

THESIS

LIVING IN AMBIGUITY: THE MIXED RACE EXPERIENCE  
AT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Submitted by

Carl Izumi Olsen

Department of Ethnic Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Fall 2012

Master's Committee:

Advisor: Joon Kim

Irene Vernon

Linda Ahuna-Hamill

Copyright by Carl Izumi Olsen 2012

All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

### LIVING IN AMBIGUITY: THE MIXED RACE EXPERIENCE

#### AT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

This study analyzes the experiences of mixed race students at Colorado State University by using semi-structured interviews of nineteen students. The interviews reveal that multiracial students exhibit different forms of racialization as compared to monoracial students. Despite some commonalities, the study also demonstrates that multiracial students are not monolithic group. In an effort to highlight the uniqueness embedded in the diversity of multiracial students, the study analytically identifies three main clusters based on how they are perceived. These include: Non-White Mixed Race, In-Between Mixed Race, and White-Identified Mixed Race. The interviews also show that the three dominant themes mediate their multiracial identity: perception, self-identification and connection to culture. Finally, the participants in this study all point to the inability of the existing cultural centers in meeting their specific needs and call for the establishment of multiracial center that would provide resources for education, outreach and retention issues for multiracial students.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES.....	10
CHAPTER THREE: PERCEPTION, SELF-IDENTIFICATION, AND THE SEARCH FOR AUTHENTIC CULTURE: AN INTERVIEW ANALYSIS.....	22
CHAPTER FOUR: THE MULTIRACIAL CENTER.....	51
REFERENCES.....	70

## Chapter One: Introduction

"...potentially we like to refer to people in halves, because even as the entire world is an inextricable, bloody mash-up of hundreds of different ethnic groups, we still like to imagine racial groups as separate, impenetrable, sanitised entities. Even while they are simultaneously existing in one human." -Thea Lim (2009, para. 9)

"What are you?" This is the inevitable question I was asked throughout my life and to this day. It is strange that I do not remember the first time I was asked, but I always seemed to know the answer: "I am half white, half Japanese." My race is a "what," a category about which people feel they are entitled to probe and discover. The question, "What are you?" may come after they hear me speak Japanese with my mother. They may ask me after recognizing the difference in skin tone and racial features between my father and me. But mostly, the question came after minutes of stares of confusion from people I did not even know. When I came to realize that my racial identity was inextricably tied to many painful experiences in my life, I began to wonder: Am I alone? What makes me so different? Can I even talk to my parents about what I am going through?

Being of mixed race at Colorado State University (CSU) is both challenging and empowering. CSU is where I came into a language that helped me interpret and understand the previous 18 years of my life. It was the first time that I could openly and proudly identify that I am 100% Japanese and 100% White. I found mentors who walked the path I was on, and I met people who could relate for the first time. The fall semester of 2010 marks the first time CSU created a "multiracial" category in their fact book and ethnic demographic reporting. That category constitutes 18% of the non-white population at CSU, the second highest behind Hispanic. Clearly, there are thousands of students who identify as multiracial and yet there is

neither space nor opportunity to understand the uniqueness of our experiences. This anomaly prompted me to conduct an exploratory study on experiences of the mixed race/multiracial individuals at Colorado State University.

This study reveals many things about the mixed race experience for students before and after enrollment at CSU. This is significant for two reasons. First, it contributes to the understanding of how a growing population of students view the CSU campus because no study like this has been done before at CSU and this is the first time mixed race student voices are heard. The interviewees examine the various ways CSU does and does not support them. Second, from a broader perspective, the data from the interviews take a critical look at the monoracial paradigm of the United States that renders their experience invisible. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of how mixed race individuals navigate society by defining three different lenses to view the mixed race experience, which will be described later. The diversity of experience is tremendous among the nineteen participants, but the data reveal very clear themes. These themes are: the importance of how race perception affects the mixed race experience, the process of self-identification, and the connection between race and culture. The following is a brief outline of each theme.

How the participants are racially perceived is one of the most important themes in this study. As it turns out, multiracial individuals are as diverse as any other category of people. Although it would be erroneous to essentialize complex and nuanced differences among multiracial populations, this study identifies three main clusters in which interviewees generally fall. These include: Non-White Mixed Race, In-Between Mixed Race, and White-Identified Mixed Race. The Non-White Mixed Race group is characterized as having others perceiving them to be monoracial. The In-Between Mixed Race group represents multiracial individuals

who look racially ambiguous, thus others constantly ask about their racial identity. The White-Identified Mixed Race group constitutes those who look White, but they clearly have a myriad of racialized experiences. These differences in how others perceive them clearly impact the content of their experiences, but the common thread that runs through these experiences can be captured in the concept of monoracialization, a process of being treated as having a singular and essentialised racial identity.

The second important finding of this study is that the participants exhibit diverse ways of negotiating between social perception and their individualized self-identification process. Interestingly, the Non-White Mixed Race and White-Identified Mixed Race groups could both choose when to identify as multiracial, and these self-identification experiences are generally met with resistance. The In-Between Mixed Race group could not avoid people asking them about their “true” racial identity, and that identity was used as a tool by monoracial people to explain why they are different. All of these paths left a different imprint on the psyche of the different groups. However, there are many similar experiences of doubt and questioning in almost every story of self-identification. All individuals had to mediate other people’s confusion about their racial identity.

Although race and culture are clearly different concepts, every participant spoke about the connection between them. It seems that they constantly negotiate the authenticity of race or ethnicity. Because of the cultural litmus test for justifying one’s racial identity, there were many invalidating experiences for all three groups. When some express that they do not know the language associated with a part of their culture, they are told implicitly that they must be something other than what they claim. Other interviewees spoke about how it is important to know the specific types of “ethnic” music to listen to, the familiarity with certain foods, and an

understanding of the history of their ethnic heritage. There is an intimate connection between race and culture that many of these participants are compelled to bridge.

Thus, this study reveals three key points. The first is that the mixed race experience is very unique from monoracial experiences. The second key point is that for most of their lives and specifically at CSU, the mixed race students feel invisible both personally and systematically. Third, this lack of understanding of mixed race students leaves them unsupported on many levels at CSU. These key points are important to keep in mind throughout because they are the fundamental aspects of the mixed race identity that fuel the participants perspective on their personal experience. The following is brief explanation of these points.

Mixed race persons negotiate racial identity on a daily basis and frequently experience microaggressions. Microaggressions are “the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership” (Sue, 2010, p. 3). An example of a microaggression against a mixed race person is asking, “What are you?” because it reinforces the idea that mixed race people do not fit into a monoracial social paradigm. The daily experience of microaggressions against their multiple racial identities is the defining characteristic of the mixed race experience.

In addition to being very unique, another main point that is drawn from this study is that the mixed race population is very invisible on campus. Many students expressed frustration that their identity is invalidated on many levels. These include filling out forms that ask for their race, being told what their racial identity really is, and feeling like they had to choose which cultural center with which to identify. This study affords the opportunity for many participants to share their stories and have their voices heard.



A third point from this study is that CSU support networks for mixed race students are incomplete or inadequate. CSU does many things behind the scenes that benefit and support mixed race students. For example, when faculty or administration sees a student profile, they see all of the race boxes that the student marked are visible. This is a major step in recognizing the existence of mixed race individuals. However, there is little understanding of the mixed race experience in the United States, and CSU reflects that limitation as well. The participants believe that a center geared towards the needs of mixed race students is not only something they desire, but also something they desperately need.

### **Methodology**

This exploratory study about the mixed race experience at CSU utilizes semi-structured interviews, using aspects of grounded theory, specifically the methods of coding and constant comparison (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory cannot be fully utilized because the interviews are not used for theory development, nor will they be performed to the point of saturation. However using grounded theory as an approach is suitable for understanding how these students view their situation at Colorado State University in the context of their racial identity.

This study consists of a total of nineteen interview participants. All of them are students at CSU, 18 are undergraduate students and 1 is a graduate student. There are three first-year students, four second-year students, four third-year students, four fourth-year students, and three fifth-year students. Four of the students identify as male, and 15 students identify as women. Their ages range from 18 to 23 with an average age of 21. In terms of recruitment, the study utilizes the email lists of all seven Student Diversity Programs and Services offices, SHADES of CSU student organization, Key Communities, and word of mouth.

Participation was strictly voluntary. Along with signing a written consent form, participants were verbally briefed on its contents. The verbal explanation of the consent form stressed that their identity will be kept anonymous, the data kept secure, and they could terminate or withdraw from the research at any point until submission of the thesis. Each participant was also asked if the conversation could be recorded. The CSU Institutional Review Board approved this study.

The semi-structured interviews were about thirty minutes to half an hour in length. Three questions were consistently asked for each interview. The opening question was “Tell me your story.” The second question was, “What, if any, were your experiences with the Cultural Centers at Colorado State University?” The final question was, “What do you think of establishing a center for mixed race, multiracial, biracial students in addition to the existing SDPS offices?” Follow up questions were asked to elaborate on certain aspects of their response.

The recordings were transcribed. These documents are password protected. Using line-by-line coding as described by Charmaz (2006, p. 50-53), the interviews were coded for comparative analysis. The benefit of this coding is that it makes the data even more anonymous. With this thought in mind, the interviewees were invited to sift through the codes themselves as a group and analyze the patterns within the codes. This allowed the participants to indicate significant themes within their own data. All of these elements were taken into account when constructing this paper.

### **Clarification of Terminology**

An important facet of discussing the multiracial experience is terminology. Typically the terms multiracial and mixed race are used interchangeably (Ozaki and Johnston, 2008; Shang, 2008; Williams, 2009; Wong and Buckner, 2008) and includes the term biracial. However,

biracial is used more specifically for people with exactly two different races as defined by Census categories, rendering those with more than two races/ethnicities problematic. Another popular term is *hapa*. This is a slang term that originated from *hapa haole* in Hawaii to identify someone who was Asian and White. It was shortened to *hapa*, which means “half,” to denote someone with partial Asian ancestry. However, this term is used primarily by mixed race Asians on the mainland, specifically in California. The political implications for co-opting native language to be used as a descriptor of non-natives are widespread. Taniguchi and Heidenreich (2005) argue that the term “hapa” is problematic. The term creates more racial lines within the group who identifies as *hapa* by implicitly assigning qualifications for being *hapa* and continues the colonization of Native Hawaiians. *Mulatto* is an older term typically referring to an individual who is racially Black and White and it historically has negative implications about the psychological well being of mixed race individuals (Hanrahan, 2005). *Mestizo/a* is also a term that can be used in reference to a mixed race individual. It is typically applied to people with mixed Latin American and European backgrounds. The definition of a *mestiza* with greatest relevance as described by Anzaldúa (1987) as “a border culture,” or an identity that is In-Between a binary racial ideology (Black vs. White).

The term mixed race will be used throughout this research paper when referring to persons of two or more racial backgrounds. This term is preferred because it centers an individual who embodies two or more races. Multiracial is used in institutions of higher education attempting to make their campuses and pedagogy multicultural, but essentially taking the focus off of the persons. However, self-identification is important to self-determination (Collins, 1990) thus an attempt is made to address individuals based on how they self-identify and to use mixed race when talking about the general population.

There is danger of essentialism here. One study explores the employment of “mixed-race” as an identification. Mahtani (2002) “examines how people who identify as ‘mixed race’ contemplate the identification as a flexible label while at the same time choosing to negotiate its essentialist forms of identity categorization” (p 470). The term, according to the interviewees in this article, occupies two different spaces. Some celebrate the label saying that “mixed race” “can provide a position from which to articulate and transform social experiences” and “the term deinstitutionalizes the norm of racial categories ... creating a space within which she can validate her multiple identities” (p 477). Some contest the label. From these interviews, three themes emerged: “the term reifies the notion of race...it subsumes differences among individuals...it privileges the idea of race over and above other social identities” (p 478). Many held both positions.

However, Bost (2010) in *Encarnación* speaks to the nature of diversity implicit in the term mixed race or multiracial: “‘Gypsy’ and ‘disabled’ are identities without borders. Both refer to a heterogeneous range of embodiments that are ex-centric to normative ways of being and belonging. Their movements are, by definition, in friction with fixed identities” (p. 187). Although she speaks specifically about gypsies and disability, the same concept of one term representing the incredible diversity of the people contained within the term can be applied to mixed race. By definition, mixed race resists and creates friction, as Bost suggests, by challenging the notion of fixed, rigid definitions of mono-racial identities.

### **Surprises and Challenges**

The issue of choosing one race was a dominant force in the participants’ life experiences. However, it was never a single incident that stuck out for many of the participants. It was a generalized experience. This points to the intensity of these experiences as they happened over

time. There were some stories that detailed a specific incident, but these were monoracial experiences. Most of the experiences that were specifically mixed race were not time and place specific. The participants all talked about how their identity is invalidated on a daily basis. This repetitive invalidation is the focal point of the mixed race identity.

One of the challenges of this exploratory study is using a monoracial language to describe multiracial experiences. There is no language to speak of multiple experiences for one individual. It was challenging to write about multiple experiences based on how the English language in the United States is rooted in dichotomy.

