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Multiracial Women: Identity, Resistance, and the Body

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Sociology

by

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ABSTRACT

Multiracial Women: Identity, Resistance and the Body

by

Gabrielle G. Gonzales

This master's thesis examines the racial identity development and the role of the multiracial physical body in the lives of 10 self-identified multiracial women. Through the collection and grounded theory analysis of qualitative interview data, findings demonstrate that the physical body is a potential site for developing resistance against a monoracially-oriented society. Through relationship with the self and the influence of outsiders, respondents developed a multiracial identity and awareness regarding the dominant monoracial order in the United States. Interactions with outsiders led respondents to witness racism, feel shame and embarrassment, and find community. Within the role of self and others, the body played a significant role in aiding the participants in forming awareness and a potential resistance to a monoracial world. Utilizing a Feminist Critical Mixed Race lens, this research connects feminist research on the racialized physical body to research on critical multiraciality. Therefore, this master's thesis makes a valuable contribution to literature on the body, multiraciality, and potential avenues to resistance against the dominant monoracial framework in the United States.

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I. Introduction

This thesis is a qualitative study exploring multiracial identity through the lives of 10 self-identified multiracial. As a multiracial person myself, I wanted to interview other multiracial women in order to hear their experiences and demonstrate how the lives of multiracial individuals are particularly fruitful places to view how race is understood and enacted on an individual level. As a sociologist and feminist scholar, my personal interest in studies of mixed race extends to a deeper level of examination of structures of racial and gender inequality. My study shows how the mixed race research participants begin the process of developing a resistant consciousness to the dominant racial order (monoraciality) in the United States through the development of a multiracial identity (Daniel 2004; Daniel, Kina, Dariotis, Fojas 2014; Renn 2005; Rockquemore 2009). The way participants chose to self-identify are powerful ways the women in this study began to develop resistance against monoracial societal norms. Their self-identification was also facilitated through interactions with others throughout their lives. Through development of community, racist interactions, and shame and embarrassment, outsiders strongly influenced participants' self-identification. The role of the physical body is the key thread running through the themes of self-identification and interactions and the role of outsiders. I argue that through perceptions of self, interactions with others, and the physical body, multiracial women begin the process of resisting a monoracial world.

This study is unique in its contribution to mixed race literature on resistance and the body. I add to literature not only on multiraciality, resistance, and multiracial identity but also incorporate an analysis of the role of the physical body. Therefore my main contribution to mixed race studies comes from viewing the importance of the physical body in developing multiracial resistance to monoraciality. This work contributes to the body of knowledge on

pathways leading to a resistant consciousness among certain multiracial subjects. Thus, this study will add new knowledge to critical mixed race studies by focusing on the role of the self, others, and the physical body. This study also bridges the gap between research done on the body, race, feminism, and critical mixed race studies by drawing from previous research and literature in each of these fields and combining them. My analysis is then situated within the current literature on mixed race identity, resistance, and the body. These interviews and the lived experiences of these women extend the literature on multiracial resistance by demonstrating the various processes that lead individuals to become resistant to dominant societal structures.

My research is also unique in that the 10 women who graciously shared their lives with me come from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. Six of the women come from a white and Latina background, two are East Indian, Hawaiian, and white, one is East Indian and German white, and the last is Japanese and white. Although this is rapidly changing, the majority of research conducted on multiracial people is on bi-racial black and white as well as white and Asian American individuals.

In addition to my particular contribution to the literature and the research participants, this scholarship is unique in its perspective. I approach my research from a feminist critical mixed race perspective (Bettez 2010; Daniel et al. 2014). This means that I am a critical mixed race scholar who strongly incorporates feminist epistemology and methodology. Therefore, I work with literature from different disciplines and situate my contribution to the field of critical mixed race studies in a variety of ways. Mainly, this research adds to critical mixed race studies and enhances this field through an analysis of the mixed race body.

Literature Review

Multiraciality

Today there is a large body of work on studies of multiraciality, although this was not always the case (Daniel 2001; Daniel et al. 2014; Root 1992; Spickard 1989,). In the 1980s and 1990s academics including Paul Spickard and Maria P. Root centered their research on multiraciality in works such as *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in 20th Century America* (1989) and *Racially Mixed People in America* (1992) along with *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier* (1996) (Daniel et al. 2014). . It is important to note that the increase in public discussion of multiraciality is tied to the increase in scholarly work on the topic. Not only was there an increase in academic papers, theses, and dissertations published about mixed race since the 1980s, but numerous theater and art pieces, books and memoirs on the topic oriented to a public audience. Examples are James McBride's 1995 memoir *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother* in which he reflects on his white mother and her marriage to a black man in the 1940s. In 1998 Danzy Senna published *Caucasia*, a novel about two biracial sisters, one who could pass for white. A film and literary festival showcasing works about and by mixed race individuals was even started in Los Angeles in 2008 by authors and performers Heidi Durrow and Fanshen Cox (Lee 2011).

The scholarly research on and public discussion of mixed race identity has increased in popularity within the last 50 years as the population and visibility of mixed race individuals increased. Alongside the Civil Rights movement, during the late 1960s, interracial marriage was finally declared legal. During the 1970s and 1980s people banded together to form a multiracial social movement aimed at bringing awareness to the large and increasing number of multiracial individuals in the United States. Activists in these movements demanded a change in how the census and other forms more generally document race and ethnicity. By 2000 activists were finally successful in changing census categories which was important

because it acknowledged and gave legitimacy to the large multiracial population. The 1980s and 1990s were a pivotal time in both the broader public and academia in which many scholars and activists began to write extensively on multiraciality (Daniel et al. 2014).

Within this historical time period, many specific events led to the increase in scholarship on multiraciality, highlighting the importance of examining this topic. For years, interracial marriage was a controversial legal and social issue due to reproductive consequences of white-black marriages resulting in mixed race “Black” babies. The first works on multiraciality focused on biracial black/white individuals due to the historical racial mixing of the United States rooted in slavery. As mentioned, in June 1967 miscegenation laws were declared unconstitutional in the *Loving v. Virginia* court case. Decades later, the 2008 presidential election of Barack Obama led to even more critical discussion about mixed race and race in general in the United States. Jackson (2012) states, “Due to the growing number of persons who claim membership in more than one racial group and the increased visibility of multiracial persons in the media in the late 1990s and early 2000s (e.g., Tiger Woods, President Barack Obama), multiracial identity has received increased attention in social science research” (45). Silvia Cristina Bettez (2010), in her work on multiraciality, discusses the increased scholarship across many disciplines and cites Jayne Ifekwunigwe (2004) as arguing that, “ ‘Mixed Race’ Studies is one of the fastest growing, as well as one of the most important and controversial areas in the field of race and ethnic relations (144).”

Monoraciality

The United States is a monoracially-oriented society meaning that racial identity is treated as a singular identity category. Individuals only possess one racial identity. Historically, individuals from mixed backgrounds had no place in the dominant racial framework, or rather would be forced into monoracial categories of identification. The United

States is a monoracial society established through hypodescent. Hypodescent was established early on in the colonial period to preserve white racial purity and privilege. The one-drop rule is an extreme rule of hypodescent only applied to individuals of African descent. The one-drop rule, to this day, although legally attenuated in terms of its application, still socially binds biracial blacks/whites to a black racial identity by designating those from mixed backgrounds as belonging to the group of color. Hypodescent is a more general and less restrictive rule applied to other groups of multiracial people. It is important to note that there has been more flexibility in identification for other multiracial people particularly those of one white parent and one parent of color. As J. Winthrop Jordan wrote, “In this country, the social standard for individuals is superficially simple: if a person of whatever age or gender is believed to have any African ancestry, that person is regarded as black” (Jordan 2014:99). Hypodescent, and particularly the one-drop rule established the United States as a monoracially oriented society.

As Daniel et al. say, “monoracial claims originating in rules of hypodescent are the basis for normative patterns of identification in the United States (13).” In a monoracial society, those who are monoracial receive monoracial privilege. This privilege has historically suppressed multiracial identity through both micro and macroaggressions towards multiracial people. Monoraciality, “is the lynchpin not only of US constructions of whiteness and its associated privileges, but also unearned social advantages, including cultural, social, economic, political, and other resources, which accrue to European Americans as well as traditional groups of color (‘monoracial privilege’)” (Daniel 2014:13). Monoraciality forms the racial framework of this project. Highlighting the dominance of monoraciality in the United States shows how the multiracial individual poses a threat to the dominant racial paradigm.

Critical Mixed Race Studies

The field of Critical Mixed Race Studies is distinguished from both mixed race studies and critical race theory although it combines aspects of both fields. Critical Mixed Race Studies critiques the monoracial framework to bring perspective on the mixed race population. It is an interdisciplinary field combining work from historians, sociologists, racial and ethnic studies, and other disciplines that study multiraciality globally. This field emerged around 2014 and continues to expand (Daniel et al. 2014). Daniel et al. make clear that adding the word “critical” to mixed race studies does not signify that all previous work on multiraciality was uncritical. Rather, by adding “critical” to the title of the discipline, the fields origins in critical race theory are made clear. Critical race theory was developed out of legal studies and critical race theory (Daniel et al. 2014). The word “critical” also denotes a component of self-reflexivity. More specifically,

Critical mixed race studies places mixed race at the critical center of focus. Multiracials become subjects of historical, social, and cultural processes rather than simply objects of analysis. This involves the study of racial consciousness among racially mixed people, the world in which they live, and the ideological, social, economic, and political forces, as well as policies that impact the social location of mixed-race individuals and inform the mixed-race experiences and identities. CMRS also stresses the critical analysis of the institutionalization of social, cultural, and political structures based on dominant conceptions of ‘race.’ (Daniel et al. 2014:8)

Also central to critical mixed race studies is the social construction of race’s variability over time, along with its commutant racism. Additionally, intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), is the idea that an individual’s identity is composed of and influenced by all of an individual’s characteristics of race, class, gender, sexuality, etc., which plays a fundamental part in critical mixed race studies (Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1989). The concept/theory makes the connection between lived experiences and structures of power while acknowledging fluid, unfixed, and differing but often overlapping aspects of identity. The concept remains inextricably linked to its roots in Black feminist thought. Critical mixed race

studies forms the base of my research and shapes my contribution to the scholarly conversation. Critical mixed race studies concerns itself not only with scholarship but with activism and changing unequal power relations that have contributed to the oppression of multiracially-identified people. And “it is equally concerned with social justice and antiracism” (Daniel et al. 2014:25).

At this point in my literature review, as an addition to critical mixed race studies, I wish to foreground the feminist aspects of critical mixed race studies in order to demonstrate its importance to my research on multiracial subjects. In many ways, critical mixed race studies incorporates aspects of feminism such as intersectionality, research on women, a focus on power and agency, although not explicitly. However, it is critical to my research that the feminist aspects of critical mixed race studies are brought to the fore and that there is a specific focus on the lives experiences of multiracial women. Feminist critical mixed race studies is a critical feminist approach to mixed race subjects. Feminist critical mixed race studies draws from critical ethnographic theory in that it questions and challenges hegemonic power structures through a focus on lived experiences and their connection to these structures. As an example of Feminist Critical Mixed Race Studies, Silvia Cristina Bettez (2010) interviews mixed race individuals using a fluid and intersectional analysis of race and ethnicity.

