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Reconsidering the Relationship Between New Mestizaje and New Multiraciality as Mixed-Race Identity Models¹

JESSIE D. TURNER

INTRODUCTION

Approximately one quarter of Mexican Americans marry someone of a different race or ethnicity—which was true even in 1963 in Los Angeles County—with one study finding that 38 percent of fourth-generation and higher respondents were intermarried.¹ It becomes crucial, therefore, to consider where the children of these unions, a significant portion of the United States Mexican-descent population,² fit within current ethnoracial paradigms. As such, both Chicana/o studies and multiracial studies theorize mixed identities, yet the literatures as a whole remain, for the most part, non-conversant with each other. Chicana/o studies addresses racial and cultural mixture through discourses of (new) *mestizaje*, while multiracial studies employs the language of (new) multiraciality.³ Research on the multiracially identified population focuses primarily on people of African American and Asian American, rather than Mexican American, backgrounds, whereas theories of *mestizaje* do not specifically address (first- and second-generation) multiracial experiences. In fact, when I discuss having parents and grandparents of different races, I am often asked by Chicana/o studies scholars, “Why are you talking about being multiracial as if it were different from being *mestiza/o*? Both are mixed-race experiences.” With the limitations of both fields in mind, I argue that entering these new mixed-identity discourses into conversation through an examination of both their significant parallels and divergences accomplishes two goals. First, it allows for a more complete acknowledgement and understanding of the unique nature of multiracial Mexican-descent experiences. Second, it benefits race theorization in both Chicana/o and multiracial studies by expanding upon existing models and challenging the exclusions that each reproduces.

Specifically, new *mestizaje* and new multiracial identity theories both contest previous inegalitarian conceptions of mixture by:

1. Challenging conceptions of racial purity and essentialism as well as racial binaries and hierarchies;
2. Redefining the meaning of key racialized terms; and
3. Centering liminality, multiplicity, fluidity, self-integration, and self-creation.

Both of these identities, however, share a fourth parallel in that they each can also support racial binaries, hierarchies, and/or white supremacy if inattentive to racism.

On the other hand, these new mixed-identity models have several significant divergences, including:

1. The immediacy of and reasons for mixing;
2. Which mixtures are addressed;
3. Individuals’ relationships to their respective communities; and
4. The relationship between self and other.

¹I would like to thank the following people for their feedback on earlier drafts of this essay: G. Reginald Daniel, D. Inés Casillas, Ralph Armbruster-Sandoval, and the anonymous reviewers.

Prior to beginning this comparison, however, it is important to note briefly the parallels of previous constructions of mestizaje and multiraciality to which these newer articulations respond.

INHERITED ARTICULATIONS OF MIXED IDENTITY

Traditional concepts of mestizaje erase the plurality of Mexican background through the racist project of “whitening” and “progressing” away from the indigenous and exist in both colonial *casta* and postrevolutionary Mexican racial projects. The former hierarchized not only Spanish racial purity over mixture, but also the numerous mixtures themselves. This racial project detailed the classification of discrete mixed-race categories, equating physical body and social location.⁴

On the other hand, the racial project in postrevolutionary Mexico was to construct a homogenous, united, national Mexican mestizo identity. Most well-known for theorizing this new Mexican mestizo is José Vasconcelos who suggests that the mission of Latin America’s mixed people is to lead humanity’s evolution into a new, universal, and spiritual fifth race. This “*raza cósmica*” has components of each of the four parent races—indigenous, African, Asian, and European—yet is a new and distinct fifth race.⁵ Vasconcelos has been heavily critiqued as racist for hierarchizing the four parent races; dehumanizing and abandoning the indigenous, African, and Asian components; as well as inscribing his construction of “the cosmic race” with white superiority.⁶

A more recent construction of mestizaje, namely that of Chicano nationalism, definitively inverts these previous racial hierarchies. That is, it privileges the indigenous and constructs the Spanish/Anglo as the other, while concurrently denying multiple ancestries, such as African, Asian, and Middle Eastern. Documents such as the 1969 “*El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*” simultaneously signify Chicanas/os as indigenous to the United States, as racially indigenous (i.e., “Aztec,” “bronze,” etc.), as male, and as heterosexual.⁷ Such a racial project is an important political move that contests not only previous articulations of mestizaje, but also experiences of continued colonization by a dominant white US society. While this was not the only manifestation of the Chicano movement, its discourse has remained largely hegemonic in the movement’s history.⁸ In essence, each of these three constructions of mestizaje is only a partial recognition of Mexican background.

As with mestizaje, previous constructions of multiraciality in the United States (read primarily as black and white) also erase racial plurality of background, with the motivations of each construction differing according to racial project. The one-drop rule protected the institution of white supremacy by defining as black anyone with any African ancestry, with specific quanta varying by state or territory and historical period. Alternately, many mixed-race descent leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, such as Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes, and of black nationalism, such as Malcolm X, internalized the rule of hypodescent in order to employ black identities that resignified blackness in a positive and proud manner.⁹ Furthermore, passing, while complicated in its motivations and manifestations, also adhered to racial binary projects, necessitating the denial of blackness in order to pass as white. It is important to note, however, that there have been rare instances of US ternary racial articulations of identities intermediate to black and white, including triracial isolates and Louisiana Creoles of color, though these were often still racially hierarchical.¹⁰

PARALLELS BETWEEN NEW MESTIZAJE AND NEW MULTIRACIALITY

Responding to these inherited racial models, new mestiza/o and new multiracial identities not only acknowledge but also center mixed histories, bodies, and experiences, with both attending to significant portions of the US population that exist outside of facile and static racial constructions. Specifically, both mixed-identity models contest previous inegalitarian conceptions of mixture by

challenging conceptions of racial purity and essentialism as well as racial binaries and hierarchies; redefining the meaning of key racialized terms; and centering liminality, multiplicity, fluidity, self-integration, and self-creation. At the same time, though, both models share a fourth commonality in their potential to be inattentive to, or even further, racism.