The nuances of the mixed race identity cannot be explored or explained in one study. Further research is required to understand how appearance affects experience. Perhaps the best way to do this is to interview mixed race siblings and compare their stories. The sibling aspect is important because it would control the variances of racial heritage and cultural immersion, leaving the research to focus on the impact of appearance on the mixed race experience. Further research is also needed to explore the impact of microaggressions on the invisibility of the mixed race identity. That is to say, perhaps the silence for mixed race advocacy is connected to the idea that it is easy to ignore microaggressive discrimination. And if mixed race identity is predicated on a lifetime of microaggressions, it is easy for society to maintain its invisibility.

Despite these challenges, this study represents one of the first efforts to understand and problematize monoracial assumptions embedded in diversity programs of higher education. Hopefully, studies like this and many others would provide a basis for institutionally recognizing the unique needs of multiracial students and meeting those concerns.

## Chapter Two: Identification of Issues

Mixed race identity development is an expanding area of study. Mixed race people can experience racial identity in a variety of ways ranging from choosing a monoracial or integrated identity to opting out of the racial categories entirely (Binning, Unzueta, Huo, & Molina, 2009; Cheng & Lee, 2009; Poston, 1990; Renn, 2000). After the 1990 Census, criticism concerning the narrow scope of the standards became increasingly hard to ignore. Originally, Statistical Directive No. 15, created in May, 1977, established five race/ethnic classifications for federal programs' administrative reporting and statistical activities: (1) American Indian or Alaskan Native, (2) Asian or Pacific Islander, (3) Black, (4) Hispanic, and (5) White (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d., Definitions section). The main argument in support of revising the racial standardization pointed to a concern that "the minimum categories set forth in Directive No. 15 do not reflect the increasing diversity of our Nation's population that has resulted primarily from growth in immigration and in interracial marriages" (Standards for the classification of federal data on race and ethnicity, 1995, para. 1). After a four-year review, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) revised Statistical Directive 15 in 1997 and expanded the categories to include: (1) American Indian/Alaskan Native, (2) Asian, (3) Black/African American, (4) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, (5) Hispanic, (6) White. More importantly, the revision required federal agencies to offer the option to choose more than one racial category (Kellogg & Niskode, 2008).

There were advantages and disadvantages to this revision. The biggest advantage was that it provided a relatively simple and presentable solution to recognizing a growing multiracial population. This information is incredibly important on an institutional level. Unfortunately, even though Directive 15 aimed at creating a common language between federal institutions

regarding population diversity, it failed to standardize data input, coding, and presentation across the board. This means that it does not matter how an institution keeps or obtains data, as long as it is reported by those standards. Renn criticizes this aspect by recognizing that categorization can vary state by state or even institution by institution (Renn, 2009). This makes comparative analysis difficult.

This lack of uniformity presents numerous challenges to institutions. For example, can a mixed-race person make a case that he or she experienced racial discrimination at the workplace if the personal record the employer had that person's ethnicity as white? Documenting discrimination against multiracial people is clearly a challenge if record keeping makes them monoracial. This is of particular importance to institutions of higher education. There is great potential to study the mixed race population since 42% of those who marked more than one race on the 2000 Census are under 18 years of age (Jones & Smith, 2001). This means if universities bring their data collections up to speed by the January 2003 deadline set by Statistical Directive 15, research on the mixed-race experience should have exploded. Presently, this is not the case.

### **Multiracial Identity Models**

In response to an increasing diversity of mixed-race population, scholars have developed identity models designed to explain the complexity of multiracial experiences. The three representative models include: Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model (1990), Renn's Patterns in Occupying Spaces (2000), and Wijeyesinghe's Factor Model of Multiracial Identity (2001). The following is a brief summary of each model.

Poston (1990) creates a stage model that mimics monoracial identity models. The first stage of Poston's Biracial Identity Development is *Personal Identity*, which is mostly associated with adolescence. During this stage, the individual has a sense of self that could or could not be

associated with ethnic background. The second stage is *Choice of Group Categorization*, which is set off by a time in life where individuals feel as though they are pressured to choose one racial identity over the other. Poston believed most biracial people felt forced to be monoracial because of intellectual immaturity. The third stage, *Enmeshment/Denial*, reflects feelings of guilt for rejecting one ethnicity in favor of another. The fourth stage in Poston's identity model is *Appreciation*. Through the third stage, individuals learn a great deal about one or multiple sides of their racial identity while they tend to claim one in the fourth stage, they have a greater understanding of their identity as a whole. The final stage, *Integration*, is characterized by "individuals...experienc[ing] wholeness and integration" (Poston, p. 154).

Although Poston's (1990) model takes care to distinguish between stages, it is problematic for several reasons. His sample population is limited to those who identify as Black and White. If diverse groups experience racism differently, then their identity development may also correspondingly vary. Limiting the study to one type of mixed race flattens the diversity of experiences and, thus, makes it difficult to get a fuller picture of the mixed race experience. Much of Poston's argument also assumes that multiple races within an individual are compartmentalized. There isn't an option to choose being multiracial until the final stage. The Biracial Identity Development State Model is rather static way of understanding and explaining the diversity of mixed race experiences.

Renn's (2000) study of college-aged multiracial students identified five patterns, "showing how participants occupied spaces on the racial landscape of each campus " (p. 328). This is the first theory to challenge a linear development model. In what Renn calls "the first pattern," students choose a monoracial identity. In the second pattern, students shift between monoracial identities depending on their situation. In the third pattern, students identify as



"multiracial," which is a category of their own creation. In the fourth pattern, "students opted out completely by deconstructing the category of race or choosing not to identify along US racial lines" (p. 329). The final pattern was that students moved between or among the above options.

Renn's (2000) study demonstrates the complexity of the mixed race experience. She details how each institution clearly impacted the student experience in different ways depending on how the University was set up. However, she also discovered that there are many similar themes that apply to almost all of her research participants. Renn stated that if there is a critical mass of mixed race students at an institution and they feel like they cannot belong to existing monoracial groups, then the students will create and maintain their own space. Her conclusion, however, does not support an institutionally supported mixed race office or space despite the fact that the mixed race students generally do not have anywhere to go. She believes that there needs to be a critical mass of students who feel the need for such a space to justify one created on an institutional level. These criteria were only met at one University of the three campuses she interviewed.

Wijeyesinghe (2001) also recognizes that a linear development model inadequately represents the complexity of diversity within the multiracial community. She advances "The Factor Model of Multiracial Identity, 'FMMI'" and identified eight contingent factors that could affect how mixed race individuals racially identify. An individual's multiracial identity is not necessarily affected by all eight factors and some factors may be more significant than others depending on personal experience. The eight factors were racial identity, cultural attachment, early experience and socialization, political awareness and orientation, spirituality, physical appearance, social and historical context, and other social identities (Wijeyesinghe, 2001).

Wijeyesinghe (2001) noted, “each multiracial population is also affected by its unique experiences and history in the United States” (p. 136). Yet, her study has only African American/European multiracial adults (p. 137). Limiting research to a specific mix of races cannot capture the full extent of the mixed race experience. This is most evident in the category that Wijeyesinghe created titled “Social and Historical Context” (p. 141). The only historical context that Wijeyesinghe provides is the “one drop rule,” which was only applicable to those with African descent. There is no such establishment for other racial categories.

Poston and Wijeyesinghe's models are problematic because their sample populations consist of only one type of multiracial identity. Poston (1990), for instance, surveyed only adults with Black and White ancestry and claims that the model is applicable to all individuals with mixed race heritage. Renn's (2000) survey consisted of 24 students with different racial ancestries. Though the sample population is more diverse, the data shows institutional bias in experience since five out of eight participants who opted out of a racial definition are from the same institution. While these studies are helpful in understanding the complexities of the mixed race identity, they still offer a limited view of multiracial experience because of the built in bias in the studies. Nonetheless, these studies all point out that the mixed race experience is quite different from the experiences of monoracial identities. Much of this has to do with the ambiguity of outward appearance.

### **Ambiguous Racial Identity**

Studies on the perception of mixed race people add another layer of complexity to identity development theories. Some studies premise on facial recognition and show the power of racial boxes in classifying individuals monoracially (Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2004; Hutchings & Haddock, 2008; Maclin & Malpass, 2001; Malahy, Sedlins, Plaks, & Shoda, 2010). They

reinforced the notion that mixed race people belong in established race boxes by forcing participants to choose a dominant race. Hutchings and Haddock (2008), for instance, conducted a study with young children who were asked to identify “angry faces,” and they quite consistently chose racially ambiguous but clearly “darker-complexioned” faces. Maclin and Malpass (2001) found that the “racially ambiguous faces” were put into racial categories based on hair and other stereotypical features. These studies focus on how racially ambiguous/mixed race people get classified, instead of identifying how mixed race people are perceived. Contextualizing the complex ways in which people perceive each other racially would greatly enhance the existing knowledge about the multiracial experiences, without unnecessarily reinforcing the institutional need to monitor experiences based on presumed monoracial experiences.

This in-between space that mixed race persons occupy plays out in nuanced ways on an individual level. Mohan and Chambers (2010) discuss and explore these complexities in qualitative research and argue that the insider/outsider dynamic is “limited in their applicability to research with multiracial individuals” (p. 260). For one, the dominant feature of one’s physical appearance destabilizes the insider/outsider dualism. For instance, even though both of the authors are self-identified as mixed race, they “would unlikely look at each other as ‘insiders,’ that our racial identities are quite different, and that, based in large part on our phenotypes, we have very different experiences from each other” (p. 261). At the same time, however, Mohan noted that his “multiethnic identity was an asset during these interviews” (p. 273) because it allowed him to better access, relate to, and understand these participants’ stories and experiences. This suggests that although the mixed race community is by no means monolithic, there is a common thread that exists in their stories. This further implies that our current conceptions of

communities formed around racial identities may exclude mixed race persons. Mohan and Chambers (2010) elaborate:

the unique markers of monoracial community membership do not apply in the same way to multiracial populations. Indeed, what binds many multiracial individuals to each other may be their engagement in micronegotiations related to their racial and ethnic identity(ies) rather than shared experience, identity, history, social proximity, or phenotype. (p. 278)

### **Multiracial College Students and Data Collection**

The mixed-race conception of community is starting to form on college campuses across the nation. Yet, institutions have significantly lagged behind in collecting accurate and reliable data, much less an effort to understand their impact on institutions of higher education and a desire to understand and address their unique needs. The following is a brief review of the efforts by higher education to understand increasing campus diversity and the shortcomings pertaining to collecting information about the silent but significant multiracial student population.

The importance of diversity in higher education has been well established (Antonio, 2001; Astin, 1993; Baez, 2000; Bernal, Cabrera, & Terenzini, 2000; Duster, 1993; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998; Milem and Hakuta, 2000; Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Bjorklund & Parente, 2001). In the 2003 Supreme Court Case, *Grutter v Bollinger*, Justice O'Connor affirmed the earlier court decision that diversity is a compelling state interest, but the court also argued that race could only be used as one of many diversity factors in the admissions process. Leaving it up to the states to decide how to diversify their student body, many different models emerged (Kim, 2005). Without a strong federal stance and guidelines,

affirmative action policies and data collection methods have varied from institution to institution for multiracial students. This presents a challenge to higher education policy makers.

Various diversity policies in the recent literature show a change from ignoring the existence of mixed race individuals to recognizing the complexities of multiracial experiences. Unfortunately, many institutions do not have hard data that accurately reflect the mass of multiracial students because students do not yet have the option to choose one or more race (Padilla & Kelly, 2005). Directive 15 required federally funded institutions to update their data collections processes by January 1, 2003 (Wallman, Evinger & Schechter, 2000). However, Padilla and Kelly found that only 27% of institutions polled, as of 2005, allowed students to mark more than one race. This apparent lack of observance in data collection procedures stems from the fact that Directive 15 affected only federal institutions. Without this data, however, it is difficult to reach, survey, and analyze the needs of multiracial students. Simply recognizing how many multiracial students are enrolled is not sufficient. Only 9 out of 298 (3%) of universities actually collect, maintain, and present detailed data on student racial demographics. In short, the institutions approaches to data collection need to shift in order to accommodate an increasingly diverse student body, and universities should proactively develop on-campus policies in order to assess, anticipate and address the needs of this population.

Because of the lack of data pertaining to mixed race communities, universities have been slow in responding to their needs (Kellogg & Niskode, 2008). Since a vast majority of universities do not keep data on mixed race students, it is impossible to provide them with institutional support. As a result, mixed race individuals must try and fit into established race-oriented student services (ROSS). Literte (2010), however, rather critically argued that such offices reflect “left-liberal racial projects that institutionalize and legitimate the identities of

‘Black,’ ‘Latino/a,’ and ‘Asian American’” (p. 125). More importantly, they “implicitly deny the existence and veracity of biracial identity and persons” (Literte, p. 125). Literte (2010) also recognizes that this exclusion is not necessarily intentional by ROSS organizations but is a result of constraining ideology and limited understanding from university administrators.