Mixed-race women’s experiences cannot be separated from the history of race and gender politics and contemporary racial debates . . . Given general heteronormative assumptions, as women, and thus as people who can potentially bear offspring and who are expected to assume primary responsibility for raising children in a patriarchal culture, mixed-race women occupy a particularly charged social position (Bettez 2010:150).

In feminist critical mixed race studies, the knowers and the subjects are one. Women are taken as experts on their own lived experiences and self-selected identities. Feminist critical mixed

race studies center the knowledge women possess and negotiate in claiming specific racial/ethnic identities. Agency is also central in valuing self-definitions as they relate to lived experiences. As Bettez says, “Through their descriptions of what it means to belong to a particular race, they destabilize racial categories as they call into question the nature of culture and assumptions about race. The overall validity of what defines racial culture, such as Latina/o and black cultures is challenged” (Bettez 2010:159). Feminist critical mixed race studies defines the work I do in this project based on honoring the lived experiences and chosen racial/ethnic identities of mixed race women subjects.

Multiracial Identity

Researchers of multiracial identity focus on how multiracial individuals create and understand their racial and ethnic identities. An important conceptualization of multiracial identity is the term “betwixt and between.” This term parallels Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera*, as an inbetween state. As it applies to multiracial individuals, the term comes from studies of liminality originally performed by ethnographers and anthropologists, most notably Arnold Van Gennep and then Victor Turner who studied coming of age rituals. Liminality or being “betwixt and between” is the state of existing in the middle. As Reginald Daniel describes individuals demonstrating the new multiracial identity, “They maintain no rigid boundaries between themselves and the various communities in which they operate. They are liminal individuals whose identity has no fixed or predictable parameters. It has multiple points of reference but no circumference because it manifests itself on the boundary” (Daniel 2002:106).

One of the first historical approaches to multiracial identity by scholars, academics, and those in the medical field, to multiracial identity was to view this identity as pathological and ultimately negative for the mixed race individual. The pathological view is connected to

the monoracial framework and the idea that multiracial people pose a problem to the established racial system. This perspective led many psychologists to study mixed race identity and the problems individuals encountered within their personal lives rather than looking to larger structural issues that may contribute to the lives of these people.

Theorists rarely focused on the social forces that made psychological functioning difficult for multiracials. Rather, multiracial individuals were characterized as psychologically dysfunctional because this image reinforced what Cynthia L. Nakashima calls an existing “multiracial mythology” that discouraged racial blending, thereby protecting and seeking to preserve white racial purity and dominance. (Daniel et al. 2014:16).

The *ecological approach* is the most recently developed approach to multiracial identity (Rockquemore, Brunsma, Delgado 2009). This approach, rather than focusing on the outcome of an individual’s chosen identity, focuses on the context and process of the identity development. It is based on the ideas that multiracial people choose racial identities based on contextual logic which is both influenced by how they see themselves and how others view them. There are no predictable stages of identity development, identity development is not linear and without an end point. This approach does not privilege any identity whether multiracial or monoracial because this privileging reproduces essentialist ideas of race by creating a hierarchal structure of racial and ethnic identity.

Broadly, my research looks at multiracial identity from an ecological approach. I highlight how mixed race subjects see themselves and how others view them. However, as Rockquemore et al. point out, it is not so simple; a focus on singular experiences of mixed race people can in fact misconstrue ideas of racial fluctuation and change. Rather than viewing lived experiences as the end all and be all of multiracial identity development, identity must be viewed as a matrix (Collins 1990). Usage of the concept of the matrix incorporates identity fluctuation throughout time as well as other identity factors such as class and gender, linking

to other interdisciplinary fields. Employment of the identity matrix takes into consideration agency of individuals as well as structural factors influencing identity choices, “An identity matrix helps reveal such shifts as well as how multiracial individuals use a variety of racial identity options depending on the discursive context” (Rockquemore 2009:482).

The importance of the physical body in multiracial studies is becoming apparent. The physical body is a marker that can be read by outsiders influencing how individuals choose to identify racially. Moreman (2011) found that participants used the physical body as text. Moreman finds that her participants’ identities are influenced by how others read their bodies. For example Moreman writes, “People either legitimized or delegitimized their Latinanness/ones depending on whether the observer could link the participant’s skin color to a stereotypical Latina/o brownness or a stereotypical White fairness” (Moreman, 2011:205). Jimenez (2004) finds that the majority of his participants, who have one white parent and one Mexican parent, when checking boxes select one box rather than a mix, “The reasoning that these respondents give for choosing a single category on forms points to the importance of ethnic markers, such as skin-color and surname, in choosing identity categories. One respondent of Mexican and Irish ancestry chooses a white identity because he believes that he ‘looks more Caucasian’” (80). Jimenez also highlights the unique perspective of lighter skinned multiethnic Mexican Americans, “Their white skin is not normally associated with American conceptions of what people of Mexican descent look like and their experiences as a ‘white’ person allows them an insider’s view of white racism (Frankenberg, 1993)” (86).

A mixed Latino identity is linked to the physical body particularly through markers like skin color. Those from mixed Latino and white backgrounds are often mistaken for white. A focus on mixed Latino identity can also be conceptualized as *mestizaje*. Sociologist and Chicana studies scholar Jessie Turner (2014) writes, 25% of Mexican Americans marry

someone of a different race/ethnicity. This percentage highlights the significance of examining the offspring of these marriages as they will form a large part of the population in the future (Turner 2014:133). Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) addresses the issue of mestizaje and mixed race. Anzaldúa calls for a positive reclamation of indigenous identity. Like many, she has walked her life in the borderlands, a neither here nor there space similar to being "betwixt and between." Mestizaje is a specific term applicable to people of Latin America and the American Southwest. This term also acknowledges the conquest and colonization that led to mestizaje. Multiraciality can be a mix of any races and ethnicities and is often brought about through loving unions between people of different races and ethnicities. However, multiraciality has also historically arisen from forced unions, for example, between black slaves and white masters.

How do multiracially-identified individuals make sense of their identity in light of their mixed background? What role does skin color and the body play in for the multiracial person themselves and the onlooker? What do multiracial women have to say about the social construction of race in the United States? Many recent studies of mixed race identity have aimed to answer these questions paying particular attention to groups of individuals outside the black/white identity (Bettez 2010; Jackson 2012; Jimenez 2004; Moreman 2011). This is crucial because there has been an increase in population in the United States in more recent decades of other groups of people such as those from Asian countries and Latin America due to larger global economic forces and consequent immigration. My research builds upon these works by adding to the body of literature on individuals of Latino/white backgrounds and Asian white backgrounds.

Resistance

The theme of racial resistance is an important part of studies on race, multiraciality,

and monoraciality (Desfor Edles 2003; Jackson 2012; Romo 2011; Spickard 2003). There are many ways that multiracial people can resist the dominant racial order in their every day lives. For example, Rebecca Romo (2011) shows how her participants performed race and asserted a Blaxican identity as tactics of resistance. In order to be seen as legitimately Black or Mexican by both outsiders including the Black and Mexican community, the respondents had to choose one of the sides, not both. The majority of Romo's participants rejected forced monoracial identification by embracing and asserting a mixed Blaxican identity. Another way of resisting is through revealing knowledge that challenges historical myths about racial mixing. Laura Desfor Edles (2003) sheds light on the ways the women and other participants in her study challenged myths about racial mixing in Hawai'i. Migration into Hawai'i ever since the 1700s was diverse and large in number, intermarriage between these populations over time produced a multiracial Hawaiian population. The high numbers of multiracial intermarriages create the illusion that Hawai'i is a paradise of diverse multi-racial relations. This myth obscures the history of colonization, imperialism, and oppression in Hawai'i, masking the currently existing racism. Revealing this history is a way of resisting the dominant racial framework of the United States. Paul Spickard (2003) discusses resistance through multiracial studies and whiteness studies. On one hand, these two fields of study can support colorblind racism – the belief that the United States is a postracial society no longer affected by racism-- and white supremacy (Omi and Winant 2014). But they can also be used as sites of resistance, “I have written that multiracial people, by their very choice to assert a multiracial identity, are ‘undermining the very basis of racism, its categories’ (Spickard, Fong, and Ewalt, 1995)” (291). Therefore, similar to Romo, those asserting a multiracial identity are resisting the dominant racial order.

Resistance to monoraciality can also take the form of passing (Daniel 1992). Passing

was and remains a controversial tactic because some scholars view passing as enforcing the racial hierarchy rather than contesting it. Historically, passing was an extreme tactic used by biracial blacks/whites from around 1880 to 1925 (Daniel 2002:52). Passing allowed individuals with lighter skin to enjoy the privileges of living in a white world. “. . . passing may seem to be mere opportunism, a way of selling out or accepting the racial status quo. If viewed on a spectrum of tactics however, passing may be seen as an underground tactic, a conspiracy of silence that seeks to beat oppression at its own game” (Daniel 2002:49). It is important to note the extreme lengths individuals had to take in order to pass. Passing for multiracial African Americans meant cutting ties with family members who identified as black and refusing to set foot in communities where one grew up. Passing, specifically the continuous variant, is a complete severing of ties between black and white communities, and whether continuous or discontinuous a mighty feat as to do so requires ignoring a part of one’s self and history. Passing is not only a tactic of the past, but, moreover, a tactic of the present. Nor is passing solely the domain of race; indeed queer people and trans people have used passing to gain the privileges of a heterosexist society (Garfinkel 1967). Passing is directly related to the body. Passing both lines up with assumptions about the body and race as well as questions these assumptions. Multiracial people, on an individual and collective level, use tactics such as passing and forming communities apart from mainstream society to resist. These racial projects also allow multiracial people a path of self-preservation through the creation of communities that support their chosen identity (Daniel 2002:82). Daniel further conceptualizes these tactics as forming a racial project of resistance to monoracism.

Overall, resistance to monoracality is performed through multiracial studies and mestizaje as they both question inegalitarian concepts of mixing, challenging essential

concepts of race, racial purity, binaries, and hierarchies. Multiracial studies and New Mestizaje center histories, bodies, lived experiences as well as liminality, multiplicity, fluidity, self-integration, and self-creation. For example, Velasco and Trianosky (2003) call upon Latinos to refuse assimilation and refuse to become white and to embrace multiple identities, “By openly living out several racial identities at once, we can perhaps transform the character of each, so that black and white will no longer be mutually exclusive, polarized identities (186). This identity as *nuevo mestizos* is parallel to Reginald Daniel’s critical multiracial identity (1992) in that both seek to resist the dominant racial order.

