Black interracially married father recalls what the segregation in church meant for his family.

> For years we had Sunday School at home, because for years we went to different churches and they'd say, "You can

> come but you're not really welcome" so we'd just do Sunday school and church at home. Even when we went to church people would always stare and there's seven of us so we'd take up an entire pew and we always sat in the back so people couldn't just sit and stare at us.

By avoiding church, a place single-race people traditionally go to find comfort, Julien and his family avoid the discomfort. Likewise, Ingrid a White interracially married mother of a young daughter also finds that she avoids church because of the discomfort.

> I am most uncomfortable in the places where I shouldn't be -- in the church. I don't go every Sunday but when I do go I see people looking at us like crazy trying to figure this all out. So the places that you'd think I would find the most comfort, like a church, I don't.

Peter describes the process by which pastors are chosen for particular churches. It is a process that reflects the single-racedness and segregation of the larger society.

> You have a pool of churches and pastors and they search for the pastor that best fits the church. They have an explicit policy stating that there should be no racial consideration, but in practice the Black pastors go to Black churches and White pastors to White churches. When they cross racial lines it's generally Black pastors serving as an Assistant to a large "White liberal" church.

The religions people cited included Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism -- many people lamented that this was an area that borderism was really hurtful. They had expected that the church or temple should be a place all people would be welcomed. Candace considers how borderism has forced her children to rethink Christianity:

> If we were a same race family in the Church everything would be warm and loving. But instead we've had to make our own way the whole way, we've never been automatically

> embraced by anybody. As a result our kids have had to question their faith and have had to go deeper into themselves than most kids have had to at a certain age. They still question, 'If this is the way the Christian community embraces us, is this something we want to be involved with, is this real?' So they deal with these questions much earlier than an all-Black or all-White family because they are not automatically embraced.

We avoid unknown places because of fear. The fear is based on our uncertainty of the racial rules and concern that our children may face hurtful situations. We avoid known borderist and single-race places because we know the racial rules. By avoiding unknown places we are maintaining a level of comfort and sense of safety. At the same time we are avoiding and contending with borderist and single-race people, we are also struggle to create spaces of comfort. Most recognize that spaces of comfort will only be created if we destroy the racial hierarchy. Yet to claim membership in a Multiracial family means placing ourselves under suspicion in the Black community. Further, White interracially married women and men are viewed by many in the Black community as 'the enemy,' especially when they intermarry. The difficulty for Multiracial families is to stand firm against a White supremacist system and in solidarity with the Black community even when we are not always embraced or accepted by the Black community. One Biracial man I interviewed commented that his parents, married for more than 30 years, have never felt acceptance from any racial community. He reflected that when they married they did not expect Whites to embrace them, but when the Black community also rejected them they felt a level

of hurt and anger that remains with them to today. This is a very real issue in the Multiracial communities attempts to form a community to protect our families and children and at the same time challenge Whiteness. As Multiracial families we struggle to create communities and friendship networks that are both supportive and comfortable. The question to be explored in the following chapter is: are we building communities able to produce counterhegemonic discourse and shift the balance of racial power toward of more just society, or are we merely reproducing the racial hierarchy by creating a community that serves as a buffer between Whites and Blacks?

CHAPTER FOUR

CREATING SPACES OF COMFORT: BUILDING COMMUNITY

> Don't listen to other people, they'll tell you about all the problems you're going to have. You have to do what's best for you and be who you are. ***Don't*** apologize, that was my mistake. Don't apologize for who you are, who you married or for your family, that is *your* family -- Lisa, a Black interracially married mother living in Chicago.

When we walk out the door in the morning, we are forced to contend with single-racedness in much the same way we contend with the morning commute and the weather. It is everywhere, every day and unavoidable. All day long we are being forced into categories by others. When single-race people discover they are interacting with someone from a Multiracial family they sometimes make statements like, "You don't look mixed" or "You don't seem like the type who would cross the line." As I discussed in the previous chapter Multiracial family members must continually address comments, assumptions, stares and institutions set up along single-race lines. Here I will highlight the spaces of comfort we find and create for ourselves. We are definitely a growing community with voices stretching outward (Root, 1995), yet many Multiracial families still find themselves isolated from others who may share and understand their social location. When isolated from other Multiracial families it is more difficult not to internalize society's racial pathology as our own. When we come together we learn to stop apologizing for who we are and the choices we've made. As we come together and share experiences we also begin to theorize the world from

our shared and varied perspectives. This has meant that we have begun to call into question the single-race premises upon which society and social identities are constructed. As we begin to feel the comfort and support of others we gain strength to confront a racist and borderist world that has been telling us that we are "wrong."

In this chapter I will be addressing several ways interracial family members create spaces of comfort in a society that assumes single race lifestyles. These include: developing informal friendship networks of 'likeminded' people, privileging Multiracialism by creating friendships networks with other Multiracial family members and/or creating friendship networks that bring together people from many different backgrounds; joining one of the growing numbers of Multiracial family organizations. These methods for creating comfort are not mutually exclusive and how we find comfort changes over time and space (Root, 1995; Nakashima, 1995). Many people spoke of not feeling comfortable in groups regardless of what identity was being privileged. The mere fact that groups exclude and privilege particular identities caused these individuals discomfort.

Several questions are driving this exploration: Do the ways Multiracial family members create comfort for themselves lead to a better world, that is, are we choosing counterhegemonic spaces of comfort or merely eking out a space within the current system? How is "sense of community"

constructed by people who have been pushed, pulled and moved to the outskirts of traditional racial communities and yet are still very much a part of traditional racial communities? While we may share some experiences of the border, we also have manifold differences based on our many intersecting communities of race, gender, sexual orientation, culture, class, religion, and political ideology. How do we negotiate our differences as we attempt to create community?

WHAT IS COMMUNITY?

Community is the act or sense of sharing. Some communities are geographically defined, others have a "sense of community" not bound by physical location. Some communities claim a diaspora, others are solely diaspora. Some communities have a shared history and a common goal, others are newly forming and are writing their own histories. Community is precisely what it sounds like -- communing, coming together and sharing something. My students are always surprised when I point out that the term communism is derived from commune, they just hadn't thought of it that way before. Of course it makes sense that in a society contending with all of the cultural, political and economic baggage of late-capitalism, communism is still presented as evil. Even the more palatable term "socialism" stirs strong emotions. Individualism is the name of the game -- community is well and good but it had better not impinge on individual freedom. My point here is not to repackage and sell communism, but rather to point out that the

hegemonic discourse promulgates individualism. Not just any old individualism, but an apolitical -- my shoes are a different color and better than your shoes -- individualism. In short, we live in a society that demands a competition to conformity without community.

In the 60s and 70s attempts at community building were done through identity politics. One identity was privileged and a political struggle engaged based on that identity. Black. Woman. Lesbian or Gay. Individuals had to fit themselves under a banner. Identity politics moved to the forefront, as traditional class based movements lost ground. Today we struggle with the very same issues, although to claim a "movement" of any sort is rare. From identity politics we moved to postmodern fragmentation which reinforces apolitical individualism. Postmodern fragmentation sets because it sets individualism in opposition to community and creates one more binarism (Young, 1990). As we approach the new millennium communities are developing around postmodern emergent ethnicities. These are ethnicities that are being created, named, and claimed. Individuals who do not or cannot fit themselves into traditional communities are questioning the basis of community. The challenge now is how to build community that allows for the co-existence of all our communities and identities. At the same time it should be a politically viable community able to facilitate the creation counterhegemonic discourse and shift the balance of power.

Those of us jettisoned to the margins and then rejected by the margins live on the borders. This location creates a continuous questioning of our internalized discourses and creates a set of experiences that are shared in some capacity by all who inhabit this space (albeit these experiences vary based on intersecting locations). The Multiracial community is just one site of the struggle to bring together traditional identity politics with postmodern fragmentation. The goal is to have open borders, to not exclude anyone and at the same time be a politically viable community. The Multiracial community has great potential because it brings together individuals who grow up monoracial (in this case either White or Black), and individuals who grow up Multiracial. As such the community crosses race, gender, class and sexual orientation lines. Yet there remain many difficulties. Iris Marion Young has pointed out that, "a desire for unity and wholeness in discourse generates borders dichotomies and exclusions" (1990:301). In fact this is exactly what some individuals in the Multiracial community are moving toward as they privilege a Multiracial identity over all others. That is to say, some Multiracial family members make claims to traditional identity politics by asserting, "we are a new race." Others disavow any ties to community and state that while we share some common experiences, those experiences do not encompass our entire being. These individuals refuse to privilege any identity claiming instead that authentic

humanness is only attainable apart from group affiliations. Still others attempt to balance the two and try to carve out a space of comfort in society while battling the racial hierarchy and dichotomy. This is heard most strongly in the Multiracial community through the anti-essentialist, anti-racist, anti-whiteness discourse.

BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS, BUILDING COMMUNITY

I would never say, "I have White friends, I hope you don't mind" because I never really cared what people thought, it's like these are my friends and you guys are my friends and if you can't get along, forget it -- Elizabeth a 25 year-old multiracial woman.

I have very good friends who are White and very good friends who are Black and I don't mix them very often because when I do things with my Black friends we tend to do Black thing or ways of hanging out that are different than the way I hang out with my White friends...sometimes I'll have a friend say to me, "What'd you do this weekend?" "I hung out with Denise," and she'll say "How come you didn't invite me?" and I'm sitting there thinking to myself, "Cause that would never work (laugh) we do different things than you and I do" -- Daphne a 33 year-old multiracial woman.

By avoiding certain places and geographic locations, Multiracial families are attempting to avoid the people who inhabit those spaces. Even in places where we may feel safe there are people we choose to avoid and not include in our friendship networks. Some Multiracial people spoke of being "militant" when they were younger and only wanting Black friends. Some spoke of living in "all-White" areas and thus only had White friends. As we age our friendship choices often change. Most interracially married people move to the borders as young adults at which time race becomes a central factor in friendship choices and formations. Most Multiracial

family members spoke of having changed their networks and dropped friends who either moved too much in a single-race world or were borderist.

Socializing

Socializing in private homes and parties is generally a single-race event. Given the ideological and objective racial conditions in the United States it is of little wonder. When people get together to socialize they want to be able to relax and feel comfortable. Unfortunately inter-racial interaction is one of the major issues that make single-race Americans uncomfortable. I am not speaking of interracial marriages or romantic involvements, I am speaking of all types of interactions across race lines. Even if single-race people were comfortable with such interactions, our society provides few opportunities for the creation of Multiracial networks and friendships. Joe, a White interracially married father laments:

> A lot of times we'll go to a Jewish wedding and she'll be the only Black person at the wedding and you're sort of disappointed because you'd like your friends to have as many Black, White, and Asian friends as you do, but they just don't...everybody stays with their own kind.

Likewise Nancy, a White mother of two states:

> If you're invited to people's homes you are either with all white people or all Black people, that's just the way it is.

Given the patterns of socializing, Multiracial families are often "the only one" unless they create Multiracial situations. These situations can be set up by interacting

with other Multiracial family members and/or by bringing together people from many different backgrounds. In either case it generally means making a conscious effort. Louise, a 30 year-old Biracial woman living in Chicago explains the difficult process she goes through to make sure her parties are mixed.

> I try to sculpture my parties. The last one I had there weren't many white people and they all stood in the living room and the Black people stood in the kitchen and I walked back and forth, it was frustrating. Let's face it, you go to a Black party, alcohol is not all that important, the thing is to dance. At White parties they serve beer and folks sit around talking. The balance is hard. I don't think most of my friends sit down and think about racially who they're going to invite, I do.

Louise highlights the frustration of trying to bring together groups of people who socialize differently and who often prefer to spend their leisure time in single-race interactions. Parsia, a Black interracially married woman explains why she and her husband make such an effort:

> When we go to parties at friends, it's usually single-race. If we go to parties that Blacks are throwing, it's all Blacks and if we go to parties that a White is throwing, it's all Whites. One thing we noticed when we have parties, it feels very different, we try to mix it up which is really kind of cool. We always have a great time at our parties because we're not the only, neither is the only of a certain race.

By bringing people together at their parties, Parsia and her husband are exposing people to those with whom they might not otherwise interact and providing an atmosphere where she and her husband can fit in at the same time. They are creating a space in society that few others even think of creating.

Friendships

Parties are specific events that we can plan and balance through invitations. Long-term and close friendship networks do not work on the 'R.S.V.P. by a certain date' system but rather develop or wither over time and through interaction. Friendship networks take many twists and turns based on how we are locating ourselves at particular times in life. Daphne, a mixed-race woman describes herself as being 'very militant' through school and now feels most comfortable around other racially mixed people. Here she explains why she avoids 'militant' people on either side:

> I'm really happy in terms of the friendship choices that I've made in the past few years. I have started to steer myself away from having Black friends or White friends who are militant. I am more comfortable with people who are more tolerant because otherwise it just creates too much turmoil all over again for me. I am most comfortable with people who are Mixed because things get said in White groups and things get said in Black groups and it's hard for me within the context of my family.

Likewise Louise, the 30 year-old Multiracial attorney who consciously plans racially mixed parties reflects:

> I no longer tolerate White friends who won't come to my parties, I don't have time for them anymore. I need people who feel comfortable in all different environments. My really close knit group of friends are Black, Biracial and Mexican and a white guy and one woman from Africa. At this point, if you can't be exploratory and open to all cultures, I don't have time to deal with you.

Julie, a white recently divorce mother of a mixed-race daughter, has also sorted out her supportive from non-supportive friendships. She explains why she decided to end one particular friendship:

> I broke off a friendship recently because this woman has made little comments throughout the years, things like, "Why don't you find yourself a nice white boy." The straw that broke the camels back was when she said, "Why don't you straighten [your daughter's] hair and put sun block on her." That really bothered me, I think she is a such a racist and I don't need people like that in my life. I educate people who are open and willing to listen learn and grow, the rest I will let go by the wayside.

Everybody changes friendship networks throughout life yet for Multiracial family members race is a prominent conscious factor in the decision of the creating and ceasing of particular friendships.

Because of the continual pressure and demands placed on Multiracial family members to choose, claim and defend, many people spoke of needing to take time away from single-race people. This time-away is often spent with other Multiracial family members. Vincent, a mixed-race man who grew up on Chicago's South Side talks about the benefits of being alone with other Multiracial family members, particularly other Multiracial people:

> It gives me an opportunity to talk with people who understand. You can be yourself and open up about what you are feeling. They understand what you've been through and can listen without inserting their opinion as it relates to a single-race or culture. The nice thing about this is that we don't have to choose sides. I can be part of both and no one's making a judgement one way or the other and I don't feel the need to justify myself.

We build close friendships of likeminded people. Those are the people we can count on to support and understand us. When we are out in public and away from our friendship networks we may feel more vulnerable. When Peter and his wife were driving together one afternoon another car pulled up next

to them. Peter was mentally preparing himself for trouble:

> This car pulled up next to us and they are staying parallel to us. I was kind of worried and didn't know what was going to happen. I looked over and it was another interracial couple and they were waving (laugh). We've had positive experiences, you know like when you meet another interracial family. As a matter of fact, we were on vacation in Maine and we met another family and went over their house for coffee.

Peter is expressing his feeling of vulnerability in a single-race world when he stated, "I was kind of worried..." Because of this constant tension and fear, when Multiracial family members see each other in public they often gain a sense of relief and will acknowledge, or intentionally ignore each other[1].

Kelly a Black interracially married woman has developed many friendships based on the shared experiences of the borders. In one case she met a woman while at work in a local hospital:

> I saw this [Black] woman standing near her baby who was very light with blondish curly hair and I kind of smiled to myself and said, "Bet they gave you a hard time in the delivery." She didn't know how to take it at first. She had had it with the hospital I could tell. I said, "I have a daughter that looks just like yours." Then she said, "Yes, they have given me a hard time, asking things like, 'Where's the mother?' 'I am the mother!'" Her husband is white too and it turned out she lived like 4 blocks away from me. We've been friends ever since.

Happiness and a sense of comradarie were a couple of ways Multiracial family members described responding when they ran

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[1] Because Multiracial family members live daily with the intrusive stare, there is a conscious effort on the part of many Multiracial family members to not even look at an interracial couple (particularly if the Multiracial family member is alone).

into each other in public[2]. This was particularly so for interracial couples because of the visibility factor. Owen, a Black interracially married man living in Oak Park, IL shares,

> When we're out we say, "Oh there's another interracial couple." It's almost like we're brethren. The more I see the happier I am, it's more than a happy feeling -- it's like we are sharing and it's a good feeling. I'm glad to see more Black-and-White families.

The 'good-feeling' may arise from several different places. It may come from the hope that as the number of Multiracial families grow we will be more accepted. It may also be a hope for integration in society and a belief that the number of interracial couples and families represents such a shift. Finally, some may assume that all Multiracial families members are likeminded and thus can count on the solidarity.

FORMAL MULTIRACIAL FAMILY ORGANIZATIONS

In GIFT (Getting Interracial Families Together) people are going through what I've been through over the years. I have Black friends and I have white friends, they are not in my shoes, they can listen, but they haven't been in that particular situation. But in a group like GIFT it's other people who are living or have lived what I live -- Ursula, a White mother of three grown mixed-race children.

I know there is a lot of anger and hostility towards us and I am wondering how long it's going to be before someone comes to one of our meetings -- we have no screening process, I

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[2] A few older Multiracial women also shared sentiment against Interracial relationships citing that they had had their "own little battles with it." These women are reflecting their sense of solidarity with the Black community and while race isn't essential, it is political. Yet another woman stated, "When it's all said and done I don't think I would necessarily endorse racially mixed marriages but if you want to do it, then you want to do it. In a perfect world it wouldn't be a problem, but we don't live in a perfect world and it's very hard on the children."

couldn't tell you if the person coming in is Hitler or Mother Teresa and I'm concerned about that right now -- Clancey, a White interracially married father and member of the Biracial Family Network in Chicago.