### **Toward an Establishment of Multiracial Student Services**

Because of this lack of institutional support, students have formed organizations on their own to meet some of their needs. Taniguchi and Heidenreich (2005) observe the rise of mixed-race student organizations in response to their growing numbers. Ozaki and Johnston (2008) trace the literature in multiracial and identity-based student organizations. They find that students seek out other students with similar experiences, feel the need to establish a political voice, and search for "a space to express and explore their identity". Ozaki and Johnston (2008) also presented the unique challenges multiracial student organizations face. One challenge concerns categorizing multiracial data, which can lead to conflicts between leaders and members if their identities do not match. It seems as though the factors that unite multiracial student organizations are as numerous as those that could potentially divide them. Regardless of these obstacles, the fact remains that multiracial students increasingly look for a community and space where they could inter-subjectively validate each other's experiences.

Very little critical and comparative analysis of current models and services geared toward multiracial students exist. Wong and Buckner (2008) suggest that the most common model of multiracial student services is based on the "service delivery model of single events without long-term institutional commitment ... or the inclusion of multiracial students in a multicultural center's mission statement without assigned staff" (p. 50). Wong and Buckner (2008) also performed case studies on University of Colorado at Boulder's Center for Multicultural Affairs

(CMA) and Brown University's Third World Center (TWC). Both programs move away from ROSS offices and have a central location, which oversees retention, programming, and advising. Since multicultural centers cover the broad scope of minority students, student groups are the only outlets for African, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American (ALANA) students as well as mixed race students to congregate with those who they share exclusive experiences.

Two crucial factors sustain mixed race student organizations: (1) the presence of professional staff assigned by the institution to deliver services to multiracial students and (2) strong student leadership in the community of multiracial students. Wong and Buckner (2008) also mentioned that most practitioners are unaware of other existence of multiracial student service models suggesting a complete lack of national conversation and congruence addressing effective practices to better serve mixed race college students.

This shift from ROSS to multicultural or ALANA centers is critical. A model where there are no separate ROSS offices that cater to the needs of one racial group has some advantages. It encourages development of ALANA students through interactions with students of a different racial background and increases opportunities for broad, encompassing, and potentially powerful coalitions between different ethnic groups. It also centralizes multicultural resources. This might make more financial sense for a campus with a very low population of ALANA students. There are many disadvantages as well. This process could potentially be a cost cutting measure since a center that contains all ALANA student activities requires less paid staff and less facility management costs which allocates fewer resources to ALANA students. Fewer ALANA staff also means the decrease in diversification of university faculty and staff. This puts the directors of ALANA/multicultural centers in a precarious position of potentially being perceived as favoring one ethnic group over others if the leadership only represents one identity. It also places

a greater burden on ALANA students to run their own student organizations if they are looking for a comfortable space that is racially monolithic.

The trend toward models such as University of Colorado's CMA may lead to negative unintended consequences and potentially provide a disservice to multiracial students. Although a gathering of ALANA students in one location appears to benefit mixed-race students since it provides them with an avenue to choose the community in which they wish to mingle, it has the potential to become a center for re-victimization. It seems that at an ALANA center, mixed-race students would have two options. They could melt or force themselves into one of the monoracial offices, if they exist, or be pushed out for not being ethnic enough. Either way, these centers could further render the multiracial person invisible. In addition, if no measure is taken to centralize data on multiracial students in a designated office, retention rates and programming would be fractured or lost entirely, stunting the progression of developing multiracial discourse and consciousness. This could put the burden of responsibility on both mixed-race student organizations and ALANA faculty who must advise students in addition to their full time jobs. These centers for multicultural affairs could be devious, cost-cutting measures that appease diversity policies on the surface but will damage fulfillment of social justice in the long run.

In order to increase the understanding of the importance of providing mixed race students with direct institutional support, it may be helpful to establish multiracial individuals not as a group deserving their own racial category, but as a growing community with unique needs that current systems do not support. The current body of work implies that special attention needs to be devoted to the presentation of multiracial students and faculty as integral aspects of the diversification of college campuses. This is difficult given the current historical/theoretical



framework devoted to race doesn't develop the socialization of mixed race individuals. This absence of mixed race theory makes it difficult to analyze data pertaining to mixed race.

Colorado State University has race-based student centers called "Cultural Centers." They are "El Centro" for Latina/o students, "Asian/Pacific American Cultural Center" (A/PACC), "Black/African American Cultural Center" (B/AACC), and "Native American Cultural Center" (NACC). They are located in the central student center, but do not currently share a common area. There is a student organization called SHADES of CSU that is committed to creating a space for mixed race students. Like all student organizations at CSU, it must have "an advisor who is a full-time or part-time Faculty, Administrative Professional or State Classified staff member. Graduate students will be allowed to serve as organizational advisors with consent from their academic advisor" (SLiCE, Minimum Standards for Recognition section, item 5) . However, serving as a student organization advisor is voluntary. This provides incentive to sign up to be an advisor, but not actually commit to any of the legwork that goes into running an organization. Without direct institutional support, the type of advisor SHADES chooses can make or break the organization. SHADES and mixed race students at CSU are missing one of Wong and Buckner's (2008) crucial factors to sustainability and that is assigned professional staff dedicated to working with these students.

### Chapter Three: Perception, Self-Identification, and the Search for Authentic Culture: An Interview Analysis

The interviews were incredibly illuminating. There was palpable excitement from the interviewees because of the opportunity to share their story. The scope and diversity of content from one interview to the next is breathtaking. Each experience is completely unique. However, no experience was without struggle. This chapter showcases many of the ideas expressed by the 19 students who were interviewed. The data from these interviews makes it clear that racial perceptions of mixed race individuals greatly influence their experience. This is important because it points to how different mixed race individuals navigate a monoracial society. This means the needs for these students are unique and that they are deserving of a space to call their own at Colorado State University (CSU).

The interviews revealed that multiracial individuals fall within the three types of identities. The first group is the monoracial, non-white identity, characterized by identifying as one race and having the ability to escape questions about their race. This group is referred to as Non-White Mixed Race group. A second group that emerged from the data is those who look racially ambiguous. Although all interviewees expressed the need to explain or defend their identity, this is emphasized in this group because of their racial ambiguity. They often feel like they are “not enough” of a particular race or ethnic group. This group is referred to as the In-Between Mixed Race group. Those who look White/Caucasian constitute the third group and for the most part, they identify as such. Their racial identity is only brought up if they bring it up and they often find themselves defending the fact that they are multiracial. They represent the White-Identified Mixed Race group.

It is important to note that all of the interviewees have experienced pain and difficulty through of process of other people continually trying to categorize them into established monoracial boxes. There was trepidation in grouping the participants and repeating the process of racial categorization, but it is a significant result of the interview process. It is also possible for participants to be in more than one category. The mixed race experience exposes the fluidity of racial identification and allows for movement of an individual between several different categories depending on environment and perceptions.

In order to frame the unique nature of the mixed race experience, this chapter first examines how perceptions impact each group's experience. Race perception is the primary reason for the three different types of the mixed race experience. How these individuals are perceived was situational. For example, the ideas about race perception for Non-White Mixed Race and White-Identified Mixed Race groups are similar. They speak about how easily they can pass within certain groups but not in others. For the In-Between Mixed Race group, this was not an option. Because of their racial ambiguity, students in this group were constantly told where they belong, whether through rejection from a group or being claimed by a group. There were very few instances where participants were allowed to identify as multiracial. In short, experiences based on race perceptions expose the centrality of monoracial thinking in identity formation.

Second, this chapter explores the process of self-identification in order to demonstrate the fluidity of racial identification. Many students reflected on the ability to choose their racial identification in several instances, specifically when it came to filling out census forms and occasionally during social situations. Other participants experienced self-identification differently, where they were categorically denied the ability to identify with their multiple racial

identities by being forced to choose one or the other. The difference underscores the fact that racial identification for mixed race individuals is both situational and contextual. Some participants could “get away with” identifying as mixed race or multiracial or biracial because it “makes sense” based on their physical features. However, it was evident that the idea of identifying as “multiracial” or “mixed race” did not occur to a majority of participants until their arrival at CSU. This is a significant indicator for how CSU can make an impact on the lives of this growing population.

Finally, this chapter discusses how members in each group connect their race with culture. Many participants encountered resistance when attempting to identify with a certain race when it directly related to culture of that race. Many issues surrounded language, and to a lesser extent, food, music, and family. Culture is a major theme for the mixed race experience because it authenticates racial identity. Many students gained acceptance to or rejection from a community through their cultural knowledge. This is especially magnified if the participants’ physical characteristics do not match their associated culture. This leads to a lifetime pursuit of culture or active disassociation from it. Many wrestle with the idea that they must “attain” something that can be construed stereotypically and often ask the question, “What does it mean to be Black?” or “Asian?” or “Latin@?” Students simultaneously felt pressure to fit into a culture while constantly being rejected by people within that culture. This in-between space is an integral part of the mixed race experience.

Each theme will first discuss the differences from the group, and then reexamine how they are similar in order to establish a comprehensive view of the mixed race identity. This information is important in order to frame the issues that a center for mixed race students would address.

## **Perception**

The data from the interviews reflect the monoracialized society that mixed race individuals must navigate. They analyze and attempt to conceptually understand their experiences as they develop a new language at CSU. Despite many obvious physical signs that the participants are mixed race or multiracial, current racial paradigms demand that they be put into a monoracial box, despite, as Theresa puts it, “Colorblind people are gonna know that I’m mixed!” A center for mixed race students at CSU could aid in this process of naming their experiences and moving forward.

Race perception dominates the mixed race experience. This is partly because the racial landscape of the United States is highly monoracialized. By definition, racial perception is an external force that affects everyone and the force is predicated on the practice of fitting people into racial boxes. This presents a problem for mixed race individuals because they are often somewhere between these boxes. MaryAnn, who identifies as Hispanic, talks about the notion of fitting in based on how she is perceived:

I asked my mom, “why didn’t I look like them? Why wasn’t my skin color like them because it’d be easier for me to be friends with them” because sometimes I did see that judgment from both groups. That I would say something... That just didn’t fit in.

MaryAnn expresses desire to fit into a Hispanic identified group but she is very cognizant of the difference in skin tone. This recognition of difference stems from her experience of being judged from both white and Hispanic groups. MaryAnn’s sense of un-belonging in both groups is a consistent issue for most of the participants, but each group experiences this a little differently.

The Non-White Mixed Race group, for the most part, has navigated their lives as monoracial. Naomi, who identifies as Black and White, talks about a very “Black” experience:

I remember one time, I was in the seventh grade, I was walking home from school, you know it's like the big group of middle school kids and whatever and, this one kid had told me that I should have been sitting at the back of the bus cuz that's where I belonged.

This is important because some mixed race individuals are not free from monoracialized prejudice. Naomi's mother is White, yet this did not matter to her peers because of their perception of her presumed race.

More so than the other groups, there is a greater expectation for Non-White Mixed Race individuals to act a certain way. Will, who identifies as White and unknown, explains these expectations in the Black community:

The lack of Black people up here [at CSU] makes it so when you are around Black people; they tend to think "Oh you have to act so and so way. You have to act more Black than maybe you usually 'would.'"...So that, you know, you can represent up here and like, "Oh well we don't have enough of us up here anyways so you get to be Black. You have to be Black." So I think a part of it is a lack of diversity on the campus makes it so I feel like I have to represent myself.

Despite his mixed racial heritage, Will's race is determined by popular perception. The "black side" of his identity is often accentuated in situations where there may be little racial diversity.

Physical appearance undoubtedly is a very important aspect of race perceptions.

However, race perception sometimes goes beyond physical appearance. The way one acts, the hobbies she or he prefers, and the way she or he talks also impact how one's race is perceived. Lucy, who in most circumstances identifies as Hispanic/Latina/Mexican, believes that even though she may look Hispanic, the way she behaves prevents her from fitting in. She expands:

The way that I talk is a lot of it because, I mean, I try not to use a lot of slang terms...

Cuz I think White people have a certain way of speaking, you know what I mean? So I think I talk pretty White... Then acting White also maybe...the way I dress?

Lucy had a little trouble identifying characteristics that make her seem less Hispanic and more White because it was behavior that shifted the perception of her race. It is interesting that Lucy has been called White by not using slang terms. It seems that racial perceptions can shift from day to day based on style of dress as well. This demonstrates the fluidity of race and that there are subtle and significant nuances that create separation between races. Mixed race individuals understand these lines very well because they are constantly being pushed and pulled across boundaries.

What is interesting about this Non-White Mixed Race group is that people outside of the perceived racial group accept monoracial identification. However, many expressed that it is only the Black community that questions their race. Maya and Mia explain this well. Maya, who identifies as “mostly African-American” but reveals that she is also Asian, Native American, and French, says:

Black people will just come up to me and be like, “hmmm you’re not all Black huh?” or something like that. Like, Black people will notice but not anybody else really. That’s when I have to clarify [my race] mostly.

Maya says that strangers who appear to be Black will question whether or not she is completely monoracial, but only Black folks will do so. By saying that nobody else notices, she implies that non-Black people perceive her to be Black. Mia wouldn’t be considered to have a monoracial identity, but she further explains this idea that the Black community is where she encounters the most resistance in self-identification. She explains:

I noticed a pattern within the Black community. It was always “nuh-uhhh” [No]. So, like, what happened when I was younger, it [the Black community] has always been “no you’re not,” like, “you have to explain yourself.” But...when you’re around different, other people of color besides black and that includes White, if you just say “I’m Black” they don’t ask you to explain.