Possessing marginal identity and being “betwixt and between” is a potential pathway to acquiring a resistant consciousness to monoraciality. This identity can be a catalyst for multiracial individuals to reveal embedded and socially constructed notions about race in the United States and across the world. Patricia Hill (1986) discusses black women existing in a traditionally white and male space. Similarly, mixed race women exist in a world geared towards monoracial identification (Daniel et al. 2014; Jordan 2014). Negotiating between separate racial and ethnic identities often forces the individual to notice taken for granted societal ideas about race. Being forced to confront entrenched ideas of race is an avenue for multiracial individuals to see how race is socially constructed rather than biologically determined. And put them n the path to monoracial resistance. Collins references Simmel’s *The Stranger in Learning from the Outsider Within*. Georg Simmel (1950) describes a person who is both wandering and attached, part of the group but not, “The unity of nearness and remoteness involved in every human relation is organized, in the phenomena of the stranger, in a way which may be most briefly formulated by saying that in the relationship to him, distance means that he, who is close by, is far, and strangeness means that he, who is also far, is actually near” (1). The stranger’s positionality is privy to multiple points of view. Along

these lines, Patricia Hill Collins deeply explores the valuable knowledge of black women in academia and society and their status as both outsiders and insiders. Collins writes, quoting Robert Merton,

‘On the one hand, Black women who undergo sociology’s lengthy socialization process, who immerse themselves in the cultural pattern of sociology’s group life, certainly wish to acquire the insider skills of thinking in and acting according to a sociological worldview. But on the other hand, Black women’s experienced realities, both prior to contact and after initiation, may provide them with ‘special perspectives and insights . . . available to that category of outsiders who have been systematically frustrated by the social system.’

Simmel and Collins highlight the value of the knowledge of those who are simultaneously excluded and included. In this project I explore how mixed race women’s insider/outsider status is a valuable source of knowledge that these women use on a daily basis to challenge monoracist assumptions and racism about how mixed race individuals identify, what they know about race, and what they physically look like. Furthermore, being a marginal member of society, “betwixt and between” is in and of itself a potential path to resistance.

It is obvious that many studies have documented multiracial resistance but few answer the question, how do multiracial people develop a resistant consciousness? What life processes and events lead to the potential formation of resistance within an individual?

This section of my literature review serves as a comprehensive overview of literature on mixed race, critical mixed race studies, and multiracial identity. The next section covers research on the body, mainly from the field of feminist studies. By beginning with multiraciality and ending with the body, I will point out the importance of the emerging field of feminist critical mixed race studies.

The Body

Research on the body reveals how race is socially constructed and why the body is a site to look at multiraciality (Butler 1993; Collins 2000; Davis 2015; Kafer 2013; Kang 2010;

Lock 1993; Martin 1987; Scheper-Hughes 1987). Any discussion of race relates back to the physical body, as individuals' racial and ethnic identities are read understood by outsiders through phenotype. The body is a site of protest, action, and contention. People are born with bodies yet bodies also change over a lifetime and have the potential to be altered. Individuals are socialized to read bodies in terms of phenotypically defined characteristics of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. However, a person has the ability to manipulate and change their physical body. The body is a window to how society shapes groups of individuals and how individuals shape their bodies in response to society. Social science research on the body has been performed mainly by feminist and gender studies scholars. Feminism has been credited with "bringing the body back in" to discussions of social history (Campbell et. al 2009:8). Another motivation for me to coin my research Feminist Critical Mixed Race Studies is due to feminism's tradition of reintroducing the body to feminist research.

Embodied Agency

I wish to highlight the connection between the physical body and individual agency. Campbell, Meynell, and Sherwin (2009) write, "the human body is an agent, inevitably transforming through its actions both the world and itself" (1). Campbell et al. credit 1970s feminism as reintroducing the body to the academic discussion of feminisms. These women challenged the mind-body duality from traditional European thought, incorporating the physical body in to the intellectual circle. Some of these women include Susan Bordo (1993), Sandra Bartky (1990), Marilyn Frye (1983), Iris Marion Young (2005). Furthermore women such as Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Audre Lorde (1984, 1986), Felly Nkweto Simmons (1999), and Patricia Williams (1991) challenged the dominant white feminist perspective on the body and "have called on feminists to see that the ability to ignore the body in theorizing positive agency rests on the ignorance and privilege of these bodies that have not been marked

by modes of oppression other than gender” (10). My work adds to the feminist body of literature on embodiment and agency through an examination of the lived experiences of multiracial women. This perspective also allows me to bridge feminist studies and critical mixed race studies to create feminist critical mixed race studies.

Agency emerges as a theme in research focusing on bodies. Embodied agency means that the physical body is utilized as a site of struggle against oppressive power structures. For example, Roberts (1997) shows that alongside the oppression of black women’s bodies is the agency and resistance of black women. Roberts’ analysis of resistance and agency allows the reader to see the black women as much more than victim. For example, during slavery, Black women resisted by refusing to bear children through abortion, ensuring their own children’s survival, and relying upon kinship networks. Susan Bordo (1993) discusses the material body as a site of struggle. Historical social movements were vital in establishing the importance of the body as “focal point for struggles over the shape of power (Bordo 1993:16),” particularly for feminist movements. Bordo frames the body as a site of independence and power for the individual, similarly to Collins and Roberts. In many ways the physical body is used in protesting oppressive conditions of race and gender. Intersectionality and black feminist thought are important to discussions of the body and specifically feminist critical mixed race studies in that they bring to light how closely gender, race, class, and sexuality are interwoven and dependent upon each other for how individuals embody their position and how they are perceived by outsiders.

The embodiment of thinness is a means for social mobility. Altering the physical body to approximate thinness is a tactic for managing oppressive power structures of race, class, and gender. Ann M. Cheney (2010) finds in research with women from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds that body (dis)satisfaction was intricately connected to feeling of

belonging, acceptance, and image.. Cheney found that one method women used to fit in and felt accepted, particularly if they were from a minority racial/ethnic background, was to be skinny. In many ways, thinness has been equated historically with thinness. Therefore, to obtain thinness is to obtain status in society (String 2012). Cheney writes of the women in her study, “Experiencing other forms of exclusion, they quickly learned that the slender body was a vehicle through which they could obtain more social power” (1355). The women in her study attempted to achieve slimness- a dominant societal ideal, but as a method of self-preservation, not as a reflection of vanity or negative body image. There is a fine line between assimilation and resistance through the adoption of dominant forms such as thinness.

There is a strong link between food, eating and the physical body. People manifest feelings, traumas, and experiences in their physical body that they often manage by eating or choosing not to eat. These experiences are related to structural issues that affect lives of individuals including issues of monoracism. Rather than framing women’s issues with food in terms of body image issues, Thompson (2004), as a feminist sociologist, demonstrates how women use food as a way of coping with larger systems of oppression. She says, “I propose that eating problems begin as ways women cope with various traumas including sexual abuse, racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and poverty” (547). Eating disorders can be viewed as an embodied agentic response to oppressive power structures because those with eating disorders alter their physical bodies as a way of dealing with larger oppressive social structures like racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Having an eating disorder is not in itself resistance but can provide a way that women gain awareness of oppressive power structures. This is possible through eventual recovery from eating disorders and knowledge about patriarchy in the United States.

Another agentic physical tactic other than thinness, food, and eating is “covering”. Yoshino (2006) draws strongly from Erving Goffman’s (1963) concept of “stigma” to employ the concept of “covering.” Goffman identified stigma as a possession of those who display undesirable characteristics in the eyes of society. In order to handle this stigma, people use various methods of covering to tone down their undesirability. These methods can involve changing of names but often include managing of the physical body through methods like straightening hair or dressing in line with a stereotype. Passing is on the extreme end of this spectrum while covering happens daily in many people’s lives. The subtitle of Yoshino’s book, “The Hidden Assault on our Civil Rights,” describes his perspective on the effects of covering. I acknowledge the many problems and detrimental effects that both covering and passing have on both individuals and society at large – for example loss of diversity, assimilation, and catering to those in power who fear racial difference. However, covering is a reasonable response by oppressed populations in dealing with racism, heterosexism, sexism, and classism.

Multiraciality and the Body

Much of the discussion and existing literature on multiraciality and the body focuses on skin color and the representation of the multiracial body (Haritaworn 2009; Williams 1995; Young 1995). Sanchez (2002) argues that “the multiracial body has been appropriated for use as a symbol of multi-ethnic America, often representing the nation’s hope for the future and its potential for overcoming racial strife . . . the multiracial body appeared in the 1990s as an angelic savior for our age” (277). These popular perspectives on multiraciality as a way to overcome racism in the United States do not challenge the racial hierarchy, racial essentialism, or white supremacy. Rather than challenging the core of the unequal system of race in the United States through a critical examination of multiraciality, these concepts return to race as

biological and the importance of offspring from interracial marriages. A new perspective of multiracial bodies is needed to deconstruct monoraciality and its hegemonic presence, despite increased number of mixed race people in the United States.

Representation of mixed race bodies is present in a variety of work on multiraciality (Haritaworn 2007, 2009, 2012; Sanchez 2002; Young 1995). Jin Haritaworn (2007, 2012), a qualitative multiracial scholar discusses the multiracial body, focusing on mixed women of Thai and non-Thai heritage in Europe. Haritaworn connects femininity to multiraciality in the lives of her participants. She looks at the exoticization of the mixed white and Asian body as discussed by the women she interviewed. Some women felt empowered by the exoticized representation of “beautiful bodies” and embraced this identity. Haritaworn calls for a critical examination of the mixed race body that looks at how a positive exoticization can be harming and oppressive.

Existing liminally and “betwixt and between” as a multiracial person is strongly connected to understanding perceptions of the physical body (Thompson 2009). Connections are made by outsiders between physical appearance and biology. And historically race has been understood biologically and genetically. Although it is now common knowledge that race is not a biological phenomena, among the broad population, assumptions about race are made based on phenotype. Thompson (2009) engages with racial biological history from a multiracial perspective, “I contend that when race is conceptualized in terms of biological imperatives, it relates individuals to a state of liminality – being neither here nor there” (5). Thompson’s analysis of biological racism includes the role of the physical body and appearance, “Racial aesthetics is, above all, a mode of observing the body . . . the emphasis on aesthetics and appearance within biological racialism negates the existence of mixed-race

individuals . . . Power is instilled in the materiality of bodies” (7). Thompson demonstrates a connection between the body, liminality, and the lives of multiracial individuals. She states that the existence and political consciousness of multiracial people threatens the established racial order of white supremacy as multiracial people have no place within the existing racial structure. Therefore, due to the way race is inscribed upon the body, multiracial individuals as liminal individuals are a powerful threat.

More research is needed on the link between multiraciality and the physical body. Multiraciality provides a unique site to examine the biological imperative of race considering that multiraciality and its connection to the physical body does not fit in to the dominant racial framework.

METHODS

My work focuses on mixed race identity from an intersectional and critical mixed race studies perspective using a critically ethnographic methodology that I call feminist critical mixed race studies. My methodology and theoretical perspective to conduct this research stems from feminist methodology and critical ethnography. Critical ethnography is a specific approach to qualitative methodology and theory that looks beneath the surface of interaction, aiming to reveal underlying power structures steeped in historical and social constructions affecting the lived experiences of individuals (Harvey 1990). Critical ethnography confronts the question of who decides what knowledge is valuable. This is done by showing how power relations between groups and individuals with differing cultures and values manifest and embed themselves in everyday life (Thomas 1993). Critical ethnography brings those at the margins back in to the center. Critical ethnography connects lived experience to history and socially created structures of inequality (Bhavnani and Talcott 2011).