Because Multiracial families are still relatively rare. Because stable racially mixed neighborhoods are few and far between. Because borderist sentiment is so strong and Multiracial parents have a great concern for their children, formal Multiracial organizations are popping up and growing in size across the U.S. Formal organizations are those that have named themselves, are governed by some set of rules or by-laws and have a designated purpose for existing. Some of the organizations have sought non-profit status, put out regular newsletters, have an active board of directors, others are not as structured. Some are concerned with political issues facing the Multiracial community while others want to be solely a social outlet. As of April 1995, New People Magazine listed 65 Interracial support organizations across the United States, many of which have more than one chapter. For instance, *A Place For Us*, a national organization based in California has at least 28 locations nationwide. The number of organizations is indicative of the many people searching for a connection with other Multiracial family members. Of the many organizations across the United States I focus on two -- Getting Interracial Family Together (GIFT) which meets in Montclair, New Jersey, a suburb about 1/2 hour outside of New York City and the Biracial Family Network (BFN) which meets downtown Chicago.

Getting Interracial Families Together: GIFT

There was incident in town where this Black man and White woman were sitting on their front steps and these teenagers came by and harassed them and ended up ransacking their house -- Nancy, an interracially married woman recalling the final push that helped bring GIFT to Montclair, NJ.

After this incident a few interracially married women decided they needed to do something for other interracial families in town. They learned of a GIFT group that met in central New Jersey. "It took us about a year to get down there, but when we did we liked it very much." After some discussion with Sandy Scott and Betty Turko, the founders of GIFT, it was decided that the GIFT mission and name could be expanded to Montclair, N.J. One of the women from Montclair explained that it took some time because "Betty and Sandy wanted to make sure we would not, in anyway, deal with political or religious issues, this was only to be a support network."

Sandy Scott*, a White interracially married mother and co-founder of the original GIFT had "tossed the idea around for years" after seeing groups and organizations available for almost everyone except Multiracial family members. In 1991 she and Betty Turko*[3], a Multiracial woman married to a White man, got together and started meeting. They wanted GIFT to be "a resource for the community" and felt that taking a political or religious stance would make some folks feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. The organization was a success

[3] These are the women's real names.

from jumpstreet. After about two years of meeting in private homes and talking about problems confronting the families, some members started looking for more structure and wanted to make the organization a political vehicle. Ms. Scott stated, "They wanted a sense of doing something, not just communing." After a pause she continued, "But if people see our group together in public, we are putting out a message -- we don't need to endorse a candidate. By seeing us doing fun, non-threatening things people will see, we will get our message across in a nice way."

By avoiding a political stance on behalf of the Multiracial community, Ms. Scott believes that GIFT will attract all "interracial and intercultural people and not exclude anyone." She sees GIFT as a comfortable space for Multiracial family members to come and not deal with the questioning looks and comments. She fears that politics will create a boundary and exclusion the way it has in other communities. Interestingly she is recognizing the shared experiences of Multiracial family members yet is not willing to make the shared experiences the basis for the formation of a political community. Patricia Williams (1993) has warned that under the guise of neutrality inequality is reproduced. in other words, if GIFT does not define itself politically (i.e. anti-Whiteness) it may be used as a buffer to support White power. This leads to the ultimate question. How can we create communities and spaces of comfort that do not exclude

and at the same time be political in our attempts to shift the balance of power? I will address this dilemma shortly.

To this day, GIFT in Montclair maintains a *support only* mission. They do not take any official political stances. When blatantly political issues are brought to the fore, GIFT distances itself. For instance the following notice appeared in the March 1996 GIFT newsletter:

> Charles Byrd, editor of Interracial Voice, is organizing a march on Washington, D.C. this coming July 20 in support of establishing a multiracial category on governmental forms. While GIFT is not taking a position on this issue as an organization, interested members are invited to contact Mr. Byrd.

Obviously the introduction of a Multiracial category on the census is very political, controversial and has proved to be a great rallying point for the Multiracial community. Yet in an attempt to keep GIFT a place for all Multiracial family members to come and feel comfortable they avoid politics that can lead to divisions. This does not mean that race as a political issue is not addressed. Individual members of the organization can be politically involved just not on behalf of the group. *Multiracialism* is privileged over other locations. Dorothy, a White interracially married mother and member of GIFT shares:

> We have friends who we've brought into our group who are definitely not left wing, who we have met just because they happen to be mixed-race couples and probably we would not have anything in common except for that.

Because of the difficulties Multiracial families face, such organizations do present spaces of comfort, places where we

can catch our breath. Sheri, a 23 year-old mixed-race woman living in Montclair, N.J., attended her first GIFT meeting in the spring of 1995, she reflects:

> When I went it just felt really good and everyone there is so friendly. It meant a lot to be there with everyone, because they have either gone through or will go through the same things as me, or can identify with me and understand -- everyone! It makes me feel like I can express myself better.

Several people spoke about the comfort and safety they feel in a Multiracial group. It is as if by privileging Multiracialism individuals are finally able to relax, socialize and find their voice to speak about the word rather than always being spoken about. The question becomes, is this newly found voice one that has the potential to challenge essentialist and supremacist notions of race, or is it one more voice among many that reproduce the racial hierarchy. Nancy, a White mother of two who has been very involved in establishing GIFT in Montclair shares:

> I do see it growing and I think it's great. People just want to know that there's a safe place to go. I think Montclair is about as good as it gets for raising Biracial children, but it's still sometimes nice to just be in a group where you don't have to explain yourself, where people know right away who you are and what you deal with.

For exactly the reason Sheri and Nancy state -- the need to connect on a social level -- GIFT is careful to not take a political stance. Multiracial experiences as lived on a day-to-day basis are privileged in the discussions. In one GIFT meeting a discussion centered around Maureen Reddy's book, *Parenting Across the Color Line*, an autobiographical

exploration of Reddy's Multiracial family. During the discussion Beth[4], a White interracially married mother stated:

> Yeah, I liked this book a lot until the last chapter where she started talking about feminism and racism. That was a little too much for me. One ism at a time, please!"

A couple of issues are brought to light by Beth's comment. First, the hope for the creation of 'communities of difference' seems to be dampened. At the same time, the comment reflects the middle-classedness of many Multiracial organizations. Montclair, NJ is definitely a middle, upper-middle class suburb. Finally, it may be that Beth is looking for answers how to handle daily concerns with her children and for her Multiracialism and racism are central concerns. Lisa Tessman reminds us that, "by advocating that separation take place along one line of identity and that other forms of oppression be fought *within* the separatist community, one form of oppression is still being privileged, and oppressions are therefore being seen as conceptually separable" (1994:61). Yet for the parents of Multiracial children, of any children, politics and concern for the children do not always jive. After the discussion, Mina a White interracially married mother reflected:

> This would have been a totally different discussion if it were a group of moms sitting around talking. It got pretty academic, the intellectual side is important, but we don't all have that language, although we do have the day-to-day, how do I get the dishes done, experiences.

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[4] Beth is a pseudonym I am using for a 38 year-old White interracially married woman. I did not interview her but had interactions with her at several GIFT meetings.

Mina is expressing what many Multiracial family members, particularly the parents think. That is to say, politics are important yet the family has to survive day-to-day and that's what they want and need from this group[5]. Politics are important, but so is a child's self esteem and they are intimately connected. Luis Rodriguez, author of Always Running, La Vida Loca: Gang Days in L.A., writes, "Although the best way to deal with one's own children is to help construct the conditions that will ensure the free and healthy development of all, it's also true you can't be for all children if you can't be for your own" (1993:8). With limited time together many Multiracial families prefer to focus on those things that will help them to be strong families and raise healthy children. Katey, a Black interracially married woman living on Long Island insists, like so many others, that if we are going to raise Biracial children, we need to make family issues a central part of our interactions with each other.

> There are so many things about raising our children I really believe we need to help each other. White moms raising biracial children - they don't know how to take care of hair -there's all kinds of issues. But the hair issue, that's the first thing other Black women will look at, whether or not the child's hair is done. I know that mom is probably saying, "I need help!" because I know me personally I need help with my daughter (laugh). We need to get together and talk to each other.

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[5] If the growth of GIFT is any indication of its ability to address Multiracial family members' needs, then it seems to be working. GIFT has expanded from its original location in Central New Jersey in 1991, to today having locations in Northern New Jersey, New Hampshire and most recently, Pennsylvania.

One Multiracial woman acknowledged that she attends GIFT meetings because she can help parents of Multiracial people by sharing her experiences. Many other day-to-day experiences are addressed such as where to live, shop and travel. Additionally the groups serve as a resource for finding books, information and Multiracial friendly professionals, whether its a realtor, lawyer or an adoption agency.

Biracial Family Network (BFN). The Biracial Family Network (BFN) began in Chicago in 1980, now 16 years later BFN is incorporated, has a nonprofit status and is very politically involved.

> The Biracial Family Network of Chicago began as a parents' discussion and support group, drawing from six mothers with biracial children...BFN became more than a mother's group, as other types of people expressed an interest in the organization (Douglass and Brown, 1995:332).

What started as a sharing of the "day-to-day, how do I get the dishes done, experiences" has expanded. In 1988, BFN "became a charter member of AMEA" (Douglass and Brown, 1995), and in doing so took a decidedly political turn. AMEA is the acronym for Association of MultiEthnic Americans, the group on the forefront of lobbying congress and politicians for the addition of a Multiracial category to the Census and other governmental forms. In fact, Ramona Douglass, a Multiracial woman and the current president of AMEA is the past president of BFN. In a recent article she lists BFN as one of the six "significant organizations across the nation" that has "set the tone and character of the interracial/multicultural

movement" (1995:330). She still writes for the *Interracial/Intercultural Connection*, the bi-monthly newsletter of BFN. In the April issue Douglass reaffirmed her goals for AMEA with the support of organizations like BFN. She writes:

> My energy right now is focused on getting the multiracial category on the 2000 Census and increasing public awareness of the multiracial community's needs and experiences...I'm learning a great deal about political influence and how the lack of it can stop even the most noble causes--I'm attempting to gain political clout for AMEA and our community in general (April 1996:3).

As an organization the Biracial Family Network is much more willing to take a political stance. In fact in the most recent newsletter there were three lengthy articles exploring the implications of the Multiracial category. Additionally, a preliminary list of speakers for the July 20th March on Washington including BFN past-President, Clarence Krygsheld.

The Biracial Family Network has been around much longer than has GIFT in Montclair and meets in the city rather than a suburb. This means that BFN does not meet in people's homes, rather monthly meetings take place in donated church space downtown Chicago. The meetings have a different feel. GIFT meetings/discussions generally take place in an individual's home and socializing revolves around a potluck dinner on a Sunday evening. BFN meets at a church on a Saturday morning. There is not a group of people that meet socially and with regularity outside of BFN meetings in Chicago. GIFT, on the other hand, is located in Montclair and

attracts those from many Multiracial families in Montclair and socializing takes place outside the meetings. While the organizations do differ, they each create a space where Multiracial family members can get together, away from the single-race world, and relax.

In each organization many of the families and people on the membership list do not attend regularly, but want to stay in touch with the organization "just in case." Knowing the organization exists and is active provides a sense of comfort. Multiracialism is not the only issue we contend with on a daily basis and many people do not have the time or money to search out and attend Multiracial organizations' meetings and events.

In general, the meetings I have attended over the past year tend to be slightly more White and female, but certainly not overwhelmingly so. Demographically the disproportionate number of females can be explained by divorce rates and the fact that women tend to be primary caretakers. The disproportionate number of Whites can be explained, in part, through a statement made by a White woman at a GIFT meeting, "Race was never an issue for me in my life, I never knew I was White until after I was in this interracial relationship." Whiteness and race become visible for Whites often for the first time in their lives. When Whites claim the borders and an anti-Whiteness location they have removed themselves from any racial community. They are "no longer white", but they

have no new named location. When Whites enter Multiracial organizations they are claiming a racial location. They are naming themselves racially in a society. Further racial rules dictate the White is defined on a fallacy of "purity," which means the White parent is set apart from the Black partner and their children. Multiracial organizations provide a way for Multiracial families to be whole. These organizations help families to claim their location rather than allowing taken-for-granted rules of race to dictate the terms of family. Quisha, a Black interracially married expectant mother explains that this is exactly what the organization helped her to do:

> Before I heard of BFN I was in a quandary about what to do about the kids. I didn't want them to deny their Irish heritage or their Black heritage. Then I went to BFN and I kept hearing "biracial" and I thought, "Yes! I've solved one issue." Plus it's good to feel accepted, I think it's a basic human need.

Multiracial people also attend, although the meetings are indeed overwhelmingly Multiracial partners/parents with small children. Further, I do not think that it is coincidental that these organizations cater to middle-class families. GIFT holds meetings in Montclair, N.J. a decidedly middle/upper-middle class town. Biracial Family Network meets downtown Chicago where parking and childcare costs are issues for families who attend. In addition the meetings and social events are often held on the weekends, precluding those workers who have varying shifts. Peter, a White interracially married father laments,

> I think sometimes BFN is a little too middle-class oriented and they are excluding people and they don't even know it. I don't think they deal with race and class issues together very well. They have parties at places that are quite expensive.

Clancey, a White interracially married father of two and an active member of the Biracial Family Network speaks to the same issue,

> It's middle-class, you don't see truck drivers, factory workers, blue collar workers. If you look at it, we are scheduling ourselves to a white collar profile, we meet on a Saturday, not at night, many blue collar families work on the weekends. How do you get the person on welfare interested in being part of the organization?

BFN and GIFT do fulfill a much needed space in society yet because of where they meet they exclude working-class and poor Multiracial families. Further, these organizations attract predominantly, if not exclusively heterosexual families, couples and people. In addition to class, people face all kinds of issues in their lives. Many are not willing to privilege race or Multiracialism over other identities. They will acknowledge that we do share a commonality based on the Black and White dichotomy and hierarchy, but it is not everything. Further, Multiracial people especially those without children are contending with issues that interracial partners/parents are not.

I WILL NOT PRIVILEGE MULTIRACIALISM

Marguerite, a Multiracial 30 year-old woman adopted by White parents states:

> We are a group of people who share that one factor, it's the ability to live in both worlds, and that brings us together. There are certain things you understand that

> don't need explanation that sometimes other people just don't get, but we are also different.

It's the differences that cause many people to not want to get involved in any type of organization or group that they think privileges just one identity or community. Groups are generally built around a shared identity of some sort, unfortunately people who do not share that identity are excluded. This notion of exclusion has caused many Multiracial family members to turn away from any type of group or organization. They do not want to be defined or constrained by the boundaries of a group and do not like the fact that other people are excluded. Living on the borders we become very sensitive to all people who are excluded for any reason. Lauren, a 'multiethnic' 42 year-old woman expresses her concerns about various types of organizations:

> I've never been big on joining organizations. I would never join any sorority because I don't believe in joining anything that excludes anyone else. But then again that's why I don't belong to an organized religion because I won't join anything that excludes. See, in my club anybody can join. You don't have to do anything, just be you.

Mark, a 25 year-old mixed-race man living in New Jersey agrees:

> I don't belong to any organization because I don't believe in them. I think an organization for mixed race people is fine, but that's another class another clique. It's fun to hang - I'd like to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there (laugh).

These Multiracial family members shun most forms of organizing and categorizing because it tends to impose restrictions on individual's behaviors. Bob, a Black male

suggested,

> It's almost like having a race is more important then being yourself because it governs everything you do. I think people would be far better off if they let who they are and what they did define themselves rather than race.

Who people are is much different than *what* they are. *Who* they are implies looking for everything the person encompasses and who they claim to be. *What* they are is a question of categorizing.

CREATING COMMUNITY: SOME CONSIDERATIONS

Recently L.R. Gordon has written against the possibility for creating what he calls a "critical mixed-race theory." He is one of the many recent voices speaking out against the Multiracial community's attempts at naming and claiming a counterhegemonic community location. Gordon argues against the possibility for the Multiracial community to subvert the hierarchy and dichotomy. He suggests that the Multiracial community cannot sustain itself and cites that a person can be Biracial for only one generation as the reason. Such an argument reflects the idea that an individual's racial location is genetically driven in that it is assumed that Multiracialism is located in the individual and dies with the individual. Gordon sets up two dominant principles of racist ideology; (1) be white, but above all (2) don't be Black. He argues the following:

> A mixed-race racial position is compatible with the rejection of principle (1), but it is not compatible with the rejection of principle (2). That is because there is no way to reject the thesis that there is something wrong with being black beyond the willingness to 'be' black --

> not in terms of convenient fads of playing blackness, but through being the recipient of the social costs of anti-blackness on a global scale. Against a raceless credo, then, racism cannot be rejected without a dialectic in which humanity experiences a blackened world. But therein lies the suicidal irony of a critical mixed-race theory (1995:392).

The problem presented by his argument and others like it lies in the assumption that individuals just need a "willingness to 'be' Black" and they will be accepted. He also sets up his formula in a binarism, precisely the binary opposition that creates the location called the borders. Yet he does not recognize the border, borderpatrolling and borderism. His reasoning does not recognize that the borders are inhabited by folks who live in both worlds but are fully accepted in neither. Willing or not, conformity is demanded before acceptance is granted and conformity is not possible given the single-race rules of society. Multiracial family members have little choice but to either privilege one racial ancestry or move to the borders and eke out a space of comfort.

The obstacles to creating a Multiracial community able to challenge Whiteness appears to be insurmountable at times. Because Multiracial families often reject groups and organizations creating social change is perplexing. Robin, a White mother of a mixed-race daughter living in New Jersey contemplates this dilemma:

> I am not necessarily a group person, although I fight with that because I have a vision of the world, and in order to achieve my vision I need a way to organize. I do think we need to come together, but I'm not a group

> person. My communities would have lots of room for individual freedom and physical space. To create such a world I probably should be more active, I know it's important but I'm fiercely individualistic.