It is apparent that those outside of the Black community feel Mia looks Black enough to be treated as Black. The Black community members, however, feels as though they need more explanation. This pattern in the Black community has significance for mixed race individuals at CSU because of the presence of the Black/African American Cultural Center.

Both Non-White Mixed Race and White-Identified Mixed Race groups seldom explain their race. The In-Between Mixed Race group, however, experience differently because of their racial ambiguity. The process of other people constantly questioning their race is an intense experience for the In-Between Mixed Race group.

One of the consequences of constantly being asked about their race is that people are always breaking-up the individual’s body into different stereotypical racial phenotypes. Ester, who identifies as multiracial and is Mexican, Filipino, and White describes this process, “I’ve been told that I have white features but I have ethnic skin color or some... or my eyes are more whatever but my nose and my mouth are more white and I’m like ‘ok. I guess. Sure. Maybe.’” There is often a process in which stereotypical features are pointed out. Those who are mixed with Asian heritage typically get comments about their eyes. Those with Black ancestry receive comments about their hair. Women with Hispanic/Mexican heritage hear comments about their body shape, specifically having larger breasts and wider hips.



One consequence of experiencing a fragmented body is the feelings of inadequacy or being ostracized. Many participants expressed that they felt they were not enough of an ethnicity or race. Callie, who self-identifies as multiracial, Korean and White, talks about what it means to be Asian: “Because I think so much of that [Asian] experience is the discrimination you get based on how you physically are different.” Callie links being Asian American in the United States with experiencing discrimination based on a stereotypical image. This implies that she believes she looks “white enough” to escape discrimination based on being Asian American. It is interesting that, for Callie, an authentic Asian American identity includes experiencing discrimination. This quest to validate a racial identity is often tied to commonly shared experience, one that especially leaves lasting impressions.

Because of the existing monoracial paradigm, those who do not look monoracial experience “othering” from many communities. This happens by emphasizing what physical characteristics are different. Emphasizing difference from being monoracial invalidates the multiple identities of the In-Between Mixed Race individuals because it is a process of denying a part of self. For example, even if Callie, who has a White biological father and a biracial Korean and White mother, looks White and “acts White.” The second her Korean heritage is revealed, the White identity disappears because people constantly question Callie on Korean culture and treat her as a Korean individual. The White-Identified Mixed Race group experiences invalidation of their identity differently. They are either denied their heritage from their parent of color because they look White or their White background is ignored because of the dominance attributed to racial minority heritage. Many of the White-Identified interviewees expressed this feeling by saying, “I feel like I deny my father/mother,” because they are seldom accepted as having a hybrid identity.

For the most part, each one of them understood that the privileges of their skin tone protect them from experiencing discrimination. However, they must constantly search for validation of their identity and prove that their race or ethnicity is authentic. More often than not, their racial identity is completely rejected by external forces. For example, when asked how it feels when people assume that she is White, Bailey, who is half Mexican, half German and Irish, said:

I dunno, it doesn't hurt me cuz it's like, I know I look that way but at the same time, internally it kind of does cuz its like, I don't want people to think that I'm just a white person coming in to help and like, not have good intentions, you know what I mean? And...that's kind of a barrier I'm trying to break. I am an ally but I also identify as an oppressed person in multiple ways.

Bailey is both understanding and hurt when people assume that she is White. She refers to her Whiteness as a barrier in some spaces. But she also defines her White privilege, despite being half Mexican, as an asset to be an ally. Monoracial worldview sees reality in terms of dualisms such as “oppressor” or “oppressed,” but seldom in terms of simultaneity.

Regardless of how they look, the pain of racialized experiences is very real for White-Identified Mixed Race individuals. This pain comes from denial of their racial, ethnic, and cultural heritage. Mark, who identifies as Caucasian, and is half German and English, half Venezuelan, relates an experience that touched a sensitive part of his identity. He explains:

What hurt me the most was [when someone said], “I can wrap a burrito better than you.”...I'm proud that I have that part of me, and I'm proud that I lived in Venezuela and I got that experience and I like to think of myself as that, as Hispanic. But it just sucks

knowing that I can only really divulge that to close friends because a lot of them won't judge me when I say that.

Linda, who identifies as Norwegian and Armenian, explains this well, "I think that's been probably the biggest thing that people either don't believe me or they think that I'm exaggerating [my Armenian identity]." Mark also talks about the effort it takes to reveal his diverse identity: "when I'm really delving into it, I am trying to legitimate it to someone cuz no one seems to believe me when I say that [I am Venezuelan]." Both Linda and Mark have been accused of lying about their racial identity. They feel like they must prove the legitimacy of their racial heritage. This denial of identity is how mixed race individuals feel as though they are racial outsiders. They are being denied the ability to identify as multiracial or as anything other than White, maintaining the monoracial paradigm. There is no denying that the experience of the White-Identified Mixed Race is unique because of the shifting meaning of race and the inability of people to think and conceptualize multiracial identity.

One of the strands of similarity between the three mixed race groups is the experience of monoracialization. Once the non-White identity is revealed, that part of their identity becomes a focal point of conversation. Many of the interviewees grew up as "the Black girl" of the group, or "that Asian chick" if they grew up in a community of predominantly white folks. Others were called "the White person" of the group, even if they had darker skin tone, if they grew up in a more predominantly non-white neighborhood. These monoracializing experiences invalidate the mixed race identity, as Shawn, who identifies as Chicano states, "People read[sic] me as one way and then not really accepting ... my other identities or my other experiences outside of those that may be considered white or outside of those that maybe considered of color." In a sense, Shawn

describes how he can get stuck into an identity depending on how people perceive him. And when he is in that space, his other identities are ignored. This is a process of monoracialization.

This is not limited to one type of racial mix. Another monoracializing experience in a predominantly Black identified social group is expressed by Mia, who identifies as mixed, Black, Choctaw, and White. She reflects: “I’m not known as ‘the white girl’...cuz...I have white blood in me but the way that I talk, I guess how I view things, I have a white mindset and so I’m the ‘white girl.’” This is a very different way of monoracializing. Mia could not pass for White. Yet in her community, she is constantly called “the White girl” because of her mindset, not because of her heritage. This is not something she cannot escape. Similarly, Abigail, who identifies as half Japanese, half White, relates an experience at CSU, “I’ve gotten the ‘oriental girl.’ I ride horses and, up at my job my boss is like, ‘oh you ride really good for an oriental girl.’ I was like, what does that mean?” The preponderance of these experiences among the interviewees demonstrates how a monoracial paradigm makes life difficult for those who identify as mixed or multiracial.

Several participants talked about how their race perception was influenced by their body shape. Lucy, who identifies as Hispanic/Latina, and reveals that she is part Yaqui Indian, talks about how her figure made her feel different,

I think it was hard on me too because all...my closest friends were all blonds with blue eyes. And I’d always be like, the short, dark, well I mean not that dark but compared to them you know, little Mexican girl or like Latina girl...And so I think that was difficult just because...obviously my body shape was completely different than them cuz they’re just like, super skinny and super tall.

Bailey adds to Lucy's observation about how her body type impacts her identity and observes that it clues people into her ethnic identity. She reflects:

They know that I'm half Mexican and so we would get a lot of like, not necessarily about the skin but the physical body, with like the hips, and like the bigger butt or whatever, like, they would just like, "oh its cuz you're Mexican." And like, "oh you can dance because you're Mexican." You know stuff like that.

Because people often respond to body parts that presumably identify a race or ethnicity, multiracial individuals reject the tendency to accentuate one part of their identity while suppressing other parts of the self. The impact that the selective validation of identity has on those who live through the contradictions is difficult to measure.

Perception is not simply an objective reality, but it greatly impacts how mixed race individuals subjectively interpret the symbols and form a self-identify. Hailey, who identifies as multiracial speaks about how racial perception influences self-identification. She comments:

"I'm also Cherokee Indian, Irish and Chinese but it's just not as prominent. And facially too, what I look like, I feel like I don't look like I'm white, I don't look like I'm Asian. I don't identify with them as much."

This is an important point to consider because racial perception, that is, the objectified perception based on race, greatly influences how one responds to those perceptions. Inevitably, multiracial individuals try to answer the underlying questions about the relationship between race and identity, precisely because race is one of the dominating identity markers. The next section addresses the intricate ways in which the objectified racial symbols impact the subjective interpretation essential to identity formation.

## **Self-Identification**

The constant barrage of questions surrounding their racial identity inevitably leads to many organic responses about the process of self-identification. There are a myriad of ideas surrounding self-identification, and some of these ideas conflict. One's socialization process, including the family and close-knit networks, may significantly impact identity formation. In general, for those who grow up in a supporting environment, their mixed race identity had a more static identification process. Conversely, for those who did not experience having conversations about race or being mixed race, their identity tends to be more erratic and less stable. In short, what is unique about the self-identification process of mixed race individuals is that it is constantly negotiated and can also be a source of pain and empowerment.

For the Non-White Mixed Race group, there are specific instances where being multiracial was important. What separates this group from the others is the ease in identifying as monoracial and non-White, especially in White dominant spaces. Naomi identifies primarily as Black because it is easier than saying "half Black, half White" in almost any situation. This implies that she experiences explaining her race enough times to want to avoid it. At the same time, she believes that she should have the right to self-identify however she wants and whenever she wants. Naomi explains:

If God decided to make me half of one thing and half the other, then He's allowing me to make the choice of who I want to be, type of thing. So its like, you know, if I decide to change my mind 7 billion times and decide to be Black half those times and White half of those times, then so be it.

Naomi is almost angry that she feels powerless to identify how she wants. This internal conflict is a fairly consistent theme in self-identification, precisely because of the gap between public perception and individual reality.

Maya, who says she is “mostly African-American,” has a different justification for identifying with this group. For her, it’s not one of convenience but an explicit act of demonstrating solidarity. She explains:

Going to that class, it made me realize that my people fought hard for me, even though I’m not all Hawaiian and everything. So I was like, “Oh man, dang, my people went through so much. I need to claim that as who I am because there’s so many people that died for me.”

For Maya, it is important to claim a racial identity in order to honor her ancestors. This may be an underlying motivation for most participants who do not physically show a certain ethnicity or race in a physical sense, or didn’t have any contact with that part of the family growing up. In order to overcome the feelings of loss and the cultural disconnect with that part of identity, multiracial individuals tend at times to overcompensate by shifting identity completely to one side. One common reaction is to search to fill that gap by either learning more about the culture or learning the language.

For the most part, both Non-White Mixed Race and White-Identified Mixed Race groups are inundated with a “dominant” culture that corresponds to racial perception, so there are not many situations where their race is questioned. They can choose when to reveal their mixed identity. The major difference between these two groups is that it is more acceptable to look like a person of color and claim being mixed race, than it is to look like a White/Caucasian person and claim being mixed race, and more specifically, as a person of color. Although both groups

have some level of control over how they are racially perceived, White-Identified Mixed Race individuals are consistently denied the ability to self-identify as mixed race. This denial of racial identification is unique, even within the sphere of the mixed race experience.

The context in which White-Identified Mixed Race individuals proclaim their racial identity is very specific. Shawn, who identifies as Chicano, was questioned about his race/ethnicity while visiting a cultural center. He explains in detail:

I think it depends on how people ask it and how they frame it. Like, for example, today, I just got asked “So are you like, Native American?” Because I was in the NACC [Native American Cultural Center] office and I was like, “ummm I would never use that term or label and so like let me go into this right now.” And so other ways it’s framed is “what’s your nationality?” And I was like, “Ok... do you mean ethnicity? Do you mean race?” Shawn was asked about his race and ethnicity directly because he was in the context of NACC. Typically, many of the conversations about a mixed race person’s heritage begins with others asking indirectly. These questions include, “what’s your nationality?” “Where are you from?” “Where did you grow up?” “Where are your parents from?” The most probing question for many mixed race participants was, “What are you?” This particular question always seemed to strike a nerve with many of the interviewees because of the uncomfortable feeling of being directly objectified.

Another context in which White-Identified Mixed Race individuals reveal their ethnic backgrounds is when there are others around them who may be able to relate. Lesa, who self-identifies as multiracial, and is German, Italian, French, and Vietnamese, describes this situation in relation to her Vietnamese heritage:



[My race] comes out... if people are talking about their own race and ethnicity and background, then I usually feel comfortable chiming in or saying something about it... I don't necessarily like, throw it out there as, "hi my name is Lesa, by the way I'm, you know, part Asian." It's not something that I necessarily come right out with.

Lesa feels uncomfortable revealing her Vietnamese heritage right away. This is understandable considering that others do not lay out their racial background the moment they meet someone new. But it is interesting that it seems like Lesa walks through the world as a White person, and almost needs to be reminded that she is also Vietnamese.

Unlike Lesa, Bailey, who identifies as half Mexican, half German and Irish, shares an opposite experience. Because of her White appearance, it is difficult for her to reveal that she has Mexican heritage. She relates her experience in a predominantly Latin@/Hispanic environment,

Yea it was kind of hard being in La Raza because I was the whitest person and they all had like, these jokes in Spanish and I wouldn't really get it and I would just kind of laugh or like... I just felt like I wasn't included as...I felt like an outsider.