To begin with, new mestiza/o and new multiracial identities both challenge conceptions of racial purity, essentialism, binaries, and hierarchies. In her seminal work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Gloria Anzaldúa insists on recognizing the multiple lineages—“all five races”—of mestizas/os, thus proposing that new mestizaje contests the idea of a “pure” race and can exist outside of simplistic racial binaries.¹¹ While Anzaldúa’s theory resonates with Vasconcelos’ “fifth race,” it surpasses the latter in that it does not privilege whiteness.¹² Furthermore, Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga both critique their individual, familial, and Mexican/Chicana/o community’s internalized racism, colorism, and denial of the indigenous.¹³ In addition to these ideas, Gregory Velazco y Trianosky contributes his theory of “Nuevo Mestizaje,” which not only “embod[ies] a rejection of the idea of racial identities as mutually exclusive” but also further confronts Latina/o disconnect from African background and African American communities.¹⁴

Similarly, multiracial studies scholar Maria P. P. Root argues for racial confusion rather than purity or fixedness as a method to move beyond racial binaries and hierarchies.¹⁵ Moreover, G. Reginald Daniel eloquently proposes a “new multiracial identity” that forcefully challenges false and racist notions of racial purity and singularity, as well as “the dichotomization and hierarchical valuation of African American and European American cultural and racial differences.”¹⁶ Likewise, numerous scholars contend that multiracial identities in general, and their own identities specifically, challenge the insistence by US society and monoracialized communities that multiracial-identified people adhere to an “either/or” racial existence.¹⁷ In recognizing multiple, interdependent, and non-hierarchical pasts and presents, both new mixed-race identity models suggest that racist inheritances from within one’s own communities and from society in general need not dictate self-conceptualizations or collective racial futures.

Second, these new articulations of mestizaje and multiraciality redefine the meanings of key racialized terms, crucially challenging exclusionary or static identity labels in multiple communities. To begin, the Chicana feminist movement responded to the sexist and heterosexist articulations of Chicano nationalism by gendering and often queering what it previously meant to be Chicano, extending experiences of mestizaje beyond race and ethnicity.¹⁸ For example, Anzaldúa renames “mestizo” as “la nueva mestiza,” an identity that also “questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings.”¹⁹ Moreover, theorists such as Ana Castillo center feminist and indigenist values in their redefinitions of Chicanidad, codified by the oppositional employment of “x” in the new term “Xicanisma.”²⁰

Furthermore, several scholars reintroduce African, Asian, and Middle Eastern descent and contemporary identity into what it means to be Mexican/Mexican American/Chicana/o/ mestiza/o. For example, Martha Menchaca redefines Mexican American as multiracial, centering afromestiza/o and US Southwest indigenous backgrounds, and she even traces the multiracial history of Spanish conquistadors.²¹ Additionally, several scholars reclaim the Chinese history of Mexico, with Evelyn Hu-DeHart as a pioneer in this respect.²² Robert Chao Romero, however, does not only trace Chinese heritage within the Mexican context. His suggestion to develop “Chino-Chicano Studies,” a field that would attend specifically to the past and present Asian/Latino interactions in addition to multiracial Asian Latinas/os, redefines mestizaje as Mexican-Chinese mixture and insists on the salience of this ethnic heritage for Mexican American identity.²³ Similarly, other scholars re-inscribe Filipino, Japanese, and Middle Eastern descent into Mexican heritage.²⁴

While these historians may not be formally theorizing identity as do other scholars cited in this essay, in correcting racial memory they are in fact contributing to the re-imagining of what it means to be Mexican (American). Such work furthers Chicana/o Studies' antiracist tenets by moving beyond a simplified conception of "Mexican-descent mestiza/o" as Mexican indigenous and Spanish, a conception that racially others African, Asian, US indigenous, and Middle Eastern multiracial Mexican identities. Instead, such work more accurately accounts for the racial multiplicity of Mexican background while simultaneously linking mestizo/a with multiple ethnoracial communities in contemporary Mexico and the United States.

Many multiracial studies theorists also reconceptualize key racialized terms. For example, in reference to "blackness" and "whiteness," Daniel argues that each expands to include both, while John Powell proposes that "white" and "black" be disassociated from race and phenotype altogether such that, for instance, black identity does not require any African ancestry.²⁵ Additionally, scholars challenge notions of discrete "Indian" and "black" or "Creole" backgrounds, reintegrating them into contemporary mixed identities.²⁶ Furthermore, US Indian peoples, who by virtue of their specific history with colonization and survival are necessarily mixed, are redefining the meaning of "Indian" from blood quantum, tribal enrollment, and legal designation to include cultural and familial identities.²⁷

Multiracial Asians and Pacific Islanders have resignified racialized terms as well. *Hapa*, a native Hawaiian term meaning "part" or "mix," now commonly signifies mixed Asian and Pacific Islander descent in general, while Beverly Yuen Thompson further redefines *hapa* to include bisexual women.²⁸ Moreover, recognizing the limitation of multiracial identity theorization, several authors aim to redefine what it means to be multiracial with Asian descent in the United States by decentering whiteness and instead focusing on minority-minority background combinations.²⁹

Not only do preferred racial labels change over time, but, as shown here, the connotations of racial labels in Mexican-descent and multiracial-identified communities also change according to political projects. Those people previously marginalized redefine in order to self-define, challenging fundamental labeling assumptions often taken for granted when conceptualizing self and other.