Faced with this dilemma people on racial borders look for other ways to create social change and subvert racial categories without having to join organizations or claim specific communities that draw boundaries and exclude. We have three primary obstacles. **First**, within a racial hierarchy and dichotomy, Multiracial family members are fighting to de-essentialize racial thinking. Yet the fight, at times, runs contrary to attempts at shifting the balance of racial power. The message is one of "race matters a great deal in a White supremacist society" but, "race is not biological, static nor is race reducible to skin color." These are difficult messages to deliver at the same time. We have to recognize race to subvert the racial hierarchy. Clinging to a colorblind discourse is not progressive against white supremacy. Now, Multiracial families are often colorblind within their homes, yet recognize (and are constantly reminded of) the significance of race in the world. Thus while race shouldn't matter -- it does matter and must be addressed. **Second**, the Multiracial community has no shared history, we share the history of invisibility and stereotypes (Nakashima, 1992; Zack, 1993; Spikard, 1989). Although we each face the borders we are coming from different places and have differently historical legacies we bring to the community. There is no shared history, at least not one that's been

written, and there are no geographically defined or politically defined Multiracial community boundaries. Because of this, the Multiracial community cannot draw on the us-them means of creating community. We are them and us. Yet we have these historical differences that we must work through and sort out. Our community then becomes one built on dismay for single-race "stick-to-your-own" discourses, and attempts are made to include all people willing to accept and appreciate differences while simultaneously understanding the mass inequity in society. **Third**, and likely the most difficult obstacle to overcome. How can we create a community that does not exclude, that allows for individual expression and yet is politically viable? As Stuart Hall points out, we have to name and locate ourselves before we can speak to and about the world. For a group or organization to be politically viable they must name and locate themselves. As soon as that happens, a boundary is created and some folks will be excluded. If we create an organization of 'likeminded' people, then we close ourselves off to some Multiracial families who may need support yet have differing politics. What do we privilege? Further not everybody agrees with the best way to fight White power in society. This will become clear as I explore the debates surrounding the possibly addition of a Multiracial category.

CONCLUSION

As interracially married people and parents, we come

together from very different racial histories and through our shared experiences and by questioning our internalized discourse we begin to build a new community. Multiracial people bring those communities together through the recognition of their parentage. We come together and are fighting to incorporate all of our insights and likewise expose ourselves to many ways of understanding the world. The one shared experience we have is borderism and that is also experienced differently depending upon our race, age, gender and sexuality. However part of this borderism is our invisibility in the media, in the law and of course, the Census. Interracial parents fight on behalf of their children, the children struggle for themselves and we all look for a space to claim in a racially charged world. How we experience this invisibility also depends a great deal on the location we choose to claim. Some would prefer to claim a monoracial location, some prefer the invisibility as a way to create counterhegemonic discourse, some privilege multiracialism, some would prefer to ignore race all together. Our comfort with others on the borders comes from knowing that we share an experience vis-a-vis the single-race world. At the same time our experience is by many intersecting and different communities. Because we have (or are working to) overcome essentialist understandings of race and community, many of us find ourselves caught in a position of not knowing how to create community and more precisely a community able to

shift the balance of power.

CHAPTER FIVE

DEBATING RACE AND POLICY: Multiracial FAMILIES SPEAK

Who's making these category decisions? That's the killer. It's typically one side or the other - Black versus White, as opposed to someone who has all those experiences. We need to find more mixed-race adopted people and get some input -- Daphne, a 34 year-old mixed-race woman who was adopted by White parents.

Thinking about society in binarisms (either/ors) is harmful to those unwilling or unable to fit into the prescribed categories around which communities are (re)created. Community gives us strength, but as we create community we create boundaries that exclude. Suppose an individual cannot or does not fit into the traditional binary categories of gender (male/female), race (Black/White), and sexual orientation (homosexual/heterosexual). Binary categories are always hierarchical with one set up as the norm against which the other is judged. People on the borders of these binary distinctions are expected to choose a side and stake a claim. Of course the choice is limited as the more powerful group seals its borders. For example, bisexuals will never be fully accepted in a heterosexist world and simultaneously are not accepted by the gay and lesbian community (Rust, 1992). The message sent by the gay and lesbian community is one of, 'If you are not completely with us, then you are against us.' Likewise, Black-White Multiracial people are called to deny any fond connection to their White ancestry and family if they want acceptance in the

Black community (Funderburg, 1994). Based on White supremacist notions of purity, Biracial people will never be accepted as White. Naming and claiming a racial location in a hierarchical and dichotomous society is quite political, particularly when individuals claim a location outside the binary categories. When we speak of the politics of anything we are speaking of the inherent link between the individual and larger social relations of power. The process of claiming and naming locations is all about power--the power to recognize and be recognized, and the power to act on and speak about the world from a particular perspective.

Unlike Latin America, the Caribbean and parts of Africa, where more complex systems of racial classification exist, based on hair texture, heritage and economic and educational background, in the United States census and other official records, a system of either-or classification is employed. In this chapter I will be exploring two separate, albeit similar debates taking place in the U.S.; the Multiracial category and transracial adoption. In the first section I will highlight the battle over the possible addition of a Multiracial category to Census 2000. In the second section I will explore the long running debate about race and adoption. Each will be explored from the experiences of Multiracial family members. The two debates highlight the fact that the fight for maintaining the racial border comes from 'both sides,' and is based on essentialist understandings of race upon which public

policy is created.

Claiming a social location is one thing; demanding a State legitimized social location is another. Many members of the Multiracial community are fighting for the addition of a Multiracial category to the Census and other official forms. Like other situations faced by the Multiracial community, we are caught at the intersection of the racial hierarchy and dichotomy. On the one hand, we have the 'individual right' and need to assert our racial location in a society that is racially charged. The day-to-day insults often leave Multiracial family members longing for their own space, their own named location in society. On the other hand, this will dramatically challenge Civil Rights Programs that are based on a 'group rights' criteria. Thus many fear that a Multiracial category will effectively destroy Civil Rights Programs and create a buffer group that will facilitate White power. Because so much is attached to race and racial identification in society, naming an additional *official* racial location will have political and social repercussions for years to come.

Transracial adoption has been publicly debated since 1972 when the National Association of Black Social Workers finally gained enough strength to speak out against a White controlled Child Welfare System. Immediately the number of Black children placed in White families dropped dramatically. The fight over race and adoption is also inextricably linked to group rights versus individual rights discussion. The U.S.

courts hold the 'best interest of the child' as the bottom line criteria in decisions (individual rights). When talking about the placement of Black children in White homes, based on groups rights arguments, the child's named racial category may take precedence over the need for placement.

Advocates for racial matching have as an underlying premise that the boundaries of the community can be drawn and the authenticism can be determined (and achieved). This assumption has a long history steeped in a White supremacist system of power, privilege and domination. Community borders has meant some protection against a White supremacist system which has a history of practicing "racial hygiene" and enforcing the one-drop rule. Racial hygiene, practiced in England and the United States, implies that Whiteness is defined as having no "Black blood." Racial matching policy advocates are fighting within a system that privileges individuals over groups and also Whites over Blacks. The problem is that racial matching (i.e. racial categorizing) requires, to some extent, essentialist notions that race can be located within the individual, that "ours" and "yours" can be differentiated. These are the same ideas used to justify and naturalize racism. Building a community on one "identity," requires privileging the community over the individual. It is precisely because of the historical and contemporary racial relations that Black Americans need some sense of community to fight the White supremacist system.

However, the complex problem arises that communities of sameness demand conformity before granted acceptance, hence, transracially adopted and mixed race people often feel they must "prove" they are "authentic." Attempts to create a community based on some notion of essentialism or universal sameness, creates borders and boundaries for those who may not share in the self understanding of the either-or dichotomy. That is to say, a community based on homogeneity and exclusion help in countering the alienating feelings of a racist, society - but it is heterogeneous experiences of sex, class, kinship ties, sexual orientation, culture, hue, and age, that make such communities sites of reductionism and alienation, for those on the borders (West, 1993). Until recently, most of the debates about race have been fought by people who consider themselves (at least publicly) to be single-race. In the past five years there has been an explosion of academic literature (Spikard, 1989; Root, 1992; Zack, 1994; Funderburg, 1994), organizations and magazines publicly calling attention to this space called the racial borders. In this chapter I will specifically examine the debates from the perspective(s) of members of the Multiracial community and how we do or do not resolve the conflicts inherent in the border location.

THE POLITICS OF (NAMING) LOCATION:
Census 2000 and the Multiracial Category

In this battle over racial turf, a *disturbing* new contender has appeared. -- Lawrence Wright (1994), speaking of Multiracial families and organizations (Ital. mine)

In order to take advantage of the Multiracial community's potential, this society must first recognize and acknowledge our existence. -- Carlos Fernandez, Past President of AMEA (Association of MultiEthnic Americans) testifying before a congressional subcommittee in 1993.

Being Multiethnic, not only do you have to define yourself for yourself, but I think that for your whole life people want you to define yourself in a certain way, and when you don't define yourself as *they* wish, they give you a very bad time. -- Lauren, a 42 year-old 'multiethnic' woman who was adopted by White parents.

You have to position yourself somewhere in order to say anything at all -- Stuart Hall (1989).

Questions of race have appeared on every decennial census since 1790. The 1920 census marked the final year the term "mulatto" was included. The term "mulatto" is offensive given its etymology, yet when the term was dismissed so too was the notion of racial complexity. From 1930 to the present, the Census Bureau has asked people to choose between checking the box indicating Black or White, no other **color** choices are made available. Between the 1980 and the 1990 census the number of mixed race, Black-and-White children more than doubled from 104,060 to 214,570. During that same time, the total number of children from all types of interracial unions grew from 996,070 to 1,937,500 (Bennett, 1995). The growing number of Multiracial/ethnic people, including Latinos who have refused in large numbers to fit themselves into U.S. racial categories has led many to question the usefulness and validity of the

current census categories. In fact, in 1990 over 10 million people checked 'other' on the census (Wright, 1994), with 4 out of 10 Latinos marking 'other' (Rodriguez, 1994).

The distribution of resources and power is directly linked to the number of people marking particular categories. The 1990 instruction manual of the census included the following statements:

> Census information is used to find out where funding is most needed for schools, health centers, highways, and other services...The most important reason for taking a decennial census is to determine how many representatives each state will have in congress.

As we near Census 2000, a debate rages in the press, the academy, within Civil Rights organizations, and the government about the possible addition of a Multiracial category. Local and national newspapers have been running articles and op-eds on a regular basis. Congress has held hearings. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Presidential office charged with overseeing the racial categories to be used on the census and other Federal and local forms, has conducted test questionnaires and held public meetings. Multiracial family members and Multiracial organizations, dubbed the 'Multiracial Movement' have been actively lobbying for this category since 1988. In fact in July of 1996, the Multiracial community is planning a march on Washington to present a united front and demand recognition before the U.S. government and the nation (Bryd, 1996). In a society defined by a Black and White dichotomous racial hierarchy, the recognition of

Multiracial category is certain to shift the balance of racial power. The question becomes one of, how will it shift?

Advocates for the Multiracial category focus primarily on the need and right to claim a Multiracial location in a society where race is central. Creating and claiming a racial location in a society where race is central, is talked about as a matter of human rights and dignity. Parents want to ensure that their Multiracial children develop a positive racial identity and self esteem. In fact, the platform of advocate groups is one of *individual rights*; people should be able to self identify in a White supremacist and racially divided nation (Davis, 1994; Fernandez: 1994; Graham, 1994). Similar to the transracial adoption debates, opponents highlight the racial hierarchy and the power of racial unity to fight White supremacy. Historical and cross-cultural analysis does indicate that introducing a new category will likely create a trichotomous racial hierarchy (see Davis, 1991). A quick look at South Africa or Brazil shows that a trichotomous (and beyond) racial hierarchy works to the benefit of the White elite. Some suggest that as Whites loose the demographic majority in the U.S. they will push the Multiracial category as a way to divide and conquer (Bates, 1994). Attempts to subvert the dichotomy and make life more comfortable for those caught on the borders seem to strengthen the racial hierarchy (i.e. White supremacy) and likewise undermines the struggle of Black Americans to create a unified

fight against Whiteness.

Why Do We Have the Racial Category on the Census?

Prior to 1977, local and federal agencies were not consistent in their definitions of racial groups. Yet newly created Civil Rights legislation needed to be consistently tracked and enforced. In June of 1974, a committee made up of representatives from various federal agencies with a significant interest in the collection of racial and ethnic data, was created to set forth broad definitions of racial and ethnic groups (Evinger, 1995). The committee "wanted to ensure that whatever categories the various agencies used could be aggregated, deaggregate and otherwise combined so that the data developed by one agency could be used in conjunction with another agency" (Katzen, 1994:2). These categories would be used, not just for the census, but also for school forms, on mortgage applications, employment forms and loan applications as a way to monitor Civil Rights compliance and discrimination. By 1977 the Office of Management and Budget had performed a monstrous feat by overseeing the creation of the broadly defined racial categories, that would for the first in history allow people to self-identify. Unfortunately the process of self-identification was constrained by the preset categories and left no room for Multiracial identities (Colker, 1996). The fourth question on the 1990 census form read, "Fill ONE circle for the race the person considers himself/herself to be." The

form allowed individual family members to identify themselves as Black, White, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander. The form does not allow individuals to claim more that one identity and if they cannot fit themselves into the broad category they are forced to "Other" themselves; "Other" is the fifth and final category choice. For those checking "other" the instructions specified, "If you fill in the **other race** circle, be sure to print the name of the race." The directions ask for *the race*, indicating only one choice should be written in. If an individual chose to write in two or more races, their multiple list was deleted and the first race listed became the category under which they were tabulated. For instance a Multiracial individual who wrote in *White and Black* would be tabulated as White. Individuals who wrote in *Black and White* would be tabulated as Black (Lythcott-Haims, 1994; Colker, 1996). Such data collection and analysis seems wholly insufficient considering the centrality of the statistics to the distribution of resources and power in society. In fact, after the 1990 Census, several districts were redrawn because of population undercounts which occurred primarily in poor, urban, minority neighborhoods (Puente, 1996). Many fear that a Multiracial category would exacerbate minority under representation.

Because of the unique location of life at the intersection of the racial hierarchy and dichotomy, people on the border of current racial categories are sometimes

ambivalent about the best approach to create and claim spaces of comfort while simultaneously resisting Whiteness. Most Multiracial family members agree with the 'group rights' basis of Civil Rights legislation. Citing contemporary and historical racism faced by Blacks, as a group, most argue that public policy should addressed the rights of Blacks as a group. Likewise many strongly believe that Multiracial people should be considered Black when it comes to various programs because in the current dichotomous society they are Black according to others. At the same time we live in a racially divided society in which Black-White Multiracial families face discrimination from both Blacks and Whites. Our families do not feeling welcome in either community, yet are intimately a part of both. Under such circumstances the Multiracial community is coming together and fighting for their own box, albeit with much ambivalence and difficulty. I will begin by exploring the arguments made for the addition of a Multiracial category. Next I will highlight the arguments made by opponents. Finally, I will examine the possible implications of the various plans before the Office of Management and Budget as they consider if and how to implement a Multiracial category on census 2000.

COUNT ME IN: Spaces of Comfort and Debunking Racial Myths

When our kids were growing up, it was hard to find books that reflected mixed-race families. I had to sit and color cards myself and I wrote some of my own stories for the kids so they'd have stuff to read -- Candace a White interracially married mother living outside Chicago.

Not having a named racial location creates many problems that go unnoticed by people who fit into a racial category. One such problem is the difficulty in locating resources such as books, dolls, toys and cards. Katey, a Black interracially married mother living on Long Island remarked, "I was in the bookstore the other day and saw a book on raising Black children and thought, 'Why can't we have this -- one measly book'." Recently, a card company was created to cater to Multiracial families, several magazines now address this community and a few companies carry "Multicultural" books, toys, dolls and games. Unfortunately it is rare to locate any of these products at a local store. The reason is not because a market is not out there, but rather businesses fear offending single-race people and families. Candace Malstrom owner of Colorblind Creations Card Company which produces special occasion cards for Multiracial families reported that some retailers "liked the cards personally, but didn't display them for fear of offending customers" (Goodnow, 1995) In a recent issue of *Interrace* magazine, the editor, Candy Mills (1996) wrote, "Sadly, many advertisers believe 'Interracial' couples and families are 'too controversial'" and thus will not purchase advertisements in the magazine. Advertisers fear

losing the business of single-race people if they show any interest in the Multiracial community yet advertisers do utilize endless numbers of Multiracial children, adults and couples in their advertisements. In fact, companies such as Benetton "use" Multiracialism as a logo of sorts in their advertisements. They are using the exoticness and differences this community presents to a world in which single-racedness is taken for granted. bell hooks has explored this phenomena as it relates to the Black community. In an essay entitled "Eating the Other" she states, "The commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling" (1992:21).

In short, companies are not selling resources needed by the Multiracial community rather they are "using" Multiracialism and exploiting it as exotic in an attempt to sell their products.

The hope expressed by some Multiracial family members is that the addition of a Multiracial category will help to legitimize the experiences of the community. Multiracial family members would be recognized as more than social deviants or exotic families and people. The community could define itself rather than having to continually watch itself though the variously situated single-race gazes. By that I mean Blacks and Whites have a different historical and political connection to the Multiracial community yet faces

being exoticized (or freakicized) and discriminated against by both sides.