Many experience being an outsider because of how they are perceived. This ultimately affects how and when these individuals feel like they can self-identify because they usually encounter resistance. Linda, who identifies as Norwegian and Armenian, has trepidations with identifying as multiracial. She admits that she can "cover up" her Armenian heritage but doing so would be dishonest. She explains her dilemma:

If I do come forward and say I'm multiracial, then I'm worried about the people who identify as either multiracial or as a minority race. I'm worried about them being like, "no you're not. You don't even know what that's like. You have no idea what it's like to be a minority." Because I've always been treated like I'm white.

There is a very clear recognition of the difficulties of identifying as non-white when one is perceived as a white person in most circumstances. There is literally no space or situation for Linda where she can comfortably identify fully, except for a select group of friends and family. This is the most difficult negotiation of identity that the White-Identified Mixed Race group experiences.

Lesa takes this concept a step further. She argues that identifying as mixed race is a right and attaches the ability to self-identify as mixed race to how she looks. She comments: “I don’t know if I have the right to call myself mixed race if I don’t look it. Cuz I just, I look so white.” Because she feels that for her it is wrong to identify as mixed race, this puts her in a unique position that is not fully White and not fully a person of color. This is an ambiguous position in which many mixed race individuals find themselves and much of that is revealed when they speak about their process of identification. White-Identified Mixed Race individuals hesitate to identify as multiracial because of their White racial perception. Two forces are at work here. One, these participants understood and accepted that they experience White privilege. Two, these same participants have had their racial identities invalidated. However, the essence of the mixed race identity is that all racial identities exist at the same time. The very idea of mixed race calls into question the fragmented identities based on dualisms, such as oppressor or oppressed and majority or minority. Under the current paradigm of race, a person who is a racial “minority” is perceived to lack privileges, but White-Identified Mixed Race individuals experience some level of discrimination and the privileged status, simultaneously.

Despite these differences, there are many similarities across the three groups. One important commonality is that individuals in each group feel like their race is used against them. Naomi, who identifies as half Black and half White, talks about how there are times when people

use her White identity to put her down, “People are like, ‘Oh you’re really bad at jumping. Black people are supposed to be good...supposed to jump really high.’ Always, you know making joke like, ‘Oh it’s my White half doing that. Don’t worry.’” Although some of these exchanges are not motivated by deep-seeded racial animus, these comments nonetheless reinforce monoracial stereotypes drawing from socially ascribed characteristics of race. Linda, who identifies as Norwegian and Armenian, talks about this as well: “One time I remember saying ‘I’m Armenian’ and someone’s like, ‘What’s that?’ and I’m like, ‘Well its kind of Middle Eastern’ and they kind of gave me that ‘Whoa...’ look.” Although she gives no visible indication of a stereotypically Middle Eastern individual, the very idea that she has Middle Eastern heritage creates this image in someone else’s head that would cause him or her to be surprised. These types of situations make it clear that race is perceived monoracially, but mixed race individuals’ experience shatter this paradigm.

One of the consequences of being constantly questioned of one’s racial identity is that it leads to self-doubt and the feeling of inadequacy of “not being enough” of a certain race. The following three participants reflect these feelings. Will, who identifies as White and an unknown non-White, talks about this experience at Colorado State University:

Most Black people will say, “Oh well if you don’t listen to rap or you don’t listen to hip-hop or you don’t listen to a certain kind of rap or if you listen to the radio too much, then you’re not Black enough. You’re not very culturally exposed or appreciative of what Black culture brings.”

Similarly, Yumiko, who identifies as multiracial, and is Japanese and White, talks about not being enough:

They'd be like, "oh you're that Asian girl" but then they'd sometimes say, "You're not Asian enough" and then they'll say, "you're not White enough." And so I was, right then and there, I felt like I had to choose.

Finally, Andy, who identifies as biracial, Mexican and White, says, "when I say no, that I can't speak Spanish, it makes me think that whoever was asking me, they think I'm less of a Mexican." Much of the ideas of being enough stems from an idealized concept of what it means to be of a certain race. More often than not, mixed race people do not meet these criteria and often times experience feelings of not being enough. Interestingly, the resistance does not necessarily come from one but multiple racial communities. Will, for instance, experienced it from a Black community that told him he wasn't Black enough. Yumiko grew up in a predominantly White area, and it was her White friends who told her she wasn't Asian enough. Andy grew up in a predominantly White and Hispanic community and experienced these feelings regardless of who was asking about his race. This idea of needing to be placed into a race box and not being enough generates complex feelings within the participants, the most prominent of which is confusion.

Many participants spoke about the confusion they felt because of navigating through a monoracial world as a multiracial person. Callie, who identifies as multiracial, Korean and White, explains the feeling well:

My whole life I felt like I was being raised in Asian and Black culture, but then looking White and then taking part in White culture, and it's just like, one big hot mess growing up because there's just this push and pull of different expectations from everywhere.

These expectations that Callie felt are racially motivated. Mixed race individuals feel this push and pull constantly and can lead to feelings of being out of control, which leads to feelings of

confusion. Although these experiences could be interpreted as the mixed race individuals being confused about their own identity, it is clear that it stems from other people's confusion about them. Ester, who identifies as multiracial, Mexican, Pilipino, and White, adds: "The only thing that really came out of [figuring our family out] was the satisfaction of the person feeling more comfortable around us." It seems that not being able to categorize racially ambiguous individuals makes other people uncomfortable, and mixed race people bear the unspoken responsibility to clarify the confusion.

### **Connection to Culture**

This constant mediation of other people's confusion is critical to the process of self-identifying in the mixed race experience. Each group tends to self-identify differently, but the similarities are undeniable. In addition to mediating confusion and having to deal with their own identity being used against them, there is often a search for authenticity when claiming a racial identity. And this search for authenticity is intimately connected with culture.

A major aspect of both race perception and self-identification is how mixed race people connect to their multiple cultures. There are many different processes, but almost all of them feel loss of culture. It is hard to distinguish between external pressures to understand culture and internal drive to do so. What is interesting is the dynamic between those who are immersed in a certain culture growing up and those who are not. The interviewees clearly articulate that culture (or the lack thereof) plays an integral role in understanding the mixed race experience.

The reason why culture is so important to the mixed race identity is best described by Hailey, who identifies as multiracial Hawaiian, but also as Black, Chinese, Cherokee Indian, and Irish. She reflects: "I feel like I should acknowledge everything I am because, you know, everyone has their roots and to acknowledge your roots is to really, truly know who you are."

For Hailey, knowing cultural roots and personal history is a very important aspect of knowing self. Thus, the search for authentic culture is particularly critical to the mixed race experience. Knowing the culture of their racial identity validates who they are, not only for themselves, but for the people around them. Unfortunately, growing up in a racially homogeneous community, where opportunities to practice one's culture are minimal, and having their culture questioned leads to confusion and oftentimes painful experiences. In short, culture plays an important part in shaping a mixed-race identity.

A major difference among the three groups is the manner in which they seek a missing cultural connection. In general, the Non-White Mixed Race group had a non-White culture on which to fall back and in which to be comfortable. This limited the scope of seeking meaningful cultural connections because there is already a sense of cultural fulfillment. However, Maya, who identifies primarily as Black, but is also Asian, Native American, and French, actively searches for meaningful connections to her Asian identity by turning to the Asian/Pacific American Cultural Center (APACC). She comments: "I'm the APACC liaison. And it was kind of like, I was just put into it. And I was like, 'Oh this is really cool it'll give me the chances to get to know Asian culture.'" It is interesting to observe that "Asian culture" is generalized even though there are major differences among Asian ethnicities. Furthermore, APACC is representative of all of what that entails. If the cultural centers live up to their name, then the cultural fulfillment of many of these students would be easy. Obviously, it is much more complex than that. Part of the complexity is that there is a certain level of acceptance that needs to happen in order to experience a certain culture.

The In-Between Mixed Race group has many different avenues for relating to culture. For the most part, their experience has an element of cultural immersion but it is only partial.

Many are still left wondering or seeking to fulfill a cultural void since they must constantly answer questions about a culture with which they never had contact. Mia, who identifies as mixed, Black, Choctaw, and White, has a greater understanding of identifying with Black and White racial groups, but she has no connection to the Choctaw side of her family. In an effort to understand and be more close to it, she makes an effort to appreciate Choctaw cultural artifacts. She reveals:

My dad, he sends me drawings. And so one day I got a drawing. It's like a female looking up to the sky and there's like a male under her. So it's just her face and she's looking up to the sky and there's like a male under her. And then there's a dream-catcher in the background and then across it is says "Choctaw." He drew this for me and I was like, "Oh wow! This is so cool!" It was like I finally got a piece of something that could, it was like a piece of my history.

Not only does this art make her feel connected to her father, but also it is the direct line to her Choctaw heritage. It is one of the few examples that Mia has in actively preserving her culture with her father. It was exciting for her because she feels like she is learning more about herself that was previously inaccessible.

For those in the In-Between Mixed Race group that have a White parent, they must navigate through a host of questions concerning the culture of their non-White identity. The experience is different for those who have two non-White racial identities. For them, there is a competition between communities of color to claim the multiracial individual as a whole. Ester and Theresa are the best example of this. Ester experienced this through the Greek system: "it's interesting cuz since I checked those boxes [Mexican, White and Filipino] I had the Asian

sorority and the multicultural sorority chasing after me.” Theresa, who identifies as mixed race, Puerto Rican and Black, talks about feeling the pressure to choose:

I feel like people always want you to pick a side and so I never tried to not mention...

I’m not ashamed of who I am, I’m proud of who I am, all of who I am and so sometimes someone else will be like, “Oh well you play up your Puerto Rican side more” and I hate that cuz it makes it sound like I’m trying to be someone I’m not like I’m hiding something.

Ester experiences competition through recruitment into a variety of Greek letter organizations. This is a more positive experience for her in terms of feeling wanted. But it is tough to predict whether or not all of her identities would be appreciated in these organizations. Theresa feels this competition for her race in a more negative way. People pressure her to pick a side, either Puerto Rican or Black, which challenges her ability to identify as multiracial.

White-Identified Mixed Race individuals have a different perspective on culture. There is resistance from the group they are trying to culturally identify with because of how they are perceived. Mark, who is Venezuelan and White, talks about how forgetting Spanish distances him from his family in Venezuela, to the point where they reject him. This painful experience affects how he pursues culture today. Mark explains:

I took Spanish courses and I was really trying to relearn the language because it’s important to me to start communicating with my dad in that language and maybe actually be a part of that. I think something that set me back was going back to Venezuela and seeing that as something that I was like, maybe I don't wanna be this.

The rejection from his father’s family took away the potentially enjoyable experience of reclaiming his Venezuelan culture. If Mark looks more Venezuelan, there may have been more



forgiveness from his family for not knowing the language. But the combination of looking White and not knowing the language was too much. It is as if someone like Mark is disowned by that culture.

It can be difficult and complicated for those who look White to connect to non-White cultures. The cultural centers are physical manifestations of this complicated process. Many of the programs depend on connecting with other students, but if the student is Asian American but looks White, it is difficult to feel fully comfortable in that situation. Lesa's disconnect from her Vietnamese culture causes her to hesitate in programs sponsored by APACC. She explains:

I was just like, "How am I gonna mentor someone?" You know? If ... an Asian American student who comes into CSU and they're looking for a mentor that looks like them, who's been through everything that they've been through and can help them make that transition into college and then here they get paired up with this woman who doesn't look like them at all and has no idea what Asian culture is like, you know?

Like Callie, Lesa makes the connection that much of the "Asian" experience in the United States is predicated on looking Asian. Those experiences legitimate the Asian American racial identity. Therefore, it is significantly difficult for White-Identified Mixed Race students to connect to campus.

Among the methods of cultural exploration, family plays a huge role in supporting this journey. Linda, who identifies as Norwegian and Armenian, does not have a difficult time exploring Armenian culture with her family. She comments:

I'd say, again...rediscovering it [Armenian culture] in the last 10 to 12 years was really interesting and we got to do a lot of the food and the cooking. My sister made an entire

Armenian meal. I got to help a little bit but it was kind of... it was really neat actually we both kind of do that because then we got all those stories about [our family].

Linda has the benefit of the Armenian experience being invisible in the United States. There is not a community there to tell her that her culture is inauthentic. Lesa, however, can see that the experience of Asian/Vietnamese Americans is completely different from her's, forcing her to contemplate whether or not she can identify as mixed race.

The greatest sense of loss that the participants identify is language. It is a key component to cultural validation. This is a theme that cuts across all of the groups. Hailey sums up nicely the connection between language, culture, and identity:

When I was first learning Hawaiian I struggled a lot with the language just cuz I wasn't good at picking up languages. And so I felt that if I couldn't connect with the language, I couldn't connect with the culture, then I wasn't truly what that [culture] was.