As an example of a critical ethnographic approach that I attempt to employ in this project, Devon Abbott Mihesuah in *Indigenous American Women* (2003) discusses the deconstruction of history through ethnography as a method to begin the process of “decolonizing.” She shows that looking into the past is a major aspect of “decolonizing” and “recovering our own stories” (Mihesuah 2003:39). Mihesuah, like Margaret Kovach (2009) and other indigenous scholars, highlights the value of story in decolonization and indigenous methodology as a path to revaluing oppressed cultural knowledge. Within my own life, telling these untold and hidden stories has allowed me to heal from a trauma experienced in the past. In telling the stories of the women I interviewed I hope to reveal another piece of the decolonizing puzzle. Revealing previously oppressed and devalued knowledge is a piece of critical ethnography.

Participants

For this research project I interviewed 10 women who self-identify as multiracial, multiethnic, and/or mixed race. The ages of the women ranged from 20 to 35. I wanted to interview women within this age range for two reasons. First, I chose to obtain an adult perspective on participants’ life in terms of race and ethnicity. I assumed that women this age would have had some time to reflect on their racial and ethnic identities. Secondly, I wanted women above the age of 18 for ease in the Human Subjects process so as to not need parental permission. The participants lived in various locations across the country from Portland, Oregon to Boston, Massachusetts to North Carolina and California. I recruited participants through snow-ball sampling. I began with multiracial women I knew and branched out from my personal network to find women willing to participate through the use of word of mouth, email, and Facebook. The women came from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. The majority came from middle class families and attended secondary education institutions. For a

more specific outline of participants' race, ethnicity, education and other relevant information, see appendix.

Data Collection

I conducted qualitative interviews using a semi-structure interview guide with the research participants. My feminist critical mixed race studies methodological approach led me to the method of qualitative interviewing as a way of featuring the voices of the participants. I used a semi-structured interview guide but let the participant lead the discussion, allowing the interview to happen on the terms of the participants. The interviews lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to 2 and a half hours. I digitally recorded the interviews using my computer. Four of the interviews were performed over the phone or skype. The other seven interviews were conducted in person at a neutral location such as a café. All interviews were completed over Summer 2015 and Fall 2015. I asked participants a variety of questions relating to their family, life growing up, racial/ethnic identity formation, and their relationship with food and their bodies. For details on the interview guide see appendix.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze my data I transcribed and coded each interview. I then printed out each transcription in order to code by hand. In my analysis I employed a grounded theory approach. A grounded theory approach does not enter the research with a specific analysis objective or outcome. Rather, grounded theory lets the data speak for itself and allows themes to emerge based upon the dominant themes emerging in the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Lofland et al. 2007). Grounded theory is important in that it allows the participants in the study to speak to what is most important to them rather than only responding in a way that confirms the researchers assumptions and interview guide. Qualitative interviewing with a

semi-structured interview guide allowed for me to engage in this approach (Moreman 2011). I asked participants questions based upon my interview guide but also allowed them to take the conversation in whatever direction felt pertinent to them. I began by generally coding by identifying themes common among the interviews. I then engaged in focused coding by narrowing down the important and relevant themes to a majority of participants. Codes I developed included resistance, knowledge, family, community, body, and whiteness. These focused codes allowed me to focus on the themes present in my analysis. It is important to note that these data and my analysis do not represent all multiracial people but rather, are specifically representative of the individuals within this project.

Reflexivity

In addition to revealing embedded power structures and centering the lives of the subjects, another important part of critical ethnography is reflecting on our own values and positionality as researchers. This is vital to critical ethnography because it demonstrates how every person enters into a situation not as an objective outsider seeking the truth but as people with our own stories and histories that affect how we perform our research. As a person from an interracial family, many of my family members experience their racial and ethnic identifies differently than I do particularly because my skin is on the lighter side compared to others in my family. I pursue this research as a scholar engaging in research about a group in which I consider myself to be a member. My status as an insider is central to this research. My status as insider led to many advantages in conducting my study but I must also acknowledge my limitations due to my positionality. My positionality and reflexivity are vital aspects of this project. My role may cause some to question the validity, objectivity, and generalizability of this study. I make no claim to any of these positions (Collins 1986; Smith 1999). I wish to ground theories of mixed race identity in lived experience. Within the university, there are

areas of study that are seen as less legitimate based on their methods of knowledge production. As Margaret Kovach (2009) says,

As an indigenous researcher, it has been liberating to unveil the political nature of how knowledge is constructed. Unravelling the influence of white privilege has revealed how alternative ways of knowing have become marginalized . . . Much of what society perceives as legitimate knowledge is generated by a rather small, homogenous group of people in formal institutions of higher learning (79).

My research methodology questions dominant forms of knowledge production and what counts as “real” knowledge. The purpose of my research is to give voice to these lived experiences while exploring and centering the role of the body in mixed race identity.

This project originated from a deeply personal perspective as a mixed race woman and my interests in social justice and the role of the body in society. My own racial and ethnic identity has been in a constant state of flux and confusion throughout my life. Growing up I was isolated from many people of color and other mixed people. I grew up ignoring as best as I could, my father’s New Mexican side in order to embrace whiteness and be accepted by European Americans. Throughout my childhood I was never able to reconcile the seeming contradiction and I lived ashamed of my last name and my father who gave it to me. It was a relief to return to the home of my white mother. As I began to educate myself and learn about race, gender, sociology and social justice I started to see glimpses of who I might be. I craved to know what other women experienced being mixed race. In many ways I am just beginning to understand how I identify. Being a mixed woman is how I have chosen to identify. I wanted badly to identify with someone, anyone. This desire and my growing awareness led me to this project.

I began to find women across the country that might speak with me, using snowball sampling. I was apprehensive, nervous and awkward in the beginning. My light skin color made me self-conscious that the women I spoke with would only see me as a white woman

incapable of understanding their lived experiences. In addition to wanting to counter the power imbalance and engage in reflexivity and the traditional role of researcher and interviewee, I felt the need to explain myself in light of these insecurities. My interests in connecting the physical body to mixed race identity not only stem from skin color but also my struggles with my own body. During and after college I suffered from bulimia and anorexia. These very difficult times of my life I now see as a reasonable survival mechanism to the trauma and confusion surrounding my father, his family, and my “New Mexican-ness.” The issues surrounding my body are connected to my racial identity. I spent a long time feeling imprisoned by my body, not seeing it as a way to connect to myself but a heavy burden that must be transformed at all costs. As I healed I shifted my focus on the body to look at its social construction in terms of size, weight, features, skin color, hair, etc. and the role they play in the social construction of race.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Based upon the findings, my analysis revolves around three major themes of the self, others, and the physical body. Participants’ understandings of the self suggest that a resistant consciousness is facilitated through acts of multi-racial self-identification in response to monoracial norms. The majority of participants chose and embraced a multiracial identity rather than a singular race and/or ethnicity. Embracing a multiracial identity is one-way participants resist monoracial norms. However, I also show how the path to this identity is fluid and non-linear, wrought with difficulty and contradiction. In addition to the self, through interactions with others, participants developed shame and embarrassment, witnessed racism, and developed community. For the participants, shame and embarrassment, interactions with others, racism, and community all aided in the development of a multiracial identity. My

analysis connects perceptions and understandings of the self to the role of outsiders in constructing a multiracial identity and resistance to monoracial norms.

A major theme that runs throughout each of the self and others section of the analysis reveals how the women negotiated their physical bodies in a monoracial world. More generally, the role of the physical body also demonstrates how women represent and understand their bodies as multiracial women. Relationships with oneself and others are all facilitated through the negotiation of the physical body. These negotiations are powerful ways that multiracially-identified individuals are awakened to issues of race in a monoracial society. It is important to note here that my analysis demonstrates that self, others, and the physical body are arenas in which these mixed race individuals began the process of developing a multiracial identity which then is a site for resistance to the dominant racial order and not necessarily representative of resistance in and of itself.

As a feminist critical mixed race scholar, I constantly highlight the importance of the role of the physical body in the lives of these participants. The embodiment of race and gender and its connection to self and others is the key to tying the themes together and is my key contribution to the literature. I demonstrate how the body's role in terms of race, class, and gender is strongly connected to how multiracial participants begin to resist the dominant racial order in the United States. I also integrate scholarship mentioned in the literature review to connect my research to the body of literature on topics of mixed race and resistance.

THE SELF: construction of multiracial identity

The first theme that emerged in my grounded theory analysis centers on how participants view themselves and their racial and ethnic self-identification. The way individuals chose to identify racially and ethnically is important because it is one way that they began to develop a resistance to dominant conceptions of race in the United States. It is

also a way that the participants demonstrate agency on a path to monoracial resistance. Throughout the interviews a major topic of discussion brought up by both me and the participants, was how respondents chose to self-identify throughout their lives. Among the participants, racial and ethnic self-identification varied and changed over time. At times, participants chose a monoracial identity or were confused about what identity they wanted to embrace. The participants demonstrate that the path to embracing a multiracial identity was not simple and in many ways participants upheld the racial hierarchy on their path to a multiracial identity.

Multiracial Identity

At the time of our interviews, the majority of participants identified with a liminal or marginal identity (Daniel 1992; Park 1928; Thompson 2009). That is, in their own ways, they embraced a multiracial, in-between identity, which is a “both/neither” rather than an “either/or” monoracial identity. Embracing an in between identity puts respondents on the path to begin to challenge norms of monoracial identification and categorization as they defy norms of monoracial identification. In a monoracially-oriented world, choosing to self-identify as multiracial is in and of itself defined as resistance whether or not the participants are aware of this or not (Daniel 2004). Their chosen identities “involve resistance to normative configurations” (Daniel et al. 2014:8) and demonstrate how “multiracial identity formations interrogate monoracial norms supporting notions of white racial ‘purity’” (Daniel et al. 2014:13). Many participants use various terms such as “multiracial”, “mixed”, “in-between”. Some purposefully and clearly engaged with these terms in order to outright challenge racial norms. Others, not quite able to voice why they chose to identify this way, are examples of how an individual begins to become conscious of oppressive racial structures. Therefore, I

argue that both purposeful and more ambiguous self-identification are powerful ways of beginning to resist the imperatives of a monoracial society.

In line with Renn's (2005) identity categories I discuss the self-identification approaches that my participants utilized. Each of these approaches I frame as either conscious resistance or the beginnings of a resistant consciousness to dominant conceptions of race in the United States. Historically, multiracial people, specifically bi-racial individuals of blacks and white backgrounds have been impelled by the one-drop rule to identify as black (Winthrop 2014). Multiracial individuals of Latino/a, Asian and other backgrounds have had comparatively more flexibility in their identity options (Daniel et al. 2014:12). Individuals' identities fit in to a larger picture of the structure of a monoracial society (Johnson and Nadal 2010). People are only "allowed" and indeed forced to choose one race with which to identify, particularly through mechanisms like the US Census.