Many expressed the hope that if a Multiracial location were officially recognized, Multiracial families and people would also become visible actors in society. After Chelsi Smith won the Miss USA 1995 title, the media repeatedly referred to her as "Black" and she repeatedly asserted her Multiracial location by stating firmly, "I am Biracial." Her experience is not uncommon, in fact, the list of contemporary role models in the media with one Black parent and one White parent is long, although rarely are these individuals recognized as Multiracial. The list includes such well-known individuals as, Mariah Carey and the man formerly known as Prince (singers), Chris Zorich (Chicago Bears), Lisa Jones (writer), and Lani Guinier (Law Professor, author, speaker). Many of these individuals assert their Blackness (solidarity with the Black community against a system of Whiteness and participation in Black culture), yet they acknowledge and speak of the uniqueness of the Multiracial location. Because these individuals are not spoken of as Multiracial, the 'tragic mulatto' myths are not debunked and Multiracial children do not see role models who share their racial location (Nakashima, 1992). A White interracially married mother of five laments:

> Look at the list of Biracial people making an impact on the world, but people won't recognize it. They want to believe the stereotype that these kids are freaks of nature and all mixed up.

While Multiracial family members would become more visible to Multiracial children, the rest of society would be forced to make note of the accomplishments of Multiracial family members rather than dismissing them as "mixed-up."

In addition to debunking the specific myths about Multiracial families and people, many hope that a Multiracial category would debunk the underlying myth of racial purity upon which categories are constructed. Many spoke forthrightly about the significance of White supremacy in society, but still thought the Multiracial category is important given the way both Blacks and Whites cling to essentialist notions of race. Charles Byrd, the publisher of Interracial Voice, an electronic magazine writes,

> Contemporary advocacy of a mixed-race identifier is the largest and most meaningful assault on the concept of White racial purity/supremacy--an idea lustfully embraced, unfortunately, by political leaders "of color" generally and by Black "leaders" specifically--to come d o w n t h e p i k e i n m a n y m o o n s (http://www.webcom.com/intvoice/; 1996)

Charles is addressing the catch-22 for the Black community. By defining community boundaries by parentage, physical features and some modified version of the one drop rule, Blacks are accepting and perpetuating the myth of White purity. Yet as one Black scholar stated, "if we give up our basis for unity how will we fight Whiteness?" Likewise bell hooks asks, "Where would we be without a touch of essentialism" (quoted in Hall, 1992). This is not a new issue, as long as Whites have defined themselves as "pure,"

the Black community has struggled to include a 'rainbow of colors.' While Whites demand a public belief in purity before granting acceptance, Blacks demand a rejection of White family and ancestors. Louise, a 30 year-old biracial attorney living in Chicago, describes how the responses to her claiming a biracial identity and location are entrenched in the racial hierarchy and essentialist thinking.

> In general I have found that as long as you don't say you're White, Whites don't care what you call yourself -- they have no problem with the Multiracial category. But Blacks take offense to the fact that you say you're Biracial. They think that by saying you're Biracial, you are saying that you don't want to be Black. I've had boyfriends correcting me, "Get over it this is what you are." I would say, "No. I am not trying to be offensive to you, I'm not saying there is anything bad about being Black, I'm not saying it's better to be Biracial, it's just different."

Both Louise and Charles are speaking of the essentialist thought on 'both sides' and the notion of racial purity which grows out of and reproduces notions of White supremacy. Multiracial people and families cannot claim "White" as a social location because the ideology of 'purity' is still the demarcation in the binary White supremacist system (Zack, 1994). The family is not seen as Black because of the White partner/parent yet the children can claim a Black location as long as they deny their White family members and have some African features. Those who refuse are continually forced to explain and defend themselves. Many Multiracial family members do choose to identify as non-White, not because of rules of blood quantum and myths of racial purity, but as an

act of resistance to Whiteness, as an act of solidarity with the Black community, or because they have a greater sense of comfort in non-White communities (see Root, 1995b). Yet being a member of a Multiracial family means facing unique experiences vis-a-vis single-racedness. Recognizing the experiences of Multiracial families and people does not in and of itself indicate a lack of solidarity with the Black community. Naming and claiming an official Multiracial category is not about trying to be more White rather, it's about attempting to legitimize unique experiences.

In short then proponents hope that once a new category is formally added to the Census, the U.S. racial categorization system will fall apart because the blatant inaccuracies will be exposed. Further, the Multiracial category will expose the myth of racial purity and thereby strike at the heart of White supremacy. Those who argue for the Multiracial category have very important and legitimate concerns which are strongly tied to undermining the Black-White racial dichotomy in the United States. Unfortunately White supremacy is not being directly challenged by this new category and cross-cultural analysis suggests that it may actually strengthen White power (Davis, 1994). As Louise remarked, "As long as you don't say you're White, Whites don't care what you call yourself." The fear expressed by many is that introducing a Multiracial category without addressing the racial hierarchy and underlying myth of purity may strengthen White supremacy and undermine the

traditional Black struggle -- a struggle that is already being attacked in these economically insecure and scapegoat seeking times.

COUNT ME OUT

> Not having one's identity acknowledged is not at all the same as not having it -- Peter Caws (1994), from "Identity: Cultural, Transcultural, and Multicultural"

There are two primary arguments leveled *against* the addition of a Multiracial category to Census 2000. First, it is argued that people should claim the borders because it is a location of freedom and is a potential location for creating counterhegemonic discourse. Adding another category will not eradicate essentialist thinking upon which categories are based it will merely create more distinctions and separations. Second, it is feared that a Multiracial category will actually strengthen White power in this society by further eroding Civil Rights gains for which the Black community has worked so hard.

Individuals are supposed to follow the rules of the existing binary racial distinction. Demands are placed on people to make a choice, or to comply with the guidelines of an racial existing racial category. Those who do not are made invisible. But it is within this invisibility that Multiracial people and families find freedom. For instance, Jane, a White mother, living on the South Side of Chicago shares,

> I can remember my son saying that he felt freer than Black people and White people because he was neither, he

> didn't follow all the White rules or all the Black rules and that's sort of how I feel too."

Louise, (the Multiracial attorney who insists on claiming her biracial location) recalls,

> I had a good Black girlfriend and other Blacks would get on her case because she didn't speak Black english. No one would hassle me because I had a White mom. I think we're treated differently than monoracials. They think you have different rights. People would come up to me, "Oh you are so lucky, you can date whoever you want" 'Well so can you!' But they don't view it that way because they think they can't go outside their race.

Louise explains that she was never constrained herself in the ways single-race people do. The borders is a location she has claimed and she enjoys the fluidity of her unnamed location. She, like Jane and Jane's son, feel freer because they do not have to follow the rules of single-racedness in society. Gloria Anzuldua (1987) explains that the freedom to move between categories also gives us the ability to create counterhegemonic discourse. In a recent article in *Interrace Magazine*, Kenya Mayfield (1996) suggests that a location of "ambiguity" is a "license to 'travel playfully' through many worlds." Living on the borders of any categories and particularly the Black and White border means understanding the rules of race very well but not being bound by them. Although difficult people who claim the racial border can resist essentialist understandings of race and simultaneously fight Whiteness. bell hooks reminds us that this is not a location that is claimed without struggle; yet it is a location that "necessarily calls those of us who would

participate in the formation of counter-hegemonic cultural practice to identify," and one that offers, "the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds" (1990:150). Marguerite, a biracial woman who claims the borders states:

> I think talking about another category is just creating another separation. We don't like it when we're excluded. If the real attitude is, 'Let's break down these walls,' well we are just creating another category and now we are really saying we are different than other people.

As Marguerite suggests, this category has the potential to limit the freedom of the borders and will set them apart from others based on some essentialist notion. Marguerite addresses this idea directly when she laments the possibility of being seen as "really" or fundamentally different. In other words, our ability to create a discourse that counters current racial thinking is undermined as we are absorbed into the very racial system we are fighting. As Marguerite pointed out, this means creating greater divisions in society rather than moving toward the eradication of both essentialist thinking and race as a salient marker in the distribution of resources and power. A second argument against the addition of a Multiracial category suggests that as Whites lose the demographic majority they will encourage greater divisions within communities of color. Most estimates indicate census 2050 as being the first to reflect a White minority in the United States. The next fifty years (and beyond) will be marked by continued struggles over the meaning of race i.e.

issues of power, nation, culture, ideology and economy. The Multiracial category debate is just one of many to follow.

F. James Davis (1994) has traced the role mixed-race people play in different societies and notes that in several places, including South Africa, mixed-race people are used as a buffer group; a group that facilitates White power. Many fear that this is precisely why the Multiracial category is being introduced at this time in the United States (Bates, 1994). Contrary to South African, Brazilian and U.S. racial politics, Stuart Hall (1989) points out that in England the term *Black* "came to provide the organizing category of a new politics of resistance" and incorporated all groups who were marginalized and faced racism. According to Hall (1992) a location of resistance means publicly acknowledging identity one way and privately understanding identity in another. England and the United States have many differences. To expand the signifier "Black" to all marginalized groups in the United States would mean uprooting Blackness from its historical construction. Attempts have been made for unity under 'people of color,' but these efforts often fall apart for many reasons including the varied histories and relations to Whiteness (gender, sexual orientation, culture, class and on). Further, American Blacks share the legacy of slavery in which darker skinned people are dealt the worst cards. And here is, of course, where we must contend with the Multiracial category's relationship to possibly facilitating White

supremacy. Several people stated the desire for subverting White power as the reason they do not agree with the addition of the Multiracial category. Marguerite, a Biracial woman who enjoys the freedom of not having a formally named location shares,

> There are some important reasons Blacks need to be recognized and given opportunities...Sometimes I think, "Yeah, it would be nice if we could break down all the racial barriers." But it is bull shit if you think that somebody is going to be able to walk into a job and not be judged by their color. There is still a lot of prejudice out there and unfortunately the Blacker you are the harder it is. So they want some real data, and they want to see where things fit and that maybe things are easier for Multicultural people, that may be good, but some people may take advantage of it.

Dorothy, a White interracially married mother of two, living in New Jersey agrees that important reasons exist to maintain the Black-White dichotomy.

> Mahalia is only three and she doesn't understand yet that color makes a difference but I put her down as Black. I would prefer her to be representing a Black group because there is just too much power in the hands of Whites.

Concern for facilitating White power by creating greater divisions in society was expressed by many people. If definitions of 'Black' were expanded to include all people who stand in opposition to Whiteness and face discrimination based on their racial location, then members of Multiracial families could claim such a location with ease. Unfortunately, within the hierarchy the border is patrolled by 'both sides' as notions of authenticity or purity and authenticity are drawn upon.

THE THEORETICAL MEETS THE PRACTICAL

This Directive provides standard classifications for recordkeeping, collection, and presentation of data on race and ethnicity in Federal program administrative reporting and statistical activities. These classifications should not be interpreted as being scientific or anthropological in nature -- Directive No. 15 as adopted May 12, 1977, for racial classification on the census and other federal and local forms.

Myths of race as a genetic condition have been thoroughly debunked for nearly a century. If race is not biological, some argue, then it is sheerly ideological and if individuals would stop talking about, theorizing and categorizing the world into races, then issues of race and racism would disappear (Webster, 1992). Some groups and individuals are fighting to remove questions of race completely from the census and other forms (Anderson and Fienberg, 1995; Webster, 1992; Hayes, 1993). However after more than half a millennium of White supremacist systematic control, race is more than an ideological construct, it is part of the objective conditions of society (Omi and Winant, 1994). In short, a socially just society cannot be achieved without addressing race as it is reflected in objective conditions such as, the economy, politics, education, healthcare and employment. These objective conditions cannot be addressed unless there is someway to track them. Civil Rights legislation made it possible to enforce greater racial equality; Directive no. 15 set up the classifications by which to track and monitor Civil Rights programs. Without racial categories there would be no way to track the privileges received by individuals from one

group and forms of discrimination faced by others. Yet categories do not leave room for complexities and differences, particularly when the entire population of the U.S. is squeezed into one (and only one) of four categories, the rest are 'othered'. Categories treat race as an essential and static phenomena and since race is neither static nor essential categories are constantly being challenged.

The Multiracial community is one of many communities challenging the current racial classification system. Cape Verdeans, Arab Americans and Creoles are just a few of the other groups. Rumbles for change were heard prior to the 1990 census. In 1988 Association Multiethnic Americans (AMEA) formed by bringing together fourteen Multiracial organizations from across the United States (Brown and Douglass, 1995). That same year the Office of Management and Budget asked for public comment on a possible revision of Directive no. 15. The Multiracial community spoke out for the addition of a Multiracial category, however many affiliated Multiracial organizations were still in there infancy and the community did not have the research and unified voice necessary to rally. Since then several books have been published including Maria Root's (1995b) most recent publication, The Multiracial Experience which was given to each person on the Race and Ethnicity Advisory Committee of the OMB so they could "better familiarize them[selves] with socio-political ideologies/identity issues facing Multiracials today"

(Douglass, 1996). Having books that address the issues of the Multiracial community will help tremendously in the fight for formal recognition on federal and state forms. The fight for the addition of a Multiracial category is also bolstered by the fact that several states, including Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Georgia and Ohio have added a Multiracial category to their state forms.

Those charged with monitoring and enforcing Civil Rights programs are concerned that new categories, especially a Multiracial category, could be the final straw as far as Civil Rights programs are concerned. According to at least one alarmist, if the Multiracial category appeared on the 2000 census and was to include anyone of "any racial/ethnic mixing four or more generations," then up to 80% of Blacks and a majority of Americans would be considered and consider themselves Multiracial (Hodgkinson, 1995). Ringing bells of alarm based on the unlikely projection Harold Hodgkinson, director of the Center for Demographic Policy at the Institute for Educational Leadership, states that "Black, Hispanic, and Native American tribal colleges could close. Students could lose scholarships. Affirmative action programs might be dealt a death blow" (1995:176). The OMB suggests that primary opposition to the addition of a Multiracial category comes from Federal agencies "such as the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Human Services, the EEOC, and the Office of Personnel Management,

and from large corporations" (Katzen, 1994:2). These constituencies cite that the current system yields satisfactory information, that changes would be costly and divisive.

Many lament that even if Civil Rights programs survive the introduction of a Multiracial category, it will be much harder to monitor compliance and discrimination. Several plans have been forwarded and are being considered by the OMB. On behalf of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA), Carlos Fernandez argued before a Congressional Subcommittee that for purposes of congruency in statistics and demography each person claiming a Multiethnic or Multiracial identity will have to list the "races/ethnicities of [his or her] parents..." on the forms and the census. The Association for MultiEthnic Americans has proposed a plan that will allow for both Civil Rights program monitoring and the tracking of trends in the U.S. The tracking of trends is important if we want to understand the changing balance of racial power. In addition, it is currently difficult to ascertain information about the Multiracial community on any broad basis. If for instance, we want to know how Multiracialism intersects with class issues, the census could provide such information. We could learn more specifically Multiracial family housing patterns and see if they tend to cluster in certain areas of the country. We could even begin to track the specific discrimination faced by this community. This is information

that could be used to help create spaces of comfort for Multiracial families. Yet there is an unfortunate side to this plan. The Multiracial Movement and specifically AMEA, is stepping back from questioning the underlying essentialist assumptions around which *all* categories are constructed. There are many transracially adopted people as well as White and Black members of mixed race families who will not be defined as "Multiracial" given the parameters suggested by AMEA yet these individuals live on and claim the racial borders. By reducing the borders to a Multiracial category defined by biological inheritance (a.k.a. "parentage"), we lose some of our ability to challenge the racial hierarchy and essentializing discourses.

Another organization, Project RACE (Reclassifying All Children Equally) an organization created in 1991 specifically to fight for a Multiracial category on the census, proposes adding a Multiracial category but not requiring individuals to mark any further racial information. On behalf of Project RACE, Susan Graham argues

that Multiracial people should not have to explain their racial location and if they are forced to identify their parent's racial backgrounds, as proposed by AMEA, they are made to feel like their Multiracial identity is not enough. Further she argues that such a step on the census and other forms is unfair to transracially adopted children for whom listing the race/ethnicity of their parents is both irrelevant

to the information the Bureau is attempting to collect and problematic for the child. Most significant, Graham argues, is the absolute necessity of self-identification. "No one should be allowed to "guess" a person's race based on the perceived color of their skin, on their surname, or any other criteria" (1995:46).

Much of the opposition to the addition of the Multiracial category comes from Federal agencies concerned with monitoring and enforcing Civil Rights legislation. Within their opposition, the issue of whether or not individuals should be able to self-identify is a primary. A primary concern cited by federal agencies is that self-identification hinders the various agencies' ability to track Civil Rights violations and compliance. These agencies suggest that data should be based on observer identification, "since discrimination is based on the perception of an individuals race" (Katzen, 1995). The claim that adding a Multiracial category would force these agencies to set forth complicated instructions that could not be followed anyway. In other words, in an effort to monitor Civil Rights programs they are reinforcing a modified version of the 'one drop rule' that is, it is easiest to tell "observers" to choose between broad categories and then pigeon-hole people rather than allowing people to identify themselves. Interestingly, as Katzen reports in the August 28, 1995 Federal Register, "[agencies] report it is their experience that direct inquiry about a person's race,

ethnicity, or national origin sometimes raises concerns among employees or other respondents about the purpose of collecting the data." Such comments highlight the pathological nature of race in the United States. On the one hand, race matters and statistics need to be collected, on the other hand people should not question the basis of racial categories or the purpose of such data. In short, the U.S. is a deeply racialized and racist nation that attempts a race neutral facade. Further, such comments reflect the conscious effort made by agencies to pigeon-holed individuals into categories often against their will.