Callie, Abigail and Yumiko had the decision of being taught their respective Asian language taken out of their hands at an early age. Callie and Yumiko share that their mother deliberately did not teach them the language in order to protect them from standing out and to facilitate social mobility. This decision impacts both of their lives tremendously. When asked what factors contribute to "not feeling Asian enough," Yumiko, who identifies as multiracial or mixed Japanese and White, says:

Not speaking Japanese is the biggest one. I used to be so angry at my mother for not teaching me but...I kind of understand the reasons as to why she didn't...she was never encouraged to teach her children Japanese but I know that looking back at it, it was kind of a way for her children to gain that social mobility... she wanted us to be as American as we possibly could be...but that's kind of one big thing because I know a lot of my

friends who do not identify as Asian and aren't Asian and they're learning Japanese and they'll be like, "Why don't you know it?"

Callie, who is multiracial Korean and White, expresses similar feelings. She elaborates:

I never learned the language because my grandma refused to speak it around people that don't speak Korean cuz she, her experience was that she was treated horribly when she first came over here and didn't speak English. And so people would always be like, "Teach me something in Korean, teach me something in Korean!" and I'm like, "I don't speak Korean." "Oh then you must not actually be Asian then." And so I just felt weird, always having to justify myself growing up.

Both Yumiko and Callie clearly express that language has a direct connection to being able to justify their Asian identity to non-Asian groups. They both also talk about elements of assimilation that can be damaging to racial identity. Assimilation is a major source of cultural loss for many students. Sally, who identifies as biracial, Filipino and White, explains this well:

I really don't feel Pilipino. My great-grandmother was from the Philippines and she moved to Hawai'i and I feel more Hawai'ian culturally just because my grandmother's from there, my mom's from there. And they were really pushing getting rid of the Pilipino culture. Language and you know, assimilating because it was seen as better.

Assimilation is a paradox for many mixed race students. They feel pressure to understand their "foreign" culture, yet are expected to fit into a White American cultural ideal that actively excludes other cultures. A central point in assimilating is the active loss of language.

For Abigail, who identifies as hapa, half Japanese and half White, her family has been in the United States for generations and the language was lost in time. At times, she mentions that she's a "bad Japanese person" because her lack of connection to the culture, and that feeling

comes up with the loss of language. She recalls: “Some people are asking me stuff about Japanese people. They’re like, ‘how do I say this in Japanese?’ and I’m like, ‘I dunno...;” The exotic factor of knowing an East Asian language plays a prominent role in their identification process. There’s an outside expectation or hope that these women can perform their culture on the spot for the people who are asking. And when it cannot be done, there is disappointment and feelings of inadequacy, although understanding that not knowing the language is completely beyond their control.

Spanish speaking identities parallel the Asian American mixed race experience. The ability to claim being Hispanic or Mexican relies heavily on the ability to speak Spanish. Often, speaking Spanish is a requirement for inclusion in Latin@ groups. Both Bailey and Andy express these sentiments earlier. When Lucy, who identifies primarily as Latina or Hispanic, but also reveal that she is probably Mexican and Yaqui Indian, was asked what made her feel like she didn’t feel accepted in Latina groups, she responded:

Well I think the language component might be one...people in my [Key] cluster, the Hispanic people talk to each other in Spanish...they would just be like, “yeah you’re cool but we’re not going to hang out with you.” It was kind of like that where I was like, if I hung out with the white people, then it was just easier.

The inability for Lucy to speak Spanish plays a big part in determining her social circles because an understanding of culture implies, for many, embodying an authentic racial experience.

Some students who reveal they cannot speak Spanish, but have Mexican or Hispanic heritage, feel their identity taking a direct hit. Theresa has thoughts about not speaking Spanish as well in order to avoid an unpleasant experience. She explains:

And so for me, and I think this goes for anyone who doesn't speak Spanish but identifies as Hispanic, if you don't speak the language, there's always going to be those people who are like, "you don't even count." So I'm kind of used to having that awkward space because there's always that awkward space wherever I go. I'm never 100% in the group. Not speaking Spanish for these individuals feels like their Hispanic or Mexican identity gets downgraded. There's a feeling that to fully realize their racial identity in the eyes of others, they must know the language of that group.

Not speaking Spanish for someone who identifies with a Spanish speaking culture is not a uniquely mixed race experience. However, it is relevant here in the sense that the hesitancy not to speak a language is a direct result of having parents from two different racial backgrounds. Acknowledging these experiences can create a bridge between two communities. Another similarity is that the participants are adamant that the process of filling a cultural void in their identity is an important process of reclaiming identity. They feel like their culture has been taken from them and now they need to take it back. In general, cultural reclamation occurs after identity reconciliation. Mixed race folks should recognize that they cannot help who they are in order to control what it takes to feel comfortable about their identity. Many participants discover this when they transition to CSU. Their experience at CSU will be discussed in the next chapter.

The totality of their experiences, that is, how they are perceived and the process of identification, compel them to mediate the confusion over their perceived race. Many participants express some level of confusion in terms of their own identity, but this stems from constantly negotiating their identity with people who consistently question it. The idea that mixed race individuals are confused about their racial identity hangs over them. Mixed race individuals must manage this clash between the monoracial paradigm of society and the

ambiguity of being mixed race. This clash surfaces repeatedly during the interviews as an internalized denial of racial identity. Yumiko, Abigail and Callie speak about “not being Asian enough.” Will, Theresa, Mia and Naomi point to how their “Blackness” is being denied or questioned. MaryAnn, Lucy, Andy, Shawn, and Bailey all discuss feelings of exclusion from a Mexican/Hispanic/Latin@ community. Lesa, Linda, and Mark express feelings of needing to prove their race and concerns about being “posers” for their respective identities. At the same time, many of the participants, including Ester, Maya, Hailey, and Sally, claim their identity very proudly. There is a point in their identification process where they begin to realize that much of the internal feelings are caused by external pressures.

The mixed race experience is unique in many ways. Perhaps what stands out is what is not mentioned. Not many interviewees share experiences of blatant discrimination against their mixed race identity. Instead, their consciousness is influenced by an infinite string of micro-aggressions. Although some stories seem to speak to a specific moment in time, those examples are generalized experiences compiled from having that same experience over and over. There is also an undercurrent of isolation and loneliness. When examining how many of the participants feel like they “weren’t enough” or “didn’t look the part” or “didn’t fit in,” it appears that, when the mixed race identity is not validated, they walk the journey alone. The palpable excitement at the beginning of these interviews is a testament to that. They seem ready, almost desperate, to tell their stories.

## Chapter Four: The Multiracial Center

The experience of multiracial students at Colorado State University confirms a wide variety of support systems that CSU provides for its students. Participants mention many different programs that are significant to their experience, such as Key Communities, Multicultural Greek Council and its associated Greek-letter organizations, the department of Ethnic Studies, and student organizations. However, the biggest impact on the mixed race experience at CSU revolves around the cultural centers: Black/African-American Cultural Center (BAACC), Native American Cultural Center (NACC), El Centro, and Asian/Pacific American Cultural Center (APACC). The administrative body of the cultural centers is housed under the Student Diversity Programs and Services (SDPS), along with the Women and Gender Advocacy Center, Resources for Disabled Students, and Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Resource Center. These organizations represent the diversity at CSU, and the mixed race students generally do not feel welcome or accepted by these organizations.

All of these experiences and support services are important, but they unfortunately do not adequately address the unique needs of multiracial students. In response to the apparent gap within the university structure, multiracial students started student organizations. This chapter, in the first section, briefly addresses the significance of student-operated organizations in the context of the existing framework concerning student support services and programs. While the student-based organizations provide safe space to organize and develop a community, it also is not sufficient ground for addressing many of the issues that the participants in this study reveal. Based on a critical discussion of the student-run, multiracial organization called SHADES, this chapter provides additional reflections on why an institutionally supported multiracial center at CSU is both important and long overdue.

The second section outlines the myriad of reactions by interviewees concerning their experience with the cultural centers. The reactions range greatly from avoidance of the cultural centers to feeling at home. The participants also speak about the cultural centers with great respect because they understand their purpose and appreciate the services they provide. But it is clear that for most of these 19 students, it is a difficult space to navigate.

The final section of this chapter discusses a model for a student services geared toward mixed race/multiracial students at CSU. The participant's vast experiences with the diversity centers at CSU prove the desire for mixed race students to be involved with campus. Many have found small niches and spaces that allow them to thrive. However, when asked about their opinions about establishing an eighth SDPS office specifically geared toward mixed race, multiracial, and biracial students, the response was overwhelmingly positive. With those responses in mind, this section explores and details specific attributes of such an office.

### Student Organizations

Student organizations provide tremendous opportunities for empowerment and advocacy. Many participants speak about their experiences with student organizations on campus. There are three student organizations with notable mentions: La Raza, Multicultural Greek Council, and SHADES of CSU. Students seek student organizations in order to shrink a very large campus by surrounding themselves with familiarity. For students of color, this means seeking a community that shares cultural values. La Raza is an organization for Latin@ empowerment and cultural advocacy. MaryAnn talks about her first experience at La Raza:

I went to La Raza meeting the first time...my freshman year and I just sat there and I was like, "this is a really cool program you know they talk about how media they talk about values and this would be my home away from home. I can make a community here."



Creating this sense of home away from home is an important aspect of retention from a University standpoint. That is one of the tenets of both student organizations and the cultural centers. One of the things that Bailey, who is half Mexican, half German, and Irish, likes about La Raza is that during the first meeting, members went around and told their stories about where they come from and how they identify. This really helped Bailey let the organization know that she doesn't speak Spanish and have them better understand the circumstances in which she grew up. She expands upon her experience in La Raza:

I'm culturally White...I don't speak Spanish, I don't really celebrate any kind of traditions...it was really cool, La Raza, I was in it for a couple years. That really helped me. I was like, "yea cool!" cuz you know they're really into Mexican traditions and culture. And so I really got into that and that kind of helped me come closer to that identity.

La Raza accepts students from all backgrounds, as long as they have a passion for advocacy and social justice. The fact that La Raza allows students to tell their stories is an important aspect of making mixed race students feel comfortable in a predominantly monoracial space.

The Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) is another source of comfort. Greek letter organizations associated with the MGC have a strong emphasis on academics, philanthropy, cultural advocacy, and community service. It brings together several different organizations focused on different ethnic and racial identities. This creates a unique environment at CSU that brings together a collection of student leaders from many backgrounds. This sort of environment provides comfort for some students. Theresa and Ester found solace in a Latina-based organization. Theresa spoke about how her sorority and the MGC made her feel:

I think what was beneficial was having like, realizing how many people were here of different races. When we're all separated, it feels like I am the ethnicity at CSU. And just having everyone there together was awesome! There are people here that I can identify with!

Theresa and Ester decided that their particular sororities were the best fit for them and allowed them to strengthen their confidence in their Latina identity.

Many of the participants have heard of or actively participate in SHADES of CSU, a mixed race/multiracial/biracial/interracial family student advocacy group. For the first time for many members, SHADES provides a safe and comfortable space to be all of their racial identities at once without being questioned or trying to justify their racial backgrounds. This is different from MGC and La Raza because those organizations are premised on monoracial advocacy. SHADES is the first organization that focuses on multiracial advocacy. There are similarities in the sense that they are supportive of multiple identities, but the direction of the group focuses on monoracial issues. Shawn describes how SHADES is different from any other space on campus:

I really appreciate SHADES and the mixed race space. Cuz mixed race people are often the people that I can share all of my experience whether I would classify that experience as a white experience or of color experience and it being ok that I have both of those.

Mia shares similar experiences with SHADES. For the first time, she is not questioned about her behavior and mannerisms. She is allowed to express her identity without classifying them. She explains:

When I got to school, to CSU, Colorado State I was like the White girl, I was like, "ok I can't, I don't like being the white girl." And so I joined SHADES because no one ever

was like “you talk so funny”...or no one ever asked me about my hair. It was really cool to not have to explain myself.

Mia is classified as the White girl in her Black social circles because of how she talks, not because of how she looks. Being classified in such a fashion makes her feel like an outsider, and so she sought asylum with SHADES. Other participants express a sense of catharsis with SHADES because of the similarity of their experiences. All of the negative experiences that are outlined in the previous chapter do not exist at SHADES meetings because of this similarity. And many experience this for the first time, creating a sense of excitement. Callie speaks about her first SHADES meeting:

I think that first SHADES meeting I went to where I was just...in this group of people where I felt like we were just talking about our experiences of being multiracial and I felt like, “yea! Exactly! Thank you!” I just felt really relieved and I felt like a breath of fresh air.

SHADES organically creates a safe environment for members because every member carries the weight of the mixed race experience. SHADES provides a space where individuals can finally drop that weight by connecting with people with similar experiences. Ester describes it as a “mobile cultural center.” As an advocacy organization, the student leaders are diligent about making sure SHADES serves to support mixed race student needs. They do this by providing space and time for members to tell their stories and express their frustrations with campus and beyond. They then turn those frustrations into advocacy for the mixed race experience. Some participants appreciate what SHADES does for many students, but don't get a lot out of it. Sally, who identifies as biracial half Filipino and half German, Scottish, and English, grew up in a mixed race supportive environment. When talking about SHADES, she says:

“Honestly I was uncomfortable a little bit. Cuz I think I went to the one where they were really... It felt like a support group for...mixed race and I didn’t feel like I needed a support group around it.” However, she does appreciate its purpose, stating: “I was trying to be supportive of the people there and they were having issues around their race. But there was some good conversation for sure about what people felt like and what they saw.”