A third parallel between *mestizaje* and multiraciality as new mixed-identity models is that both re-imagine race by centering liminality, multiplicity, fluidity, self-integration, and self-creation. For example, Anzaldúa's *nueva mestiza*—in acknowledging multiple lineages, present selves, and allies—moves between different identities in different contexts. Furthermore, intent on synthesizing binary "opposites," she adds "a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts ... a new consciousness—a *mestiza* consciousness," the "energy [of which] comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm."³⁰ Anzaldúa suggests a method for this work—"The *Mestiza* Way."³¹ Edwina Barvosa calls this method—which includes "inventory, discernment, and revisionary living"—"selfcraft." She theorizes selfcraft as a way of attending to the conscious experience of identity contradictions that arises from membership in groups constructed as mutually exclusive.³² A possible integrative identity outcome of this process is identity "management," meaning retaining dual "contradictory" identities, whether situationally or constantly. Barvosa argues that this identity theory can "defragment" not just the self but also society.³³ Similar to Anzaldúa's *nueva mestiza*, Linda Alcoff suggests that "[m]estizo consciousness is a double vision, a conscious articulation of mixed identity, allegiances, and traditions" that posits liminality, mobility, and ambiguity as being the *mestizo*'s sense of place.³⁴

New multiracial identities also theorize experiences of liminality, multiplicity, fluidity, self-integration, and self-creation. For example, building on Anzaldúa's new *mestiza*, Daniel suggests the following regarding people with "the new multiracial identity": "Their style of self-consciousness shapes their identity through 'incorporat[ing] here, discard[ing] there, respond[ing] situationally.' ...

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.³⁵ The work of Sarah Gatson provides another example.³⁶ Gatson develops an “amorphous” identity, which she defines as a consciously engaged process informed by multiple messages coming from multiple places that challenges externally imposed and singular identities. Amorphousness, she suggests, is “a picture with blurred edges,” “an awareness ... of the possibility of play.”³⁷ Furthermore, scholarship demonstrates that people with multiple ethnoracial backgrounds might identify in a variety of ways (e.g., monoracial, multiracial, situational, and extraracial), and that such individuals often simultaneously claim multiple ethnoracial identities.³⁸ Finally, in reference to self-creation, individuals often desire to “change the course of their ‘racial’ destinies—to rename their affiliations by changing their personal names.”³⁹

New mestizaje theory is well-known for its discussion of liminality, multiplicity, fluidity, self-integration, and self-creation, and multiracial studies has undeniably employed this work in its own development. For example, several authors cite Anzaldúa in theorizing multiracial identity.⁴⁰ Such use of her work demonstrates the fundamental similarities between new mestiza/o and new multiracial day-to-day experiences of self. Not only can the latter inherit from the former, but the former can also learn from extensions of the original theory, such as its central applicability to contemporarily mixed people who do not singularly identify as Chicana/o.

While both new mestiza/o and new multiracial identity constructions have great liberatory motivations and potential, they can also support racial erasure, essentialism, binaries, and white supremacy. For instance, for all of Anzaldúa’s theorization of identity fluidity and multiplicity, it has been argued that she preferences a romanticized bygone indigenous identity that exists at the cost of erasing a present indigenous subjectivity.⁴¹ In a similar vein, several scholars critique and warn of the dangers of factions of the multiracial movement’s inattention to racism and white supremacy, or even its employment of white supremacist ideologies in order to escape blackness.⁴² Furthermore, it has been suggested that multiracial identity discourse, while aiming to break down racial binaries, actually creates a new binary between multiracial- and monoracial-identified people.⁴³

These parallels—contestation of racial pedigree, dichotomies, and ranking; reinterpretation of common racial labels; and defiance of imposed singularity, fixity, and ascription—are important because they evidence the ways in which Chicana/o and multiracial-identified communities, often seen as discrete, are in fact undeniably aligned. This affinity is seen in their lived experiences and theorization as mixed-race subjects by scholars who insist on the radical reconceptualization of the US racial status quo. Multiracial people with Mexican background can find representation in both identity models, recognizing the fundamental similarities in diverse mixed-race experiences. Neither of the fields has a monopoly regarding such experiences, and each can learn from the other in manifold ways. As is often the case with identity movements that aim for liberation, both of these new mixed-race identity models can also reproduce exclusion.

DIVERGENCES OF NEW MESTIZAJE AND NEW MULTIRACIALITY

While theories of new mestizaje and new multiracial identity have several primary parallels as outlined above, they also have significant divergences, including the immediacy of and reasons for mixing, which mixtures are addressed, individuals’ relationships to their respective communities, and the relationship between self and other. It is important to elaborate these differences in detail because they are fundamental to understanding why mestizaje and multiraciality cannot be collapsed into being one and the same. First, creating an equivalence between the two does harm to people with Mexican and other ethnic and racial backgrounds by denying their particular identities and experiences; and second, it encourages static theory.