Those charged with enforcing Civil Rights programs and monitoring discrimination fear that the introduction of a Multiracial category coupled with the right for self-identification will undermine the ability to track discrimination and Civil Rights programs. If categorization is based on observer's opinion then only those with visible African features and darker skin are counted as Black, when in fact, there are <u>many</u> White-appearing Black folks. What happens for instance of the blue-eyed, brown haired, White-appearing mixed-race woman who is granted a minority scholarship? Susan Graham of Project RACE testified before a congressional subcommittee in 1993 that, "My child has been White on the U.S. census, Black at school, and Multiracial at home, all at the same time (1994). Clearly the rules of categorization are problematic and observation identification

does not work. In fact, many White-appearing mixed-race people contend with a similar issue on a daily basis. Silvia, a White-looking, mixed-race woman living in Brooklyn, NY recalls the dilemma she faced after she was awarded a Graduate Fellowship:

> When I started Graduate school I was given a minority fellowship...The minority fellowship is supposed to remedy past discrimination and I obviously haven't been discriminated against because of my skin color because I don't have any skin color. So maybe I shouldn't have a minority fellowship because it's not like people have discriminated against *me*. I do feel awkward about that sometimes, but then I think, that's just sort of luck of the draw I happened to be born with my mother's coloring and not my father's. I could have ended up with skin color and then all these issues wouldn't come out.

Most people would look at Silvia and not see a Biracial person, they would see a White woman. Based on observer identification Silvia would not be considered African American. That's a location she must continually assert. Judith Scales-Trent, a law professor and a White-looking Black woman has recently written on issues faced by "White-Black women" states:

> When someone asks me "How many Black people were there?" I say, "I have no idea. How can you tell who is Black? How can I?" For although I can count all the brown faces in a room, there is no way that I can count the "Black" faces. For brown does not equal "Black" (1995:88).

Multiracial family members are forced to engage in the politics of name or be named. If we do not name ourselves for ourselves, others will. At the same time, as Kenya Mayfield reminds us "there should never be a time when racial inequalities are dismissed or ignored. Civil Rights

organizations are attempting to maintain group rights because as a group Blacks and other people of color face inequalities based on historical and contemporary discrimination. At the same time, the Multiracial community is trying to find a space to breath.

DISCUSSION

> People shoot each other every day over the question of labels. And yet, the very people who do so tend to deny that the issue is complex or puzzling or indeed anything but self-evident -- Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991.

It is one thing to claim a space, it is another to demand that a particular location be recognized by the state. While each may be acts of resistance, we must move cautiously because state recognition will reverberate for years to come. Thus we must be careful that we are claiming locations of resistance, not just locations of comfort. Some hold out hope that claims made to a Multiracial location will dilute racial categories into non-existence -- and perhaps they will given the "browning" of America (Root, 1995a). This category could prove to be the unifier against a system of Whiteness (Fernandez, 1995). Yet a basic understanding of a capitalist system highlights the role of management in removing the capitalist from the hot seat of worker discontent. Likewise, the Multiracial community, once State legitimized could function to blur clear signs of Whiteness as is the case in Brazil, many other Latin American countries and the Caribbean (Daniel, 1992). For the past couple of years of OMB with the help of the Committee on National Statistics of the National

Academy of Sciences has been reviewing past categories and testing new categories. With census 2000 approaching, the OMB hopes to have their review completed and have published "final decisions by mid 1997." The Multiracial community is at the crossroads right now and must decide how to precede as we do we must recognize and address race and the inherent systems of power. We must balance our desire to create spaces of comfort and our desire for the liberation of all communities of color.

RACE AND ADOPTION: MULTIRACIAL FAMILIES SPEAK OUT

> Adoption should be absolutely colorblind. Why are you labeling these children? Is it their fault if a "same race" family couldn't be found? Blacks do adopt, but there are too many kids in orphanages. Why keep them in there when there are a number of people out there who want to adopt children? -- Elizabeth, a mixed-race woman who was adopted by White parents.

> I think it's really awful when people adopt across color lines and then isolate the kid and say, "Aw, well we don't see color." Well then you're blind, cause it's there and the nastiness and the ignorance is there and it's better to address those issues than pretend everyone is the same -- Lauren, a 'multiethnic' woman adopted by White parents.

Couched in larger debates of individual rights versus group rights and nationalism versus integrationism, transracial adoption has been hotly debated for more than 25 years. On one side are the colorblind policy advocates who argue that we should ignore race when placing a child with a family. Drawing on western tenets of 'individual rights' they suggest that the U.S. courts' 'best interest of the child' criteria, should be the foremost concern (Hayes, 1993; Simon et al., 1994). They argue that by considering race in the adoption process, Black children are needlessly raised in

institutional care rather than loving families. On another side are the race-specific policy advocates who argue that historically grounded racial inequalities are still pervasive and therefore to place a Black child with a White family is, at the extreme, a form of cultural genocide. Drawing on a 'group rights' criteria, they suggest that the 'best interest of the child(ren)' is only addressed when the grievances of oppressed groups are addressed.

Unfortunately, the debate has been argued by people who identify as single-race and each side in the debate draws on a similar underlying essentialist premise. The underlying question for each side becomes one of differences and similarities. Advocates of color-blind policies make claims to the humanist philosophy in which all people should be treated in the same manner because people, once we peel away differences, are the essentially the same. Race-matching advocates make claims to a community boundary with an underlying premise that individuals socially defined as Black all share in a universal experience vis-a-vis the White supremacist system (regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or class).

Colorblind policies advocates argue that highlighting race through discourse and public policy only perpetuates racial significance and inequalities in society thereby dividing the "human" community (Webster, 1992; Kennedy, 1994; Bartholet, 1991; Hayes, 1993). Advocates of colorblind

policies ignore the socio-historical context and the differing values assigned to our racialized bodies. Those fighting for race-matching policies argue that race is a central organizing principle in all our lives, thus we should acknowledge its centrality and build communities of solidarity in light of the racial oppression (Chimenzie, 1975; NABSW, 1972, 1988, 1994). Advocates for race-matching policies base their arguments on the historical fight against a supremacist system, yet subsume all differences under race, thereby denying differences "within and between subjects" (Young, 1990; see also, Dyson, 1995; Hall, 1989; West, 1993).

Both proponents and opponents often fail to define race and begin to use terms in a "common sense" manner thus essentializing race through their arguments. This is seen most often through the subsuming of mixed-race children under the nonWhite biological parent's racial designation without explanation or exploration. In most studies a Black-and-White mixed-race child is immediately categorized as Black. The argument made is often that mixed-race children should be placed in Black homes because they will be considered Black by society and that "Black" children need to grow up in their "culture of origin." The assumption is that Black and White are essentially different because our physical features and/or genetic heritage supposedly represents some innate human difference that cannot be bridged given current conditions in society. In this section I will highlight the case of

interracial couples who adopt. I will also address the debates through the voices of five Multiracial people who were adopted by White parents. Adoption policies have changed over the past few decades (and are again being re-written by congress). My exploration will illustrate the profound essentialist thinking in society and the way it intersects and interplays with formal and informal policies to maintain the racial border.

Interracial Couples and Adoption

> The agency called, "Congrats, you're the parents of a baby girl." Then they called back, "Wait a minute, the baby might be too dark for you. She is brown, and that's not what we had in mind, we wanted tan." That's what they said! It was like shopping for a pair of shoes or something. If we had a baby biologically we wouldn't know what color it would be, so what's the problem? -- Ingrid, a White interracially married adoptive mother.

> The doctors look at the baby's eyes and skin and all kinds of things and they give scores. Our daughter got perfect scores and the one score she got dinged on was skin color. I was outraged. "What are they judging her against?" How do they know what color skin or what her tone is "supposed" to be? -- Parsia, a Black interracially married adoptive mother.

When interracial couples express interest in either fostering or adoption, the response from the child welfare system is generally quite positive and fast. Interracial couples are in high demand for both fostering and adopting children and are often "steered" toward adopting mixed-race children. The Interracial couples with whom I spoke were given a child very quickly (in less than 9 months), and were placed on a priority or preferred adoption list and asked repeatedly to adopted more children. The couples who adopted

ran the spectrum in terms of class, age and racial make-up of their neighborhood; while I do not have statistical measures to back this up, I would suggest that the fact that these couples were *interracial* is the reason they were given priority. Joe, a White interracially married father, living in a wealthy, predominantly White neighborhood, suggests that they were able to adopt quickly and easily because,

> most people want to adopt a White child. We didn't want a White child. We wanted a mixed race or Black child. I think once we were licensed, they had a child for us in two weeks. Most people wait a year. Our lawyer presented us with the possibility that we might have to choose and that was tough because nobody ever has to choose, but ten days later we had two children to choose from.

Barbara, a White, recently divorced mother of a three children, living in a poor predominantly Black suburb of Chicago, shared:

> I was expecting an eight year wait for a healthy child, I only waited nine months for my son. After we adopted him they called and asked if we wanted a girl. It was really incredible. See they are considered special needs children, which is bizarre, because they are perfectly healthy babies. And then it is interesting, but we, as an interracial couple, are considered a resource.

Ingrid, a White interracially married mother, living in a predominantly White working-class community on Long Island shares:

> We were surprised how quickly it happened. It was just three and a half months and we had are daughter. We were not prepared because it happened so fast and we were told that the birth mother just wouldn't look at another couple, she wanted a biracial couple, they always ask the birth mother to choose a back-up in case and she refused, she only wanted us.

We can see from each of these cases that whether living

in a wealthy, poor or working-class area and whether it's a predominantly Black or White area, interracial couples are able to adopt mixed-race children quickly and easily. Several factors intersect to make the placement of mixed-race children with interracial couples quicker than most people expect. First, the birth mothers are given a choice of who will adopt the child and in each case discussed above, the birth mother demanded that an interracial couple adopt the child. Next, agencies themselves still maintain the legacy of closed adoptions and attempt to have the family "pass" as a biologically connected group. The assumption is that a mixed-race baby with an interracial couple will appear "natural." The final reason can be located with the interracial couples who themselves attempt to "race match." As an attorney, Louise specializes in transracial adoptions in Chicago. She laments,

> Most mixed couples definitely want a mixed baby. I mean when you think about it, you would expect more out of a mixed race couple, but they are doing the same thing as all these Black parents who say they want a Black baby and all these White parents who want a White baby, they all want the baby to look like themselves. So if it's a mixed race couple, they want a mixed race kid so the kid looks like they were a product of their union.

Of the people with whom I spoke, most had stated that they didn't have a preference of "mixed" over "Black", but each ultimately adopted a mixed-race baby (or babies) because of pushes from the agencies and birth mothers. Lisa, a Black interracially married mother of two, living in a predominantly Black neighborhood on Chicago's South Side explains how she

and her husband were approached as potential adopters of a *mixed race* child.

> When we applied for adoption we said Black or Biracial child, either - or. We went through a public adoption agency. A private agency had contacted the public agency to see if there were any Biracial families who wanted to adopt a Biracial child and we did and it worked out that way. They called a some time later and said the birth mother was having another baby and wanted to know if we'd adopt it. We just couldn't afford it.

Only one couple spoke of considering the adoption of a White child. The power tied up in "race" becomes very clear as Parsia explains why she decided she would not feel comfortable raising a White child in a racist society.

> We could have done a Russian adoption easily and quickly, but whether or not I could be real comfortable rearing a White child was another question. I really thought I would not be comfortable -- it would be weird. I had the thought that everyone would think I was the nanny or servant, no one would think I'm this child's mother, and the whole thought that a cop could challenge you about being this child's mother. And always having to explain that I thought would be very difficult.

The politics of race and the historical imbalance of power loomed large in her decision. She is clearly indicating the importance of the racial hierarchy and her relation to systems of power. In fact, her child would be given more power and privilege based on the color of her skin, than her mother. What would happen in public when Parsia needed to reprimand her child? Because of the racial borders, she would likewise face the scrutiny of those assuming she is not the mother. In fact, other interracially married Black women who had given birth to children with light skin and hair talked about the fact that single-race people often assumed they were

the nanny.

Interestingly, when I began this research, I had seen only one reference about interracial couples and adoption. In her article entitled, "Where do Black Children Belong? The Politics of Race Matching in Adoption," Elizabeth Bartholet (1991) notes the following anecdotal information:

> an Interracial couple, (White husband, Black wife) that recently applied to a D.C. adoption agency was told by the agency that they would be placed very low on the priority list for a mixed-race child. The first preference was to assign such a child to a couple who were both mixed race, with darker skinned Black couples next in line, and Black singles third (1187, fn. 60).

It seems, fortunately, that the agency Bartholet refers to may be an anomaly. Each time I relayed this anecdotal information to interracial couples who had adopted they expressed surprise. While it is par for the course that agencies attempt to match skin tone, it seems that birth mothers and agencies are as concerned with locating interracial couples. Of course, the troubling factor is the assumption that an interracial couple is somehow better suited to raise a mixed race child socially. The underlying assumption is first, that race is biological and second, families should appear biological if at all possible. I will now address current debates about transracial adoption through the voices of five Multiracial people who were adopted by White parents[1].

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[1] I did not locate anyone with two socially defined African American birth parents and then adopted by a White family. The transracially adopted folks with whom I spoke were all between the ages of 24 and 42 and were mixed race. Transracialy adoptions tend to "involve children who are in face biracial or Multiracial and

MULTIRACIAL PEOPLE AND ADOPTION: RACE MATTERS, LOVE MATTERS

We are not screwed up people, being mixed in a White home, you can grow up and be healthy. It's got to be healthier in a stable home than to not have any home at all and if you wanted to see me get up and scream about an issue, that would be it, I will fight to the very end --Marguerite, a 31 year-old mixed-race woman who was adopted by White parents.

If the option is to put a kid in an orphanage, absolutely I'd stick them, I don't care where, because love is the most important thing. I can definitely argue both sides, but in the end if you really care about the well-being of the child, I can't believe that this is not better. I do volunteer work at an orphanage and it's gotten to the point that I can't go inside to the cottages where the kids live because I come out in tears every time. Life is such a fragile thing and it would have been so easy for me to end up in that situation and for somebody to legislate my parents not being able to get me - it could have destroyed my life. So I feel very strongly about it -- Daphne, a 33 year-old, mixed-race woman adopted by White parents.

Each individual with whom I spoke advocated strongly for the removal of formal and informal race barriers in adoption. The empirical research carried out to date, overwhelmingly supports making transracial adoption a viable alternative to institutionalization (Simon et al, 1994). In 1993, Folaron and Hess reported on their two-year study of mixed-race children in the child welfare system in Indiana. They found that the system attempted to walk a line between race-matching and colorblind practices and in doing so failed to adequately address the "unique needs of children of mixed racial parentage." The Children and Family Services manual of Indiana states that "biracial and Multiracial children would

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relatively light rather than dark skinned...The theory has been that these kinds of placements constitute less of a breach with same-race matching principles than would placement of the "pure" black child with White parents" (Bartholet, 1991:1175-76,fn.14).

be most appropriately reared by an adoptive family of the minority race or in a family in which at least one of the parents is of the child's minority race" (quoted in Folaron and Hess, 1993:120). Yet agencies did not address race when it came to placing Multiracial children in foster care or adoption,

> the informal agency placement policy...for children of mixed African American and Caucasian parentage was with African American foster parents, but in practice, these homes were generally reserved for African American children (1993:118).

With African American children being placed in Black homes, and an apparent lack of interracial couples adopting and/or fostering, these children were repeatedly placed in White homes and neighborhoods. Once it was discovered that a 'race match' was not going to take place, then race was ignored as a salient factor both in placement and in interactions with the foster family. "In the foster parents' experience, caseworkers and service providers tended to deny or ignore the significance of the children's racial identity" (1993:119). Thus, with the Black homes spoken for by darker skinned children, and a lack of interracial couples, mixed-race children were sent to White homes and the system then chose to ignore race completely.

Lauren, a 42 year-old 'Multiethnic' woman with sandy brown hair and green-eyes, was adopted by White parents when she was twelve years old. Prior to this time she was held in orphanages and bounced in and out of foster homes. She

recalls never being told of her socially defined racial background until one day when she was nine, a social worker heard her and some other children taunting a passerby by chanting, "Nigger, nigger, nigger." Lauren remembers,

> By time I was nine I'd already been in 10 foster homes and I was in an orphanage for the second time. There was a social worker outside at the orphanage and she stopped us and called me over to her and asked me why I was doing that because didn't I know I was a nigger too. That was my introduction to my ethnicity, I was devastated, I had never heard anything good about anybody Black and it very hard to deal with.

At the age of 42, equipped with an understanding why she was not being adopted or placed permanently with a family, Lauren now laments:

> Now, all things being equal then you make the placement, but you don't do what they did to me, they kept bouncing me around thinking that they would hit on the right combination, but it didn't work. You don't bounce kids around waiting for the right thing or until they are old enough so it won't be an issue. You don't do that to children, maybe I wouldn't have had to be a nine year old totally aghast that I was a "nigger." It didn't have to be that way, I could have learned at 2 when I first became available for adoption. I could have learned that in more positive terms.

Vanessa, a 25 year-old mixed-race woman living in New Jersey, who was adopted as an infant agrees with Lauren:

> It's best to place a child in a home that is of their race, but most definitely, if that child is in a foster home for any length of time, the first decent family that you can put that child with -- put them there. I think ideally it is best to put them with the same race, but if it means that they are bounced around from foster home to foster home, kids are developing so much during those years - and to see kids sit there and wait and wait just because of race when a perfectly good White family is available is a shame.

Neither Lauren nor Vanessa are promoting a completely

"color-blind" adoption policy. In fact, both criticize notions of colorblindness because race matters a great deal personally and socially. At the same time, they do not want to see children waiting needlessly in the Child Welfare System. Color-blind policy advocates argue that we need to remove all racial barriers in adoption because such policies offend the *traditional*, *legal*, and *philosophical* underpinnings of the humanist ideal of equality in the United States. Peter Hayes (1993) asserts that, "African American separatists," those individuals who insist on racial-matching policies, stand in opposition to the "humanist philosophy of the Civil Rights Movement." He claims that "race matching policies are harmful to a harmonious society in which "personhood" is not racialized." Hayes would like to ignore race entirely.