Student organizations can be supportive of multiple identities and are integral to creating campus climate that supports students. However, they are limited in terms of advocacy because it is students volunteering their time. They need to organize, raise funds, and program in addition to maintaining academic standards. Mixed race students greatly utilize services offered through student organizations, but with mixed results. Organizations such as MGC and La Raza have elements that support mixed race identity. SHADES carve out the only space on campus focused solely on the mixed race identity. It would be unrealistic to expect that one organization can serve the needs of thousands of mixed race student at CSU. Because of the diversity of experiences just from these 19 interviews, mixed race students would be best served if an organization were a part of an institutional structure that recognizes the unique needs of multiracial identity.

### **Cultural Centers**

The cultural centers are a focal point for the mixed race experience at CSU and make the biggest impact, both positively and negatively. When speaking about the cultural centers, the experiences reflect their childhood. The participants express many conflicting views and ideas about the cultural centers. Some argue they are very welcoming. Some avoid them completely, while others try to connect but are shut down. Still many use the facility and space in their quest for cultural exploration. The participants offer great insight for both the positive and the

limitations of the cultural centers. The students understand fully the mission and values that the cultural centers hold, but the participants feel that their multiple racial identities are not supported in the current system in place at CSU. This feedback is vital in order to frame a student service model for mixed race students.

One of the primary functions of Student Diversity Programs and Services (SDPS) is to create a community that feels like a home away from home, and for some participants, they do just that. Hailey speaks highly of APACC's atmosphere:

I think it's a lot of the people there [at APACC] who are willing to open their doors or let you talk to them if you're having issues or if you just want to talk. Sometimes I come in here with a joke, it's just being able to be yourself. And no one really here asks you ethnicity or something like that.

Naomi feels the same way about BAACC:

I really like it in there. This year I've only been in there a couple of times so far. Every time I come in there, everyone is just really nice. Even if you don't know them they're like, "oh how are you? How are you doing?" And actually take the time to see how you are and such.

These feelings are significant because even a small step, such as really asking how they are doing, makes a significant, positive impact on their connection with the office.

It seems that the interviewees understand the importance of the cultural centers. They respect and acknowledge their missions. But it also appears with every positive comment, there's a caveat that negates the positive aspects of the offices. Will reflects cautiously about BAACC:

When I got to CSU, I tried to like, go to the BAACC office and it was fine, I felt comfortable there and everything, but I still always felt like maybe I wasn't Black enough

or maybe I wasn't cool enough or I didn't talk a certain way or I wasn't a part of the "in" crowd, so to speak.

The cultural centers do not promote racial hierarchy within the title of "Black/African American" but the unintended consequence is that there are criteria to meet an idea of being Black, which is promoted by the students. The title of the cultural centers begs the question, "What or who is Black?" and mixed race students can never fully answer that question. Theresa echoes this sentiment:

I feel like that they're really trying to create a place for us to feel safe and feel welcome and for a lot of people they do. But for me...I mean that might just be how I look too. It's just cuz I was like, "these are where the brown people are, and this is where the Asian people are, and this is where the Native people are." And that was weird to me. I didn't want to go from being the only one of my background to being "this is where half your heritage is and if you want to visit the other half, go upstairs."

For Theresa, the monoracial cultural centers only partially recognizes her identities, regardless of how well intentioned they may be.

When participants spoke freely of the cultural centers, the reaction is negative because it reifies negative experiences they have had in the past. Because of this history with monoracial spaces, many of the participants had preconceived notions of what the experience of walking into a cultural center would be like. If most of the participants experienced being constantly asked to choose a race box to fit into or were forced into race boxes, then the SDPS cluster is a physical manifestation of that experience.

Although the cultural centers advocate for a broad category of race, they unintentionally exclude the marginal or less common ethnicities. For example, many participants express

concerns that El Centro is very Mexico-centric, which is problematic for those who are not immersed in that culture growing up. Shawn reveals: “Even though you may identify as brown or Latino, [El Centro] isn’t necessarily welcoming space because it’s very like Mexican-centric in terms of nationalism.” MaryAnn reflects on her personal cultural values that she cherishes from her Hispanic family. She seeks the same values of community and family at El Centro, but is disappointed:

I walk in and it just feels cold. Not at all what I would expect and not at all that whole Hispanic welcoming community where “happy to see you” and then part would be cuz you’re still a stranger you know? But I’m like, “no, even if it was a stranger, I feel like we should still be a bit more welcoming.”

MaryAnn’s experience is very different from Hailey and Naomi, who find the cultural centers to be very welcoming. This may stem from her inability to speak Spanish and the fact that she does not have stereotypical Hispanic features.

Lucy, who identifies as Hispanic and Yaqui Indian, also expresses reservation about El Centro. Lucy differs from MaryAnn in the sense that she has features that would allow her to fit in at El Centro, but she characterizes herself as acting or dressing White. She also does not know Spanish, which may lead to thoughts such as this: “I don’t really want to be in El Centro just because I’m like, ‘ugh..’ I just don’t really fit.” Ester elaborates on the reasons why some students hesitate in visiting El Centro. She comments:

It definitely did feel a little like... if you don’t identify as this kind of Hispanic or Latino, no one would flat out say don’t come back but it wasn’t as, I dunno... it didn’t feel completely comfy I guess.

Ester's criticism of El Centro is important because there is a sense that if a student does not fit a certain image of being Hispanic, the general message is to not come back. However, it may not necessarily be the staff at El Centro that is unintentionally giving this message since the students make up the majority of the office staff in the office. But the main focus of the office unintentionally marginalizes those who do not look Hispanic.

Students do not identify APACC as having a single ethnic focus. But some of their feelings for APACC reflect those for El Centro. Again, it is not that the monoracial cultural centers are actively denying the multiracial identity. In fact, it could be argued that they try to make everyone feel welcome. But the monoracial focus renders multiracial identity invisible and makes the space uncomfortable. Yumiko says of APACC:

I actually avoided this office because I did not feel that when I walked in I was looked at, a lot of times I felt like I walked in and people are like, "Why are you here?" And when I would be like, "Oh I'm mixed" but then not really know too much about a multitude of Asian cultures, not even my own, that made me feel like, "Oh my god do I even belong here?"

When the student staff is unaware of the existence of mixed race identities, then situations that make mixed race students uncomfortable are certain to surface. Callie experiences this first hand in APACC. She recalls:

Actually my freshman year, it was like the first week, APACC was doing some kind of sushi making something and I was like, "that sounds like fun, I love sushi, I know how to make sushi, I love making sushi. I'll go." And so I went and one of the women in the office who I perceived to be Asian was like, "Oh great! Are you from the Collegian?" And I was like, "No" and just left.



The combination of the center's goals, the staff, and the students creates more opportunities for unintentional rejection of multiple racial identities than creating an atmosphere of acceptance.

The White-Identified Mixed Race participants provide an interesting perspective on the cultural centers. For the most part, they avoid the centers because of the way they look, not because they could almost fit in. Mark argues that when he reveals with students associated with El Centro that he is half Venezuelan, they are all really nice. In the same breath he says: "I really don't have that want to go to El Centro or be a part of that. I guess I don't want to open myself up to that awkwardness again." To Mark, El Centro is guaranteed to be uncomfortable based on all of his previous experiences around Hispanic communities. Because the White-Identified Mixed Race students look nothing like the ethnicities that they would associate with, it closes the door to many activities and programs that the offices present. Presumably, mentorship programs based on non-White racial identity is meant to connect younger students to older students who can relate and guide them through a predominantly a white institution. As Lesa expressed earlier about A/PACC's peer mentoring program, she feels like she cannot participate based on her White outward appearance. Experiences like these are significant because there is not a system that would connect Lesa to a younger student who identifies like her. Race-oriented offices may connect with students in this fashion, but for the most part, mixed race students are left out.

Before college, mixed race individuals constantly negotiate fitting into metaphorical race boxes. The ethnically-identified SDPS offices represent those monoracial boxes. In many ways, it is not the cultural centers' fault for the way mixed race individuals are treated. The cultural centers are merely a reflection of society. Many mixed race individuals take the step to enter the cultural centers knowing exactly how everyone is going to react. It is the same choice that mixed race individuals have been making all of their lives. The data shows that it is the idea of the

cultural centers that makes it uncomfortable for many mixed race students, not necessarily the administration and the students that are associated with them. Clearly the CSU campus greatly impacts the identity of mixed race students. It is reassuring that these students are finding ways to thrive. But there is certainly room for improvement.

### **Reflections: Service Model for Mixed Race Students**

Every participant was asked directly, “In addition to the current SDPS offices, what do you think of a resource center, or cultural center, or advocacy center catered toward mixed race/multiracial/biracial students?” They were then asked for both potential gains and challenges for such a center. The participants provide a range of answers and the response is generally positive. Some participants feel as though SHADES is enough. Other interviewees believe the existing system could work if there was more intentional programming and collaboration with mixed race students. No one opposes to the idea of a center for mixed race, but some thoughtful discussion for what it would look like is illuminating.

The initial reaction to the question is fairly mixed. Several responses are influenced by the idea that the current cultural centers are separate. They believe the separation of the existing cultural centers reinforces stereotypes and segregation, and adding another office for mixed race students would reinforce that. The belief that another center would reinforce balkanization was not uncommon. Much like the existing cultural centers’ tendency to promote a certain type of ethnicity, students expressed concern that a center for mixed race would do the same. For example, if the staff were predominantly mixed Asian and White, then perhaps the space would become uncomfortable for those who identify as Black and Asian or any other combination of races. Also, acknowledging the existence of mixed race may reify racial lines by creating another box for people to fit in. Shawn, who identifies as Chicano, expresses some of the danger of

having a center for mixed race students: “I think it’s complex and you know there’s danger in definitely simplifying the experiences of mixed-race people.” This simplification of racial identity would add to the paradigm that race must be kept separate instead of deconstructing it. If the mixed race experience is promoted in one way by the center, then that could recreate similar situations that the interviewees experienced in the cultural centers. The students that would be most vulnerable would be the White-Identified Mixed Race group because they may not fit the image that students and staff would have of what a mixed race individual looks like.

Sally, who identifies as Filipino and White, feels the SDPS offices symbolize this idea of balkanization and adding another center would add to that. She feels as though there are enough resources on campus to support mixed race identity, “I feel like there’s enough people to support here in that an office [is unnecessary]...I think...SHADES...is great for that.” Sally is advocating more for a restructuring of current systems. Although feasible, adding to the workload of an already busy SDPS cluster could create resentment for mixed race students. This could reinforce an attitude that mixed race students should just fit in to existing programs.

Hailey, who identifies as multiracial, Hawaiian, Black, Cherokee Indian, Irish, and Chinese, shares the idea that the cultural centers could do more to make mixed race individuals feel more welcome. She comments: “A lot of times that the diversity centers do things together and so if they were to increase that...that would open the doors wider for a multicultural thing.” Collaboration between cultural centers would have to intentionally program for mixed race students. There may not be a critical mass of students who have two or more non-White racial identities to warrant such an undertaking, however. Ester is hopeful for a center for mixed race students. She feels it is important, but has doubts that CSU would commit because:

“I think for this University, I don’t know if that’s in the cards just yet... I think if we tried to do it now, right now people wouldn’t really know what to do with it or how to work things. Because in a sense, this stuff is kind of new.”

She is unsure how to proceed because of the relatively new concept of addressing mixed race students in a university setting. Admittedly, a center for mixed race would be on the cutting edge of identity politics. However, most of the cultural centers at CSU have similar roots. A critical mass of students demanded recognition and support for their community. The mixed race community is on the precipice of change on a national scale. CSU would stay ahead of the trend by supporting a center for mixed race students.

Despite significant reservations, many react with excitement. There is a correlation between those who experience some form of rejection from the cultural centers and those who are excited. The reason that a center for mixed race sparks excitement is best explained by Will, who identifies as half White, half unknown:

Safety. You can feel safe to be yourself. You can feel safe to accept others you can feel safe to say what you want about yourself and not feel like you’re not enough or that you’re too much of something or something like that. But I think its, it would be really beneficial just to help students find out who they are.

The appeal for the center for mixed race students is a combination of feeling like it is a safe space to go and the idea that CSU would be validating their unique experience as someone with multiple racial identities.

Much of the concern from the participants about establishing a center for mixed race students is in relation to the existing cultural centers. Yumiko, who identifies as multiracial,

Japanese and White, says: “I love the idea but then at the same time its just like, I don't want to create separation.” Callie, who identifies as multiracial, Korean and White, says:

I’m feeling like there’d be resistance from the other cultural center and I hate to say that but I just feel like as a multiracial person I’ve been told by members of my own...Koreans and Whites that I don’t really count, you know? “Multiracial isn’t real.”

Naomi, who identifies as Black and White, express concern that mixed race students will have to choose between a center for mixed race and an existing cultural center. She comments: “It could possibly play back to that whole mixed identity thing where it’s like, ‘oh gosh, do I wanna be part of the Black Cultural American Society or the Biracial Cultural Society?’ type of thing.”