To begin with, the immediacy of and reasons for racial mixing differ in discourses of new mestizaje and new multiracial identity. Discursively, Mexican-descent mestizaje is primarily conceived of as an historic racial, and thus often cultural, mixture that happened five hundred years ago at the point of contact and conquest through colonization. It has also been theorized as encompassing more recent cultural mixtures that result from continued colonization as well as immigration.⁴⁴ While I do discuss exceptions to this below, I would underline the fact that even many exceptions still privilege this historic mixture.

Alternately, new multiracial identity discourse overwhelmingly privileges contemporary first-generation ethnoracial mixture, with choice and love composing a central reason for present-day interracial relationships, and thus the origins of first-generation multiracial people.⁴⁵ Specifically, the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court ruling that overturned all remaining anti-miscegenation laws in the United States was a key turning point for the *possibility* of what it meant to be multiracial, as it positioned African Americans and European Americans on equal legal standing as free adults who could partner and reproduce as they wished.⁴⁶ This ruling served as a historically necessary precursor to public discussion of a multiracial identity, though it would be at least two decades before such an identity emerged as more normative among children of these unions. Additionally, the civil rights movement brought white (often Jewish) and black communities together, facilitating interracial relationships.⁴⁷ Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the prevalence of groups created by and for interracial families and multiracial people (e.g., iPride; Biracial Family Network; Multiracial Americans of Southern California; Association of MultiEthnic Americans; MAVIN; and more recently Loving Day) emphasized a contemporary, consensual coming together.⁴⁸

To a lesser degree, scholars also explore multigenerational multiraciality. Many still cite agency, especially in response to structural inequality, as a motivation for this history. For example, Craig Womack explains that his “family has always been somewhere between Creekness and Cherokeeanness”—as a result of the latter hiding out and intermarrying with the former during Indian removal—in addition to also being Irish and German.⁴⁹ Additionally, Daniel details historic articulations such as the Louisiana Creoles of color and triracial isolates, as well as discussing numerous case studies of present-day multigenerational multiracial individuals.⁵⁰

Even as new multiracial identity discourse emphasizes choice and love in interracial relationships as the origin for many multiracial identities, it does of course necessarily also attend to slavery and colonization when discussing multigenerational multiraciality. For instance, Shirlee Taylor Haizlip traces in great detail the multigenerational multiraciality of her family back to slavery in the United States and to the 1600s in England.⁵¹ Furthermore, Daniel also explores the way in which the experience of “multigenerational” (i.e., African and European descent) individuals often “carries with it the implicit stigma of concubinage, rape, and illegitimacy.”⁵² Such examples provide important historicity to contemporary multiracial-identity discourse, underscoring that considerations of present-day multiracial bodies and identities should extend beyond “choice.”

That said, this first difference regarding the immediacy of and primary reason for the racial mixing in new mestizaje and new multiraciality is decisive because there is a qualitative experiential and conceptual disparity between the two. It is one thing to say, “My people originated five hundred years ago from Cortés’s initial rape of (or union with, depending on one’s perspective) Malintzin. I am mixed because of colonization, but both of my parents are Mexican/Chicana/o, and I identify as the same.” It is a very different thing to say, “I acknowledge that my ancestral history may include a legacy of slavery and colonization, but I am mixed because of a recent love. My *parents* are different races/ethnicities, and that is why I am multiracial.” This difference sets the stage for subsequent

ones, namely the third and fourth differences as outlined below regarding individuals' relationships to their respective communities.

A second difference between new mestiza/o and new multiracial identity discourses concerns the groups that participate in mixing. Both old and new conceptions of Mexican-descent mestizaje give primary attention to Spanish colonization of Mexican indigenous peoples; the African component is less attended to, while the Asian, US indigenous, and Middle Eastern components are rarely included in discussions of mestizaje. Conversely, multiracial studies literature attends to a broad array of racial and ethnic communities and mixed backgrounds, though it must be noted that inquiry is most established when it comes to black/white and East Asian American/white mixed experiences.

While conceptions of new mestizaje emphasize Mexican indigeneous and Spanish mixing, they also move beyond ethnoracial terms to critically and consistently prioritize considerations of gender and sexuality.⁵³ In fact, these theorists are foundational to not only Chicana feminism, but also to queer studies. Conversely, mixings within the context of sexuality are not yet adequately attended to or centrally framed in discourses of new multiracial identity. It is important to mention that there are, however, a handful of scholars who challenge the heteronormativity implicit in mixed-race theorization.⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, the scope of this work emphasizes parallels between biracial and bisexual experiences and identities specifically, though some work does extend to gay, lesbian, and queer sexualities more broadly.

It can be argued that heterosexuality is normative within mixed race studies because conceptions of racial mixing and being first- or second-generation mixed race are largely based in biological conceptions of race and reproduction. The primary battles revolved around questions of legal heteronormative marriage, families, and racial proscription. This national discourse was emphasized not only for African Americans, but also for Mexican Americans and other racial groups. For Mexican Americans, however, there was not the same inevitable sense of permanence.⁵⁵ Furthermore, though Chicano nationalism did promote in-group procreation, new mestizaje is no longer delimited in such a way. Even as the focus on biological ethnoracial mixing in multiracial studies is understandable given the social and legal history of race in the United States, the field can learn from new mestizaje theorization by prioritizing a more intersectional analysis of mixed-race identity that does not continue to reproduce predominantly heteronormative, and many times without gendered analysis, understandings of race and self that singularize possibilities of being.