Individuals who have been adopted by White parents tend to be strong advocates for removing race-matching policies, but also recognize the importance of race in their own lives and the larger society. Each individual with whom I spoke suggested that the adoption worked (or could have worked better) precisely because (or if) families did not ignore race, but rather addressed race issues regularly. In a racially charged society, every "personhood" is racialized, and must be acknowledged as such. Marguerite talks about what her parents did to help her

> My mother and this other [Black] woman I started getting close to, talked all the time. My parents encouraged it, they knew I needed that, they knew I needed to identify myself and they would get up in the morning and drive me

> to church and come back and get me, it was totally encouraged. As I look back now I can see what my mother was doing, then I was just a selfish teenager and I didn't think much of it. I'm sure she knew I was curious, so she wanted me to be exposed to all of this.

In addition to her parents encourage her to develop relationships in the African American community, they also made discussions of racism a part of daily life -- whenever racism became an issue, the family discussed it. Marguerite recalls:

> When we went to buy a new home it was an open conversation about having us with them and the way certain people might react and there was very open conversation about our neighbors being prejudice if they saw that. If my mom and dad were having a conversation it wasn't hidden from us.

She continues:

> My parents were real good about getting Black dolls and bringing us to the DuSable Museum and that was back when getting Black dolls was not that easy. And nothing - nothing was ever secret.

Lauren talks about the importance of her parents networks and their openness about racial issues, particularly since she had been "devastated" by her "introduction to her ethnicity" at the age of nine.

> My parents had a very diverse group of friends, ethnically, economically and they're the kind of people from every ethnic and economic backgrounds. There were things I didn't know like why it would be good to be a Black person--all I ever saw was that if you were a Black person people didn't like you, and my folks thought it very important that I understand what's good about it. I was lucky because my parents were very involved in the Civil Rights movement. We had people in our house, when they came to town to speak my parents always put them up, so for example, the man who taught me to stop biting my fingernails was Stokley Carmicheal.

She also credits her parents for leaving their previously

all-White neighborhood and moving to a mixed area that was a hotbed of Civil Rights and Black Power activity.

> I had all these strong Black people around me, so learning about being a Black person and feeling good about being a Black person was just incredible for me, and I really credit my parents. When they decided to adopt me, they decided to move out of a predominantly White neighborhood and move into a more ethnically diverse area. As I learned about my Blackness I became militant very quickly because it was so new and unique and I was so entitled -probably the only bandwagon I was able to jump on in my whole life. My parents weren't doing anything to dissuade or discourage me, because I think they felt I needed to be firmly rooted in good feelings about myself first and then if there were things that needed adjustment later on, and you're not able to do it, then we can.

Based on my interviews with these mixed-race adopted individuals I would argue that colorblind policy advocates overlook the importance of race to all our lives. Instead they tend to talk only about how society is being racialized through discourse rather than focusing on the interplay between racialization and the historically based effects of interpersonal and institutional racism on the individual (Webster, 1993; Kennedy, 1994; Bartholet, 1991). Randall Kennedy (1994) argues that, "Racial matching reinforces racialism." Suggesting that race-matching policies "racialize" social relations, without acknowledging the significance of race in all our lives, is to take transracial adoption out of its ideological, social, political and historical context. At the same time, race-matching policy advocates tend to downplay the voices of those who have lived in adoptive families and reflect positively on the experience.

DISCUSSION

Transracial adoption is sure to raise the passion of most Americans. At stake is the countries most precious resource - children. The question is: Are we talking about children 'who happen to be Mixed (or Black)' or are these 'Mixed (or Black) children'? That is to say, which identity is privileged and why. Further, in a country where interracial couples -- especially Black and White couples -- are seen as pariahs, they become a 'resource' in the world of adoption. This priority status is granted in large part on essentialist understandings of race (a mixed race child belongs with an interracial couple); and the differing values placed on racialized bodies. Multiracial and Black children are seen as 'special needs' and those willing to adopt these 'special needs' children are often painted heros[2]. The Multiracial community is overwhelmingly in support of removing race matching policies that keep children institutionalized. At the same time, most recognize that race is a central organizing principle in society (Omi and Winant, 1994), and thus must be addressed in daily life and conversation.

The transracial adoption debates and the Multiracial category debates bring questions of essentialism into contact

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[2] According to Simon et al. in 1990 a U.S. agency published a price list for adoption. White children would cost $7,500; Biracial children would cost $3,800; and, Black children would cost $2,200.90. Clearly, bodies are "racialized" not because of race-matching policies, but because of larger social inequities, rarely addressed by colorblind advocates.

with public policy. When Civil Rights legislation was introduced, the government had to have some way to track it. Through the Office of Management and Budget, Directive no. 15, racial categories were designated. Challenging Directive 15 means challenge the way in which Civil Rights legislation will be either implemented or tracked. With many Civil Rights gains already under attack, and continued Government cutbacks, it seems doubtful that the government will willingly sink more funding into redesigning programs. Likewise, as government spending is cut, and the poor find themselves more and more disenfranchised, we will find more and more children in need of homes. Is the removal of race-conscious policies merely a band-aid to a larger problem based at the intersection of race, class and gender inequality? At the same time individual children need homes. The women with whom I spoke all talked of implementing required "training" and educational programs for parents who adopt across race lines. One of the women has even started her own educational program for parents. The Multiracial community offers hope that we can positively address race issues in society, and this must be done consciously and at the intersection of all locations of domination and inequality.

CONCLUSIONS

BEYOND BINARISMS

Binary thinking masks the methods through which power and domination are reproduced. In terms of gender, a newborn is wrapped in blue or a pink with appropriate socialization to follow. The appropriateness of the socialization is based on essentialist notions of how people within socially defined categories should act and how they should be treated. The most obvious places to witness this is in terms of gender and race. As with all binary oppositions one side is set up as the norm, the other side as the deviant. The more powerful side is always the invisible norm against which the less powerful "other" is judged.

Binary oppositions however create spaces for resistance. The more powerful side is not all-powerful and the less powerful side does not accept their lot in life without resistance and struggle. The lines drawn for who belongs on which side also serve as a way to distinguish in-group from out-group. Members on the "other" side consciously and unconsciously develop strategies to resist domination. Some resistance is individual, some within the context of community, some is progressive and challenges hegemonic discourse, other forms of resistance merely reproduce the binary opposition. When individuals come together in community to fight the hierarchical power, community boundaries are more clearly defined in the battle for freedom from domination thus creating a border location.

Resistance comes from another place, a place called the

borders. Individuals who cannot or do not fit into the either/or binarism have the opportunity to subvert the dichotomy and hierarchy. In my dissertation I address what happens to those individuals on the border of the racial binarism. I distinguish dichotomous social categories from binary oppositions. Dichotomous categories need not be problematic. Binary oppositions are always problematic given the inequity of power. Many dichotomies exist in social life. One can be Irish and Italian -- they have two ethnicities and within an Irish or an Italian community the dichotomy holds some salience. Yet in this case, power differential within larger social relations is a non-issue. Both groups are considered White in the United States and granted all the privileges produced by a system of Whiteness. The individual lives with a dichotomy but not in a hierarchical fashion. Thus the Italian-Irish person does not live on the border of a binarism, but rather a dichotomy. Each presents difficulties, yet the binarism creates the added burden of being part of both the more powerful and the less powerful at the same time.

A binarism is a dichotomy that is also hierarchical. Within a binarism each side is defined in essentialist terms. One is Black because that's what she or he is, period. One is a woman because that's what she is, period. In other words, it is believed that some internal, genetic, static condition is the basis of the binarism. Consider for a moment, Judith Lorber's discussion of binary oppositions as it relates to sex, sexuality and gender.

> [I]n Western societies, despite our firm belief that each person has one sex, one sexuality, and one gender, congruent

> with each other and fixed for life, and that these categories are one of only two sexes, two sexualities, and two genders, hermaphrodites, psuedohermaphrodites, transsexuals, transvestites, and bisexuals exhibit a dizzying fluidity of bodies, desires, and social statuses (1994:95).

Essentialist notions of sex, gender and sexual orientation are directly related to the reproduction of setting women, female, and homosexuals as the "other" in a world in which men, male and heterosexuals are the taken-for-granted norm. Those with the power can define themselves as the norm and perpetuate hegemonic discourse that invisibly proclaims their normalcy and justifies their privilege and power.

Current arguments used to forward a unified agenda against hegemonic power rests heavily on essentialism. bell hooks has questioned, 'where would we be without a little essentialism?' (see Hall, 1995). Without some essentialism, community boundaries fall apart and take the sites of counterhegemonic discourse down with them. Yet in an attempt to avoid nihilistic and/or apolitical relativism of postmodern fragmentation, boundaries are drawn and individuals excluded. It is a catch-22. On the one hand, if those who are "othered" do not guard their borders the more powerful group will gain and maintain hegemonic power without any united resistance. On the other hand, essentialist notions of unity exclude and pushed individuals to the borders. If community boundaries are erased, from where do we begin to create a counterhegemonic discourse? In her exploration of the development of bisexuality community ties Paula Rust states that bisexuals pose a particular problem to lesbians because bisexuals "blur the

boundary between homosexuality and heterosexuality, thus hindering the struggle for lesbian liberation by confounding the distinction between oppressed and oppressor" (1993:382-3).

There are many folks who cannot and choose not to claim either side or may claim both sides. These individuals pose a threat to the entire system of power in the United States. On the one hand they challenge the more powerful side because they undermine the boundaries upon which racism, sexism and heterosexism are reproduced. On the other hand, as Paula Rust points out, they challenge the "othered" side of the binarism because they threaten the essentialist basis of unity needed to fight the more powerful side. Western thought, played out through language, cannot and does not speak to these individuals. Our language cannot accommodate the ambiguities, cannot accommodate the borders.

If we are going to change the way Americans think about race, if we are going to challenge racism then we must find a way to use and change the language to reflect an anti-binary location. An anti-binary location is immediately counterhegemonic (anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-classist etcetera) because to recognize the binary opposition is to recognize the inherent inequity of power. Speaking to the issue of creating language that moves outside of dualistic thinking, Marie Root states, "Flexibility is usually accompanied by complexity" (xxiv). We cannot move away from binary oppositions and essentialist notions of community without developing more "sophisticate conceptions" of community and identity (Dyson, 1994). Many of us living on racial borders are

struggling to create a language with which to express our lives, identities and communities in a positive and holistic manner. The language we have today does not allow for such an expression of self. Throughout this dissertation I used term such as borderism and borderpatrolling. With these terms I am attempting to redress the invidious gap that pervades Western thought and language -- particularly as related to Black-White racial issues in the United States. We must find ways to destroy the dualistic and power laden binary categories or we will perpetuate them, albeit with slight shifts in the balance of power.

An exploration of the borders shows that this location is anything but a neat and tidy place. People are traipsing back and forth, bringing with them the pathologies created by the racist system. On the borders we are attempting to work through our many internalized pathologies and at the same time subvert the power and the binary system that spews out pathology. Further, the border extends wider than the individual or immediate Multiracial family. All kinds of people traverse in and out of the borders. Many people are pushed there, not everyone claims it as home. Some stay for a while but prefer the comfort of a side. Others find the borders too ambiguous, the politics are not developed, fighting the power is difficult. Claiming the borders may mean antagonizing those who are also attempting to fight the hegemonic power, that is, it may upset many in the Black community who see Multiracial families as a threat to their struggle against White supremacy. Most Multiracial family members with whom I spoke did not believe

racism was ever going to disappear or dissipate in the United States. They believed racism as an integral part of the functioning of this society that permeates every aspect of life. Based on this observation it is logical for the Multiracial community to align themselves with the Black community in a fight for racial justice and liberation. Unfortunately many do not feel they can claim their Multiracial family and still be welcomed by the Black community. If we, the Multiracial community, are going to avoid the trappings of being used as a buffer group in the way that other 'multiracials' around the world have been, we need to make our political stance known. This means thinking through political issues such as the addition of the Multiracial category to census 2000 and taking actions based on an anti-racist, anti-white power, pro-justice world view. The Multiracial community can act progressively against racial injustice or we can be the "not too Black" buffer. We must define ourselves for ourselves lest others do so for us.

W.E.B. DuBois suggested that the problem of the twentieth century is the colorline. As we quickly approach the twenty-first century, the problem will be one of making the colorline or the border a location from which counterhegemonic discourse can be created. It will be one of deciding how racial communities and battles will be played out. The border is not an easy place to claim but it is a location that forces a more "sophisticated conception" of community and identity. Claiming the border means claiming an anti-binary location. Such a location means standing

in opposition to essentialist notions of community and likewise standing in opposition to oppression and domination based on supposed essentialist qualities.

APPENDIX 1

* O/R = O home/Rent * U/S = U/SubU
* Mar.= Marital Status * Educ = Education level

Name	Age	Race	Sex	Chldrn	O/R	U/S	Mar.	Edu
NEW YORK								
Andrea	24	Multi	F	0	R	U	S	Col.
Bob	62	B	M	1	O	S	M	MA
Chris	24	Multi	M	0	R	U	S	Col.
Daphne	35	Multi	F	0	O	S	S	MBA
Dorothy	33	W	F	2	O	S	M	PhD
Evelyn	29	W	F	0	R	U	M	BFA
George	33	B	M	2	O	S	M	HS
Ingrid	42	W	F	1	O	S	M	BA
Jerome	18	Multi	M	0	R	U	S	Col.
Jessie	38	Multi	F	0	O	U	M	PhD
Joe	35	W	M	1	O	S	M	MD
Katey	45	B	F	1	O	S	M	MA
Kimberly	24	Multi	F	0	R	U	S	BA
Lionel	40	B	M	1	O	S	M	BA
Mark	26	Multi	M	0	R	S	S	HS
Mina	35	W	F	1	O	S	M	BSW
Nancy	40	W	F	2	O	S	D	BA
Oscar	61	W	M	3	O	U	D	BA
Parsia	35	B	F	1	O	S	M	MBA
Robin	37	W	F	1	O	S	S	BA
Sheri	24	Multi	F	1	R	S	S	HS
Silvia	29	Multi	F	0	R	U	M	PhD
Steven	30	Multi	M	1	R	U	S	Col.
Ursula	55	W	F	3	R	S	M	HS
Vanessa	25	Multi	F	0	R	S	S	Col.
Yolanda	43	Multi	F	3	R	U	S	Col.

Name	Age	Race	Sex	Children	R/O	U/S	Mar.	Education
CHICAGO								
Anna	43	Multi	F	1	O	U	M	HS
Barbara	45	W	F	3	O	U	D	BA
Candace	48	W	F	5	R	S	M	BA
Clancey	50	W	M	2	O	S	M	MA
Elizabeth	25	Multi	F	2	R	U	M	HS
Gail	42	W	F	0	O	S	M	MA
Jane	65	W	F	3	O	U	Widow	BA
Jonathan	28	Multi	M	0	R	S	D	JD
Julie	35	W	F	1	R	S	D	HS
Julien	48	B	M	5	R	S	M	HS
Kelly	50	B	F	2	O	S	M	MA
Lauren	42	Multi	F	1	O	U	D	Col.
Lisa	36	B	F	3	O	U	M	BA
Louise	29	Multi	F	0	R	U	S	JD
Marguerite	29	Multi	F	0	R	S	D	BA
Mary	30	Multi	F	0	R	U	M	HS
Owen	50	B	M	2	O	S	M	BA
Peter	40	W	M	3	O	U	M	PhD
Quisha	28	B	F	pregnant	R	U	M	BA
Raymond	31	W	M	expecting	R	U	M	HS
Vincet	40	Multi	M	1	O	S	M	BA

APPENDIX 2

Short descriptions of those interviewed.

NEW YORK AREA

Andrea is a 24 year-old Biracial woman living in Brooklyn and attending college in Manhattan. I met Andrea at a party thrown by a mutual friend. She is the daughter of an Irish American mother and Black father; she never knew her father. Andrea lived in a predominantly White area and all her brothers and sisters are White. She faced constant torments as a child and received no sympathy from her mother. When she came home crying one day that the kids called her "nigger" her mother replied, "You're not, you are Irish, so don't worry about it." To this day Andrea's family refuses to recognize her mixedness. She is currently getting involved with a group for Black Lesbian women and hopes to learn more about herself and how she wants to locate herself in a racist, borderist, heterosexist world.

Bob is a 62 year-old Black man who grew up in Harlem. I met Bob through a friend. He recently retired and moved to a White working-class community with his wife who is White (Ingrid, see below) and their adopted Multiracial daughter. Bob was the son of Caribbean immigrants. He faced constant battles on the playground and in the streets because of his White features and light skin. Because of his ambiguous racial features Bob was forced to continually question race and in particular "Blackness." He found that he was always being asked to prove his Blackness and he found that "utterly ridiculous," and "refuses to make race more important than the individual." He reflects that when he was younger he was more concerned about race issues, but now 'whether a matter of age or just being tired,' he didn't want to deal with thinking about race.

Christopher is a 24 year-old mixed-race man who grew up in both poor, predominantly Black areas and also lived for a time in a wealthy predominantly White community. I met Christopher through family. Christopher's mother is a Black woman originally from the Caribbean, his father is a White man from England. He has lived in the United States since he was two and has had little contact with his birth father. None of Christopher's siblings are mixed, they are all Black Americans. Christopher prefers to remain in urban settings where there is greater diversity because he feels greater acceptance. "It feels good, it's not, 'Oh he's a half-cast', it's just "okay" and they go on about their business." When he was teased by kids about his light skin and soft curls his mother would, "make a joke out of it and make me feel better. She'd tell me things like, 'You need to be proud of what you are' and other things to motivate me and being young I'd just sit down and think about what she said and 'yeah she's right.'" Now as a young man Christopher is thankful to have lived in both suburban and urban, wealthy and poor, Black and

White areas because, "I can relate on both ends. In my business I can sit down and talk to people, relate on both ends -- White, Black -- if they want to talk on a college level I can do that, they want to speak on a city level, on a hoodrat level, I can speak that too. So it helped me."