I interviewed Ana at a coffee shop near the university we both attended. Although from religious studies department, I met her in a class on Race, Ethnicity, and Nation in the sociology department. She had discussed her identity as a mixed race person a few times in class and I reached out to her after the class was over to see if she would be interested in doing an interview. Ana grew up in the Bay area of California with their Hawaiian/White mother and East Indian father. Their parents met in college when their father came from India to study. When asked, Ana strongly asserted her identity to me, "I identify as Asian Indian, white, and Hawaiian . . . Yes absolutely, I identify as multiracial." Ana clearly and confidently embraces a multiracial identity both to me in our interview and in her everyday life with those asking about her racial and ethnic identity.

Sanya, Ana's sister, who I met through Ana rejected both a specific racial identification and a multiracial identity consisting of a combination of separate

races/ethnicities. She explained to me when talking about the U.S. census, “it forces you to conform to one race. Even if someone is multi racial, they will not have the same experiences as you. I understand the census is trying to collect information but it doesn't make any sense to me because you can't compare. They are defeating the purpose by lumping people into a category.” Although the census is meant to put people in to categories based upon the similarities, what Sanya is saying is that putting all multiracial people in to one category does not make sense because there is such a variety of races, ethnicities, and experiences among the mixed race population. The census, a population wide example of how race is conceptualized in the United States, as of 2000, has allowed respondents to check more than one box for race. However, there is no multiracial box to check. But, as Sanya points out, even a multiracial box lumping all multiracial people in to one category would not demonstrate the variety of multiracial people.

Sisters Sanya and Ana consciously and confidently resist monoraciality. Sanya questions the racial order in the United States as exemplified by the census. Sanya takes on an extraracial identity (Renn 2005) meaning she does not identify herself using any formal census categories. Ana takes on a multiracial identity identifying herself as multiracial (Renn 2005). She rejects how she is “supposed to choose” to identify and embraces a liminal personhood. Checking separate boxes on a census reifies racial distinction, which defeats the purpose of identifying as multiracial. As Reginald Daniel says, “Even the current formula . . . which allows individuals to check more than one box . . . puts forth the notion that multiracial-identified individuals primarily should view themselves as parts of various or multiple monoracial communities rather than also as constituents of a multiracial collective subjectivity” (Daniel et al 2014:14). Sanya questions these issues and resists classification as designated by the census and U.S. as a whole.

Isabel, a woman of Japanese and European descent, grew up near Seattle, Washington in a relatively racially and ethnically diverse community. She spoke to me about how she checks boxes on the census and other demographic forms and identifies, “If you can pick more than one I do Asian and white. If there aren’t any other choices I do other. I can’t decide between Asian and white so I choose other.” Isabel is not entirely conscious of why she chooses the “Other” category but is an example of someone beginning to question the racial order because they do not fit in to the prescribed categories. Choosing “Other” is one way that participants like Isabel start to question the racial order in the United States. Her choice of “Other” could easily be viewed as ambivalence towards her identity because she does not critically and consciously engage in an analysis of racial categories. However, her choice is an example of how someone begins to challenge the monoracial imperative and confront monoracial categorization. She has the opportunity to check white yet chooses not to do so. For Latinos in the United States who are not seen by the census as a racial group, checking the other box can be seen as a sign of resistance (Daniel 2002). Although not purposefully, Isabel is asserting a similar resistance by not choosing Asian or white when forced to select one race. Although she does not draw a connection between the broader construction of racial identity and her own multiracial identity, she nevertheless resists choosing the “other” box. Isabel takes on multiple racial identities telling me at one point that she is Asian and white. At other times she takes on an extraracial identity and a transcendent identity, refusing to categorize herself (Daniel 1996; Renn 2005; Rocquomore and Brunsma 2002). A person embracing a transcendent identity views themselves as outside of racial classification.

Myra also resisted classification but in a different way than any of the other participants. She said that she would mark Caucasian (White) on a survey or census,

I guess if they saw me they wonder about that because I have darker skin, no one has questioned it or said anything about it, what would I mark, I have a German passport my dad is as white as it gets. My mom's darker genes are dominant in the next generation: my sisters and I have color and dark eyes and hair but I didn't feel that different and only some people made me feel different.

Myra acknowledges her difference from other white people based upon skin color at the same time that she is aware of the whiteness of her German father. Her choice to mark Caucasian or white on surveys is a stark demonstration of resistance against a system with no place for multiracial people.

Fluctuating Identity

Although at the time of the research, most participants self identified as multiracial in one way or another, their identities as multiracial fluctuated. For the participants, self-identification varied over time and is often flexible and context specific (Poston 1990). Kelly Faye Jackson (2012) describes shifting racial/ethnic expressions for the multiracial participants of her qualitative study. She found that many of the participants modified their racial/ethnic expression based upon the race/ethnicity of the people in their surrounding environment while some grew confident in their multiracial identity as time passed. My participants also demonstrated fluid identifications and expressions of their racial identity. In addition, some do so in a way that purposefully resists monoracial expectations in the environments around them. For example, Isabel did not provide a comprehensive analysis of the reasoning behind her choice to check the "other" box yet, she nevertheless challenges racial categorization. In conversations with friends she discusses herself as Japanese and white rather than seeing herself as an "Other." Both by checking the "Other" box and by acknowledging her white side and Japanese side, Isabel demonstrates a fluid identity as well as a resistance to monoracial imperatives.

I also interviewed another set of sisters, Phoebe and Carson. They grew up on the West Coast living between their white mother and Latino father. Their stories are examples of how racial and ethnic identity changes over time. Phoebe described to me how she believes she is both Latino and white but how other people don't see it this way, "It's like when I say I'm white people are like, 'oh but your last name is Garcia and you don't really look white' and when I say I'm Latino people say, 'oh you're white.' People don't think you can be both." This is interesting in light of the U.S. census and other forms that require respondents to declare race and ethnicity because on the census one can be both white and "Hispanic". However, as Phoebe shows, in her everyday life, being Latino and white are seen as mutually exclusive. She also said, "I've been more consciously identifying as Latino in the last few years because I've gained more of an understanding of multiculturalism, just because I'm white doesn't mean I'm not Latino." Phoebe points out common societal monoracial perceptions. Yet she clearly states multiple times that she believes she can be both Latino and white. Phoebe touches upon an important key to racial identity resistance in these participants' lives. Their identities and expressions challenged outsiders' notions of race and ethnicity, which in turn affected how the participants viewed themselves (Cooley 1902). A catalyst for discussion of race in the lives of sisters Phoebe and Carson was their last name, Garcia, a common Latino surname.

Carson, who can easily pass as racially white, also sees herself through a multiracial lens. For example, Carson said to me, "Yesterday at work someone asked me my last name, it was good we led in to a very good conversation about labeling someone as Hispanic or Latino . . . "I then asked her if during this conversation she was choosing to identify as both white and Latino and she said, "when I was talking to her I was identifying as both, but I think she

only asked me that question because my last name is Garcia.” Although at times she is perceived as only white she still chooses to embrace a multiracial identity.

Carson said, about a conversation she had with a coworker, “when I was talking to her I was identifying as both (white and Latino), but I think she only asked me that question because my last name is Garcia.” This quote identifies how Carson takes on a situational identity in which how she chooses to identify varies with context (Renn 2005). Carson and Phoebe’s identities can be viewed through a lens of multiracial studies and new Mestizaje studies as they are both multiracial and mestizo. Jessie Turner (2014) outlines the similarities and differences, stating that one significant similarity is that both perspectives challenge inegalitarian concepts of race and racial mixing. Carson’s last name not only led to a discussion about race and ethnicity but also was a venue for her to assert her white and Latino identity. Because she can pass as white, her claim to a multiracial identity claim and resulting educational conversation with someone are mechanisms for resisting monoraciality. For example she was talking to a coworker who assumed based upon her appearance that she was white, “He said I don’t like curry. I’ve never met a white girl who doesn’t like curry (referring to her). And I was like excuse me, I’m not white, but I look white to you.” In this instance, she confronts this person’s perceptions about race/ethnicity. Carson also challenges people’s ideas of race and ethnicity through language, “I show up to job interviews and people ask me if I speak Spanish and I say no, even in New Mexico around white people they didn’t get that I didn’t speak Spanish.” People with Spanish surnames are expected to speak Spanish. Carson defies assumptions of essentialist categories of race and ethnicity. I argue that these micro level exchanges are powerful instruments of resisting monoracial classifications.

As they got older, a few of the women gained a larger and more nuanced understanding of race. This knowledge created space for them to embrace multiple identities.

For example, through education about race and culture, Phoebe chose to embrace her father's race and ethnicity. When I asked Isabel if she felt connected to her Japanese side she said, "I like to think so, I like the Japanese culture, and I studied the language and gaining some of that culture back by learning Japanese and when I visit Japanese I don't feel like I really belong. "As these women gained knowledge of their respective cultures they felt more comfortable identifying as such. Acquired knowledge not only allowed women to negotiate their identities and resist monoracial identification, but also demonstrated their deep understanding of the roots of race and privilege in the United States. Daniel et al. (2014) say, "multiracial identity formations interrogate monoracial norms supporting notions of white racial purity as well as European Americans' investment in whiteness and its attendant privileges" (13). This section addresses how participants chose to self-identify racially and ethnically in a society that challenges their mixed identity. These women engaged with their identities and in doing so, resisted dominant racial norms in the United States.

THE ROLE OF OUTSIDERS

Race is socially constructed through relationships and interactions between outsiders and insiders. Racial and ethnic insiders – the multiracial women in my study—construct their identities in contexts affected by outsiders – those who do not self-identify as part of the same racial and ethnic category. The previous section shows how the agency of the women strongly shapes their chosen self-identities. This section demonstrates how racial and ethnic identity is constructed in tandem with the perceptions and actions of outsiders through shame and embarrassment, racism, and forming communities.

The women I interviewed lived as insiders and outsiders as they navigated between different social environments throughout their lives. Because of this these individuals are capable of revealing embedded and socially constructed notions about race in the United

States from a unique perspective. This perspective largely comes from negotiating interactions with outsiders. Having to navigate two worlds or exist on the border (Anzaldúa 1987) in a mixed race person's life can lead the individual to acquiring knowledge that gives them the tools to resist the dominant racial order. This positionality is a challenging place to exist particularly in the United States, yet it can provide opportunities for marginal individuals to gain deep insight into the complexity of intergroup relations. As Daniel (2014) writes of Robert Park,

He nevertheless argued that such a position could provide an individual with a broader vision and wider range of sympathies due to the ability to identify with more than one racial or cultural group . . . This 'positive' marginality in turn would assist social scientists in gaining deeper insights in to the dynamics of race and ethnic relations. (16)

Although it is possible for many types of people to resist a racist society and engage in antiracism, these women's positions as witness to outsiders' perceptions and interactions, similar to the black women in academia Collins discusses (1986), provide them with a unique understanding of race and racism leading to resistance to monrality.