Further consideration of the groups included in these two mixed-race identity models reveals that only recently have race scholars turned to contemporary multiracial Mexican-background identities. For example, Karen Isaksen Leonard researches Punjabi Mexicans, or "Hindus," in California from the early 1900s through the 1980s; Rudy Guevarra Jr. investigates Mexipinos in San Diego, CA, from 1900 to 1965; and Rebecca Romo looks at present-day Blaxican identity in California.⁵⁶ Angie Chabram-Dernersesian interrogates her "Chicana Riqueña" identity, while Moraga, Kevin Johnson, Tomás Jiménez, Raquel Scherr Salgado, and Griest write first-generation Mexican/white (Jewish in the case of Scherr) multiracial experiences into the discussion.⁵⁷ The overwhelming majority of these works and identity theories, however, employ multiracial-studies terminology and models rather than those of Chicana/o studies, given that the former readily account for contemporary mixture while the latter do not. Chabram-Dernersesian is the exception to this last point, as she is situated firmly within Chicana/o studies; she does, however, sharply critique and call for an expansion of insular conceptions of Chicanidad and Chicana/o mestizaje that deny her claim to the "Riqueña" aspect of her identity. Also, it is crucial to note that both Scherr and Griest explore their multiracial Mexican-descent identities simultaneously and specifically in terms of mestizaje

and multiraciality, and without collapsing them, thus providing important models for how this might be done.⁵⁸

A third divergence between these new mixed-identity models is the mixed person's relationship to the respective ethnoracial communities. Mestizas/os are defined as a new, hybrid race.⁵⁹ As mentioned above, various racial projects give preference to different racial components of mestizaje, yet they all position the mestiza/o as something new, undeniably informed by Spanish, indigenous, and African lineages, but not belonging to those communities. In fact, this new mixed-race existence becomes resignified as a monoracial/monoethnic Chicana/o one.

Multiracial-identified people, especially first-generation, may also feel that they are something new and different but still often also have much more direct relationships with their respective communities. For example, because of the immediacy of first-generation mixing, as mentioned above, individuals have parents and family members who belong to various, often dichotomized and monoracialized, communities. Numerous authors recount personal experiences of being caught between sides of their families and of themselves.⁶⁰ It is also an extremely common experience to multiply identify as “both/and,” one reason for which is not having to choose one side over another.⁶¹ As such, many multiracial individuals refuse to divide themselves by choosing between externally imposed binaries precisely because they do feel themselves to be very immediately attached—as opposed to historically, as with mestizaje—to both.⁶²

In short, people of mixed Spanish and indigenous (and African, Asian, etc.) backgrounds are commonly constructed as a new race (or at least new group) in relation to these original, discrete communities. This is evidenced by terms such as “Latina/o” and “Hispanic,” as well as answers to the question, “What race are you?” which commonly include “Mexican” and “Chicana/o.” In contrast, despite progress made by the multiracial movement, as evidenced by the “mark one or more” race option in the 2000 and 2010 Census, multiracial people have not yet been widely accepted as a new racial group in and of itself. Thus, unlike mestizas/os, multiracial individuals often identify with their various respective groups.⁶³

Closely tied to this third point, a fourth difference between new mestizaje and new multiracial identity is the relationship between self and other. “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán”, as stated at the beginning of this essay, clearly delineates the indigenous and “bronze” Chicano self as separate from and embattled with the European/Anglo enemy other.⁶⁴ While I hold that this cultural nationalist identity is prior to new mestizajes as outlined in this essay, it does inform them. For example, while Anzaldúa promotes coalition and multiple affiliations with people of various genders, sexualities, and races,⁶⁵ she also defines the nueva mestiza as “brown,” and “darkskinned” and thus othering White as “they.”⁶⁶ I point this out fully recognizing that many mestizas/os are phenotypically and politically brown, and that Mexican-descent people in the United States are historically and contemporarily racialized as “brown others” by hegemonic US whiteness. At the same time, however, this binary construction of brown and white within Mexican communities in the United States may prove particularly problematic for many multiracial people with Mexican descent, given that the largest such group in the United States is people with Mexican and white backgrounds.

Not only can many multiracial individuals not “otherize” either sides of their identities as discussed above, but several multiracial identity theorists further argue for an identity model in which lines between “self” and “other” are erased completely, and the self is made up of the other. Scherr provides one such example, suggesting “misceg-narration,” defined as ingestion of the other and association at will, as the most politically salient way in which to challenge the construction of the other.⁶⁷ George Lipsitz also provides a compelling argument in this regard. Stating that multiracial individuals cannot claim “noises in the blood and echoes in the bone” as do many monoracial(ized) communities that employ strategic essentialism, Lipsitz instead proposes the

employment of “strategic antiessentialism” and “branching out” as a multiracial epistemology that is available to everyone.⁶⁸ These theories hold radical potential in positioning multiraciality as a political tool to counter otherness.

The following example provides a case in point of this difference between new mestiza/o and new multiracial selves’ relationships to the other. In *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa states that she is Mexican to white people and Indian to Mexican people.⁶⁹ From this we understand that she is never white to anyone, including herself. In contrast, Alcoff, who has a Panamanian parent and a US white parent from the United States, in a parallel yet crucially distinct move, says that she feels Latina in a white context, yet white in a Latina context.⁷⁰ Remember that Alcoff theorizes “mestizo identity” in a way very similar to Anzaldúa’s “new mestiza.” She is published, however, in a mixed-race anthology on “microdiversity,” a concept that editor Naomi Zack defines as “the reality and scholarship of racial difference within single individuals.”⁷¹ This example shows that while Anzaldúa is mestiza, she definitively does not identify as the white other. Alternately, Alcoff, also mestiza, is a “microdiverse,” multiracial mestiza who does identify as Latina *and* white, providing another qualitatively experiential reason why these identity models cannot be collapsed.