Daphne is a 35 year-old 'Mixed-race' woman who was adopted by White parents as an infant. She grew up in a predominantly White suburb of Albany, NY and currently lives outside of New York City. I met her through Parsia (see below). She shares, "My parents are White and about as average American as you can get." She recalls some of the difficulties growing up in a White area, "I remember running home one day after a girl called me nigger and crying to my mom, I didn't know why I was upset, I just knew it wasn't a good thing. Sitting down with my mother, you knew she had never experienced anything like this, she said, 'Well what does that word mean and why would that upset you, is that what you feel like? Don't let people categorize you in anyway.' While I knew that was the right thing to do it was very hard as a child because you felt like you couldn't identify with any specific group." She became very militant in High School and her parents supported her search for racial identity. Now at the age of 35 she has moved away from people who locate themselves as 'militants' on either side. She prefers to be around other racially mixed people.

Dorothy is a 33 year-old White woman married to George, a Black man (see below). They have two Multiracial children. Dorothy is a friend of a friend. She met her husband in a restaurant in which they both worked. She immigrated from Ireland about ten years ago and is very proud of her Irish heritage and believes that as an Irish woman she has a great deal in common with Black Americans. She insists that her children should learn both cultures. Dorothy has experienced some resistance from her family and from her in-laws, yet relations are maintained on both sides. When I went to interview her a second time she informed me that her boss had asked her about my study. When she told him it was about Interracial families, he replied, "Oh she could make millions, she should just put a picture of a Black man and White woman having sex on the cover." Dorothy was disgusted with the blatant borderist images and informed him that it was precisely such myths that are going to be debunked.

George is a 35 year-old Black man, married to Dorothy (see above) and together they have two children. George grew up in Hoboken, NJ which was always racially mixed. He has faced a great deal of borderpatrolling by other Blacks at his job since they found out about his interracial marriage. His dream for the future is to live in a society in which "everybody would be colorblind and we'd get rid of money -- colorblind

and no money." He and Dorothy decided to move to Montclair, NJ because it is known to be racially mixed and to have a good school system.

Ingrid is a 42 year-old White woman married to Bob (see above). Ingrid grew up in a tight-knit Catholic family in Queens. She met Bob at their place of employment in Manhattan. Ingrid and Bob adopted a mixed-race daughter and live in Long Island. She describes her family of origin as the "Archie Bunker type" and while they accepted Bob they still maintain borderist stereotypes. For instance Ingrid recalls one awful outburst by her mother during a family gathering, "This whole OJ Simpson thing, oy, when that all came out last year, in a drunken moment at a party, my mom said something like, "See, he's this big celebrity and thinks he can have anybody, even a White woman." And then EVERYBODY looked at her. But she'll still do that. She accepts Bob because she makes believe that he's not Black."

Jerome is an 18 year-old 'Black-and-White' young man who attends college in Manhattan and lives in the projects with his mother in Brooklyn. I met Jerome through a colleague. His mother is Jewish and his late-father was Black. Jerome maintains his closest friendships with other racially mixed people. His mother urges him to find out more about his African American heritage but Jerome prefers to learn about life from his very diverse group of friends. He has faced a few racist and borderist incidences, one when he was beaten for walking in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn an area known for racist attacks on Black Americans. He also played hockey in High School for which he suffered the torment "White-boy" from his Black friends. He refuses to choose a side although reflects that in some instances you have no choice. "Cause if I'm with a whole group of White people, they'll say, 'There is a group of White people and one Black person.' But if I'm with a group of Blacks, they'll say, 'There is a group of Blacks'...Black people are just more accepting -- you can't be White if you have any color, you know, White people (sarcastically) are more pure."

Jessie is a 38 year-old 'Blendo' or 'Mixed-race' woman who grew up in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. Her mother is Jewish and her father is Black from the West Indies. I met her through professional circles. Her parents were very involved with the Civil Rights Movement and attended many protest marches. She was arrested at a march at the age of five. Jessie lived in a predominantly Black neighborhood and was in Junior High in 1969 what she describes as "the height of the Black is Beautiful" era. Even with her White features she was selected by her peers in a beauty contest. "I did not feel unattractive about my skin color, eyes or hair." That changed one afternoon when she went to visit a boyfriend who

was Black at his home. "His older brother came home and when my boyfriend introduced us his brother said, 'I don't want my brother going out with some half-Black bitch.' Well I certainly knew I was not, hmmm, that there was something wrong with me being half-White." She began to split her time between the predominantly White hippy scene in the Village and her friends in the neighborhood. Because she appears White to most people she is constantly facing what she calls, "passing anxiety" and unending questions. She is now comfortable with a Mixed-race location. She is coming to terms with the fact that most Blacks do not recognize her as Black, this was a painful admission for her.

Joe is a 35 year-old White Jewish man married to Parsia (see below) and lives in Connecticut. I met Joe through a family friend. He grew up in an upper-middle class area on Long Island, NY and met his wife while attending a large Midwestern college outside of Chicago. They have an adopted daughter who is mixed-race. Joe does not like to talk about "race" but prefers the term "ethnicity." He differentiates the two by stating that there is only one race -- the human race, yet there are may cultures, many ways of approaching the world. In terms of his daughter and his interfaith/interracial marriage he shares, "We'll raise our daughter with both backgrounds. I always said we'd expose her to Judaism, but we would raise her as a Christian because it would be easier for her to not be a Black Jewish person -- at least in this society."

Katey is a 45 year-old interracially married woman living on Long Island. I met Katey through a reference I had received from the editors of Interrace Magazine. I was told that Katey ran an Multiracial organization. I discovered that the organization was dormant but Katey agreed to be interviewed. She is the daughter of Caribbean immigrants. Katey grew up Catholic in a predominantly Black neighborhood and married her husband who is Jewish and grew up in White Jewish areas. Katey's family accepts her marriage without a problem, her husband's family has rejected them. They met in college in the late 60s. For Katey and her husband religion has very little significance since neither practices religion. She would very much like to see the Multiracial community come together so we can learn from one another and develop stronger ties.

Kimberly is a 24 year-old 'Biracial' woman who was born and raised in a predominantly Black area in the Prospect Heights section of Brooklyn. I met Kimberly through a mutual friend. Her father is a White Irish American and mother is Black. Kimberly and her sister were raised primarily by her paternal grandparents who were. She refuses to choose a side although she finds her life more complicated because of this. She laments the fact that "I never the Black side of my family, I

have cousins with Blond hair and Blue eyes and their all I've got." She chose to attend the City College of the City University of New York because "it was predominantly people of color and that's where I learned about Black history." After the second interview we walked to the bus stop together. She wondered aloud how much different and easier her life would be if she had just chosen a side. She decided that not only would she not be accepted fully by Whites but that she is not willing to give up the best of either side. "I'm glad there is two that I'm privileged with, that I wasn't taught to put one over the other, in a sense I was given my freedom. It just might have been easier if I were only one."

Lionel is a 40 year-old Black man married to Mina (see below) and together they have a 5 year-old Multiracial son. I met Lionel through a Getting Interracial Families Together (GIFT) meeting I attended in Montclair, NJ. Lionel grew up in a Black community in Cincinnati, OH. His hobbies and interests do not lead him to a lot of contact with other Blacks. In addition, he is not religious and thus does not meet a lot of Blacks in Church. He is an only child and has little contact with other Black Americans. He was very involved in music and acting and states, "It was my experience that people who were involved in music were pretty much colorblind." He also has "always been intrigued by science and aeronautics and space and in the late 60s it was generally uncool to be Black and involved with the moon-race. I was a fish out of water in those days." He finds comfort and acceptance in Montclair because most people there are "New York transplants."

Mark is 30 year-old mixed-race man living in Montclair, NJ. He is the brother of Sheri (see below). I met him through his sister Sheri. He lived for several years in a White community and had no friends. When he move to Montclair a whole new world opened up to him in terms of friends. Mark refuses to join organizations seeing them as just another separation in society. He sees his border location as advantageous because he can hear and understand "both points of view." He sees people who choose a side as "fake." "If somebody were to choose a side then it would be bull shit. It's not fair to yourself and anybody else. A lot of people are fake, they fake it. I don't get along with people like that, they act White around Whites and Black around Blacks."

Mina is a 35 year-old White woman married to Lionel (see above), together they have a 5 year-old Multiracial son. Mina grew up in a "lily-White" wealthy community on the ocean in Connecticut. She spent several summers in South Carolina with her grandmother who was racist and attended a Quaker High School. After college she moved to New York City where she met her Lionel. She had to keep her marriage secret for a time because of the hostile responses of her immediate and extended

family. She laments what happened when her family did discover her marriage, "Nothing was ever directed to me. All was said behind my back. I never got to stick up for myself. I went down to South Carolina and presented Lionel, pulled out his best pictures, he worked at a bank, he was educated, all the things they would be proud of if he were White, but he was the wrong color." Mina struggles with maintaining 'both cultures' in the house because of the lack of African American relatives and friends. She sees GIFT as one possible means.

Nancy is a 40 year-old divorced mother of two. She lives in the racially mixed community of Montclair and is very involved with GIFT. I met her through Dorothy (see above). Nancy grew up the daughter of a Christian minister in a predominantly White community. In college she had several friends who dated or married interracially and at that time couldn't imagine where they found the strength. Now she has moved away from her previous single-race location. "I fit myself into both the Black and White community. Montclair is very divided and Whites and Blacks live very distinct lives and don't really mingle. Because of who I am I insist on bringing the two worlds together." Further she no longer considers herself a White person. "I'm no longer really White which is troublesome because people don't know that when they see me, they don't understand that I'm not a White person. I do realize that I am a Caucasian woman, but my politics and my needs and the things I feel strongly about, I am not really White." Nancy is facing the same battle so many other White interracially married and White-looking Multiracial people face, how to name an their racial location when they appear White.

Oscar is a 61 year-old White interracially married father. I met him through his co-worker, Ingrid (see above). He grew up in the borough of Queens with a father who "was very prejudice against Blacks and Jews, basically anybody who wasn't from the neighborhood were seen that way." He met his wife at the wedding of a mutual friend. They married and lived on Manhattan's Lower East Side where they raised their three sons. He believes that class will play a much larger role than race in the future of the United States.

Parsia is a 35 year-old Black woman married to Joe (see above). Together they have adopted a Multiracial daughter. Parsia grew up in a tight-knit Black community in Florida and for many years thought that anyone who was not Black, was White. She shared of her childhood, "If I were on my way home and a neighbor saw me doing something wrong, by time I got home my grandmother knew about it and I could expect a spanking...I can't ever remember being afraid of a Black person before going to Chicago for school." Her strong ties to the Black community made it difficult to maintain a relationship with a White man. In fact she broke up with her

husband for awhile during which time she had to think about the meaning of community, family and commitment.

Robin is a 37 year-old White mother of a Mixed-race daughter. She never married her daughter's father although they had an extended relationship. Robin was raised in a tight-knit and loving Jewish family in New Jersey in which she was taught, "All races are equal." She admits that "going out with someone of a different race took it a step further, but for me it was what I was taught." She battles being "colorblind" and at the same time being proud "that our [interracial] relationship could work and the potential for all interracial relationships to work brings a sense of pride." She hopes that "someday people will not be divided by religion, race, sex, or anything. People will choose others according to someone you can live with. Trimmings don't matter, we should choose values."

Sheri is a 24 year-old 'Biracial' woman living in the racially mixed community of Montclair, NJ. Her mother is White. Her step father is White and her biological father is Black. I met Sheri through Nancy (see above). Throughout grade school and middle school Sheri lived in a predominantly White community and "got into a lot of problems", "got called a lot of names, nigger, zebra and stuff like that" Now, after living in Montclair for some time she reports having, "Black friends and I have White friends although I don't hang out with White people as much as I used to." She never knew her extended Black family and had been disowned by the White side before she was ever born. She doesn't understand why people are confused by her family. "People don't understand, I don't know what's so hard to understand, they are always amazed that my mom could be White and my dad Black. People would just ask me, "How's your mom White?!" They give me that puzzled look." She feels very comfortable with the choices she's made in the past couple years and feels very comfortable with who she is. Her current boyfriend and the father of her child is Black. Sheri wants to stay are raise her child in a mixed-race or Black community.

Silvia is a 29 year-old 'mixed-race' woman who grew up in a predominantly Black area in Washington, D.C. Her mother is a White Irish American and her father is Black. She currently lives in Brooklyn, NY. I met Silvia through a mutual friend. Silvia's father was very involved in the Civil Rights Movement, a history she is very proud of. She inherited "really light skin that burns at the drop of a hat" from her mother. She has bright blue eyes and most people mistake her for White. She states, "I've always thought of myself as Black or as Mixed, especially because my mother's family disowned her because she was marrying a Black man." She went through an all-girls Catholic High School which was the poorest Catholic

school in D.C. In her senior year she received an award for college. Her picture was posted and she overheard two students discussing, 'Why is she getting a scholarship for Negro students?' Someone else I didn't even know said, 'Oh she's Black, her father's Black.' Then it was okay. I grew up with everybody totally accepting me even though I don't look Black." Her White features present the problem of being made privy to White supremacist discourse and not being readily seen by Blacks and Whites as sharing in the historical Black struggle against White supremacy.

Steven is a 27 year-old Mixed-race college student who grew up in the Bronx and lived in both Black and Latino neighborhoods and predominantly White neighborhoods. His mother is White and his father is Black. He currently lives in the Bronx. I met Steven at the City University of New York. He recalls the difficulties of living in a predominantly White neighborhood, "I was in like 3rd or 4th grade and one of my teachers said something to me in spanish, she said, "well aren't you spanish?' and I went, 'Yeah, yeah, okay, yeah.' I just didn't want to explain." As he got older he began to bring together his friends from various backgrounds, he was the one organizing baseball games and inviting all the kids to join. Questions of authenticity always played a role in his socializing. "I used to sit home and listen to Billy Joel, White music stuff, I'd listen to Bruce Springsteen, but it was always on the down low and my friends would tease me about my 'White side'." In terms of racial politics Steven believes that, "arguments would be so much easier if I was Black or if I was White because the arguments go along those lines and it's hard. I sit on the fence on a lot of issues, I don't really take sides." He has one daughter with a Latina. He is concerned that his daughter won't learn and be proud of her Black heritage.

Ursula is a 55 year-old White Irish American mother of three racially mixed children and one White child, all are grown. She lives in Montclair, NJ and is currently married to a White man. I was introduced to Ursula by Nancy (see above). Ursula was married to a White man and had a son. They divorced. She remarried to a Black man and her family disowned her. "My father was a ex-Newark cop and being a cop for so many years, he generalized that Blacks are no good. When he found out I married the kids dad, I got disowned." Like Dorothy (see above) she felt her children should have access to both cultures, "I would dress my kids up in green on St. Patrick's Day to prove that you don't have to be White to be Irish. I always promoted their Irish culture." Unfortunately her parents disowned her and her children so they spent many holidays alone, "we would all get into the car and go to the movies, we never had family to go to." She believes that things have gotten much better for Multiracial families and at

many points in the interviewing process she could not bring herself to talk about her more painful moments. As I was leaving her house one night she shared, "I guess somethings are just too painful." Ursula, like so many other White parents and partners in Multiracial families no longer feels White. "You know, I am White, but being my family, my views are not totally White, so I am kind of in the middle. I am on the middle of the fence...the Black community accepts me easier than the White community."

Vanessa is a 25 year-old Mixed-race woman who was adopted by White parents and grew up in Montclair, NJ. She currently lives in the same community and attends college. She is a friend of Mark's (see above). Vanessa was born down south and was adopted at 10 months old. Her adoptive mother is "Christian from a WASP type background and my father is Jewish." They intentionally moved to a mixed area for Vanessa and the family to live more comfortably. She was always in progressive schools and was given great freedom to make friends from all different backgrounds. Two major issues continue to be struggles for Vanessa. First, her parents never learned to style Black hair and Vanessa was tormented by horrible hair scenes throughout her childhood. Second, she is light skinned and when she straightens her hair, White people often assume her to be White. She is then made privy to racist discussions. While she refuses to make a choice she also recognizes that in the U.S. she has no choice. Putting the one-drop rule into mathematics language she states, "the common denominator is Black." She laments, "I get problems from both sides people telling me, 'oh you look this was or you don't look that way,' but all that doesn't matter because I don't need anybody to validate who I am."

Yolanda is a 43 year-old Mixed-race woman living in Queens. She was raised in the Bronx and Manhattan. I met Yolanda at the City University of New York. She grew up in the projects when "there were a lot of different races, Blacks, Whites -- not like it is now." Her mother is White and her father is Black. She didn't feel much pressure to choose or feel ostracized for being mixed. "Most of my time was spent in school, I was in the Catholic School system and was really protected." Her extended family was very mixed and no one ever asked her to choose. As a little girl she would make trips down to North Carolina to visit an Aunt. " I remember vividly that they had different water fountains and bathrooms -- White only and Black only -- I didn't know what to do, so I waited until I got home, I said, 'I won't drink and I won't pee'." She sees Biracial and Bicultural people as changing the face of race forever in America.

CHICAGO AREA

Anna is a 43 year-old 'Black-and-White' woman who grew up and lives on Chicago's South Side. Her mother is a White Italian American and her father is Black American from the South. Anna was introduced to me by a woman she had done business with. When Anna was born, Chicago was embroiled in the housing battle that continues into today. Her family lived for a period in a racially mixed area on Chicago's West Side. Her parents found a home in a racially mixed area on the South Side and within four years the area had completely changed and was 'all-Black.' Anna attended Catholic schools that were predominantly Black and Latino and doesn't remember race being an issue. Anna's first recollection of race occurred when her mother took her to a Black Beauty Parlor to have hair cut and styled and "they said they couldn't cut my hair because they don't cut little White girls' hair and that has always stuck in my mind." Race was never discussed in her home and after our second interview together she said that this was the first time she had ever really sat down and talked about these issues because prior to this, "Nobody ever really asked." She prefers to stay in the Black community because that is where she finds the greatest acceptance. She has faced many uncomfortable situations because of her ambiguous features; many people mistake her for White. Anna like so many others is privy to White supremacist discourse.