Shame and Embarrassment

The way others perceive and act towards multiracial people is an essential element in determining how multiracial participants feel about themselves. Therefore, the role of outsiders plays a pivotal role in the development of a multiracial identity. Many participants explain feeling ashamed of and embarrassed by their racial/ethnic background when they were younger. For example, Carson told me, "not wanting people to know my last name, embarrassed and I thought people would think I was Mexican." And Phoebe, "when someone reads roll call and I get butterflies in my stomach, I feel like people are looking at me like wtf that white girl has the last name Garcia . . . Whenever I'd hear my last name I'd be like ughhhhhh." Being Mexican was a source of shame and imbued with a negative connotation in

the white dominant environment where Phoebe and Carson grew up. Because they can pass as European American, they rejected a part of themselves that could be associated with being Mexican and instead embraced whiteness. This was made possible because the dominant and most salient race in their immediate environment was whiteness.

This shame led both sisters to further assimilate into whiteness. As young children, embarrassed of their last name and father's racial/ethnic background, one way they dealt with this shame was to engage in covering (Yoshino 2006) and at certain times to pass (Daniel 2002). When Carson was in high school, a Latino boy found out her last name was Garcia and asked her, surprised, if she was Mexican. Carson responded, offended, that the name was Spanish, not Mexican. Particularly within New Mexico, one can claim a higher status as "Spanish" or Hispanic rather than Mexican. She did not want the boy to think she was Mexican and thus of lower status than she believed herself to be. This suppression of multiraciality by the society around them, a parallel to what Patricia Hill Collins (1990) discusses as suppression of black women and black feminist thought, for some, is a catalyst for resistance; to fight against what once oppressed them. Shame and embarrassment of their racial and ethnic background due to the surrounding dominant whiteness played a role in Phoebe and Carson's path to identifying as multiracial, ultimately leading to resistance to the monoracial order. Their liminal identities and unique position in society contributed to their awareness of this shame and embarrassment, as they grew older. Awareness and a critical mindset towards their past experiences led them to embrace a multiracial identity and put them on a path to monoracial resistance.

Ana discussed shame in being Hawaiian through its connection to the perceptions of Hawaiians as dumb and lazy. When Ana and I were discussing Hawaii and her family there,

she expressed an understanding of oppressive historical structures affecting individuals' everyday lives,

Hawaiian people there is a problem with obesity but I feel like my family in particular is very cognizant of how they look . . . my Hawaiian grandma in raising her children was trying to distance her children from Hawaiianness . . . it has to do with colonialism, white people think Hawaiians are dumb and lazy. So that definitely had an impact on her. She tried to whitenfy her children; spoke fluent Hawaiian and didn't teach kids Hawaiian. Sent kids to white school, discouraged that sort of thing. Ana connects knowledge of colonization with the body, specifically obesity. She talks

about obesity but then jumps to her family. Then she specifically brings colonization and her grandmother into her discussion. Her historical knowledge leads her to make connections between her personal life and larger societal structures particularly in relation to assimilation in the context of Hawaiian history. Her quote demonstrates how perceptions of outsiders have affected her family in the past and continue to do so today. Ana is aware of how damaging stereotypes can be for people of marginalized racial and ethnic groups. Her awareness is a mechanism for resistance.

Shame and embarrassment are individual manifestations of colonization and assimilation. Shame and embarrassment led Phoebe and Carson to reject the Latino part of their identities at a young age. However, both sisters eventually grew to accept and maintain cultural ties to their ethnicity, which increased as they became older. Carson provides an apt example. She brought up colonization when discussing how she sees the difference between Hispanic and Latino,

To me Hispanic it means of Spanish origin so it's like recognizing a conquered colonial past which to me most people if they are closer to an indigenous root are less likely to accept that term. It seems the whiter people are the more they want to associate with a Spanish lineage than an indigenous lineage. Latino is the safer term to use. I would never call someone Hispanic unless they identify as Hispanic.

She distinguished between Hispanic and Latino based upon her knowledge of a history of colonization. Her knowledge is based upon how she sees certain groups of people's reactions

to claims of being Hispanic versus being Latino. She equates identifying as Hispanic as more Spanish than indigenous. Her family is from New Mexico, which has a history of native populations choosing to identify as Hispanic or Spanish rather than Mexican or Indigenous in order to distance themselves from an oppressive past and approximate whiteness (Zavella 1993). She then goes on to say,

“I would never call myself Mexican, I say who is to say what Mexican is, when all of your ancestors lived in what was used to be Mexico and it’s so complicated when you get indigenous blood in there because we got that in there through rape or persecution or something fucked up. I mean indigenous roots my ancestors bones are in the mountains of New Mexico, my father’s.”

Her family and ancestors are native to this part of the United States, which used to be part of Mexico. This interplay combining her personal choice of identification and awareness of the role of outsiders, is a powerful method of resistance on a micro-level. Carson connects hegemonic racial structures imposed by outsiders to her daily life and how she chooses to identify.

Racism

Due to their liminal positions, many multiracial people witness countless acts of racism from outsiders. Witnessing racism and naming it so led women to question the dominant racial order. Patricia Hill Collins (1986) discusses black women existing in a traditionally white and male space. Similarly, mixed race women exist in a world geared towards monoracial identification. An example of this is Marie who lived between two worlds growing up in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

My Grandpa had money from his dental practice so my nana felt more sophisticated than with my mom’s side of the family, which honestly is more ghetto, two pretty different sides. Then when my dad married Stephanie that brought a whole other culture in and she’s Dutch and her family is from Pennsylvania, different perspectives and then North Carolina has been different from New Mexico and there’s that southern hospitality but there is a lot of racism too.

She talks about her dad's more Spanish side versus her Mom's more Mexican side. Her father remarried a white woman from Pennsylvania and moved their family to North Carolina. Marie learned to navigate a variety of different spaces throughout her life. She described how New Mexico is different from North Carolina in terms of racism, "People are proud of it (the confederate flag) and say the history of the South is rich and represents history. And this kid I knew wanted to put it up (hang it up outside his house) and I asked him about the history he was talking about and he couldn't tell me about this history he was passionate about." Marie also acknowledged racism between those who identify as Spanish and those who identify as Mexican in New Mexico (Zavella 1993), "That side is more Spanish than Mexican which is different too. Nana always talks about how her dad and mom wouldn't let her talk to this Mexican boy they had a crush on, always acknowledged that there was racism between Spanish and Mexican people." Marie's experiences as a multiracial person allowed her to gain an understanding and perspective on race not shared by many. She was able to question her friends in North Carolina about their pride in the South's history and thus to question racist justifications. Her interactions with others provided the site for her to begin to resist racism.

When we were discussing her family's class background Katherine brought up the topic of racism between darker skinned people and her lighter skinned Mexican family, "Proud Mexican old ladies. Very light skinned, blue eyes, tall. My grandpa was very short with brown eyes but light skin and hair and it was probably an arranged marriage but she wouldn't want to admit that. There's a lot of racism, with darker skin Mexicans, blacks, doesn't matter, super racist." Within Mexico, lighter skinned Mexicans often have more privileges and higher status in society due to their closer phenotypic approximation to Spanish ancestry. Coming to the United States, her family may feel like they need to compete with other racial and ethnic minorities to boost their status.

Myra told me, “I used to reject the sari, my mom represented what was not loved and respected so I did not want that. I did get the idea that white people are better, my mom was not that respected by the community, they didn’t fully take her seriously. They expected her to be practical, and organized and looked down on that. I didn’t want to identify with that. “ Myra is clearly aware of racial dynamics present growing up around mostly white people. Because the community did not respect her mother, Myra also did not respect her mother.

Witnessing racism by outsiders led many to question and take note of the role of race in society. This awareness, gained over a lifetime is what aids the participants in developing a resistant consciousness.

Community

Community was a way participants found acceptance in a world inimical to multiracial individuals, creating space for them to embrace their multiracial identities. Sanya and Ana both found community growing up in Northern California. The diverse racial population in this area of the country and the middle to upper class community they grew up in most likely influenced the people they were friends with. Similarly, Katherine grew up in California around other Latino-identified people. Katherine and Marie both discussed feeling comfortable around people from similar backgrounds. The communities of Sanya, Ana, Katherine, and Maria are all very similar in that they consist of other multiracial individuals.

Other participants were friends with many other self-identified mixed race people, “so I’ve noticed that my closest friends have been multiracial, mostly Asian white people. My two closest friends, one half Cuban half white, half Asian, half white. Spanish Cuban not afro. Half Japanese and other stuff, half.” Having friends who can understand her experience as a multiracial person is important in Ana’s life. Ana’s sister, Sanya, said something similar,

I had one of the most racially diverse friend groups my best friend for example is multiracial she is Mexican German and my other friend is Filipino and Chinese . . . one thing I've noticed is that people tend to gravitate towards people who are more like them I seem to befriend people who have some other culture about time some other cultural influence other than the white norm.

Similar to Ana, Sanya chooses to surround herself with others who may be able to relate to her experiences. Marie now lives in North Carolina and says she has a variety of friends, “Here I have a lot of friends from all over. My boyfriend’s dad is from Columbia, another best friend her family is from Chile. It does go back to more Latin American south American roots for my friends.” Similar to Marie, Katherine said, “People I feel close to are mixed, understand the Mexican side or the other or they are just Latin people. Not just white people.”

As Phoebe grew older, she rebelled against standard societal norms and expectations for a teenage girl, friends she had when she was younger were not as willing to remain friends with her,” Yeah the other people who came from more wealthy families were not willing to stray out of that wealthy white normalcy.” Phoebe made it clear that her mixed race status contributed to difficulties of finding community, “I guess it has to do with ethnicity that I feel like an “other” and that’s not something they could relate to but I could relate to their experiences as someone from a white middle class family.” As Phoebe says, “As I got older I feel like I started making friends with people with less money, Raine and Jayden . . . Because they were the only people who would accept me for wearing dirty overalls and weird hair.”

Phoebe and Carson are similar to Ana, Sanya, Marie, and Katherine in that they find community of people who will accept and understand them. However, this understanding is on the basis of existence on the fringe of society rather than shared multiracial experiences. The people who embraced them and with whom they made friends were not necessarily mixed race people but other misfits—those who were lower/working class and other people of color

in the wealthy suburb they all lived in. Both Carson and Phoebe gravitated towards an alternative anarchist community. These kids were looked down upon in the larger community as the bad kids often from broken, poor families. Their tattered clothing, tattoos, and colored hair physically marked them. They were not the kind of kids most parents wanted their kids to be friends with. Yet both Phoebe and Carson found a place and an identity through this community who accepted them.

THE BODY

The thread underlying the perceptions of self and the role of outsiders is the physical body. Participants engaged their bodies and knowledge of bodies' connection to ethnic/cultural histories as a way of developing a multiracial identity and thus resisting a monoracial world. The body as one of the main symbols of race in our society plays a significant role in the lives of these multiracial women. For these women, themes of covering and passing, thinness, and confidence emerged. As a feminist critical mixed race scholar, the importance of the role of the physical body in the lives of these participants is key. Feminism's continued emphasis on women and gender's connection the physical body underlies my research (Butler 1993; Wolf 1990). I demonstrate how the body's role in terms of race, class, gender, and sexuality is strongly connected to how multiracial participants develop an awareness that allows them to begin to resist the dominant racial order in the United States.