Admittedly, Anzaldúa’s later work does aim to “make [racial identities] more pliant,” define the self “by what [is] include[d],” and embrace otherness, all of which is language very similar to that used by multiracially identified people.⁷² Thus, her “New Tribalism” significantly changes the boundaries between self and other and, by definition, what it means to be mestiza; this mestiza is no longer defined in opposition to the other and now reaches even further across difference toward others. It is crucial, however, to understand that this reaching not only presupposes a monoracial identity from which to reach in the first place, but that, additionally, *working with* the other is not the same as *becoming* the other.

CONCLUSION

As stated in the introduction, approximately one quarter of Mexican Americans marry someone of a different race or ethnicity, with one study finding that 38 percent of fourth-generation and higher respondents were intermarried.⁷³ These interracial and interethnic relationships are not a new trend,⁷⁴ and it is past time that Chicana/o studies, and to a lesser extent multiracial studies, adequately attend to the multiracial people these relationships produce.

Based on the analysis provided above, it is clear that new mestiza/o and new multiracial identities have much in common as identities grounded in mixture and multiplicity. Consequently, I have heard several Chicana/o studies scholars assert that “they are the same thing,” and that “mestizaje is necessarily multiracial,” such that “any distinction made between mestiza/o and multiracial experiences is a false one.” That said, in the final analysis, the divergences between these mixed-identity models are significant enough that they simply cannot be conflated with each other despite considerable overlap and obvious parallels and affinities. With that in mind, it is also important to consider the origins and costs of this conflation.

Some scholars charge the multiracial identity movement with privileging a multiracial identity at the cost of not only (monoracial) black identity, but also political unity and power to fight racism.⁷⁵ Perhaps it is a parallel fear in Chicana/o communities that leads to the conflation of new mestizaje and new multiraciality despite the marginalization of contemporarily multiracial Mexican-descent people. This new articulation of multiracial mestizaje, or alternately mestiza/o multiraciality, need not threaten current conceptions of mestizaje that do represent those who identify as Chicana/o only, however. My goal is not to discount a majority identity within the Chicana/o community, but to insist on the existence, recognition, and respect of 25 to 38 percent of

that same community. Furthermore, in reference to political unity and power, there is historical evidence to show that multiracial-identified people often do prioritize community of color concerns and work for racial justice.⁷⁶ In fact, it can easily be imagined that rigid definitions of belonging within Chicana/o communities could in fact decrease political efficacy by alienating multiracial-identified Chicanas/os.

An additional benefit that Chicana/o studies can achieve from this conversation between new mixed-race identity models is that of broadening its racial theory. Positioning the new *mestizaje* as a framework that automatically encompasses the newer blending between Latinas/os and non-Latinos and thus newer articulations of multiracial consciousness discounts any distinction between historic and contemporary racial mixing and community belonging. It also disallows new articulations of *mestizaje*, when in fact theories of *mestizaje* are not static. For several decades Chicana/o studies and Chicana/o identity theories of *mestizaje* have responded to racial, gender, and sexual hegemonies by developing counter theories to account for those excluded. This tradition continues. As shown above, those who identify as both multiracial/ethnic and of Mexican-descent are building a new literature in which we name ourselves and write ourselves into being. It is telling, however, that much of this new scholarship is produced and published outside of core Chicana/o studies programs and venues, instead finding homes in departments such as English, history, sociology, Asian American studies, and black studies.⁷⁷ Multiplicity in lineage, culture, and present selves is central to Chicana/o studies' new *mestizaje* discourses; as such, understanding—and, moreover, celebrating—the experiential and theoretical distinctions between new *mestizaje* and new multiraciality as lived by contemporarily mixed Mexican-descent people just serves to strengthen this core value.

Multiracial studies also has much to gain by fully attending to this conversation. As shown, multiracial studies does borrow a lot from theories of new *mestizaje*, especially Anzaldúa's, yet it does so in a way that more thoroughly attends to multiracial people of Mexican-descent by the simple fact that it centers contemporary mixed identities.⁷⁸ Ironically, however, less space has been made for Mexican-descent people in this borrowing than would be expected. By continuing to focus on African American/white and East Asian/white multiracial identities and experiences, rather than thoroughly engaging Mexican and Latina/o populations, the field continues to reproduce, rather than challenge, extant racial norms and values insofar as which populations deserve critical attention. Additionally, from theories of new *mestizaje*, multiracial studies can also learn to more consistently attend to multigenerational and historically mixed identities, as well as to fully center intersectional analyses, rather than prioritizing race to the exclusion of other inalienable identity categories.

In conclusion, it is crucial to ask ourselves, what is at stake by the continued marginalization, or even negation, of the specificities of multiracial Mexican-descent individuals and theories? Who is seen as tangential, collateral, not a real Chicana/o, not a real multiracial? What is gained by such boundary maintenance, and at what cost to us all?

NOTES

¹ De la Garza et al., *Latino Voices*, 25; Grebler, Moore, and Guzman, *The Mexican American People*, 406; Telles and Ortiz, *Generations of Exclusion*, 176.

² Here I am referring to people who have Mexican heritage and live in the United States. This includes individuals born in the United States as well as those born in Mexico but who currently reside in the United States.