In terms of positive feedback, the biggest vision for the mixed race center that the students emphasized is the potential to collaborate and strengthen the SDPS offices and communities of color at CSU. Bailey, who identifies as half Mexican, half German and Irish, says:

I think having like a multiracial center would...actually bring those other departments and other cultural centers...together because...we have this one like, mixed/multiracial center...those other centers could be included and they could be like, “have some of your kids come over if they identify with being anything other than Latina or like African American or Native” you know?

Shawn expresses similar views:

I think out of any of the other offices, it would definitely need to be extremely collaborative and integrated in all of them. You can’t have a mixed-race or multiracial center without it intimately being connected into all the other offices including LGBTQ.

Lucy and Maya also emphasize the importance of the center for mixed race students providing a place where they can be “In-Between” or “in the middle” as point of connecting with students who would utilize the office. Lucy, who identifies as Latina and Yaqui Indian, adds:

Cuz then people have this place that they can be in the middle ground...Because maybe people are challenged with like...I’m not Black enough or I’m not Asian enough and so then you’re like, “well you can be happy In-Between and come to this office.”

Maya echoes this sentiment, “Well I guess for people who feel like they’re In-Between. They’re a little bit of something. They can’t just claim one identity, they have a home. And they can just go there and feel accepted.” The idea of creating a place to be “in-between” would be tricky.

This is not necessarily an ideal point in mixed race identity development. The in-between feeling is caused by constant pressure to pick a side or fit into a race box. The empowerment for mixed race students seems to come from realizing that it is okay to identify with multiple racial identities. The center would have to address this idea of being in-between.

### **The Multiracial/Mixed Race Center (MRC)**

Many elements of Colorado State University reflect societal norms. In any attempt to improve diversity in terms of race and ethnicity, the social norm is to view the world through a monoracial lens, which ignores the steadily growing multiracial population. Breaking from a monoracial paradigm and addressing the needs of mixed race students is not only strategically viable for fostering growth in diversity, it is starting to become a necessity. The voice of the mixed race students will only grow louder. It seems that university administrators are unaware of the unique needs of mixed race students. This project clearly shows the need to address this gap in support for this growing population at Colorado State University.

This study was very institutionally specific. Because of the landscape of diversity at CSU, recommending a Multiracial/Mixed Race Center is the best course of action. To broaden the recommendations for other institutions, it is important to reach out to this student population. This could come in a variety of forms. One recommendation is to expand the curriculum to include mixed race studies. Providing classes that focus on this student population would serve to validate the mixed race identity, in addition to providing education and awareness of their existence. Another recommendation is to have existing services that are monoracial be very intentional about providing mixed race programming. These would be great first steps to address an invisible population. However, none of these address the issue of having a space specifically for mixed race students.

A Multiracial/Mixed Race Center (MRC) at Colorado State University (CSU) would address all of these issues, and the establishment of such an office must be multifaceted. It would have tremendous impact on both practical and ideological levels. At the very least, the MRC would begin the paradigm shift at CSU that race goes beyond the “traditional” monoracial identities. This shift would reverberate in the minds of all students, because the very idea that the MRC exists in addition to the other SDPS offices plants a seed that validates the existence of the mixed race identity. This will have unpredictable results, but with intentional programming from the MRC, CSU campus culture will foundationally shift away from monoracial paradigms toward a more comprehensive understanding of diversity within the sphere of race and ethnicity.

Some of the issues that The MRC would directly address would be alleviating stressors experienced by mixed race students. To address the issue of having difficulty with self-identification as detailed in chapter 3, The MRC would be an integral source of validation for students of mixed race. Many interviewees never heard of or thought about identifying as

multiracial or mixed race until their arrival at CSU. The MRC would be the beginning for many students to allow to self-identify and fully embrace their multiple racial identities, perhaps for the first time for some. This is an important step in the identity development of many of the interviewees. It also can serve as a launching point for involvement on campus. Fostering student leaders would only improve what CSU has to offer its students. The MRC could not eliminate the issues surrounding race perception for mixed race students, including such issues as not fitting in, being monoracialized, and being defined. However, The MRC would provide a space to alleviate the constant push and pull of racial expectations.

The theoretical implications of the MRC can be anticipated but unpredictable. The interviewees provide various insights for their view of the MRC. On a basic level, the participants want an office that reflects many functions of the current cultural centers. They are looking for a space to mingle with other students who share their identity, programming catered to their unique life experiences, having the general purpose of retaining mixed race students, and being validated on an institutional level. One of the biggest concerns expressed by the students is that they did not want to divide a community that they feel is already fairly divided. The development of a MRC would require collaboration with multiple sources, including, but not limited to, the mixed race student community, students of color, the directors of the SDPS offices, faculty of color, various student affairs administrators, and other organizations on campus who wish to support mixed race students. The involvement of many viewpoints and allowing space to make sure these voices are heard will mediate feelings of division because everyone will feel like they contribute to the office. This collaboration will also serve as the foundation to maintain constant communication about potential conflicts that may arise with students or administration.



The interview participants were also concerned about the students associated with the current cultural centers not understanding the need for the MRC. Conflicts would include worrying about funding, “stealing” students, and over-programming. Funding concerns arise from understanding that resources are limited and precious. Many participants wanted to make sure that money was not being taken from existing offices to fund a new one. They felt that this would be an immediate source of resentment. The concept of “stealing” student’s stems from the idea that those who once identify with current SDPS offices would choose to associate more with MRC. This concern arises from the participants experiencing resentment from students in one office when the participant chose to associate with another. Over-programming is a general concern because the participants feel students of color are highly involved on campus already. Adding another office and more programs may be overwhelming to a student body that is already bombarded with information.

CSU is a research institution. Because mixed race studies are a growing field, the MRC at CSU has the potential to become a hub of research and a national resource center. This would elevate the University’s standing on a national scale. This visibility would increase enrollment, especially of students who identify as multiracial. The Student Diversity Programs and Services offices were created out of need. They each have their own unique history at CSU. Colorado State University has a chance to make history on a national scale by being the first to recognize the needs of their mixed race students and making it happen.

## REFERENCES

- Antonio, A. (2001). Diversity and the influence of friendship groups in college. *The Review of Higher Education*, 25(1), 63-89.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The new Mestiza*. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute Press.
- Astin, A. (1993). Diversity and multiculturalism on campus: How are students affected? *Change*, 25(2), 44-50.
- Baez, B. (2000). Diversity and its contradictions. *Academe*. 86(5), 43-47.
- Bernal, E. M., Cabrera, A. F. and Terenzini, P. T. (2000). The relationship between race and socioeconomic status (SES): Implications for institutional research and admissions policies. *Removing Vestiges: Research-based strategies to promote inclusion*. A publication of the American Association of Community Colleges, Number 3, 6-19.
- Binning, K., Unzueta M., Huo, Y., and Molina, L. (2009). The interpretation of multiracial status and its relation to social engagement and psychological well-being. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65(1), 35-49.
- Bost, S., (2010). *Encarnación: Illness and body politics in Chicana feminist literature*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Campbell, M. E. (2009). Multiracial groups and educational inequality: A rainbow or a divide?" *Social Problems*, 56(3), 425-446.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Cheng, C., and Lee, F. (2009). Multiracial identity integration: Perceptions of conflict and distance among multiracial individuals. *Journal of Social Issues*. 65(1), 51-68.
- Colorado State University Fact Book 2010-11. (October 2010). Retrieved from <http://www.ir.colostate.edu>
- Collins, P.H. (1990). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Boston: UnwinHyman.
- Duster, T. (1995). They're taking over! and other myths about race on campus. *Philosophy and social action: Philosophy, science and society*, 19(1), 30-37.

- Hanrahan, H. (2005). Harriet Jacobs's "Incidents in the life of a slave girl: A retelling of Lydia Maria child's 'The quadroons.'" *The New England Quarterly*, 78(4), 599-616.
- Hugenberg, K., Bodenhausen, G. V. (2004). Ambiguity in social categorization: The role of prejudice and facial affect in race categorization. *Psychological Science*, 15(5), 342-345.
- Hurtado, S., Milem, J., Clayton-Pedersen, A., and Allen, W. (1998). Enhancing campus climates for racial/ethnic diversity: Educational policy and practice. *Review of Higher Education*. 21(3), 279-302.
- Hutchings, P.B., and Haddock, G. (2008). Look Black in anger: The role of implicit prejudice in the categorization and perceived emotional intensity of racially ambiguous faces. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 44, 1418-1420.
- Jones, N. A., and Smith, A. (2001). The two or more races population: 2000. *Census 2000 Brief*.
- Kellogg, A., and Niskode, A. S., (2008). Student affairs and higher education policy issues related to multiracial students. *New Directions for Student Services*. 123, 93-102.
- Kim, Joon. (2005). From Bakke to Grutter: Rearticulating diversity and affirmative action in higher education. *Journal of the National Association for Multicultural Education*. 7(2), 12-19.
- Lim, Thea. (2009, September 22). Tuesday nitpicking: Mixed race people and the language of fractions. [Racialicious]. Retrieved from <http://www.racialicious.com/2009/09/22/tuesday-nitpicking-mixed-race-people-and-the-language-of-fractions/>
- Literte, P. E. (2010). Revising race: How biracial students are changing and challenging student services. *Journal of College Student Development*, 51(2), 115-134.
- MacLin, O.H., and Malpass, R.S. (2001). Racial categorization of faces: The ambiguous race face effect. *Psychology, Public Poicy, & Law*, 7, 98-118.
- Mahtani, M. (2002). What's in a name?: Exploring the employment of 'mixed race' as an identification. *Ethnicities*, 2(4), 469-490. Retrieved from <http://0-etn.sagepub.com.catalog.library.colostate.edu/content/2/4/469.full.pdf+html>
- Malahy, L.W., Sedlins, M., Plaks, J., and Shoda, Y. (2010). Black and White, or shades of gray? Racial labeling of Barack Obama predicts implicit race perception. *Analysis of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 10(1), 207-222.
- Milem, J., and Hakuta, K. (2000). The benefits of racial and ethnic diversity in higher education. In D. J. Wilds (ed.), *Minorities in Higher Education 1999-2000: Seventeenth Annual Status Report*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

- Mohan, E., and Chmbers, T. T. V. (2010). Two researchers reflect on navigating multiracial identities in the research situation. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Education*, 23(3), 259-281.
- Office of Management and Budget. (1995). Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity. Retrieved from <http://clinton4.nara.gov/OMB/fedreg/race-ethnicity.html>
- Ozaki, C. C. and Johnston, M. (2008). The space In-Between: Issues for multiracial student organizations and advising. *New Directions for Students Services*, 123, 53-61.
- Padilla, A., & Kelley, M. (2005). One box isn't enough: An analysis of how U.S. colleges and universities classify mixed heritage students. *MAViN Foundation*. Retrieved from <http://www.mavinfoundation.org/>
- Poston, W.S. C. (1990). The biracial identity development model: A needed addition. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 69(1), 152-55.
- Renn, K. (2000). Patterns of situational identity among biracial and multiracial college students. *The Review of Higher Education*, 23(4).
- Renn, K. (2009). Educational policy, politics, and mixed heritage students in the United States. *Journal of Social Issues*. 65(1), 165-183.
- Sanchez, D. T. and Bonam, C. (2009). To disclose or not to disclose biracial identity: The effect of biracial disclosure on perceiver evaluations and target responses. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65(1), 129-149.
- Sands, N., and Schuh, J. (2004). Identifying interventions to improve the retention of biracial students: A case study. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 5(4), 349-363.
- Shang, P. (2008). An introduction to social and historical factors affecting multiracial college students. *New Directions for Students Services*, 123, 53-61.
- Student Leadership, Involvement, & Community Engagement (SLiCE). Colorado State University. Retrieved from <http://www.slice.colostate.edu/registration-process.aspx>
- Sue, D.W. (2010). Microaggressions, marginality, and oppression: An introduction. In D.W. Sue (Eds.), *Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestation, dynamics, and impact*. (3-22). Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Taniguchi, A. S., and Heidenreich L. (2005). Re-Mix: Rethinking the use of 'hapa' in mixed-race Asian/Pacific Islander American community organizing. *WSU McNair Journal*. 135-146.

- Terenzini, P., Cabrera, A., Colbeck, C., Bjorklund S., and Parente, J. (2001). Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Classroom: Does it Promote Student Learning? *Journal of Higher Education*, 72(5), 509-531.
- United States Census Bureau. (1977). Directive no. 15 race and ethnic standards for federal statistics and administrative reporting. Retrieved from <http://wonder.cdc.gov/wonder/help/populations/bridged-race/Directive15.html>
- Wallman, K.K., Evinger, S., and Schechter, S. (2000). Race/ethnicity and the 2000 Census: Developing a common language for data on race/ethnicity. *Census 2000 Brief*.
- Wijeyesinghe, C. (2001). Racial identity in multiracial people: An alternative paradigm. *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: A Theoretical and Practical Anthology*. New York University Press.
- Williams, R. F. (2009). Black-white biracial students in American schools: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(2), 776-804.
- Wong, M. P. A., and Buckner, J. (2008). Multiracial students services come of age: The state of multiracial student services in higher education in the United States. *New Directions for Students Services*, 123, 53-61.