The participants' paths to self identification as multiracial individuals was facilitated by their own and other's perceptions of their physical body. Many of the women's chosen racial and ethnic self-identification emerged through a lifelong process of negotiating between societal expectations of race and their internal feelings, family dynamics, and racial and ethnic background. In some cases participants chose and currently choose to racially and ethnically

self-identify is based upon the way their physical bodies are perceived by others. Carson and Phoebe can both easily pass as white and in their earlier lives, identified as white and not as multiracial. However, as they grew older and acquired knowledge about how race operates in the United States, both due to their subject position and their education, they began to question how their physical bodies were viewed by others, creating awareness of race and its connection to gender and the body.

Covering and Passing

Throughout their lives, a few of the participants completely broke with half of their background and passed as white (the majority of participants are half white, see appendix for more information on participants). Passing is on the extreme end of covering (Daniel 2002). The majority of participants engaged only with various methods of covering (Yoshino 2006). I highlight the physical aspects of passing and covering to show how the women in this study presented their physical bodies in order to cover. The participants use their bodies to resist and interrogate imposed binary definitions of racial identity while in the process also keep the racial hierarchy intact.

A powerful part of covering is how one fits in physically to the dominant phenotypical model, “Overall, skin color along with other phenotypical features such as hair texture, eye color, as well as nose and lip shape, etc. working in combination with attitudinal, behavioral, and socioeconomic attributes has increased as a form of ‘racial capital’” (Daniel 2014:24). The physical body is inexorably linked to race (Omi and Winant 2014). Historically, light skin has been the prerequisite for passing. I argue that based upon these participants’ stories, passing and covering are heightened by other attempts at body modification. These types of modifications include the lightening of skin and avoidance of tanning to attempts to slim one’s body. Slimness has been marked as a sign of status (Bordo 1993; Cheney 2011). In

order to obtain status, individuals attempt to achieve thinness. For the participants, the path to resistance was fraught with contradictions that allowed them to develop a multiracial identity and resistant consciousness but that also upheld the monoracial hierarchy. The women's relationships with their bodies demonstrate how they do not need to be free of patriarchal constraints on the female body to be resistant to monoracial society. Tanya Bunsell (2014) in her ethnography on female bodybuilding in the UK writes, "I find myself becoming increasingly skeptical of second-wave feminist claims that there is a 'female body' which can be 'reclaimed' from 'patriarchal' society . . . there can never be a resistant 'female body' outside of discourse, or a resistant body that can stand as a simple exception to forces of normalization or domination". Like Bunsell, I find that the women participants in my research are complex subjects whose bodies play an often-contradictory role. Yet, these contradictions do not prevent them from engaging in resistance.

Phoebe recounted a memory of the past, "[in] junior high, I was obsessed with being as white as possible. I would wear long sleeves and pants in the summer so I wouldn't get tan, bleached my hair, bought skin-bleaching lotion and I'm not even that brown! I didn't want anyone to think I was close to Mexican or anything." I asked her why and she said, "I was embarrassed. All the kids who were Latino most of them Mexican they had such a bad reputation as being bad kids and bad families and stuff."

Then as she grew older, "In high school I was like, 'oh fuck that shit I'm going to wear dirt overalls every day and chop my hair off and wax my eyebrows off.' And as much as that was rebelling from those societal norms it was within those norms." She altered her body in a different way – by trying to look "different" than she did before and by appearing "alternative" and androgynous. And now, after college, she embraces her body and is now mostly comfortable with herself (hooks 2003; Walker 2001).

Although Phoebe is relatively untroubled with herself and her multiracial identity, she shared with me that she feels that "my body is Latino." This is largely based on how outsiders view the bodies of women of color (Garcia 2012; Gutierrez 2008). She further elaborates on how she views society's perceptions of women of color and their bodies, "there are all these POC with big butts and boobs and as soon as a white girl has those things it's like oh shit white girls are getting better, evolving. Everyone wants a white girl with a fat butt and women of color have had these traits for however long." For Phoebe, her physical body is a major tool for expressing her racial and ethnic identity. From her younger years dressing androgynously and trying to keep her skin light, to her acceptance of her body and multiracial Latina identity.

Phoebe is one of the respondents who has consciously covered and passed at various stages in her life. At one point in her life in middle school she denied the existence of a Latino identity. In order to facilitate covering she pursued a thin physical body and engaged in other methods of covering such as lightening her skin. Although Phoebe can easily pass, her Latino last name gives her away. She felt she needed to overcompensate by refusing to tan and try to lighten her skin as well as maintain a thin physique. Later on in Phoebe's life she reacted against trying to fit in by presenting her physical body in an extreme manner. I draw a comparison between Phoebe's attempts at body modification to overweight and obese people's body weight as a form of protection against the world (Young and Burrows 2013). Both added body weight and alternative ways of dressing are unconscious methods of keeping people away. In order for Phoebe to draw attention away from her race/ethnicity as demonstrated by her physical body, she first tried to fit in and pass. She then tried the opposite by altering her body in a way that stuck out from the crowd. She might be noticed but not for her race/ethnicity but rather for her outrageous look.

Rather than viewing the way Phoebe utilized her physical body as a passive acceptance of monoracial norms, I view Phoebe's action through a lens of agency. Phoebe's attempts at covering and previous passing facilitate her resistance to monoraciality through her resulting awareness later on in life. Phoebe's presentation of her body is a powerful statement in a monoracial society. This is demonstrated through her path to embracing a multiracial identity. She is aware of how passing and covering in the past were reactions to not fitting in to society. Her gained knowledge through her education and subject position led her to see this and then to embrace a multiracial identity. Today Phoebe embraces a fuller body shape. She is also aware of how others view her body. When she says "my body is Latino" she means that the way her body is perceived by outsiders is as a Latina body; she has wide hips, a big butt, and breasts – all features stereotypically associated with the bodies of women of color and in this case Latinas specifically. Phoebe's nuanced awareness of her past relationship with her body and her racial/ethnic identity in addition to how she is perceived physically today demonstrate monoracial knowledge. Both Phoebe and Carson's awareness of societal ideals and normative about women's bodies allows them to begin to resist normative monoracial expectations and make decisions about their own physical bodies in today's society.

Thinness and Covering

I get the same messages from both sides of my family that it's not ok to be large. With Hawaiian people there is a problem with obesity but I feel like my family in particular is very cognizant of how they look . . . white people think Hawaiians are dumb and lazy. I don't know if this is related but my Hawaiian grandma in raising her children was trying to distance her children from Hawaiian-ness.

The quote above demonstrates Ana's awareness of how colonization affects the way people see themselves and their physical bodies today. This is one way her physical body as a Hawaiian person, has shaped her knowledge of race. Ana told me a few times over the course of the interview how she often felt she was overweight and would diet. Above she mentioned

obesity in the Hawaiian population and the stereotype of Hawaiians as lazy and unintelligent. She then talks about how her grandmother tried to assimilate her children into whiteness. Although she does not specifically mention how her grandmother felt about her own body or her children's bodies, she indirectly references the racialized body with her mention of obesity.

In addition to feeling pressure to assimilate physically with ethnic identification, on their mother's side, both Ana and Sanya feel a similar pressure from their Indian father and grandmother. Both sisters discussed their Indian grandmother's small body size and how she would make rude comments about overweight people as well as comment when Ana and Sanya had gained or lost weight, "My grandmother, the whole Indian family, they are very concerned with beauty standards. Whenever I gained a little weight or something it is clearly pointed out to me." Their father would also occasionally make weight related comments. Sanya connects issues of status and slimness to the caste status of her grandmother, "my grandma is very concerned with status when she married my grandfather it was pre-independent India, well, post actually, when they met. The caste system was in full force and they were different. I'm sure she's very aware of class and caste." This is another example of how Sanya connects social knowledge of Indian to the lives of her Indian family members, expounding upon her learned racial knowledge.

Sanya talks about how she is affected by the comments her family makes about her body, noting with sadness in her voice, "it affects me unconsciously on the surface I really don't care, but I know that it feeds into an insecurity on the lower level. It does affect what you think about that on a daily basis like gaining weight or food."

The pressure to be thin pervades American society. This section demonstrates how women can both be empowered and embrace a multiracial identity yet at the same time feel

this pressure. Although Ana and Sanya do not feel pressured to appear physically Hawaiian or Indian, they both feel pressure to be skinny. On one level an attempt to achieve slimness is an attempt to cover and align oneself with status through whiteness (String 2012). For women of color with little power in society, an attempt at achieving slimness is a mechanism for obtaining power.

Carson struggles between feeling the pressure to be skinny as a white person and the ability to embrace a curvier figure as Mexican. This struggle is strongly facilitated by her identity as a multiracial individual. Carson demonstrates a similar feeling about her body as Ana and Sanya in that she desires thinness associated with whiteness. Because she does not fit neatly in to specific phenotypical racial categories she is ambivalent about how her physical body fits in to the framework. In Carson's quote, she is playing off the stereotype that women of color are supposed to be heavier, have larger butts, hips, and breasts, while white women should be thin. But this limited and dichotomous view of ideal bodies does not leave room for many women in any category, above all not multiracial women. Although not explicitly stating this, Carson is pointing out that she does not know where in this dominant discourse about "ethnic" beauty standards she fits as a multiracial woman.

Carson acknowledges how at times she does not treat her body well, yet how this results in a desired outcome, "I need to make my body run at its maximum level and sometimes I neglect it and drink coffee and then I feel like shit but then I'm like ohhh I 'm getting skinny, but I still feel like shit." Carson does not see herself as legitimately Mexican because she sees herself as multiracial. When it comes to her body she explains how she feels in an either/or monoracial framework, "If I was actually Mexican I could have big boobs and hips, and it would be good and sexy but if I'm white then I have to be skinny, very consistently that goes through my head." Keeping with cultural and social body ideals, she is

“allowed” to have big hips and breasts if she is Mexican but if she is white she must be skinny.

Myra is another participant who discussed issues with her body relating to thinness. For her, these issues are in the past and she is in a much better place now. Her quotes demonstrate her insight on why she was anorexic and how difficult it was to recover. Her awareness and knowledge of these issues is yet another example of the path to accepting yourself as a multiracial woman. Based upon her appearance, Myra is often mistaken for a variety of races and ethnicities. She likes to dance and told me,

“I did some Indian dance and wore my mom’s sari and I look very Indian when I dress Indian and I guess it’s a very superficial thing it’s just the way I look. I have people call me their Indian princess. They like the idea of it. People love India. If I do the makeup like an Indian actress it’s very high status as an exotic. It is in our society. So much about image, the surface.”

Myra explains how her physical appearance can make her seem more authentically Indian to outside audiences.