³ In this paper I consider Mexican-descent *mestizaje* (as a mixed-race identity model for Chicana/os) specifically and thus draw most sources from Chicana/o studies. Chicana/o studies is not a discrete field, of course, and thus while I primarily cite Mexican-descent authors specifically theorizing Mexican-descent *mestizaje*, I also include a couple of Latina/o-descent authors who theorize new *mestizaje* in a general, rather than a nation- or ethnicity-specific, manner. Additionally, since theories of Chicana/o identity are inextricably built upon theories of *mestizaje*, some authors I cite may not necessarily use the word “*mestiza*,” though it is generally understood that this is implied. Authors with Latina/o/Mexican and another ethnoracial background are cited both in reference to *mestizaje* and multiraciality.

⁴ For a definition of “racial project,” see Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 56–61.

⁵ See Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*.

⁶ Knight, “Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo,” in Graham, *The Idea of Race in Latin America*, 71–113; Hernández Cuevas, *African Mexicans*, 1–30; Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje*, 5–6.

⁷ See “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” 1–5.

⁸ Some scholars contest this conceptualization of the Chicano movement. For example, see Mariscal, *Brown-eyed Children*.

⁹ Zack, *Race and Mixed Race*, 95–111.

¹⁰ Daniel, *More than Black?*, 50–89. On page 68, Daniel uses the term “triracial isolates” to refer to a large variety of groups in the eastern United States that: have various combinations of White, Native American, and African American background; refuse to accept US binary racial classification; and often remain geographically isolated.

¹¹ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 194.

¹² This is not to say that there was no racial privileging within Anzaldúa’s identity theory, a point that will be discussed later in the essay.

¹³ See Anzaldúa, “La Prieta,” in Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 198–209; Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*; Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*.

¹⁴ Velazco y Trianosky, “Beyond *Mestizaje*,” in Winters and DeBose, *New Faces*, 186.

¹⁵ Root, “Within, Between, and Beyond Race,” in Root, *Racially Mixed People*, 10.

¹⁶ Daniel, *More than Black?*, 111.

¹⁷ See Petersen, “What Part Moon,” in Penn, *As We Are Now*, 82–86; Espiritu, “Possibilities of a Multiracial Asian America,” in Williams-León and Nakashima, *The Sum of Our Parts*, 25–33; Welburn, “A Most Secret Identity,” in Brooks, *Confounding the Color Line*, 292–320; Walker, *Black, White, and Jewish*; Griest, *Mexican Enough*.

¹⁸ See Córdova et al., *Chicana Voices*; García, *Chicana Feminist Thought*; Chabram-Dernersesian, “I Throw Punches,” in Grossberg, *Cultural Studies*, 81–95.

¹⁹ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 81 (emphasis added).

²⁰ See Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers*.

²¹ See Menchaca, *Recovering History*.

²² See Hu-DeHart, “Racism and Anti-Chinese Persecution, 1–27.”

²³ Romero, “El Destierro de los Chinos,” 140.

²⁴ See Guevarra Jr., “Filipinos in Nueva España,” 389–416; Ota Mishima, *Siete Migraciones Japonesas*; Alfaro-Velcamp, *So Far from Allah*.

²⁵ Daniel, *More than Black?*, 13, 189–194; powell, “The Colorblind Multiracial Dilemma,” 8.

²⁶ See Brooks, *Confounding the Color Line*; Jolivet, “Examining the Regional and Multigenerational Context,” 159–87.

²⁷ See McMullen, “Blood and Culture;,” in Brooks, *Confounding the Color Line*, 261–291; Baird-Olson, “Colonization, Cultural Imperialism,” in Winters and DeBose, *New Faces* 194–221.

²⁸ See Thompson, “Fence Sitters,” 171–180.

²⁹ See Hall and Turner, “The Diversity of Biracial Individuals,” in Williams-León and Nakashima, *The Sum of Our Parts*, 81–91; Thornton and Gates, “Black, Japanese, and American,” in Williams-León and Nakashima, *The Sum of Our Parts*, 93–105. This will be discussed later in the essay.

³⁰ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 79–80.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 82–83.

³² Barvosa, *Wealth of Selves*, 176.

³³ *Ibid.*, 217–229.

³⁴ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*; Alcoff, “Mestizo Identity,” in Zack, *American Mixed Race*, 277.

³⁵ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*; Daniel, *More than Black?*, 106 (original emphasis)

³⁶ See Gatson, “On Being Amorphous,” 20–48.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁸ Root, “The Multiracial Experience,” in Root, *The Multiracial Experience*, xiii–xxviii; Wallace, *Relative/Outsider*, 119–51; Rockquemore and Brunsma, *Beyond Black*, 53–118; Daniel, *More than Black?*, 93–124; see Renn, *Mixed Race Students*.

³⁹ Nakashima, “A Rose by Any Other Name,” in Williams-León and Nakashima, *The Sum of Our Parts*, 113; see McMullen, “Blood and Culture,” in Brooks, *Confounding the Color Line*, 261–291; Griest, *Mexican Enough*, 7.

⁴⁰ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*; Allman, "(Un)Natural Boundaries," in Root, *The Multiracial Experience*, 289; Root, "The Multiracial Experience," xxi in Root, *The Multiracial Experience*; Daniel, *More than Black?*, 106; Renn, *Mixed Race Students*, 9.

⁴¹ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*; Yarbrow-Bejarano, "Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*," in Chabram-Dernersesian, *Chicana/o Cultural Studies Reader*, 85.

⁴² See Senna, "The Mulatto Millennium," in O'Hearn, *Half and Half* 12-27; Spencer, *Spurious Issues*; Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*; DaCosta, *Making Multiracials*, 183-87.