Barbara is a 45 year-old White woman who is recently divorced from her long-time Black husband. She is Polish Catholic. I was introduced to Barbara through a mutual friend. She recalls, "I grew up in a White neighborhood and had heard so many negative things and I was just afraid that I would internalize them." She began to search for answers to her questions in college. It was while she was attending college and working at Marshall Fields that she met her husband. The fact that they were both Catholic largely helped in the two families accepting the relationship. She and her husband had one biological child and adopted two more Multiracial children. She lives in a poor 'all-Black' community on the South Side of Chicago. She has faced a great deal of harassment because of her familial ties yet finds a certain level of comfort and acceptance in her Black neighborhood. Barbara recalls the brief history her daughter had with her birth mother. "When my daughter was born, her birth mother was White. She was not expecting a mixed-race baby, apparently she had had a one night stand, she was expecting a White baby. Well the mother lost it and said she couldn't commit to this child, she couldn't walk down the street holding her hand, she was ashamed of her. So after 3 months they took my daughter away from her birth mother -- how am I suppose to tell her this? When you hate your own child -- how can racism be so ingrained? It just makes me want to cry when I think about it,

to be ashamed to hold her."

Candace is a 48 year-old White interracially married mother of five. I met her through the Interracial Family Network of Evanston, IL after posting a notice in the monthly newsletter. Candace grew up in a single-race world and met her husband, Julien (see below) when they lived in the same apartment complex during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. They attended marches together and soon developed a relationship. Similar to Barbara (see above) once her parents discovered "he loved the Lord," the relationship was okay. Although Illinois did not have anti-miscegenation laws on the books, Candace and Julien had difficulty obtaining a marriage license because State workers took it upon themselves to block the marriage. As Candace reflects on her life she describes it as one that has not been comfortable or easy, but one that has been very worthwhile. A life she would repeat. Her children are very successful in their respective endeavors and she and her husband are looking forward to retirement. She called me for the interview because, "I have always felt a huge amount of pressure to represent what is good in Interracial couples and we want people to look at our family and say, 'Yeah it works, there is a possibility for racial groups to get along, we want to be a bridge for them.' Because of this she feels an added burden to achieve and ensure her children are successful.

Clancey is a 50 year-old White man who grew up in a very homogenous White Dutch Protestant community in northern Indiana. He currently lives with his wife who is Black (see Kelly, below). They have been married for nearly 30 years and live in a racially mixed far west suburb of Chicago. Together they have two grown children. I met Clancey through Jane (see below). He recalls of his childhood, "We were Dutch Reform Protestant, we could not go to movies, could not dance, you could not work on Sunday and you identified by the Church you were brought up in. The Church was the nucleus of everything." When Clancey went away to college he shared a dorm room with one of the three Black students on campus. He learned a great deal about the terror and injustice produced through a system of Whiteness from these men. His family has never really accepted his marriage and tend to dismiss him as rebellious. "Within my family they put pressure on me, 'Who do you think you are?' and I say, 'I know I'm a White person who is Christian Reform and Dutch, I'm all those things, but unlike you guys I came up with a different set of experiences and different experiences created a different product.' So I know where they're coming from, but they will never know where I'm coming from, they don't have the sensitivity to understand."

Elizabeth is a 25 year-old Biracial woman who was adopted by White parents and grew up in a racially mixed, albeit divisive far west suburb of Chicago. I met Elizabeth through a Biracial

Family Network meeting and coincidentally was given her name by Candace (see above) who has known Elizabeth's family for years. Elizabeth recalls how her family was 'accepted' by others in the community. "My dad is a pastor and when my mom went to church with my older brother who is a year older than me, he is her biological child and when we walked in heads would turn, one little White baby and one little Black baby. It's like, 'What happened with this lady?'." As Elizabeth grew older the head turning and questions were directed at her, "I always got, 'Which one of your parents is White?' I'd say, 'Both of them.' (laugh) Then I'd get a look like, 'What!?' Then I would sometimes go on to explain that my biological parents, my mother was White and father was Black as so on." Elizabeth explains that "someone will make a comment 'Well you have one-drop of Black in ya, so you're Black!' I get downright mad, I get furious and go off, 'No I am not! I am mixed or Biracial, I am not White, I am not Black, I have the best of both worlds.' And I feel I do."

Gail is a 42 year-old White interracially married woman living in Oak Park. I met Gail through a mutual friend. She is married to Owen (see below). It is a second marriage for each of them and their first interracial marriage. Gail grew up in an "small conservative town" in Northwest Indiana and has been disowned by her mother. "I have resolved it because I can live with it, it's not my problem, we are happy, I've tried to explain this to her." She and her husband are very comfortable in Oak Park and Gail is happy with her life choices. Gail said she does not often concern herself with what others think about her relationship and holds hope that interracial families are becoming more acceptable.

Jane is a 65 year-old White woman who is recently widowed by had been married for more than 40 years. She has three grown mixed-race sons. I met Jane through a series of phone calls I had made in an attempt to find out about the Biracial Family Network in Chicago. Jane grew up in a small all-White town in Kansas. She met her husband while working and attending college in Chicago. They lived in Lawndale, an all-Black racially segregated area on Chicago's South Side. When they got married they faced anti-miscegenation laws in Kansas so her father arranged for a wedding in Chicago where no such laws existed. She sees White skin as granting her privilege in society and also causing her problems from time to time in her neighborhood. She no longer identifies as White because her experiences have informed a new "multiethnic" location.

Jonathan is a 28 year-old Biracial man who grew up in predominantly White suburbs of Chicago. He currently lives in the racially mixed community of Evanston, an area known for a large number of Multiracial families. He is a White-looking Biracial man and this has presented many unique problems for

him. If asked he will say he is Black, although most people do not believe him and will often let him know that. When he was younger his family moved quite often. "The pattern when something like, I'd get to a new school, kids would have no idea about me, I'd make lots of friends, all of a sudden my parents would show up for a parent-teacher night and all then I wouldn't have as many friends or any friends depending on where the school was located. That was really tough." He always took solace in his tight knit family of origin. "No matter what situation I've gotten into or how bad things have gotten for me, and they've gotten bad sometimes, I've always had my family and that was a really good feeling." Jonathan wishes he were more visibly Black. He contemplated passing for White for a brief time but said it would be too difficult to conceal his life. He suggests that people who are considering interracial marriage should take an extra moment "because you are adding a burden on your children. They will always live with the fact that other people are going to have this third person identity crisis for them. It's like other people get confused, they don't know how to deal with it."

Julie is a 35 year-old White recently divorced mother of a mixed-race daughter. I met Julie when she responded to an ad I had placed in the Interracial Family Network in Evanston. Her family did not readily accept her relationship and extended family was quite racist, but her mother and father have become strongly protective of their granddaughter and thus have been forced into rethinking race. Julie thinks it is extremely important that she herself learn as much as possible about the Black-White experience so she can better equip her daughter to face a racist a divisive society. Throughout our interview she cited many books she had read and the list she still had to go. "I read a lot and that helps me understand what my kid will go through, as much as a White woman can understand. Although I have no idea what it is like to be judged for my skin color by a group that is stronger, larger, bigger and more economically empowered than I am. I can kind of understand it because I am a woman and I understand what men have done to us in the workforce and economically. So I can understand to a degree but I will never have to face it." Julie no longer feels a "real welcomeness from the White community" and is still searching for a racial home.

Julien is a 48 year-old Black man who grew up in a small racially hostile community in Southern Illinois. He has been interracially married for more than 25 years, has five children and he and his wife (Candace, see above) currently live in a predominantly White suburb outside of Chicago. They are getting ready to move to a more mixed area. I met Julien through his wife, Candace (see above). The community was also a hotbed of Black activism. Julien never interacting with or trusted White people. He remained opposed to interracial

marriage until the time of his own marriage. "I used to be a lot more militant, I haven't lost it, don't get me wrong, but my views have changed a lot. My kids have taught me a lot of stuff." His own family has never been supportive of his relationship and he feels that if he would have married a Black woman he would be more involved with his sisters' and mother's lives. When out in public he feels a responsibility to represent the very best of Interracial families, "it is all how you carry yourself."

Kelly is a 50 year-old Black woman who is recently claiming her Multiracial heritage. She grew up in a Black community down South and has always moved in racially mixed circles. She currently lives with her husband Clancey (see above) and is searching her Native American roots. "My daughter asked me one day, 'Why do you label yourself Black when you are so many different things besides Black?' I said, 'I don't let that define me, that's how society has labeled me based on one part of my background.' So I ended up giving her a talk about how people always want to label us." Kelly finds homogeneity boring and has "always been in a mixed community." She feels like she is getting feistier as she gets older and no longer feels any need to concern herself with the feelings of borderist or single-race people. "I'm not saying you have to say mean things to them but there are ways of saying things to people where they are still thinking about it after you walk away." Now that her children are grown and living happy lives she states, "When people see mixed couples they always say, 'Well what about the children?' What about them?! They are children! They don't have a problem, it's the person saying it that has the problem."

Lauren is a 42 year-old Multiethnic woman who was adopted by White parents and lived in a predominantly Black neighborhood on Chicago's South Side. She was placed up for adoption at the age of two and was bounced to 10 different foster homes and had lived in two different orphanages by time she was 9. It was at the age of nine that she discovered why no one had adopted her. "I was unaware of my ethnic background." After an incident on the playground one day when the word "nigger" came out of Lauren's mouth, a social worker informed her that she shouldn't say that because didn't she know she was also one. This moment was "devastating" for Lauren who had never heard anything good about Blacks. She was adopted at the age of 12 by White parents who were both social workers and very involved in the Civil Rights movement. Lauren admits that this was probably the best way for her to learn about her Blackness and become comfortable with herself. Her parents were hosts to many Civil Rights Activists, in fact, as she recalls, "The man who taught me to stop biting my fingernails was Stokley Carmicheal." She is a strong supporter and advocate for transracial adoption.

Lisa is a 36 year-old Black interracially married mother who grew up in the South and currently lives on Chicago's South Side. I met Lisa through Clancey (see above). She had some hesitation about getting involved with Peter (see below) because of race issues. Now that they have been committed to each other for many years and are raising their two mixed race children (one is their biological child and one is adopted), she now sees her role as bridging a gap between Blacks and Whites. "I like to think of myself as one of the people who bridges the gap between the two." She also finds that in her church other Multiracial family members reach out to her, "A lot of people have come up to me and said, 'My father is Black and mother is White,'I think to make us feel more welcome." At the same time she feels a cool reception from some once they find out her husband is White, "I'll meet people and it's all fine and then they hear I'm married to *him (laugh)*." She believes that "Race will always be an issue, it will not change, it's still the worst thing to marry outside your race and it seems people accept other mixes, but have the most difficult time accepting the Black and White marriage. So we have the job of teaching our kids to be very comfortable with themselves."

Louise is a 29 year-old Biracial woman and a friend of Marguerite's (see below). They met as undergrads and became instant friends. Louise grew up in a predominantly White area outside of Chicago and currently lives in a predominantly Latino neighborhood in the city. She strongly asserts a Biracial location. Her professional life and her hobbies and interests keep bringing her back to dealing with issues of Multiracial families. She is an attorney who handles many transracial adoptions and runs workshops to help Multiracial families deal with the racist and divisive society. In terms of her own life, her mother is White and her father is Black. "I think my birth certificate says White father, oriental mother (laugh). Supposedly they need this information for statistical reasons but they screwed up on mine so I know they must screw up on lots of other people too, so why even collect statistics?" She believes that Biracial people are disproportionately represented in professions such as teaching, acting and trial law, "because of what I call the 'on-stage' effect. You can walk into any restaurant - any - and if a Black family walks in, heads don't turn, if a White family walks in, heads don't turn, a mixed-race family walks in -- heads turn. So from a very young age I have been used to being looked at."

Marguerite is a 29 year-old Biracial woman who was adopted by White parents and grew up in a predominantly White small town in western Illinois. She currently lives in a predominantly White town west of Chicago. She identifies herself socially as Black and personally understands that "I am so much more

than my racial identity, other areas of my life are just as important." She feels strongly about the racism Black Americans face and thus has some hesitation about the addition of a Multiracial category. At the same time she recognizes that Biracial people do share some common experiences. "I'm allowed intimately into both worlds which I think is really unique. There's an ability to live in both and I hate to make it sound so separate, but unfortunately in my opinion it is." She later reflected, "There are times you are fully accepted in both worlds, but you are just very aware of the boundaries, but you can live in both of those worlds and I'm not sure all people can."

Mary is a 30 year-old Biracial woman who grew up in Hyde Park. I had met Mary some years ago through a job I had in Chicago. Her mother is White and her father is Black. She grew up in a mixed race area with many other mixed-race people and therefore race was not an issue in her life until she went away to college. Going to college was the first time she ventured out of Chicago's Hyde Park and discovered that she was expected to claim a side and that in no uncertain terms she was to claim the Black side. "That was the first time I realized society sees me as a Black person. See I had been picturing myself all those years as just blending in." She likes to shock people and thinks that by saying things to Whites that they don't expect and saying things to Blacks she will force them to rethink their understandings of race. "I do kind of go back and forth between the whole hanging attitude and talking Black slang, and I do that around White girls too, sometimes just to shock them and let them know what's really going on in the street. Sometimes I can see that things go right over their heads, they don't really get it." She enjoys her racial location because she "likes being so close to both cultures and that's why I think I'm lucky to be mixed."

Owen is a 50 year-old Black interracially married man who grew up in a predominantly Black neighborhood on Chicago's West Side. This is his second marriage and first interracial marriage. I met Owen through his wife Gail (see above). Contemplating the difference between same-race marriages and interracial marriages Owen stated, "Well I've been in both situations, the different has to do with the way society looks at you. I mean when I walk into a room with Gail it is amazing the way people look at you. It's entirely different than when I was with my first wife who was Black. And this is one of those things that's easy to say and hard to prove but it just seems the looks are different. But in terms of our day-to-day interaction race makes very little difference. It's society that acts differently." When people stare he tries, "not to show them I see, I try to act normal but I remain keenly aware of things. See now I look for a lot more things, before I would have probably not paid attention because it didn't

matter being in a interracial relationship it does matter so now I have to remain aware."

Peter is a 40 year-old White interracially married father who grew up in a small all-White Christian community in upstate New York. I met Peter through his wife Lisa (see above). He is a pastor of a predominantly Black church and holds a doctorate degree. He attended a Black seminary in the South which he thinks sets his experiences apart from other interracial couples because, "I was living in the Black community, going to church and school, so I think that's different from other couples who may have met at work or whatever. I think there are many couples where the White partner didn't know anything about Black culture, but I had been living in it for a couple years so that wasn't in our relationship." Peter feels most comfortable in the Black community, has pastored in several different Black churches and lives in a predominantly Black neighborhood. "I think I feel more uncomfortable and self-conscious when we are together in a White neighborhood, I don't find any problems in Hyde Park or downtown, but when we are out in the White suburbs I feel uncomfortable." He was one of the only people I interviewed who wanted to move to the south. "I think Chicago is more racist than Atlanta, at least politically. Whoa, Chicago. It's just kind of eye-balling, but I think I see more interracial couples in Atlanta."

Quisha is a 28 year-old Black interracially married woman who grew up in a predominantly White suburb outside of New York City. She faced a great deal of racism and deplores the idea that any person should live in an area where "they are the only one." I met Quisha at a Biracial Family Network (BFN) meeting -- one of the first couple of meetings she had attended since recently moving to Chicago. This is her second marriage and her first interracial marriage. She and Raymond (see below) met when they were each living out in San Francisco. Like a lot of interracial couples they broke up for a time because of pressure Quisha was feeling from her family and society in general. Now that they are together and expecting their first child Quisha is thankful to have an organization like BFN where she can get support and acceptance from other Multiracial families. She thinks that since her marriage to a White man that she "is not as open with people, certain people, I feel they wouldn't accept us so I'm less open than if I were in a same-race marriage because that wouldn't be an issue." Looking to the future she shares, "I don't want my kid to go through the name calling or being categorized or denied anything. I want race to be an non-issue but that won't happen in my lifetime."

Raymond is a 31 year-old White Irish American man who grew up in a racially mixed area outside of San Francisco. I met Raymond through his wife Quisha (see above). This is Raymond's

second marriage and his first interracial marriage. He and his wife have recently moved to Chicago and he observes, "Chicago is a very segregated city, I mean you go through neighborhoods here and it's like crossing a line and nobody crosses from place to place, this neighborhood being the wonderful exception. But Chicago is a nice place and the more we're here the more we like it." The wonderful neighborhood Raymond is referring to is the Lakeview section of Chicago which is on the North Side. It is a very diverse area in many ways. Raymond deals with borderism by ignoring it and calling on the idea that, "there is only one race and that is the human race." He believes that there are so many Multiracial families now-a-days that it will soon be the norm.

Vincet is a 40 year-old mixed-race man who grew up in the very segregated, all-Black Robert Taylor Homes housing project on Chicago's South Side. I met Vincet through Louise (see above) His father, who was White, could not live with the family because of fear of sanctions from other people at Robert Taylor. His mother and father were married and had seven children but his father lived in a south suburb. Vincet was always singled-out in school for being different. When it got to be too much he would "hang out in Hyde Park, I felt like there were people there I could talk to and identify with. I would walk over to Hyde Park and I practically lived there. It was funny because it was the only place I could go and feel comfortable. The people there understand and listened and said, "You'll be okay." Vincet is now married to a White Jewish woman. "People ask, 'You're Catholic and your wife is Jewish, how are you going to raise the children?' The worst thing I can think of is when parents impose cultures on their children, let the children know all cultures so they can be well-rounded. As far as I'm concerned we are going show our daughter both religions and if she wants to she can decide." Vincet is a successful business man and he thinks is has a lot to do with the fact that he is comfortable around both Blacks and Whites.

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