We also discussed what it was like for her to grow up as a mixed race woman in Germany. She was often the only person of color at her school and the people who looked like her were maids and of a lower class status. She felt isolated and lonely. She told me, “it manifested in my eating. I was a bit anorexic. On the inside I felt starved of what I needed.” She has since recovered from major issues with food and eating. I asked her how she recovered, “It took a lot of time and I had to gain weight and that was hard that was exactly, low weight is status, and someone with low self esteem trying to get status being thin, I had to let go of that. People will say oh you look so great you are skinny, weighing oneself is such self hate.” She also told me, “I had horrible moments in my life when I wanted all my facial hair to be blonde, my eyebrows to much work to tweeze, I lasered it once. People said I had a

mustache, I have the Frida Kahlo look. It felt like self hate about it, I wanted to be like the people that are popular”

The issues these women have with their bodies and their desire for thinness demonstrate how a path to a multiracial consciousness is complicated. Even women with strong sense of self in regards to their racial identity, their knowledge, and their community are not immune to societal pressures to be thin. I include this analysis in order to show the messy nuances as part of paths to resistance.

Attempts to modify one’s body to achieve a slim body can be conceptualized as covering in order to fit in to the dominant norm of white femininity in the United States. Covering by pursuing thinness is a way to tone down the undesirability of a mixed race body. The participants demonstrate an awareness of the tactics they used to tone down this undesirability. I argue that it is this awareness that can ultimately lead to monoracial resistance.

Confidence and Acceptance

Both Ana and Sanya discussed physical appearances repeatedly during their individual interviews, both about themselves and their family. These inter-familial comparisons are a primary way that people begin to understand diversity growing up. Our discussions about physical appearances included how they felt about their own bodies and what their parents look like, “But you can tell she’s a little different too because her hair is very clearly ethnic, very thick and puffy . . . because of the way they look people don’t assume they are Hawaiian so they don’t face a lot of racism but their brother had to deal with that because he is darker.” Sanya touches on skin color and hair texture and how they relate to racial identification and racism. Also, Sanya talks about how people perceive her, “when I’m here people think I’m Mexican or some kind of Hispanic . . . they will talk to me in Spanish based upon my

phenotype. Sanya says something similar of her sister, “what’s kind of funny is that everybody assumes that she is Latina, everybody. People who clean the dorms speak to her in Spanish and assume she is Latina.” The variation in how Ana and Sanya are viewed by others is a possible influence on their multi-racial self-identification.

Ana and Sanya both resist physical monoracial norms. They do so through not needing to define themselves physically as either Indian or Hawaiian. They are aware of how others perceive them and their family – as racially ambiguous. Not fitting in to a dominant and expected phenotype for Indian or Hawaiian people compounds Ana and Sanya’s multiracial self-identification and conviction in their in between identities. As Laura Desfor Edles (2003) discusses in her piece “‘Race’, ‘Ethnicity,’ and ‘Culture,’ in Hawai’I, The Myth of the ‘Model Minority’ States, there is a popular conception of Hawaii as a mixed race Utopia. Ana and Sanya both have an awareness of history on both sides of their family and how this history has affected their family and themselves including dispelling the myth of Hawaii as a racial utopia. This awareness allows them to make decisions about their physical bodies. The sisters consciously exist within a liminal physical space neither attempting to look phenotypically or stereotypically Indian or Hawaiian.

Isabel found self-acceptance through Japanese magazines featuring mixed race white and Japanese women,

I: I never felt like I related to white models growing up, don’t know if it is because I am Asian or because in high school I found out there were two magazines from Japan that are about half Japanese girls and I was like oh my gosh this is me, those fashion magazines, the ideal was half Japanese girls.

G: Why? Because there are a lot of half Japanese girls?

I: Japanese culture glorifies America and they kind of look white/American. Half Japanese models do pretty well.

Isabel found an acceptance of herself and her physical body through finding these magazines.

Although the magazine glorified half Japanese half white women that more closely physically approximated white women, Isabel felt a connection that allowed herself to see herself in a different light.

This magazine features all half Japanese half white models, which Isabel feels she can relate to and who physically look like her. Although these women are on display for their approximation to white beauty standards, Isabel claims this magazine as a space to feel empowered as a multiracial person.

Marie told me, “I never felt negative about my body because my mom was super positive . . . I’ve never really felt unconfident . . . I’ve never been one to watch or count calories I just like enjoying food.” Marie mentions her mother as a key figure in her acceptance of her body. Later in our conversation she also mentions the positive effect of her grandmother, who had a large hand in raising her. Scholars have long debated the role of mothers in the lives of their children (Freud) and while mothers do affect the way their children see themselves, as scholars like Becky Thompson (1994) points out, there are many other reasons such as racism, classism, and heterosexism that affect one’s relationship with food and their body.

When asked about a relationship with her body Katherine said, “I’ve always thought positive messages about my body no one has ever said anything bad, and I’ve always been active.” Katherine highlights the role of exercise in how one feels about their body. She was one of the only participants to bring this up and is an interesting topic that emerged in other research (String 2012)

A powerful way of resisting society in general and society as monoracial was through women’s acceptance and love of their bodies. Many of the participants embraced their physical bodies and accepted them as they are. This is the case of Marie and Katherine. I

suggest here that one factor in their ability to accept their physical bodies are their approximation to ideal standards of beauty. Marie, who identifies as “Hispanic” may feel less pressure to be skinny because of society’s expectations of the bodies of Latinas. For Katherine, who passes easily as white, her slender figure, which closely approximates the white slender societal ideal may allow her acceptance of her physical body. The women that I discuss in this section are all examples of the diverse ways a person can combat an oppressive monoracial society on an everyday basis through awareness of the connectedness of race, gender, and the physical body.

Through my analysis I hope to show the variety of ways that multiracially identified women become conscious of the dominant racial order and begin to resist monoracism in their daily lives. I see this research as contributing to the study of multiracial populations in many ways. First, my study entails the lives of Latino/white and Asian/white and East Indian/ white women, all understudied populations in literature on mixed race. Second, I conceptualize micro level interactions as resistance rather than capitulation to the dominant racial order. Third, my analysis of passing, covering, and the body exhibit the spectrum on which people use their physical bodies to both resist and maintain the racial binary through awareness of how the race is connected to gender and the body.

CONCLUSION

My main motivation driving the execution of this project was to learn more about the lives of multiracial women. As an individual from a multiracial and multiethnic family background I was isolated from other multiracial individuals throughout my life. This isolation grew a strong curiosity within me to further explore this topic. Were there other people out there like me? What were they like? How did they see themselves and their identity? Drawing from literature on critical mixed race studies, feminism, and the body, I

sought to fill a gap in the literature. I looked specifically at the role of resistance to monoraciality, demonstrating how my participants begin to develop a resistant consciousness through increased awareness about the dominant racial structure in the United States. I began by outlining research done on multiraciality and monoraciality. I followed this by going into detail on the main contributions made in Critical Mixed Race Studies by scholars such as Reginald Daniel (1992, 2002, 2014), Kina, Dariotis, and Fojas (2014), and Maria P. Root (1992). More specifically within Critical Mixed Race Studies I looked at multiracial identity and then multiracial resistance. I then drew in literature on the physical body to foreground the pivotal role of the physical body in the development of a resistant consciousness. Here is where I bridged the gap between studies on multiraciality and feminist studies of the body. This study bridges a gap between feminism, critical mixed race studies, and the physical body, contributing to the advancement of studies on resistance and critical mixed race studies.

Another large contribution I made in this project is the conceptualization of my research as part of what I call Feminist Critical Mixed Race studies. I draw strongly from both critical mixed race studies and critical feminism in the literature and analysis. The foregrounding of the physical body as a site of resistance and specifically the female body comes from a legacy of Feminist Studies from scholars such as Bordo (1993), Butler (1993), Campbell et al. (2009), Collins (2000), Lorde (1984, 1986), Roberts (1998), Williams (1991), Wolf (1990), Simmons (1999).

Through snowball sampling I found 10 multiracial women from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds willing to be interviewed. In my interviews I chose to ask questions about the lives and families of the participants as well as how they identify racially and ethnically and how that came to be. Having a fascination with the physical body and its role in society, I asked participants questions about their own physical bodies – how they felt about them, how

others seem to perceive them, how their bodies influenced their racial and ethnic identification. In this way I connected racial and ethnic identity formation to notions about the physical body. Through transcription and grounded theory emerged the themes of my project.

The main themes that emerged from the interviews are how the interviewees engaged with the self and with others in forming a racial identity. My main contribution to critical mixed race studies and feminist critical mixed race studies is showing how multiracial women in this study construct resistant consciousness through self-identification, interactions with others and the physical body. Through engagement with the self and fluctuating identities over a lifetime, participants developed a resistance multiracial identity. Interviewees' relationships with the self suggest resistance to monoracial identification. How the women define themselves racially is based on viewing themselves as multiracial individuals in a monoracial world. However, the role of others in their lives also strongly influences self-identification. Through interactions with others, mainly in witnessing racism, experiencing shame and embarrassment, and developing community, participants gained awareness of dominant racial structures in the United States.

Within the role of self and others, the body played a significant role in aiding the participants in forming awareness and a potential resistance to a monoracial world. Participants both passed and covered as ways to avoid the stigma of being multiracial. One tactic used in covering was attempting to achieve thinness. Thinness as connected to status in society influenced the way the multiracial women felt about themselves. Other women powerfully resisted through acceptance and confidence in their physical bodies. The analysis of passing, covering, and thinness is meant to demonstrate the complexities of developing a resistant consciousness and how eating issues and management of the physical body are reasonable responses to issues of racism (Thompson 1994). The awareness and resulting

resistance developed over a lifetime is not a static moment but rather a process that these women continuously engage with.

This project, like any, has limitations. I do not claim a generalizability of my findings to all multiracial women. My findings are a reflection and a symbol of common experiences faced by multiracial people found in multiracial literature and based on 10 in depth interviews. If doing this project again I might conduct 10 to 20 more interviews in order to increase my sample size. If done again and with a larger participants pool I would use the program Atlas.ti to aid in analyzing my data in a more standard and streamlined manner.

This research has implications for future research by sociologists and feminists, particular those who come from a multiracial background themselves. First, more qualitative research from the perspective of mixed race women from mixed Latino backgrounds needs to be performed. My study adds to this growing area (Jackson 2012; Jimenez 2004; Moreman 2011; Romo 2011). Second, more research of resistance of mixed race individuals on an individual ground level should be done to answer questions such as, “How else do mixed race individuals gain a resistant consciousness?” and, “For those that don’t, why not?” These questions and future research areas have the potential to further explore the implications of living in a monoracial society. The most significant contribution I make that demands further exploration is my conceptualization of what I call “Feminist Critical Mixed Race Studies.” Although Critical Mixed Race Studies incorporates many facets of feminist scholarship, I invite other scholars to extend and deepen this commitment to research centering the lives and identities of mixed race women.

Appendix

A. Participants, racial/ethnic self-identification, age, location

Phoebe – Latina/white, 22, Boston, MA

Carson – Latina/white 23, Portland, OR

Ana – Hawaiian/east Indian, 20, Santa Barbara, CA

Sanya – Hawaiian/East Indian, 24, Santa Barbara, CA

Marie – Hispanic, Native American, White, 21, North Carolina

Katherine – Latina/white, 25, Santa Barbara

Isabel – Japanese/white, 26, Seattle, WA

Celeste – Latina/white, 23, Santa Barbara, CA

Rebecca – Black/white, 24, Santa Barbara, CA

Myra – east Indian/white, 34, Santa Barbara, CA

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