⁴³ Dunning, "Brown Like Me,": in Kwan and Speirs, *Mixing It Up*, 132.

⁴⁴ See Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*; Macias, *Mestizo in America*; Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje*.

⁴⁵ See O'Hearn, *Half and Half*; Walker, *Black, White, and Jewish*; Renn, *Mixed Race Students*; DaCosta, *Making Multiracials*.

⁴⁶ Daniel, *More than Black?*, 104.

⁴⁷ See Walker, *Black, White, and Jewish*.

⁴⁸ To a lesser degree, the literature addresses militarism as an alternate origin for contemporary mixed-race people. For example, see *The Woman, the Orphan, and the Tiger*, directed by Jane Jin Kaisen and Guston Sondin-Kung (San Rafael, CA: itinerant_sends_for_itinerant, 2010) DVD.

⁴⁹ Womack, "Howling at the Moon," in Penn, *As We Are Now*, 30.

⁵⁰ Daniel, *More than Black?*, 68-89

⁵¹ Haizlip, *The Sweeter the Juice*.

⁵² Daniel, *More than Black?*, 105.

⁵³ See Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*; Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*; Alarcón, Castillo, and Moraga, *The Sexuality of Latinas*; Trujillo, "Chicana Lesbians," in Trujillo, *Chicana Lesbians*, 186-194.

⁵⁴ See Root, "Resolving 'Other' Status," in Brown and Root, *Complexity and Diversity*, 185-205; Allman, "(Un)Natural Boundaries"; Womack, "Howling at the Moon"; Collins, "Biracial-Bisexual Individuals," 221-253.; Thompson, "Fence Sitters"; Sari H. Dworkin, "Biracial, Bicultural, Bisexual: Bisexuality and Multiple Identities," *Journal of Bisexuality* 2, no. 4 (2001): 93-107; Williams-León, "The Convergence of Passing Zones," in Williams-León and Nakashima, *The Sum of Our Parts*, 145-161; Dariotis, "My Race, Too, Is Queer," 33-37; and Jolivet, "Critical Mixed Race Studies."

⁵⁵ See Menchaca, "The Anti-Miscegenation History," 279-318.

⁵⁶ See Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices*; Guevarra Jr., "Burritos and Bagoong," in Coronado et al., *Crossing Lines*, 73-96; Romo, "Between Black and Brown," 402-426.

⁵⁷ See Chabram-Dernersesian, "Chicana! Rican?," in Kaplan et al., *Between Woman and Nation*, 264-295; Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*; Johnson, *How Did You Get*; Jiménez, "Multiethnic Mexican Americans," in Coronado, et al., *Crossing Lines*, 161-188; Scherr Salgado, "Miseg-narrations," in Kwan and Speirs, *Mixing It Up*, 31-70; Griest, *Mexican Enough*.

⁵⁸ See Scherr Salgado, "Miseg-narrations"; Griest, *Mexican Enough*.

⁵⁹ See Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*; Anzaldúa *Borderlands*.

⁶⁰ See Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*; Jiménez, "Multiethnic Mexican Americans"; Griest, *Mexican Enough*; Walker, *Black, White, and Jewish*.

⁶¹ Root, "The Multiracial Experience," xxi-xxii; Daniel, *More than Black?*, 106-14; Renn, *Mixed Race Students*, 67, 71-76, 78-81. Also, see Brooks, *Confounding the Color Line*.

⁶² As noted in the first parallel, Anzaldúa also refused to be split by binaries, but an important difference is that she was not racially identifying *with/as* multiple binary groups. See Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*; Anzaldúa, "La Prieta."

⁶³ Exceptions to this include the racially "transcendent" or "extraracial" identity (respectively, Rockquemore and Brunson, *Beyond Black*, 49-52, 71-73, 99-101, 117; Renn, *Mixed Race Students*, 67, 76-78, 193-217) and the "multiracial" (without concomitant "monoracial" community affiliations) identity (Daniel, *More than Black?*, 108-11; Renn, *Mixed Race Students*, 67, 155-93).

⁶⁴ See "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán."

⁶⁵ See Anzaldúa, "La Prieta"; Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*; Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*.

⁶⁶ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 82,78, 85.

⁶⁷ Scherr Salgado, "Miseg-narrations," 65.

⁶⁸ Lipsitz, "Noises in the Blood," in Coronado, et al., *Crossing Lines*, 32-33.

⁶⁹ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 79.

⁷⁰ Alcoff, "Mestizo Identity," 278.

⁷¹ Zack, "Preface," in Zack, *American Mixed Race*, ix.

⁷² Anzaldúa, "Preface: (Un)natural bridges, (Un)safe spaces," in Anzaldúa and Keating, *This Bridge*, 2, 3, 4.

⁷³ De la Garza et al., *Latino Voices*, 25; Telles and Ortiz, *Generations of Exclusion*, 176.

⁷⁴ See Grebler, Moore, and Guzman, *The Mexican American People*.

⁷⁵ See Spencer, *Spurious Issues*; Senna, "The Mulatto Millennium"; Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*.

⁷⁶ See Spickard, "Does Multiraciality Lighten?," in Coronado, et al., *Crossing Lines*, 45-62.

⁷⁷ For example, Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices*; Jiménez, "Multiethnic Mexican Americans"; Scherr Salgado, "Miseg-narrations"; Romo, "Between Black and Brown"; Guevarra Jr., "Filipinos in Nueva España."

⁷⁸ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*.

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